

ELEVENTH Pan-Commonwealth Forum

SPECIAL EDITION



Innovative Open Education:
Fostering Resilient Societies for
Sustainable Economic Development



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Leaders Called for Inclusive, Innovative, and Technology-Driven Education



The Minister of Higher Education, Hon. Prince Maele, officially welcomed delegates to the 11th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF11), emphasising the importance of the gathering in advancing inclusive, equitable, and quality education across the Commonwealth.

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The President of the Republic of Botswana, His Excellency Advocate Duma Gideon Boko, officially opened the 11th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF11), underscoring the critical role of education in driving sustainable development and social transformation.

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The President and CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Prof. Peter Scott, provided an overview of the 11th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF11), highlighting its purpose as a space for dialogue, innovation, and collaboration to transform education across the Commonwealth.

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Botswana Hosts PCF11: Leaders Called for Inclusive, Innovative, and Technology-Driven Education



Gaborone, Botswana – The Commonwealth of Learning (COL), in partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education and its implementing agency, Botswana Open University, hosted the Eleventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF11) from 10 to 12 September 2025 at the Gaborone International Convention Centre.

Held every three years, PCF is one of the world's leading international conferences on open and distance learning (ODL). The 2025 forum was held under the theme **"Innovative Open Education: Fostering Resilient Societies for Sustainable Economic Development."** The theme reflected the power of innovative open models and collaborative practices, particularly those drawn from distance and online learning, to bridge divides in access, raise educational quality, and promote collaboration across borders.

The forum attracted high-level participation, including 11 Ministers from Commonwealth countries, alongside policymakers, educators, researchers, and development partners.

In his welcoming remarks, the Minister of Higher Education, Hon. Prince Maele, expressed Botswana's pride in hosting PCF11 and reaffirmed government's commitment to expanding access to higher education through open, distance, and e-learning. He emphasised the role of technology in equipping learners with 21st-century skills and encouraged delegates to use the forum as a platform for forging partnerships and sharing best practices to strengthen the education systems.

Providing an overview of the forum, the President and CEO of COL, Prof. Peter Scott, underscored that open, distance, and e-learning were no longer alternatives but essential tools for achieving inclusive, equitable,

and quality education. He explained that PCF11 served as a global platform for policymakers, educators, and researchers to exchange strategies and generate solutions aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 on education. Prof. Scott praised Botswana's leadership and urged delegates to engage actively in shaping practical outcomes that would advance learning for development across the Commonwealth.

Officially opening the forum, the President of the Republic of Botswana, His Excellency Advocate Duma Gideon Boko, stressed that education was a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of sustainable development. He called for stronger partnerships to ensure women, youth, and marginalised communities benefitted from innovative learning opportunities. Highlighting Botswana's Vision 2036 and commitment to the SDGs, President Boko urged governments and institutions to embrace technology-enabled learning and align education with labour market needs to prepare citizens for the global economy.

The three-day conference provided a rich in-person experience and reaffirmed the importance of collaboration in harnessing innovative open education to foster resilient societies and drive sustainable economic development.



Botswana Minister of Higher Education Welcomes Delegates to PCF11



The Minister of Higher Education, Hon. Prince Maele, officially welcomed delegates to the 11th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF11), emphasising the importance of the gathering in advancing inclusive, equitable, and quality education across the Commonwealth.

In his address, the Minister highlighted Botswana’s pride in hosting the forum, noting that it provides a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge sharing among policymakers, academics, practitioners, and development partners. He reaffirmed the Government of Botswana’s commitment to expanding access to higher education through open, distance, and e-learning, particularly in line with the country’s national development agenda and Vision 2036.

The Minister also stressed the role of technology in transforming education, bridging gaps for disadvantaged groups, and equipping learners with 21st-century skills. He applauded the Commonwealth of Learning for its leadership in promoting innovative approaches that make education more accessible and relevant to societal needs.

Concluding his remarks, Hon. Maele encouraged delegates to use the forum to forge partnerships, exchange best practices, and generate solutions that will strengthen education systems and improve livelihoods across member states.



President Boko Officially Opens PCF11, Calls for Innovation and Inclusion in Education



The President of the Republic of Botswana, Advocate Duma Gideon Boko, officially opened the 11th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF11), underscoring the critical role of education in driving sustainable development and social transformation.

In his keynote address, President Boko commended the Commonwealth of Learning and the Botswana Open University for convening the forum, which he described as a timely platform to reflect on how open and distance learning can tackle pressing challenges such as inequality, unemployment, and the digital divide.

He stressed that education must remain a fundamental human right and a public good, urging governments and institutions to innovate and expand access, especially for women, youth, and marginalised communities. The President further highlighted the need to embrace technology-enabled

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learning and to align education with labour market demands to prepare citizens for the fast-changing global economy.

President Boko reaffirmed Botswana's commitment to Vision 2036 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, noting that education is central to achieving both. He called for stronger partnerships across the Commonwealth to share resources, expertise, and solutions that will enhance quality, inclusivity, and resilience in education systems.

Declaring the forum officially open, the President encouraged participants to engage meaningfully, collaborate across sectors, and generate practical outcomes that will transform the future of learning for millions across the Commonwealth.

COL President Outlines Vision and Goals of PCF11



The President and CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Prof. Peter Scott, provided an overview of the 11th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF11), highlighting its purpose as a space for dialogue, innovation, and collaboration to transform education across the Commonwealth.

Prof. Scott explained that the forum brings together policymakers, educators, researchers, and development partners to exchange experiences and strategies that promote accessible, equitable, and quality learning. He emphasised that open, distance, and e-learning are no longer alternatives but essential tools for meeting the demands of modern education and lifelong learning.

He noted that the conference theme reflects pressing global priorities, including inclusivity, sustainability, and the integration of technology into teaching and learning. Prof. Scott underlined COL's mission to support member states in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 on quality education, by fostering innovations that expand access and improve learning outcomes.

Acknowledging Botswana's leadership in hosting the forum, he commended the government and Botswana Open University for their commitment to educational transformation. He encouraged delegates to actively participate in discussions, build partnerships, and generate practical solutions that would advance learning for development across the Commonwealth.





Eleventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF11)

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