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COMMONWEALTH DAY

Monday, March 14 is to be observed as Commonwealth Day in Canada and throughout the Commonwealth for the twelfth consecutive year. The Day was originated at Canada's suggestion as a way of focussing the attention of the public and especially of young people on the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth today is a vibrant and practical association of 48 member states encompassing about one quarter of the world's population. Its members represent most of the geographic areas, races, cultures and religions of the world. Its purposes are consultation and co-operation based on the use of English as a common working language and similar administrative, legal, governmental, educational and other practices arising out of shared historical experience. Its components include the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme, the Commonwealth Foundation and many other joint endeavours. Commonwealth activities involve all levels of government, officials, technical experts, universities and dozens of non-governmental groups. Canada is one of the Commonwealth's strongest supporters, valuing the role this unique organization plays on the world scene.

Last October Canada hosted the biennial meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Vancouver, which addressed such vital issues as the debt of the poorest developing countries, assistance to very small states which make up half the Commonwealth, the liberalization of world trade and co-operation in education.

Close attention was also given at the Vancouver meeting to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Toward this end, a special Committee of Foreign Ministers was created under the chairmanship of the Canadian Secretary of State for External, The Rt. Hon. Joe Clark. The Committee, which held its initial meeting in Zambia early this year, has unequivocally condemned the measures taken late last month by the Government of South Africa against anti-apartheid organizations within South Africa.

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Secretary of State
for
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État
aux
Affaires extérieures

Canada