

Commonwealth secretary-general advocates for climate justice

Commonwealth secretary-general Patricia Scotland late last month addressed the High Level Segment of the UN Human Rights Council's 43rd Regular Session in Geneva saying, "The stark reality for many states is that their people are losing lives, facing malnutrition, unable to find clean water and their homes are disappearing right before our eyes.



Photo credit: UN Geneva

"From the devastation of hurricane Dorian in The Bahamas last year to the wrath of bushfires in Australia, from severe drought in Namibia to islands inundated with king tides in Kiribati, climate change is a threat to the world and an emergency for small states."

The secretary-general said the Commonwealth advocates for changes in policies, modification of behaviour and curbs in pollution to reverse damage to our environment and ensure climate justice, especially for small states.

She spoke of the barriers to advancing human rights and inclusive development still faced by many victims of discrimination around the Commonwealth. This includes women, LGBTI persons and indigenous peoples.

'Delivering a common future'

"This year's Commonwealth theme is 'Delivering a common future'. This future cannot be 'common' without being inherently inclusive. Simply put, we have to respect the dignity and equality of all citizens in the Commonwealth family," she said.

The secretary-general added: “We remain steadfast in our commitment to support member states improve access to justice through strengthening national human rights institutions, ensuring independent judiciaries, improving capacity of officials to apply human rights standards, and reducing financial and bureaucratic barriers for people to access police, administrative offices and courts.”

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