

# Commonwealth countries need to create 50,000 jobs daily

## — Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey

By Emmanuel Bonney & Josephine Ansah

**C**OMMONWEALTH countries need to create over 50,000 decent jobs each day until 2030 to provide opportunities for young people entering the labour market, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, has said.

She said, for instance, it was estimated that together, Commonwealth countries needed to create three in every five jobs in the world as the labour force in countries such as Japan, China and Europe shrank.

"Within the Commonwealth itself, labour mobility does not correspond to the labour rigidities of our economies, denying markets the skills and resources needed to power greater inclusive growth and wealth creation. And we have failed to draw the link between young technology workers, the ubiquity of services they provide and anxiety over physical migration," she said.

Ms Botchwey, who has been nominated for the position of Secretary General of the Commonwealth by President Nana Akufo-Addo, said that at the Council on Foreign Relations Ghana Fifth Anniversary Lecture Series last Friday in Accra.

### Opportunity

Ms Botchwey said the Commonwealth provided an opportunity for its Member States and people to reshape "a world fit for the times we live in".

The Commonwealth has "a

population of 2.5 billion. 60% of this population is aged 30 or younger. By geographic size, global reach and diversity, potential wealth, numbers, demographic data, and political profile, the Commonwealth should become the second most consequential organisation of States globally, after the United Nations.

"Its Charter provides a strong framework for promoting peace and prosperity, as well as modalities for cooperation among our member states, fostering friendship, fraternal dialogue and mutual respect," she emphasised.

### Commitment

Indeed, the minister of foreign affairs said the Commonwealth had shown remarkable commitment to promoting prosperity, democracy and peace, justice and human rights, empowering women and young people, both boys and girls, amplifying the voices of small and vulnerable states, and advocating environmental protection in terms of the blue economy and climate change through its Blue Charter.

The Commonwealth and its Secretariat's purpose, as articulated in the 2005 Revised Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat, and its subsequent revision in 2022, she said, expected the Commonwealth Secretariat to expand and adapt pragmatically in the light of its experience to better carry out its functions.

Those functions include support for development projects and technical assistance in a variety of fields on a multilateral basis.



• Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey — Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration

Ms Botchwey said the leadership of the Commonwealth needed to be commended for their innovation and hard work in increasing the Secretariat's accumulation of a reliable body of knowledge that had contributed to economic development and resilience building across the Commonwealth.

With its unique identity or "DNA" of little fuss or publicity, she said the Commonwealth had worked to strengthen democracy, including through election monitoring and good office missions, as well as helping countries to manage their debt or apply for climate financing.

"Unlike large international agencies, it is a nimble organisation of particular use to small island states and lesser-developed countries. It takes on projects too small for the big agencies, building the capacity of governments at the same time as it solves problems on the ground. Its reputation as an incubator of

good ideas is well deserved and needs to be built on further," she said.

For instance, Ms Botchwey said they developed a health worker protocol that was taken to scale by WHO; a vulnerability index that was taken to scale by the World Bank; and reached an agreement on climate change that was approved globally at the climate summit in Paris.

### Challenges

She said despite the remarkable achievements of the Commonwealth, "we do not need to go behind the daily headlines to see that the world, in the words of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, "is in a bad place".

"Whether it is in Commonwealth countries or the entire world, we face existential and troubling challenges. Indeed, insecurity best describes our world, in the political, economic, social, environmental and climatic spheres," she said.

She said the business and supply chain impacts of COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and the worsening climate events associated with Climate Change merely exposed the failure of the development cooperation framework fashioned in the waning years of the Second World War.

She said the weak resilience that characterised the economies of Commonwealth developing countries could be traced to their marginalisation in the multilateral trading system, with their very limited footprints on the global trade landscape. "The shares of Pacific Island Countries and African countries in world trade are manifestly below potential at 0.03 per cent and 3 per cent respectively.

We operate at the periphery of the multilateral trading system, with a narrow range of exports mostly primary products, minerals, oil and gas.

In the cases of the Caribbean and the Pacific, because of their very small populations, they lack economies of scale. This is made worse by high transportation and marketing costs for the Pacific Countries, as they are located very far from the key markets of Europe, United States, China and Japan," she said.