

Commonwealth gets new Secretary-General;



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Altaf Hamid Rao.

MIRPUR (AJK); April 2 : Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, former Ghanaian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, assumed office as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth yesterday, pledging to advance the values of the Commonwealth Charter at a time of growing global tensions and shifting alliances, it was officially said.

“Botchwey succeeds Patricia Scotland, whose nine-year term ended in March. She is the first African woman – the second African overall – to lead the association of 56 countries, which make up a third of the world’s population and more than a quarter of the United Nations membership”, an official press release issued by London-based Central Secretariat Commonwealth, reaching and released to the media here late Wednesday said.

Speaking at the Commonwealth Secretariat’s headquarters in London on 1 April 2025, the Secretary-General acknowledged the scale of the challenges confronting the world.

She said “The world we woke up to today is unlike any we have seen in our lifetimes. The consequences of lower economic growth, increased defence expenditures, and a frayed multilateralism will affect our pockets directly, increase unemployment and poverty, reduce social protection and weaken our resilience to shocks.

“The value of our Commonwealth stands in bold relief, in a time like this. For over 75 years, the Commonwealth has been a unique and powerful force for good. Now we must seize the moment to realise the transformation our societies seek.”

The Secretary-General highlighted the power of Commonwealth unity in uncertain times. “The challenges we face are real and serious,” she said, “but together we are more than equal to them.”

Drawing on Commonwealth values, Secretary-General Shirley Botchwey added: “Sustained by the values that bind us – democracy, good governance, peace, human rights, and equal opportunity – we will build a future in which dignity, opportunity, and prosperity are within reach for all.”

The Secretary-General outlined three strategic priorities for her leadership, calling them the foundation for a “Commonwealth built on all talents”.

First, she pledged to equip women and young people with the skills, tools and opportunities they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Second, the Secretary-General vowed to revitalise trade, investment and connectivity across the Commonwealth, describing it as a pathway to industrial development, productivity and inclusive growth. No country, she stressed, should be left behind, regardless of its size or income level.

Third, calling climate change “the greatest challenge of our time,” she pledged to mobilise stronger action and advocate for reforms of the international financial system to help small and other vulnerable Commonwealth states access the support they need.

The Secretary-General also committed to accelerating the Commonwealth’s modernisation by delivering faster and smarter partnerships to meet the needs of all its people.

Reflecting on her own historic journey, she said: “It is a great honour to be the first African woman to serve as Secretary-General. No matter where in the Commonwealth you come from, this path is open to you.”

The Secretary-General concluded her address with a message of shared resolve, adding: “Let’s move forward with purpose, with courage, and with an unshakable commitment to a Commonwealth that truly thrives together.”

Born in Accra, Shirley Botchwey was appointed by leaders at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa on 25 October 2024, the press release concluded