



Photo courtesy of the Commonwealth Secretariat

There are forty nine independent members of the Commonwealth, representing one quarter of the world's nations and one quarter of its population. The member countries are:

Antigua & Barbuda  
Australia  
Bahamas  
Bangladesh  
Barbados  
Belize  
Botswana  
Britain  
Brunei  
Canada  
Cyprus  
Dominica  
Gambia  
Ghana  
Grenada  
Guyana  
India  
Jamaica  
Kenya  
Kiribati  
Lesotho  
Malawi  
Malaysia  
Maldives  
Malta  
Mauritius  
Nauru  
New Zealand  
Nigeria  
Papua New Guinea  
Seychelles  
Sierra Leone  
Singapore  
Solomon Islands  
Sri Lanka  
St Christopher-Nevis  
St Lucia  
St Vincent  
Swaziland  
Tanzania  
Tonga  
Trinidad & Tobago  
Tuvalu  
Uganda  
Vanuatu  
Western Samoa  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe



together largely by a feeling of kinship based on these common elements.

I think the strength of the bonds that hold the Commonwealth together should not be underestimated. The Commonwealth, unlike most other international organisations, has no formal constitution and its governing body is the biennial Heads of Government Meeting.

It also has a large secretariat which, since 1965, has had its headquarters in London. Decisions in the Commonwealth are reached by consensus which, as much as anything, symbolises its cooperative role.

**Is there any one example you would like to cite which shows what the Commonwealth has achieved? Or are its achievements best measured in less tangible terms — for example, in helping to foster the cooperation you mention?**

I think I have already pointed to some of the Commonwealth's achievements. Certainly, its role in helping to bring about the independence of Zimbabwe was important. The work of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation in assisting developing countries of the Commonwealth is another of its major achievements.

But the Commonwealth is continually evolving and responding to new issues as they arise. I would refer you to the recent successful Conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Education held in Nairobi and to the meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs that was held in Harare.

**How do you see the Commonwealth developing in the future? In the last 20-25 years, it has grown enormously in size, but clearly its expansion cannot continue: so how will the Commonwealth keep on developing? Where will it get new energy in order to avoid being taken too much for granted?**

It is true that the Commonwealth has expanded enormously in the past 20-25 years and in 1965 established its own permanent secretariat. Commonwealth membership can clearly not continue to expand at the same rate as there are a limited number of countries remaining that would be eligible for such membership.

Governments in international organisations are now faced with carrying out their objectives and aspirations with limited resources. Consequently, one of the major challenges to the Commonwealth will be to carry out its programmes more efficiently and effectively in a climate where expansion of its resources will be limited.

Perhaps the greatest challenge now facing the Commonwealth is the need to make progress to end the scourge of apartheid in South Africa.

**Why does Canada continue to offer such strong support of the Commonwealth?**

Membership in the Commonwealth is a vital part of Canada's international role. It reflects a part of the Canadian personality. Our role in *la francophonie* is another manifestation of our national character.

There has been a steady link between the development of the modern Commonwealth and Canada's emergence as an independent actor in the world.

After World War II, the new Commonwealth enlarged Canada's contacts with Asia and Africa and strengthened those with the Caribbean and the Pacific. The Commonwealth continues to provide vital avenues for Canadians to reach out to the world and to play a distinctive role in North America itself.

Also, with both Canada's prosperity and security depending on a smoothly functioning international system, the Commonwealth provides a unique avenue for promoting international cooperation.

**What role does Canada play in the Commonwealth?**

As the Commonwealth has evolved over the years, the pre-eminent role that Britain played has diminished, and the organisation is now very much based on the assumption of equal partnership among its members. That being said, however, Canada is certainly one of the Commonwealth's strongest supporters and most active members.

Canada is the largest contributor to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation and the second largest contributor to the Secretariat's budget. Canada's hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting this year in Vancouver is an indication of its firm support for the Commonwealth.

**What are the major challenges facing the Commonwealth today? And how can Canada help meet those challenges?**

There are several challenges facing the Commonwealth. The first is to maintain its cohesion and common purpose and aspirations. In a world where we have seen a move away from multi-lateralism and a tendency for governments to return to a more inward-looking nationalism, it is one of the great challenges of the Commonwealth to promote the commitment of nations to the concept of an international community.

Canada can help meet this challenge by continuing its active role in the Commonwealth and promoting its own sense of commitment, both to the organisation and to the efficient functioning of the international system.

In doing so, it is important to recognise the Commonwealth's limitations. It is not the United Nations and it cannot act like the United Nations. It does not represent the whole of the international community, but it has a great contribution in terms of promoting cooperation to make to that community.

In the Nassau Declaration on World Order, issued by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October 1985, the Heads of Government expressed their commitment in the following terms: 'We commit ourselves and our nations to work tirelessly in the pursuit of a world marked not by disorder and the use of competitive power, but one governed by the principles of collective international cooperation and respect for the rights of all nations and peoples as the necessary foundation for lasting peace and assured economic and social development'.

Canada subscribes fully to that commitment. ♦