

## CHAPITRE 59

## THE COMMONWEALTH

The word commonwealth qualified a body politic founded on the law for the "weal", the happiness. In English history, it refers to the republic established by Oliver Cromwell. In the US, it refers to the religious created by Puritans.

## MILESTONES

- 1884: Lord Rosebury used for the first time the expression "a commonwealth of Nations" to call the British Empire.
- 1917: Jan Smuts suggested to renamed the British Empire as the "British commonwealth of Nations"
- 1926: The Balfour report: the UK and Dominions are equal in status and united by a common allegiance to the Crown.
- August 1930: First meeting of commonwealth games in Hamilton, Canada.
- 1931: Statute of Westminster which declared some dominions among them Australia, Canada, Ireland, as autonomous communities within the British Empire
- 1934: Commonwealth games in London.
- 1958: Commonwealth games in Cardiff
- 1970: Commonwealth games in Edinburgh
- 1971: Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles.
- 1981: Commonwealth games in Edinburgh
- 1995: The Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme/ Harare Declaration.

**Today, the word Commonwealth refers to the informal voluntary association of 53 independent countries that for the most part are former colonies of the UK, and formed the British Empire of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.**

I. The founder acts of the Commonwealth community:

The first act, which permits to put bases of a real union between the United Kingdom and the Dominions, results of the imperial conference of 1926. Thus, the Balfour report declare UK and Dominions as equal in status without any particular links between each other, though united by common allegiance to the Crown.

However, through the 20<sup>th</sup> century some Dominions becoming Republic and the Commonwealth lost the requirement of the allegiance to the British monarch.

What's more, the Millbrook Declaration of Commonwealth Action Programme of 1995 reinforce the 1995 Harare Declaration that promoted Democracy, Human rights, good governance, gender equality...

II. Today's Commonwealth:

Today's, this association is present in every continent and ocean in developing and developed nations. It represents 30% of the world's population with its 1.8 billion people spread over ¼ of the earth's surface.

31 countries have a president, 6 a king or a sultan, and 16 nations are led by the Queen Elizabeth II who is represented by a high commissioner.

The instances of the Commonwealth are scattered among association's members like for example the Commonwealth information center in Quadrant House in London, or the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) founded in 1987 in Vancouver (Canada).

The heads of governments have regularly meetings, which replaced imperial conferences. They discuss, like in 1971 with the Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, to the common issues and the principal objectives of the association.

Furthermore, few events give rhythm to the Commonwealth's calendar as the Commonwealth day, called Empire Day until 1958, which is celebrated on the second Monday in March and marks the birthday of Queen Victoria. There are also the Commonwealth games (British Empire Games) every four years, where each member can face on archery, bowls, boxing etc. The first meeting was in Hamilton, Canada, in August 1930.

**The Commonwealth nations:** Great Britain, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji Island, the Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Island, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Western Samoa, Zambia.

