

## **The Commonwealth**

From Australia to Antigua, Canada to Cameroon, the Commonwealth is a remarkable international organisation, spanning every geographical region, religion and culture. It exists to foster international co-operation and trade links between people all over the world.

### **About the Commonwealth**

After 75 years of its existence, the Commonwealth is a remarkable organisation which remains a major force for change in the world today.

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 independent countries, almost all of which were formerly under British rule.

The origins of the Commonwealth come from Britain's former Empire. Many of the members of the Commonwealth were territories which had historically come under British rule at various times by settlement, conquest or cession. The administration of such colonies evolved in different ways, to reflect the different circumstances of each territory.

After achieving independence, India was the first of a number of countries which decided that, although they wished to become republics, they still wanted to remain within the Commonwealth.

To reconcile these aims, the 1949 London Declaration recognised King George VI as Head of the Commonwealth. Following his death, the Commonwealth leaders recognised Queen Elizabeth II in that capacity.

The role of Head of the Commonwealth is not hereditary, however following an unanimous decision by Commonwealth leaders in 2018, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, His Majesty The King became Head of the Commonwealth. This is an important symbolic and unifying role. As Head, His Majesty personally reinforces the links by which the Commonwealth joins people together from around the world.

<https://www.royal.uk/>