

a link for various specialized Commonwealth institutions; undertaking studies on various subjects in the economic, social, administrative and cultural fields; and organizing and servicing the many Commonwealth governmental meetings.

The first Secretary-General of the Commonwealth was Arnold Smith, a Canadian diplomat who relinquished this post in July 1975 after ten years service. His successor, Shridath S. Ramphal, who was formerly Foreign Minister and Justice Minister of Guyana, has already shown his dedication to an outward-looking, active Commonwealth.

Commonwealth meetings

The Commonwealth has become an increasingly useful vehicle for intergovernmental consultation at all levels. At the topmost level are the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, now held at two-year intervals, which rotate among the capitals of member countries. The last such meeting was in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1975. Other recent meetings have been in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1966, London in 1969, Singapore in 1971, and Ottawa in 1973. The next will be held in London from June 8 to 16, 1977, the heads of government having decided at their 1975 gathering to meet there in the year of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's accession as head of the Commonwealth. The fact that this will be the first time in eight years that the Heads of Government Meeting has taken place in London is an indication of the decentralized and non-Anglocentric nature of the modern Commonwealth. These are private and confidential meetings of individual government leaders (as opposed to delegations), and are intended primarily to provide opportunity for discussing current international economic and political issues and other questions of interest to the leaders, such as comparative techniques of government. The informal and intimate atmosphere of these discussions encourages a forthright exchange of views, without posturing or unprofitable debate. For a time, there were doubts that this frankness and intimacy could 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