

Commonwealth tackling climate change with regeneration projects

LONDON: The Commonwealth on Friday launched an ideas-sharing network to tackle the effects of climate change through replicable regeneration projects. The 53-country bloc held a two-day brainstorming of indigenous groups, environmentalists, scientists and climate change experts at its headquarters in London.

The Common Earth initiative will be a network of projects that can be copied and adapted to suit communities around the world. While the Commonwealth contains G20 industrial powers like Britain, Canada and Australia and emerging forces like India and Nigeria, many of its members are developing island microstates which feel exceptionally vulnerable to climate change.

Ideas that can hold sway in the diverse Commonwealth tend to be taken up more widely, such as its climate change accords which were instrumental in the Paris COP21 UN climate conference deal in 2015. "This about looking at practical, existing strategies to clean streams, restore forests and damaged ecosystems, protect marine health, educate our populations and challenge the economic and development approaches that led to the decline of our planet," said Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland.

Planning for hurricanes

Nichie Abo, a farmer from the indigenous Kalinago territory in Dominica who grows man-

gos and avocados, said 95 percent of the homes in his community were destroyed by Hurricane Maria in September 2017. The electricity network—all above ground on poles—was vulnerable to hurricanes and the area was left without power for more than a year.

The community wants to make its electricity network independent of the national grid, with each home having its own power source such as solar panels or a wind turbine. They also want to construct a central building that can withstand hurricanes for use during emergencies and act as a community center at other times. "We're looking for funding," Abo said. "It is going to happen again, so we need to be prepared."

"This idea could be replicated across the Caribbean," he added, citing the Bahamas, hit last month by the devastating Hurricane Dorian. The gathering also heard from contributors on developing more sustainable economic models. "We're in a time of crisis. Emergencies, historically, are a time of great innovation and often bring out the best in us," said Stuart Cowan, regenerative development director at Capital Institute, a US-based finance think-tank.

"We need to start from scratch. We need to design economies that allow people to flourish within the limits of a finite planet," he told AFP.

With an eye on funding, Secretary-General Scotland is to take forward the meeting's initiatives to upcoming summits of Commonwealth trade and finance ministers. — AFP



In this file photo, demonstrators take part in a climate march in Hendaye, southwest France to protest against the annual G7 Summit. — AFP

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