Winner: Mrs Patsy Robertson

Presented by: Journalist and president of the Commonwealth Journalists Association, Mrs Rita Payne

Citation: Patsy Robertson started work in Jamaica as a reporter on the Daily Gleaner newspaper. On moving to London she spent a short period at the Jamaican High Commission and then joined the Commonwealth Secretariat soon after it was created in 1965, under the first Secretary-General, Canadian diplomat Arnold Smith.

She served three Secretaries-General, first as Press Officer and then as Director of Information.

From the outset she always had a winning rapport with Commonwealth journalists and was a tireless figure at many Heads of Government Meetings. Whether in one-to-one briefings or more formal press conferences she developed a reputation for delivering the goods with charm and integrity.

She was the sort of press officer journalists highly regard because she was brilliant at feeding them newsy extra titbits that made good
copy better. She has always been deeply dedicated to the Commonwealth and remains highly active in her work for the Ramphal Centre and the staff association at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Memorably, in 1977 when she was expecting a child, she worked till the last moment at the meeting of prime ministers and presidents in London, who were wrangling over the deteriorating situation in Rhodesia and South Africa and working out the Gleneagles Agreement. Finally, her work done, she was driven off to hospital and gave birth to a son.

The Nexus Commonwealth Outstanding Contribution Award recognises an international figure who has dedicated their lifetime’s work to fostering the Commonwealth values of respect and understanding, and to promoting development, democracy and diversity in one or more Commonwealth member countries.