

opportunity to bring Commonwealth activities into homes and communities in every region of the globe.

The Commonwealth is involved in a number of other initiatives, such as:

**The Special Fund for Mozambique.** Although Mozambique is not a member of the Commonwealth, the Fund was created to assist this country because of its Commonwealth neighbours and the difficulties apartheid has created there.

**Commonwealth Elections Observers.** The Commonwealth Secretariat and member states have provided observers and extra funds to monitor elections in countries that are organizing free, fair, equitable and democratic elections, in many cases for the first time in many years.

**The Langkawi Scholarship Program.** Named after the Malaysian city where it was created, this program provides scholarships to government officials and other experts in the environment field to help them learn from the experience of other Commonwealth countries.

**The Small States Facility.** This initiative helps small Commonwealth countries — mostly island states in the South Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean — to obtain permanent representation at the United Nations.

## *How does the Commonwealth work?*

Since 1965, the Commonwealth has had an international Secretariat with headquarters in London, U.K. Its staff is made up of people from the Commonwealth.

The Secretariat implements the decisions of Heads of Government in the political, economic and social spheres. It also organizes meetings and conferences that bring people from Commonwealth countries together to plan and carry out agreed programs.

Every two years, leaders of the member countries meet for the Commonwealth Heads of

Government Meeting (CHOGM). The purpose of the meeting is to review the state of Commonwealth co-operation, to consult on the state of world affairs, and to decide on important issues upon which the Commonwealth will act.

The most recent CHOGM, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, October 16-22, 1991, produced the "Harare Declaration," in which the Commonwealth leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, and outlined the goals of the Commonwealth for the 1990s and beyond.

Two CHOGMs have been held in Canada: in Ottawa in 1973 and in Vancouver in 1987. The next CHOGM will be held in Cyprus in October 1993.

Private institutions are also part of the Commonwealth. These are non-governmental organizations and associations that play a fundamental role at the grass-roots level. There are some 200 of them operating in Canada and elsewhere in the Commonwealth. They link societies and thousands of individuals in a vast international network of professional, service, educational, cultural and sport organizations.

## *Why is the Commonwealth important to Canada?*

Together with la Francophonie and the Organization of American States, the Commonwealth continues to be one of Canada's most important windows on the world. It gives Canada an international constituency and influence it would not otherwise have. It creates a privileged "family" relationship with governments of 49 other countries — over one quarter of the United Nations' membership.

The Commonwealth is an important instrument for our diplomacy in support of Canadian positions, and for building North-South consensus on issues such as democratization, respect for human rights and women's equality, assisting in the process now begun to end apartheid in South Africa, protection of the environment, Third-World debt, non-proliferation of nuclear arms, and arms control.

The Commonwealth allows Canada to better understand the concerns of other countries and learn about other cultures, traditions and lifestyles.