



communiqué

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COMMONWEALTH DAY

March 10 will be observed as Commonwealth Day in Canada and throughout the Commonwealth for the tenth consecutive year. A varied program has been planned to mark the occasion in Ottawa, including an interfaith service at 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 9 at Holy Cross Catholic Church on Walkley Road. On Monday March 10 Parliament Hill will be the scene of a number of events organized by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the High Commissioners of 26 countries represented in Canada. It is expected that there will be special statements in the House of Commons during the day.

The Commonwealth is a unique association embracing 49 countries of varying races, religions and cultures, representing a quarter of mankind. Through historical ties its members share a common working language, the heritage of common law and parliamentary traditions and a pragmatic approach to problem-solving which has evolved steadily over time.

Consultation has always been the life blood of the Commonwealth which is today an immensely practical organization, sponsoring a large number of technical assistance and training programs. At every level, from Prime Ministers to technical experts, meetings and exchanges are constant throughout the year, all characterized by the same candour and informality typical of these gatherings. In their work they have the invaluable support of the "unofficial Commonwealth", over 200 non-governmental organizations providing the grassroots base which helps to ensure its continuing vitality.

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For years the Commonwealth has provided international leadership in the movement against apartheid in South Africa. At the last Heads of Government Meeting in Nassau, its members agreed to a common program of action designed to speed the abandonment of racial segregation and promote the establishment of representative government in that country. The Commonwealth is also playing a key role in maintaining North/South dialogue and in focussing attention on the economic and debt problems of the world's poorest nations. In emphasizing the need to integrate women as full partners in the economic development process the Commonwealth has been in the vanguard.