

## THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

The Commonwealth Secretariat is an international body at the service of all member countries of the Commonwealth, providing the central organization for joint consultation and co-operation in many fields. It was established in 1965 by Commonwealth Heads of Government, who saw it, in the words of the Agreed Memorandum, as 'a visible symbol of the spirit of co-operation which animates the Commonwealth.'

The Secretariat is responsible to Commonwealth governments collectively, and is the main agency for multi-lateral communication between them. It promotes consultation, and collects and disseminates information for their use. The Secretariat organizes meetings and conferences and is responsible for putting into effect decisions for collective action. It is funded by Commonwealth governments whose contributions are related to their capacity to pay and are based on their population and national income. Britain and Canada make the largest contributions.

Mr. Shridath Ramphal, then Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice, Guyana, was elected Commonwealth Secretary-General by Heads of Government at their 1975 meeting in Jamaica, for a five-year term of office starting on 1 July 1975. He succeeded Mr. Arnold Smith, of Canada, who became the first Secretary-General in 1965 and was reappointed for a further five years in 1970. The Secretary-General has access to Heads of Government, is responsible for their meetings, maintains close contact with member countries, and is the head of the Secretariat.

The headquarters of the Secretariat are in London, at Marlborough House, which was made available as a Commonwealth centre by the Queen.