

In a geographic sense, the term Commonwealth is understood to include self-governing states associated with a Commonwealth member for the purpose of foreign policy and defence, protectorates, protected states, trust territories administered by a member on behalf of the United Nations and territories still dependent on a member. Including dependencies, the Commonwealth covers over one-fifth of the world's land surface and embraces over 860 million people.

Of the 32 full members, 17 have retained a monarchical form of government. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is head of state of Canada and 11 other members. Malaysia has as head of state a monarch elected for a five-year term from among their own members by the nine hereditary Malay rulers of West Malaysia. On attaining independence, four members of the Commonwealth -- Lesotho, Swaziland, Tonga and Western Samoa -- had their pre-eminent chiefs declared king and head of state. Fifteen members of the association have adopted a republican form of government with a president as head of state but all members of the Commonwealth recognize the British Sovereign as the symbol of their free association and as such the Head of the Commonwealth.

Associated states

Within the Commonwealth, the term "associated state" means a country that has attained full internal self-government and has formally assumed a status of association with one of the larger independent members, which becomes responsible for its external affairs and defence. The association is a free and voluntary one, terminable by either country at any time. In the Caribbean region, Antigua, St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenada are in association with Britain, which retains ultimate responsibility for their external relations and defence. The six countries are known as the West Indies Associated States (WIAS) and, by agreement with Britain, exercise delegated authority over a wide area of external relations. The Cook Islands in the South Pacific also enjoy full internal self-government, but have chosen to be associated with New Zealand.

Dependent territories

In Commonwealth terminology, the phrase "dependent territories" includes some 31 remaining colonies, protectorates, protected states and trust territories. Most of these are dependencies of Britain; a few are dependent on Australia or New Zealand. Australia also administers Papua New Guinea as a United Nations trust territory.⁽³⁾

Evolution of the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth evolved from the British Empire by a gradual process that began in the nineteenth century. Many important developments first occurred in relation to what is now Canada. While there are many possible starting-points, a convenient one is *Lord Durham's Report*, published

(3) A list of the more important remaining dependencies, showing their relations to a metropolitan power, area and population appears as Appendix B.