

Canada and the Commonwealth

At the 1971 Singapore Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the principles of the association were defined in the Commonwealth Declaration, which contains the following description: "The Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association of independent sovereign states, each responsible for its own policies, consulting and co-operating in the common interests of their peoples and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace". The Declaration also affirms the belief of Commonwealth members in the United Nations and its efforts to promote international peace and order; the liberty of the individual and each citizen's inalienable right to participate in creating his society; the evil nature of racial prejudice and discrimination, the principles of human dignity and equality, and the inequality of colonial domination; the need for the progressive removal of disparities in wealth between different sections of mankind; and the value of the Commonwealth as a means to promote international coopera-

tion. In pursuing these principles, the member countries of the Commonwealth believe they can provide a constructive example of the interdependent approach vital to peace and progress in the modern world.

Membership in the Commonwealth is an important aspect of Canadian foreign policy, and Canada has consistently supported its development as a vigorous and effective association working for international peace and progress. Canadian objectives have remained constant: to strengthen the association, to encourage members to participate more actively and to assist its development as a vehicle for practical cooperation.

A. Canada and the Commonwealth Association:

Canada played a fundamental role in the emergence of the Commonwealth. It was Canadian insistence on achieving independent status within the British Empire that was the focus around which the future Commonwealth association developed. Canada was searching for a form of association that would allow the full independence befitting a mature and sovereign state, while retaining the traditional connection with the United Kingdom and its Empire.