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to act as a focal point and a link for various specialized Commonwealth institutions; to undertake studies on various subjects in the economic, social, administrative and cultural fields; and to organize and service the many Commonwealth governmental meetings.

Commonwealth meetings The Commonwealth has become an increasingly useful vehicle for inter-governmental consultation at all levels. At the topmost level are the Commonwealth heads of government meetings, which are now held at two-year intervals. The last such meeting was in Ottawa in 1973; the next will be held in Kingston, Jamaica, from April 29 to May 6, 1975, at the invitation of Commonwealth Caribbean governments. It will be the fourth such meeting held outside London -- the others being in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1966, in Singapore in 1971, and in Ottawa in 1973. These are private and confidential meetings of individual government leaders (as opposed to delegations), and are intended primarily to give them an opportunity to discuss current international economic and political issues and other questions of interest to them, such as comparative techniques of government. The informal and intimate atmosphere of these discussions encourages a forthright exchange of views, without posturing or non-productive debate. For a time there were doubts that this frankness and intimacy would be maintained; the tremendous growth in membership, the reduced familiarity, the disparities in economic development, and the growing importance of regional and other groupings might, it was thought, lead to acrimonious debate, with few constructive results. However, the Ottawa Heads of Government Meeting in 1973 successfully restored any flexibility and informality that might have been lost.

This meeting was unique in one respect: it was the first time the Queen, as the symbol and Head of the Commonwealth, had attended a heads of government meeting outside Britain. Her presence did much to focus Canadian and international attention on the meeting and on her role in the decentralized Commonwealth.

As a follow-up on the work of heads of government, senior officials (usually cabinet secretaries or the equivalent) meet in the intervening year to consider proposals referred to them and to plan for the next heads of government meeting. At the first senior officials meeting, in Ottawa in 1972, delegates drafted a report to governments on procedures and agenda for heads of government meetings and had a first "run" at a new item suggested by the Canadian Prime Minister -- comparative techniques of government, a topic that engaged the attention of government leaders in their 1973 discussions in Ottawa. The senior officials, at their second meeting, in London in 1974, developed this topic further, discussed the

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