

**THE COMMONWEALTH
OF
NATIONS
AS OF
OCTOBER 2011**



(Flag of the Commonwealth of Nations)

Compiled from various sources

(2011)

CMG Archives

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Introduction

The Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association of 54 independent sovereign states (one of whose membership is currently suspended - Fiji Islands).

Most are former British colonies, or dependencies of these colonies.

No one government in the Commonwealth exercises power over the others, as in a political union.

Rather, the relationship is one of an international organisation through which countries with diverse social, political, and economic backgrounds are regarded as equal in status, and co-operate within a framework of common values and goals, as outlined in the Singapore Declaration.^[1]

These values and goals include the promotion of democracy, human rights, good governance, the rule of law, individual liberty, egalitarianism, free trade, multilateralism, and world peace, and are carried out through multilateral projects and meetings, as well as the quadrennial Commonwealth Games.^[2]

The symbol of this free association is Queen Elizabeth II, known for this purpose as Head of the Commonwealth. This position, however, does not imbue her with any political or executive power over any Commonwealth member states; the position is purely symbolic, and it is the Commonwealth Secretary-General who is the chief executive of the organisation.^[3]

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First Formation - 1931

The Commonwealth was first officially formed in 1931 when the Statute of Westminster gave legal recognition to the independence of dominions. Known as the "*British Commonwealth*", the first members were:

- 1) The United Kingdom
- 2) Canada
- 3) Australia
- 4) New Zealand
- 5) South Africa
- 6) The Irish Free State
- 7) The Dominion of Newfoundland

Note: Australia and New Zealand did not adopt the statute until 1942 and 1947 respectively.^[4] In 1949, the London Declaration was signed and marked the birth of the modern Commonwealth and the renaming to its present name - *The Commonwealth of Nations*.^[5] The most recent member is Rwanda, which joined on 29 Nov 2009.^[6]

After World War II ended, the British Empire was gradually dismantled to just 14 British overseas territories, still held by the United Kingdom today.

In April 1949, following the London Declaration, the word "British" was dropped from the title of the Commonwealth to reflect its changing nature.

Burma (also known as Myanmar, 1948), and Aden (1967) are the only states that were British colonies at the time of the war not to have joined the Commonwealth upon post-war independence.

Among the former British protectorates and mandates, those that never became members of the Commonwealth are Egypt (independent in 1922), Iraq (1932), Transjordan (1946), British Palestine (part of which became the state of Israel in 1948), Sudan (1956), British Somaliland (which became part of Somalia in 1960), Kuwait (1961), Bahrain (1971), Oman (1971), Qatar (1971), and the United Arab Emirates (1971).

What is the "*British Commonwealth*"?

The "*British Commonwealth*" refers to the Imperial British Empire. The "British Commonwealth" ended in 1949 and a new union of what were defined as "freely and equally associated states" was created.

We include eight French-speaking countries - Cameroon, Canada, Dominica, Mauritius, Rwanda, St Lucia, Seychelles and Vanuatu - and one Lusophone - Portuguese-speaking - which is Mozambique.

All countries are independent today and with equal votes. It is from history that our association emerged, but it is our shared values and goals that unite Commonwealth countries today.

What is meant by the 'modern Commonwealth'?

On 26 April 1949, eight Commonwealth leaders from Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom met and adopted what has become known as the "London Declaration", which changed membership in the Commonwealth from one based on common allegiance to the British Crown to one in which members agreed to recognise King George VI as the Head of the Commonwealth. (So, the Headship is vested in the person and not the position.) This marked the end of the colonial British Commonwealth and the birth of what is now referred to as the modern Commonwealth, an association of independent countries united as "free and equal members".

Is there a voting system in the Commonwealth?

No. All decisions are reached by consensus from all Heads of Government.

Notes

- [1] "FAQs". Commonwealth Secretariat. <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/FAQs/20706/faqs/>
- [2] "Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles 1971", Commonwealth Secretariat. http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/20723/32987/singapore_declaration_of_commonwealth_principles/
- [3] "Head of the Commonwealth", Commonwealth Secretariat. http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/150757/head_of_the_commonwealth/
- [4] "The Commonwealth-History-Dominion Status", Commonwealth of Nations. <http://www.commonwealth-of-nations.org/article.php?id=4&subsection=3&page=3>
- [5] "The Commonwealth-History-Modern Commonwealth", Commonwealth Secretariat. http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/34493/38150/modern_commonwealth/
- [6] "Rwanda Joins British Commonwealth", The New York Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/29/world/africa/29rwanda.html>

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Commonwealth Secretary-General

The Commonwealth Secretary-General is the head of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the central body which has served the Commonwealth of Nations since its establishment in 1965, and responsible for representing the Commonwealth publicly.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General should not be confused with the Head of the Commonwealth, who is currently Queen Elizabeth II.

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Serving Secretary-General

Name	Country	From	To
1st Arnold Smith	Canada	01 Jul 1965	30 Jun 1975
2nd Sir Shridath	Ramphal Guyana	01 Jul 1975	30 Jun 1990
3rd Chief Emeka	Anyaoku Nigeria	01 Jul 1990	31 Mar 2000
4th Sir Don McKinnon	New Zealand	01 Apr 2000	31 Mar 2008
5th Kamalesh Sharma	India	01 Apr 2008	Current Incumbent

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List of the Commonwealth of Nations (Country - Date Joined - Constitutional Status)



1)	Antigua and Barbuda	1981	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
2)	Australia	1931	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
	Australian Antarctic Territory	1936	Australian External Territory
	Norfolk Island	1931	Australian External Territory
3)	Bahamas	1973	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
4)	Bangladesh	1972	Sovereign Republic
5)	Barbados	1966	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
6)	Belize	1982	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
7)	Botswana	1966	Sovereign Republic
8)	Brunei Darussalam	1984	Sovereign Monarchy
9)	Cameroon	1995	Emergent Democratic Republic
10)	Canada	1931	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
11)	Cyprus	1961	Sovereign Republic
12)	Dominica	1978	Sovereign Republic
13)	Fiji Islands	1970, 1997	Sovereign Republic (Suspended from the commonwealth in 2006 after a military overthrow of the government)
14)	The Gambia	1965	Sovereign Republic
15)	Ghana	1957	Sovereign Republic
16)	Grenada	1974	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
17)	Guyana	1966	Sovereign Republic
18)	India	1947	Sovereign Republic
19)	Jamaica	1962	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
20)	Kenya	1963	Sovereign Republic
21)	Kiribati	1979	Sovereign Republic
22)	Lesotho	1966	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
23)	Malawi	1964	Sovereign Republic
24)	Malaysia	1957	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
25)	Maldives	1982	Sovereign Republic

26) Malta	1964	Sovereign Republic
27) Mauritius	1968	Sovereign Republic
28) Mozambique	1995	Emergent Democratic Republic
29) Namibia	1990	Sovereign Republic
30) Nauru	1968	Sovereign Republic
31) New Zealand	1931	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
Cook Islands	1931	New Zealand Associated Territory
Niue	1931	New Zealand Associated Territory
Ross Dependency	1931	New Zealand Associated Territory
Tokelau	1931	New Zealand Associated Territory
32) Nigeria	1960	Sovereign Republic
33) Pakistan	1947	Sovereign Republic
34) Papua New Guinea	1975	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
35) Rwanda	2009	Sovereign Republic
36) St Kitts and Nevis (St Christopher-Nevis)	1983	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
37) St Lucia	1979	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
38) St Vincent and The Grenadines	1979	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
39) Samoa (Western Samoa)	1970	Sovereign Republic
40) Seychelles	1976	Sovereign Republic
41) Sierra Leone	1961	Sovereign Republic
42) Singapore	1965	Sovereign Republic
43) Solomon Islands	1978	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
44) South Africa	1910	Sovereign Republic
45) Sri Lanka	1948	Sovereign Republic
46) Swaziland	1968	Sovereign Republic
47) Tanzania	1961	Sovereign Republic
48) Tonga	1970	Sovereign Monarchy
49) Trinidad and Tobago	1962	Sovereign Republic
50) Tuvalu	1978	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
51) Uganda	1962	Sovereign Republic
52) United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland)	1931	Sovereign Constitutional Monarchy
Anguilla	1931	British Dependent Territory
Bermuda	1931	British Dependent Territory
British Antarctic Territory	1931	British Dependent Territory
British Indian Ocean Territory	1965	British Dependent Territory
British Virgin Islands	1931	British Dependent Territory

Cayman Islands	1931	British Dependent Territory
Channel Islands (Guernsey, Jersey)	1931	UK Crown Dependencies
Falkland Islands	1931	British Dependent Territory
Falkland Islands Dependencies	1931	British Dependent Territories
Gibraltar	1931	British Dependent Territory
Isle of Man	1931	UK Crown Dependency
Montserrat	1931	British Dependent Territory
Pitcairn Islands	1931	British Dependent Territory
St Helena	1931	British Dependent Territory
Turks and Caicos Islands	1931	British Dependent Territory
53) Vanuatu	1980	Sovereign Republic
54) Zambia	1964	Sovereign Republic

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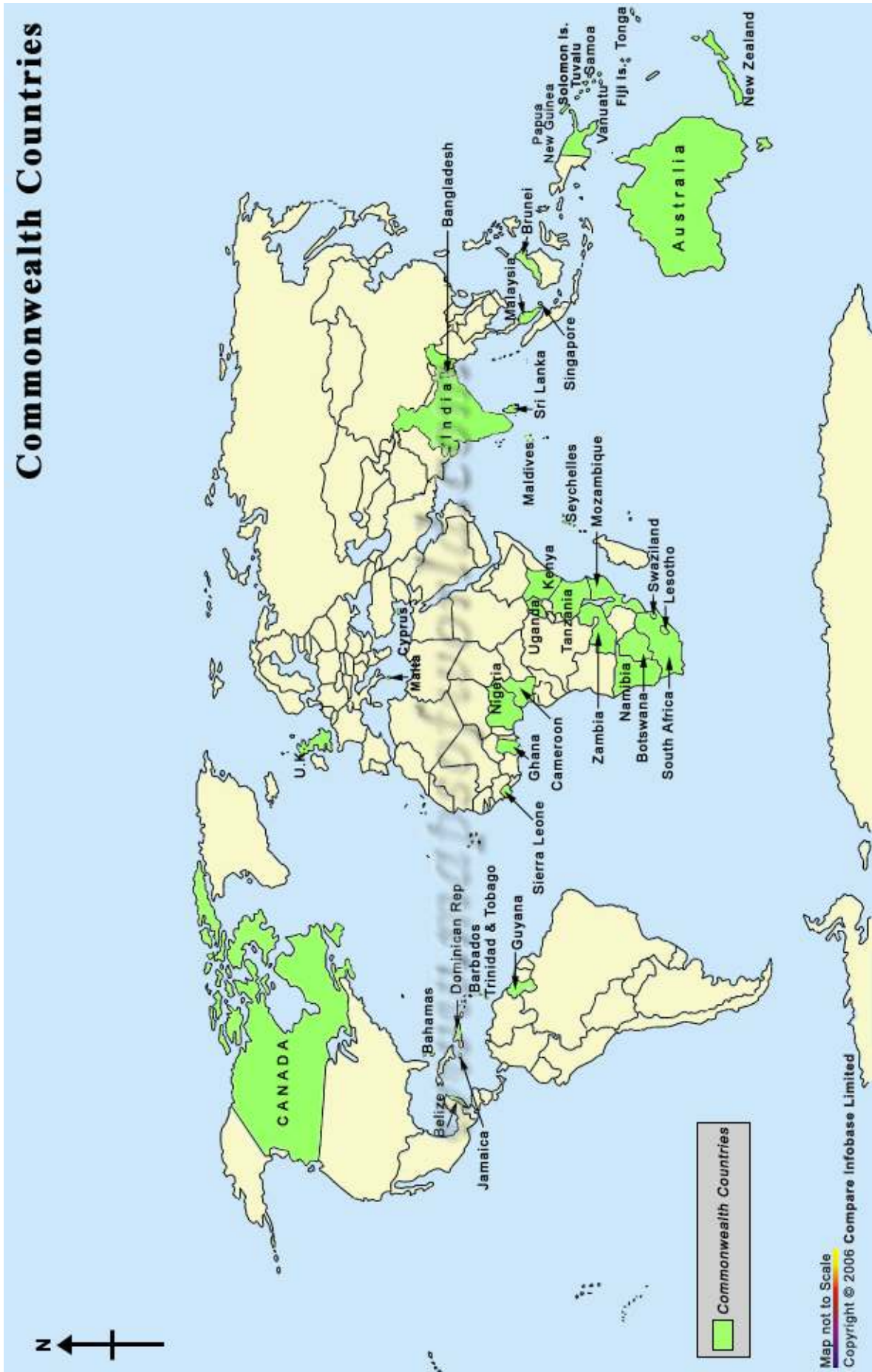
Suspended/Withdrawn Nations

Zimbabwe	1980	Sovereign Republic (Zimbabwe was suspended in 2002, and decided to withdraw from the Commonwealth in December 2003)
Fiji Islands	1970, 1997	Sovereign Republic (Suspended from the commonwealth in 2006 after a military overthrow of the government)

<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/System/YearbookHomePage.asp?NodeID=152099&load=countrylist>

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Commonwealth Countries



Map not to Scale

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