



**Press Statement
World Day of Social Justice**

Contemporary forms of slavery are a major barrier to social justice in the Commonwealth

20 February 2023, London: On the occasion of the World Day for Social Justice, the Commonwealth 8.7 Network calls upon Commonwealth countries to eliminate contemporary forms of slavery, including forced labour, human trafficking, and child labour, to ensure social justice and equality for all.

Social justice is the cornerstone of sustainable development, and the precursor to the enjoyment of a range of human rights. It requires the fair distribution of resources, and opportunities, along with the elimination of discrimination, inequality and poverty.

This year's theme, 'Overcoming Barriers and Unleashing Opportunities for Social Justice', highlights the importance of dismantling the obstacles that prevent individuals and communities from realising their full potential.

Contemporary forms of slavery are among the most serious barriers to social justice. These forms of exploitation and abuse rob people of their dignity, individual agency, and freedom, undermining their ability to participate fully in society.

According to the latest [Global Estimates of Modern Slavery](#), 50 million people around the world continue to live in conditions of modern slavery, including forced labour and forced marriage.

States have a critical role to play in shaping policies and practices that will help overcome these barriers and open up opportunities to widen social justice delivery.

The Commonwealth 8.7 Network is an international coalition of 80 civil society organisations from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean, and the Pacific working together to eradicate forced labour, human trafficking, and other barriers to social justice.

Named after the UN Sustainable Development Goal ([SDG Target 8.7](#)), the Network brings together frontline civil society organisations from across the Commonwealth to mobilise action,

undertake collective advocacy, and raise awareness on forced labour, human trafficking, and contemporary forms of slavery.

We urge policy makers and leaders to leverage the diversity and strength of the Commonwealth to share best practices, build consensus, and work together to make a positive difference in the lives of millions of people living in conditions of modern slavery.

Let us work together to ensure social justice across the Commonwealth, so that we can build a future that is fairer, more sustainable, and more prosperous for all.

ENDS