

Unit 1: The Development of the Modern Commonwealth

Learning Objectives

What does the Commonwealth look like today?

After studying this unit you should be able to:

- 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.

What is the Commonwealth?

The Commonwealth has its origins in the early nineteenth century when British governments began allowing select British colonies to move towards self-government. In due course these colonies rose to dominion status, which allowed them not only internal self-government but also independence in foreign affairs. The use of the term Commonwealth in this relationship is usually traced to the Earl of Rosebery, who first used the term in Australia in 1884 to refer to the British Empire as a Commonwealth of Nations.

A series of declarations and international commitments brought the Commonwealth to its current status. The first of these agreements is the Balfour Declaration of 1926, a document which first gave definition to dominions as autonomous communities within the British empire that were equal in status and in no way subordinate in any aspect of their domestic or external

affairs. They were united by a common allegiance to the (British) Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The parliament of the United Kingdom then passed the Statute of Westminster in 1931 to give the necessary legal backing to dominion arrangements. Canada, Australia, the Irish Free State, South Africa, New Zealand and Newfoundland were dominions under the Statute of Westminster. The Irish Free State left the Commonwealth in 1949 and Newfoundland joined the Canadian Confederation in that year.

Box 1
Independence from Britain or Other Powers

Year	Nation	Year	Nation	Year	Nation
1867	Canada	1963	Kenya	1974	Grenada
1901	Australia	1964	Malawi	1975	Mozambique
1907	New Zealand	1964	Malta	1975	Papua New Guinea
1910	South Africa	1964	Zambia	1976	Seychelles
1947	India	1965	Gambia	1978	Dominica
1947	Pakistan	1965	Maldives	1978	Solomon Islands
1948	Sri Lanka	1965	Singapore	1978	Tuvalu
1957	Ghana	1966	Barbados		
1957	Malaysia	1966	Botswana	1979	Kiribati
1960	Cameroon	1966	Guyana	1979	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
1960	Cyprus	1966	Lesotho	1979	St. Lucia
1960	Nigeria	1968	Mauritius	1980	Vanuatu
1961	Sierra Leone	1968	Nauru	1981	Antigua and Barbuda
1961	Tanzania	1968	Swaziland	1981	Belize
1962	Jamaica	1970	Fiji Islands	1983	Saint Kitts and Nevis
1962	Samoa	1970	Tonga	1984	Brunei Darussalam
1962	Trinidad and Tobago	1972	Bangladesh	1990	Namibia
1962	Uganda	1973	Bahamas		

Based on: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/related/Federal/Cmwth.asp?Language=E>

Meanwhile other moves had taken place in the less Europeanized of the British colonies, leading to independence for India and its partitioning into the two countries of India and Pakistan in 1947. Sri Lanka, under its former name of Ceylon, followed a few months later in 1948. There were to be immediate constitutional repercussions for the British Commonwealth as the new India, while keen to remain a member of the association, had decided that its form of government should place the power with its citizens, or become republican, and not remain

monarchical. Clearly this did not fit the model of the Balfour Declaration and at a Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in 1949, the London Declaration came into being, allowing for countries with republican constitutions to remain members of the Commonwealth while accepting the British Monarch as a symbol for free association of independent member nations and as the head of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth of Nations had been created but no constitution was proposed either then or later for the governance of the association.

Membership of the Commonwealth expanded steadily as other countries attained independence. However, not all former colonies joined the Commonwealth. For instance Burma, then Myanmar, became independent in 1947 but like some Middle Eastern countries it did not join the association. Samoa (then Western Samoa) and the Maldives became independent in 1962 and 1965 but joined the Commonwealth only in 1970 and 1982 respectively. There were other comings and goings. For instance, South Africa decided not to make the necessary reapplication for membership upon changing its constitutional status when it became a republic in 1961. Pakistan left in 1972 after Commonwealth members recognized the new state of Bangladesh, which had been carved out of the original Pakistan, and Fiji, like South Africa allowed its membership to lapse after the declaration of a republic following a coup in 1987. All of these have returned to membership, though, in late 2003, Zimbabwe decided to quit the Commonwealth.

One country alone, Mozambique, joined the Commonwealth without having had previous constitutional links to Britain or any other Commonwealth nation. This was permitted as a special case in recognition of the contribution of Mozambique to the freedom struggles in southern Africa where it was closely allied, and consequently suffered alongside, its Commonwealth neighbors in that region.

Today the Commonwealth has a membership of 53 countries. Over two-thirds of these do not recognize the British Monarch as their head of state. In terms of population, the Commonwealth now represents some 1.7 billion people of diverse cultures across the globe. As long as 40 years ago the head of the Commonwealth was able to say that the Commonwealth bore no resemblance to the empire of the past, but is an entirely new conception built on the

highest qualities of the spirit of man: friendship, loyalty and the desire for freedom and peace. Today many claim it is a source of unity.

In 1965 a Commonwealth Secretariat was established, with a chief executive to be known as the Commonwealth Secretary-General. The purpose of this body was to implement Commonwealth decisions and to foster the many forms of relationships between the member countries.

Commonwealth Values and Principles

The Meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers referred to earlier have since 1971 been replaced by meetings of Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM), which are held every two years. From time to time they reiterate the core values and principles of the association and review its performance and global relevance (See Box 2).

Box 2 **Core Values of the Commonwealth Heads of Government**

Following the CHOGM meeting in Coolom, Australia in 2002, the core values and principles were stated to be:

- Commitment to democracy, the rule of law, good governance, freedom of expression and the protection of human rights;
- Respect for diversity and human dignity; the celebration of pluralism in Commonwealth societies and the tolerance it promotes;
- Implacable opposition to all forms of discrimination, whether rooted in gender, race, color, creed or political belief;
- Determination to work to eliminate poverty, to promote people-centered and sustainable development, and thus to progressively remove the wide disparities in living standards and overcome the special challenges facing members in small states and less developed countries;
- Collective striving after international peace and security, the rule of international law, the elimination of people smuggling and the scourge of terrorism.

Source: <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=33250>

Apart from complying with these values, other criteria for gaining membership to the Commonwealth are a constitutional link with an existing Commonwealth member state and the acceptance of Commonwealth procedures and conventions that have grown over the years. Reapplication for membership is required where a member state changes its constitutional character, for instance, from a monarchy to a republic.

The first of the CHOGM Declarations was made by heads of government at their meeting in Singapore in 1971. A study of the declarations over the decades illustrates the manner in which the Commonwealth tries to respond to changing demands and challenges. It is important to note that since the association has no constitution, these statements, deriving from intergovernmental consultation, are the driving force behind Commonwealth behavior and action. The Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, which in 1971 established binding principles, began with a definition of the Commonwealth itself, which summarizes its characteristics:

'The Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association of independent sovereign states, each responsible for its own policies, consulting and cooperating in the common interests of their peoples and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace.'

Characteristics of the Commonwealth

The first characteristic of the Commonwealth is that membership is voluntary. This also underlines the acceptance that all members are equal within the association even if they were at one time a colony or trust territory overseen by a central power.

Next, all members must be independent sovereign states, each responsible for its own policies. However, Commonwealth practice allows dependencies of member countries to be eligible for some forms of Commonwealth technical assistance, to take membership in certain Commonwealth organizations, like the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), or to be represented at events such as regional discussion forums though not at policy-making meetings like CHOGM itself.

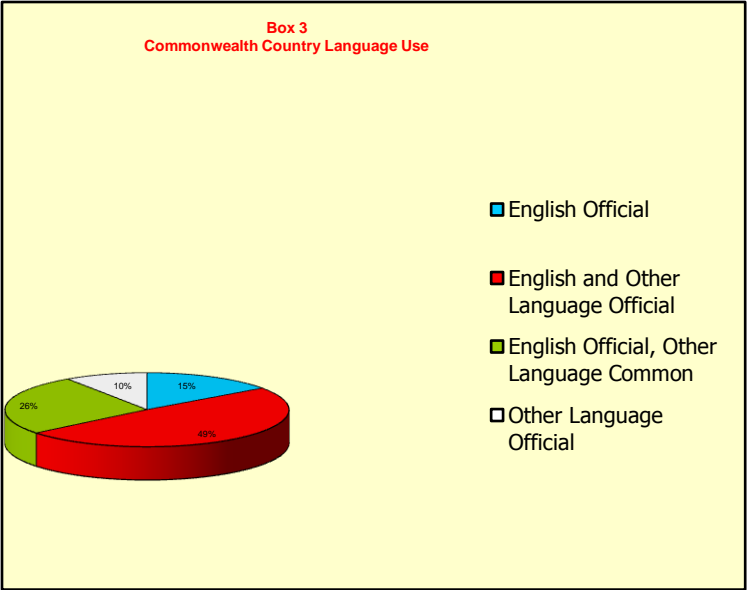
Each member country is responsible for its own policies but all Commonwealth countries must act within a culture of consultation and co-operation. Consultative events provide the strength and the backbone for policy-making at a Commonwealth level and for understanding each member's positions. It also permits action on the basis of consensus that distinguishes the

Commonwealth from many other international groupings. As for Commonwealth co-operation, this is best seen in its technical assistance programs.

Finally the definition requires that all of the association's work should be directed to the common interests of the Commonwealth's people and to the promotion of international understanding and world peace.

What holds the Commonwealth together?

It has often been said that the Commonwealth is held together by a common heritage of the English language, law and parliamentary democracy and while it is claimed that these characteristics help to generate a family feeling at its basis. These can no longer provide the full explanation since so many countries have veered away from British practice in many spheres. The English language is the only regular or official vehicle of communication in a small minority of Commonwealth countries (See Box 3). Legal systems have evolved from the original colonial legal system to one that can be more relevant to each Commonwealth nation. Many countries



have dropped the bicameral parliamentary system based on the Westminster model in favor of a unicameral one, and there are even cases of changes in the structures of legislatures from parliamentary to congressional systems. The truth must therefore lie deeper. A clue may be found in the words of the second Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Sir Shridath Ramphal (1975-1990), who said that

'the true value of the Commonwealth derives not from likeness or even like-mindedness, but from variety. It derives from the fact that this family facility is a commingling of the world's diversity. What the Commonwealth tries to do is to harmonize differences over a wider range

and to a further degree than any other grouping'. This realization is an important factor for the harmonizing of differences and is very different from attempting to cast all member countries into one mould.

The Governance of the Commonwealth and its Operations

As already noted, CHOGM is the supreme policy-making and performance-evaluating body of the Commonwealth. It appoints the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who is the head of the Commonwealth Secretariat and so holds the association's highest executive post.

One of the special procedures adopted by CHOGM has been the 'Retreat' where the heads have the opportunity to discuss difficult points of policy and try to achieve a consensus away from their officials and the media.

A full communiqué spelling out the decisions of the group is published after every CHOGM. This document outlines to the Secretariat and other Commonwealth agencies the work that is expected of them from the resources available during the next planning period.

Important Declarations accompanying the communiqués for the Commonwealth over the last fifteen years have included:

- The Harare (Zimbabwe) Declaration of 1991: This declaration reaffirmed Commonwealth principles originally set down in 1971 in the Singapore Declaration and made a robust stand against terrorism, promised to pursue measures to make the equality of women and their full participation in public life a reality, made specific decisions related to the promotion of sustainable development, and stressed the promotion of democracy.
- The Millbrook (New Zealand) Declaration of 1995: In this declaration, Commonwealth leaders decided that firm action would be taken against members who did not uphold the Harare principles, even by suspension of participation at Commonwealth meetings or with complete suspension from the Commonwealth. As a result, a rapid action force was set up under the name of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG).
- The Limassol (Cyprus) Declaration of 1993, The Edinburgh (Scotland, UK) Declaration of 1997, and the Fancourt (South Africa) Declaration of 1999: These declarations dealt with economic matters, globalization and people-centered development.

- The Coozum (Australia) Declaration of 2002: This document gave new vision and structure for the Commonwealth in the 21st Century.
- The Aso Rock (Nigeria) Declaration of 2003: A meeting of high-powered experts on development and democracy stressed the necessity for development efforts to take a pro-poor stance. CHOGM gave its support for such matters as a successful conclusion to the Doha Round of negotiations on multilateral trade. CHOGM also asked Commonwealth countries to continue to take action in support of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals.
- The Malta Declaration of 2005, entitled 'Networking the Commonwealth for Development', recognized information and communications technologies as instruments of development rather than as ends in themselves and affirmed the resolve of Heads of Government to bridge and close the digital divide.

The Commonwealth Secretariat

The responsibility for putting the instructions of CHOGM into action falls on the Commonwealth Secretariat. This is a small body, in international terms, comprising just over 250 staff. It is nonetheless the largest such entity in the Commonwealth. Apart from servicing CHOGM, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) and the regular ministerial meetings, it functions to aid all aspects of human endeavor in Commonwealth countries. The Secretariat runs consultative events and training and development activities that are conducted in fields ranging from political affairs and diplomacy to economic affairs and education, from health, gender equality, and youth matters to management development. The Secretariat has been able to recruit specialized staff of high caliber, often by secondment of senior government officials familiar with international operations at high levels.

One of the most visible activities of the Secretariat has been the organization of Commonwealth Election Observer Groups (COGs). These missions to monitor the transparency of elections are undertaken with the agreement of the country where elections are being held and, most often, it is on a request from that country that these are initiated (see example in Box 4). An assessment mission before the election establishes that the observers can go wherever they

want and have access to all stages of the process, which is vital to making judgements on the election's credibility. The observers look to see whether there is free expression by the electors and determine if the election results reflect the wishes of the people, and the election is considered in the context of the democratic process as a whole. COGs are constituted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General and Commonwealth governments, but are present only to observe, not to supervise, or provide favor to any party.

Box 4

COG's Terms of Reference for Malawi's Elections

"The Group is established by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the request of the Malawi Electoral Commission. It is to observe relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the Parliamentary and Presidential Elections which are scheduled to take place on 18 May 2004, in accordance with the laws of Malawi. It is to consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole and to determine in its own judgement whether the conditions exist for a free expression of will by the electors and if the results of the elections reflect the wishes of the people.

The Group is to act impartially and independently. It has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to form a judgement accordingly. It would also be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections.

The Group is to submit its report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of Malawi, the Chairman of the Malawi Electoral Commission, the leadership of the political parties taking part in the elections and thereafter to all Commonwealth Governments."

The

Secretariat also runs a development assistance scheme known as the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC). This scheme arranges for sharing Commonwealth skills for the common good through training schemes, expert placements and many other innovative approaches developed over its 30 years of operation. CFTC works with a small budget (£23.5 m in 2004/05 and £24.1 m in 2005/06) to achieve its goals. Particular attention is given by the Secretariat to the problems of the Small States of the Commonwealth (see Box 5).

Other Commonwealth Organizations and Activities

The Commonwealth Secretariat is the Commonwealth's government-to-government arm that operates through the executive branch of participating Commonwealth states. Much of the work of the Commonwealth relates to civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professional bodies, the private sector, and towards the promotion of parliamentary democracy and cooperation and consultation between and among Commonwealth parliaments.

Box 5

Who Are the Small States of the Commonwealth?

According to the Commonwealth Secretariat Small States group, thirty-two of the Commonwealth's members are defined as small states. The majority have populations of less than 1.5 million and are characterised by their vulnerability in the areas of defence and security, environmental disasters, limited human resources, and lack of economic resources. The surface area is given in square km.

Nation	Surface Area	Population (thousands)	Nation	Surface Area	Population (thousands)
<i>Antigua & Barbuda</i>	440	68	<i>Malta</i>	320	395
<i>Bahamas</i>	13,880	310	<i>Mauritius</i>	2,040	1,200
<i>Barbados</i>	430	268	<i>Namibia</i>	824,290	1,792
<i>Belize</i>	22,960	578	<i>Nauru</i>	20	10
<i>Botswana</i>	581,730	1,695	<i>Papua New Guinea</i>	462,840	5,254
<i>Brunei Darussalam</i>	5,770	344	<i>Samoa</i>	2,840	174
<i>Cyprus</i>	9,250	761	<i>Seychelles</i>	450	82
<i>Dominica</i>	750	72	<i>Solomon Islands</i>	28,900	431
<i>Fiji Islands</i>	18,270	817	<i>St Kitts & Nevis</i>	360	45
<i>Gambia</i>	11,300	1,341	<i>St Lucia</i>	620	158
<i>Grenada</i>	340	103	<i>St Vincent & the Grenadines</i>	390	109
<i>Guyana</i>	214,970	766	<i>Swaziland</i>	17,360	1,068
<i>Jamaica</i>	10,990	2,595	<i>Tonga</i>	750	101
<i>Kiribati</i>	730	93	<i>Trinidad & Tobago</i>	5,130	1,310
<i>Lesotho</i>	30,350	2,062	<i>Tuvalu</i>	30	10
<i>Maldives</i>	300	280	<i>Vanuatu</i>	12,190	201

Source: <http://www.commonwealthsmallstates.org/Default.aspx?page=3>

Consultation between and among Commonwealth parliaments is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). This organization has its origins in the Empire Parliamentary Association set up in 1911, and changed its name when the new concept of the Commonwealth of Nations was adopted. Interestingly, its constitution allows for the participation of sub-national legislatures, that is, legislatures of states, provinces and territories, or of non-sovereign (dependent) territories as Branches of the Association. The balance of representation is therefore quite different from the regular pattern of Commonwealth

participation. This is reflected in the representation of members on the executive committee of the Association and the manner in which the Association divides itself into regions. The CPA organizes an annual conference of commonwealth parliamentarians, which is a popular event among members. This event also covers a conference of small countries, or more accurately jurisdictions, with populations of 400,000 or less.

In the last 15 or so years, the CPA has greatly increased the scope and depth of the professional development activities it offers. While these are run mainly for Members of Parliament (MPs), including post-election seminars largely directed towards newly elected MPs, some events are now organized specifically for parliamentary staff. Reports of activities such as study groups on special topics, are published for general dissemination along with the Association's own quarterly journal, *The Parliamentarian*. Members and the public also have access to an information and reference service of the CPA through which they may, for instance, obtain references to some matter of procedure or practice.

Like most Commonwealth bodies, the CPA operates on a regional basis but to a rather more pronounced degree (See Box 6). Thus its nine regions are encouraged to run their own conferences and seminars assisted by the headquarters Secretariat when necessary whether by way of financial or technical assistance. This method of operation has great advantages, especially that the CPA is able to carry out its activities with a small number of staff, at present just 14.

Box 6
The Nine Regions of the CPA

▪ Africa	▪ Canada
▪ British Islands, and Mediterranean	▪ Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic
▪ Australia	▪ Asia
	▪ India
▪ Pacific	▪ South East Asia

Source: <http://www.cpaha.org/activities/regionalconferences/>

In 1989 the CPA decided to make special opportunities available for the professional development of its women MPs. Parallel to this, much attention has been paid to the whole issue of gender in the political arena and the problems faced by women and parliamentarians. Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) now have their own voice within the CPA and meet regularly as a group at the Annual Conference.

The CPA also organizes a limited number of events for those who are not parliamentarians or parliamentary staff. Primarily these are directed towards young people as a means of involving them in the Commonwealth and in parliamentary democracy. These include youth parliaments and youth-oriented observations of Commonwealth Day (which is the second Monday in March each year). At the local government level, the recently established but very active Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) plays a parallel role to that of the CPA.

The Commonwealth has always placed great stress on the development of associations of professionals and the contribution of its citizens to their societies. Associations and societies exist for all forms of human endeavor and interest from Architecture to Zoology. A separate intergovernmental body, the Commonwealth Foundation, attends to the interests of these non-governmental organizations. Its work in engaging civil society in the life of the Commonwealth is now an important part of Commonwealth activity.

Box 7

What does the Commonwealth Foundation fund?

The Commonwealth Foundation is an intergovernmental organization for Commonwealth governments that aims to strengthen civil society, democracy and good governance, respect for human rights and gender equality, poverty eradication and sustainable, people-centered development, and to promote arts and culture through the administration of funds. The Commonwealth Foundation's funds are administered for increasing exchanges between Commonwealth organizations in order to maintain and improve standards of knowledge, attainment and conduct. The Foundation also works with issues related to culture, information and the media, rural development, social welfare, the handicapped, and the role of women.

The Foundation will:

- Support attendance at conferences, seminars, symposia, workshops, short courses and other such activities;
- Assist professional and other non-governmental bodies at the national, regional and Commonwealth level;
- Facilitate advisory, exchange and study visits;
- Stimulate the flow of information between professional and other non-governmental bodies;
- Stimulate and support any other activities, which fall within the Foundation's areas of interest by any other means that may be thought fit by the Board.

Source: <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/>

Another very visible Commonwealth activity organized for society as a whole is the [Commonwealth Games](#). This multinational, multi-sport event is held every four years involving the elite athletes of the Commonwealth of Nations. Attendance at the Commonwealth Games is typically around 5,000 athletes.

The evolving Commonwealth has attempted to pay attention to areas that were not sufficiently catered for in earlier years. Thus there is now a body devoted to business interests in the Commonwealth known as the [Commonwealth Business Council](#) (CBC). Similarly the realization that the Commonwealth could use its resources to reach much greater numbers through distance learning led to the creation of the [Commonwealth of Learning](#) (COL) which may be described as a non-degree-granting Commonwealth University for improving development and access to continuing education for commonwealth countries. The [Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative](#) (CHRI) has a self-explanatory title but it must be reiterated that, like all such Commonwealth bodies, it does not possess any executive powers extending to Commonwealth governments in that area. [The Institute of Commonwealth Studies](#) is a research institute founded in 1949 at the University of London. Within it is based the [Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit](#), a think tank for the contemporary Commonwealth. [The Royal Commonwealth Society](#), with branches in many countries, provides information and education about the Commonwealth to all interested persons.

While most Commonwealth agencies and professional associations have tended to have their bases in the United Kingdom for historical reasons, the pattern is now showing signs of changing. Thus the COL has been based in Vancouver, Canada, from its inception and the CHRI in New Delhi, India, while the [Commonwealth Journalists' Association](#) (CJA) moved to St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago in 2004.

The Future Role of the Commonwealth

What is the Commonwealth's real role today? Is it a proxy for past colonial practices? Does it carry any weight in the modern world? What role can it play in the future? These are legitimate questions and, as the CHOGM deliberations show, the Commonwealth strives from time to time to ask itself similar fundamental questions so that it may keep rebuilding itself to meet

challenges and demands. However, it is not perfect. Some developing countries of the Commonwealth complain of feeling left out of the organization. Another criticism often levied is that it is too light-weight in the international arena and can only attend to small niche areas in its work.

The Commonwealth is at its best when it uses its capacity as a network. For instance, the small countries of the Commonwealth would lose much of their voice in international forums were it not for the support of the Commonwealth. However, the capacity of the Commonwealth for harmonizing differences is not being well maintained. Part of the reason for this is the problem of under funding. The Commonwealth is asked at every CHOGM to take on some fresh responsibility but without additional funds so that its resources get spread more and more thin.

Conclusion

In this unit we discussed the history of Commonwealth nations and the creation of the modern Commonwealth. We also learned what the membership requirements are for a nation interested in joining the institution, and the governance structure and role that the commonwealth plays in national and international governance. In the next units we begin to examine the operation of parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth.

Unit 1 Questions

Please answer each of the following questions. If you are taking this course in a group you may then meet to discuss your answers.

1. Do you think that the lack of a constitution has affected the working of the Commonwealth? Should the Commonwealth consider creating one for the future?
2. What should the Commonwealth be doing to remain relevant in today's societies?
3. Do you believe that CHOGM Communiqués and Declarations have addressed the problems of their times?
4. What further activities should the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association undertake for parliamentary staff?
5. Do you believe that the Commonwealth can make an impact on global trade practices?

Relevant Abbreviations

CBC	Commonwealth Business Council
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation
CHRI	Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
CoL	Commonwealth of Learning
ComSec	Commonwealth Secretariat
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
RCS	Royal Commonwealth Society

Relevant Internet Resources

Commonwealth Business Council
<http://www.cbglobalink.org/cbcglobal/index.htm>

Commonwealth Foundation
<http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com>

Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/20636/commonwealth_fund_for_technical_co_operation/

Commonwealth Games
<http://www.commonwealthgames.com/>

Commonwealth Heads of Government
<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=33250>

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
<http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/>

Commonwealth Journalists' Association
<http://www.cjaweb.com/>

Commonwealth of Learning
<http://www.col.org/colweb/site>

Commonwealth Local Government Forum
<http://www.clgf.org.uk/>

Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group
<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/38125/cmag/>

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
<http://www.cpahq.org/>

Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit
<http://www.cpsu.org.uk/>

Commonwealth Secretariat
<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/>

Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London www.sas.ac.uk/commonwealthstudies

The Royal Commonwealth Society
<http://www.rcsint.org/>

Young People's Commonwealth
www.youngcommonwealth.org

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