

meetings by the Heads of the Commonwealth Governments. The meetings have been able to retain a high degree of informality rarely seen at other large international gatherings. Difficult issues are often left for a weekend retreat where the attending leaders benefit from an atmosphere of informality and small-group meetings. Such informal settings facilitate solutions to difficult problems.

The Heads of Government meetings have resulted in a number of important milestones over the years. These include the Gleneagles Agreement against sporting contacts with South Africa (1977), and the Lusaka Accord (1979) which made possible the orderly transition to independence of Zimbabwe and the first truly democratic elections in that country, which were witnessed by a Commonwealth observer group. The 1985 Nassau meeting produced the Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa.

The biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings provide the highest level of consultation and guidance for functional co-operation. Additionally, there are periodic meetings of Commonwealth Ministers responsible for finance, law, industry, health, employment, agriculture, women's affairs and education.

Beyond the official organization and its agencies is the "unofficial" Commonwealth of close to 300 non-governmental organizations. Thousands of individuals in the Commonwealth are linked by an extensive international network of professional and interest groups. Together, they form a grass-roots base that ensures a continuing vitality. They include, for example, the various Commonwealth associations for architects, journalists and engineers. The Commonwealth Games and the Commonwealth Arts Festival, held every four years, reinforce links of friendship and co-operation and underline the multiracial, multicultural character of the Commonwealth.

Canada's Role in the Commonwealth

Canada has always been one of the strongest supporters of the Commonwealth and Canadians have played a major role in Commonwealth affairs. For example, Canada's role as the first self-governing Dominion and its part following World War I in gaining equal status

for the dominions with Britain set an example for other colonies on their road to independence.

Former Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker was one of the leading figures in the condemnation of South Africa's *apartheid* policy. This led to the departure of that country from the association in 1961 and reinforced the Commonwealth principle of racial equality. A distinguished Canadian diplomat, Dr. Arnold Smith, served as the first Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Robert Stanfield, former Premier of Nova Scotia and Leader of the Federal Opposition, was recently appointed as Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth Foundation. Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark has provided ongoing moral leadership to the Commonwealth in the development of common actions to convince South Africa to abolish its *apartheid* policy. And Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, similarly to previous Canadian prime ministers, has shown through his continuous commitment that he believes the Commonwealth to be an agency of action and profound change.

As its second-largest financial contributor, Canada has provided fundamental and durable support to the Commonwealth. Canada has been responsible for many important Commonwealth initiatives: The present style and format of Heads of Government meetings, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Program, the concept of an annual Commonwealth Day (1975), and the decision to complement the Commonwealth Games with an arts festival were all introduced by Canada. It has also been in the forefront in introducing women's issues directly into the political process through ministerial meetings (1983), and in calling for an equal ratio between men and women in scholarship awards (1984).

Since the end of the Commonwealth trade preference, the Commonwealth has been less a focus of immediate Canadian commercial interests than in previous years. Although in 1985 Canadian exports worth some \$3.5 billion went to Commonwealth countries, the percentage share of Canada's total world exports to the Commonwealth has fallen from about 20 per cent in the 1960s to 4 per cent in 1985, half of this being exports to Britain. However, Canada is developing potentially strong markets in

60300274