

*Parliament in Commonwealth Countries Module: What Does the
Commonwealth Look Like Today?*

Week 1: March 9, 2009

Learning Objectives

At the end of this week, you should be able to meet the following learning objectives:

- Understand what the Commonwealth is and how it has evolved into its current form;
- Analyze the characteristics of this association and its core values;
- Discuss its membership requirements and describe the present membership;
- Understand the manner of governance of the Commonwealth and of the main agencies through which it operates, especially the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association;
- Discuss the role of the Commonwealth in the modern world

Instructions:

Step 1: Read

Begin this week by reading **Unit 1: The Development of the Modern Commonwealth**. This Unit discusses what the Commonwealth is and how it came to assume its modern form. This is important for an understanding of how and why Commonwealth parliaments work in the way that they do and it will be interesting to examine how countries and their parliaments have developed and matured after independence.

Step 2: Respond

Work through the end of unit questions 1, 2 and 4. The others will be covered in the ediscussion on the Discussion Forum.

Step 3: Self-Test

Test your work against the sample answers listed on the “self-test” posted on the website’s Workbook page, available mid-week.

Step 4: E-Discussion

There are two discussion questions for this Unit.

The questions for discussion are:

- 1. The CHOGM Declarations and Communiqués attempt to address some of the problems of the times and to ensure that the Commonwealth remains relevant by proposing suitable action. Do you believe the most problematic issues have been addressed and have the actions proposed been meaningful?**
- 2. Do you believe that the Commonwealth can make an impact on global trade practices? Do its composition and methods of action allow it to play such a role or do they in fact prevent it from being an effective operator?**

These questions will, I hope, allow for some discussion of the relevance (or not) of the Commonwealth in this fast-moving age. There may not be clear-cut answers to questions like these but an examination of the factors behind, say, policy making in the area of trade, may suggest ways in which a group of nations like the Commonwealth could consider what is the best action to take at a particular time.

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