

## Introductory Welcome Speech by OSPA Chairman, Charles Cullimore, at the OSPA Farewell Event Luncheon on 8 June 2017

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First of all I am delighted to welcome you all most warmly on this very unique occasion. It is wonderful that so many of you have been able to make it including those who have travelled from as far away as Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong, not to mention Scotland! We are also honoured to have with us a number of special guests and I would like to welcome them on your behalf. It is particularly appropriate that we have with us the Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Dr Josephine Ojiambo.

I am sure you will all want to know who our distinguished guest of honour is to be, and I am delighted to tell you that it is His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Security reasons prevented us from announcing this in advance. His presence is particularly welcome and appropriate, given HRH's personal interest in the Commonwealth and the fact that all of you – all of us – OSPA members, contributed so much to the development of the Commonwealth and I am delighted to be able to announce that he is coming. I believe that he will be here in a few moments so I need to be brief.

I want to highlight the very generous support that we have had from six sponsors who have helped us meet the cost of the event – you will find their names on the back of your programme of events; we are very grateful to them. I would also like to acknowledge the help and support we have had from the Foreign Office for this event. As some of you may know, we were offered the Durbar Court free of charge but it was too small; too many of you were coming so we could not accept that generous offer. They have arranged these flags for us, they brought them this morning, and they have given us help in other ways too.

Actually, it is a bit of a miracle that we are here today. Apart from the terrorist attacks in the last couple of weeks both the ladies in Tonbridge have been ill in recent weeks and, sadly, Andrea is not well enough to be with us today. David Le Breton had to have an operation a few weeks ago and, on top of that, only three weeks ago he was involved in a very nasty car crash which completely demolished his car. He walked away unscathed, and then went back to work as if nothing had happened. He and Alison – who has been magnificent – have carried on running the show. The other thing I might say is that the Prime Minister failed to consult us about the date of the election and – my next sentence you can interpret either way you like – you can thank her for the absence of any Ministers from the programme today!

HRH is due to arrive in a few moments. He is going to meet some of the guests outside in the drawing room, and then he is going to come in here to meet as many of you as possible. Please would you get into small groups, preferably with people from your own territory or colony, and choose someone to help with introductions. Do not worry about that too much but if you could get into groups that would make it easier for His Royal Highness to go round and meet as many people as possible.

I have to ask you not to take photographs or selfies whilst HRH is here. What you do afterwards is entirely up to you but not while he is here. There will be an official photographer and you will be able to order from him afterwards – the details are on the programme.

As soon as HRH has left would you then please go downstairs by the stairs you came up? We have coloured napkins for the different geographical regions and they should, hopefully, correspond with the colours on your lapel badges. There is free seating apart from the top table because we thought you would like to be able to sit with whoever you want to, so there are no allocated seats. You will find a complimentary bag hanging on the back of your chair from Stephenson Harwood for you to take away if you wish.

Finally, I would like to say that I am sure we all feel a certain sadness because this is OSPA's farewell but I would also like to think that we can be proud of what OSPA achieved in its 57 years, and especially of its efforts to protect the good name of HMOCS in which we all served.

So let us really enjoy ourselves, have a great time and make this a memorable reunion and a day to cherish. Thank you very much for listening. *[Applause]*