



other international gatherings. The Head of Government of the host country presides. Each participating Head of Government has only two members of his or her delegation present in the discussions. Spontaneous exchanges are encouraged and set speeches frowned upon.

Although a communiqué is issued after each meeting, the detailed proceedings are confidential. The tradition is to operate through consensus and to establish as much common ground as possible. From time to time, declarations have been issued expressing a common view of broad objectives and principles. Agreement to specific common policy measures is less frequent and has allowed for a member government to abstain when desired.

Difficult issues are usually left for the Retreat, when leaders spend one or two days together in a casual setting away from the conference location. Here, the Heads of Government confer without officials and with a maximum of informality. In this atmosphere, the more sensitive issues can be raised and common ground better explored.

### **Role of the Commonwealth Secretariat**

With the establishment of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965, the Commonwealth was able to gather together in one body the many strands of long-standing consultation and co-operation — in education, law, science, economic statistics and other specialized fields. Its first Secretary-General, Canadian diplomat Arnold Smith (1965-75), oriented it toward practical achievement and policy leadership, an approach followed by his successor Shridath Ramphal, a former Foreign Minister of Guyana. The current Secretary-General is Chief Emeka Anyaoku of Nigeria, who acceded to the post in 1990. The Secretary-General is responsible to Heads of Government collectively. The Secretariat is financed by governments under a system of assessed contributions.

Today, the Secretariat, located in London, is the focal point for Commonwealth consultations, exchanges of information and many activities of functional co-operation. Approximately 350 staff members from some 30 countries work under the Secretary-General. They manage a number of important voluntarily funded programs, including the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, the Commonwealth Youth Program, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, the Commonwealth Science Council and the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Technology Management.

Moreover, the reform of the Secretariat, which became a necessity as a result of the updating of the Commonwealth objectives in the Harare Declaration, has resulted in a new program structure supporting 15 programs (good offices, promotion of fundamental political values, assisting transition in South Africa, economic policy advice, human resource development, science and technology, environment, strategic planning, etc.) that will be implemented by 12 divisions (international affairs, legal and constitutional affairs, women's and youth affairs, science and technology, and so on).

### **Commonwealth of Learning**

This most recent addition to the Commonwealth family of organizations was established as a result of a Canadian initiative at the 1987 CHOGM in Vancouver. It aims to facilitate access to knowledge, training and data for Commonwealth countries through the use of new information technologies. The distance learning organization is based in Vancouver and is the first Commonwealth organization based outside Britain.

With adequate support from Commonwealth countries, it is expected that the Commonwealth of Learning can become a major instrument of social, technical and economic development in future years. The use of modern communication technologies makes it a very efficient and effective instrument for transferring appropriate knowledge and technologies where needed.