

## Britain and Commonwealth: The History of Legal Communication

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As the interest in territory and its economic potential has always been one of the major drivers of politics it led to the formation of major empires in history. In 2025 this bond between territorial aspirations and international relations is more evident than ever. So, it seems worthwhile to consider the unique experience of the association of the Commonwealth countries preserving peaceful communication and mutually beneficial relations in the post-colonial times.

The Commonwealth has its origins in the British Empire. Once former colonies began to gain some freedom from Britain, they became known as “dominions,” and starting from 1887, dominion leaders have been attending conferences dedicated to various legal and political aspects concerning their interaction with the metropolis. And nowadays it unites states in both, eastern and western parts of the world facing and overcoming differences in the mentality of their peoples.

In 1926, at the Imperial Conference, the leaders of several countries — Australia, Canada, India, the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, New Zealand and South Africa — reached agreement with Britain that they were “equal in status, in no way subordinate to each other in any aspect of their internal or external affairs, although united by a common devotion to the Crown,” and that they were to be “freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.” This agreement was formalized in the *Statute of Westminster* in 1931. [1]

The leaders of the participating countries began to gather at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference in 1944; one of the first significant declarations was the *London Declaration* of 1949, which modernized the community and made the member states “free and equal” [2], and also resolved the issue of further cooperation with India within the Commonwealth of Nations.

Since 1971, the conferences of Prime Ministers have become known as the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) which are held every two years. The first CHOGM conference, held in Singapore, led to the adoption of the *Singapore Declaration*, a document outlining the main political goals of the Commonwealth, which, according to the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London, include “equal rights for all, regardless of race, color, religion or political beliefs”, and “commitment to democratic self-determination and non-discrimination.” Those include combating racism, reaching and maintaining world peace and “ending blatant inequality”, as well as “commitment to practical international cooperation to achieve these goals.” [3]

The subsequent agreement, the *Harare Declaration* of 1991, confirmed these commitments and established the criteria of the Commonwealth for the participating countries. At the moment, the Commonwealth Declaration Booklet has 27 declarations.

The granting of independence to India was the first in a long line of grants, and as the former dependent states gained sovereignty, membership in the Commonwealth increased dramatically in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the dependent states that gained independence chose to join the Commonwealth; like India, many chose not to recognize the Crown as the head of state.

Apart from the role of legal aspects being intertwined with cultural and political interaction between the Commonwealth members, it is interesting to consider the motifs lying behind the choice of other countries that had never been a British colony or a dependent state to enter the association. For instance, in 1995, Mozambique became the first country to receive the right to join, although it had not been part of the British Empire, neither had it been under the control of any Commonwealth member. Rwanda, which was also never part of the British Empire, joined in in 2009.

Currently, the Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 countries, almost all of which were previously under the British rule (with the exception of Rwanda and Mozambique). Its work around the world in support of the goals set out in its *Charter*, adopted in 2012, is supported by a group of more than 80 organizations. Leaders continue to gather at the CHOGM conference, held every two years, and the Commonwealth Games, an international sports competition between participating countries, are held every four years. This sports event presents last but not least aspect that is covered by the proposed paper, as the power of cultural bonds in supporting political unions should not be underestimated.

### Источники и литература

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