



The Commonwealth

Commonwealth Secretary-General

Job Description

The Commonwealth Secretary-General is a person of high standing who acts in service of Commonwealth countries collectively. The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent and equal sovereign states. Its members are bound together by respect for all states and peoples; by shared values and principles; and by concern for the vulnerable. By virtue of their appointment by Heads of Government, the Secretary-General is empowered to represent the Commonwealth publicly.

The Secretary-General is the Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth and represents the Commonwealth countries collectively in discharging the mandates entrusted by Heads and is independent from any government or authority external to the organisation.

The Secretary-General manages the Secretariat in accordance with the strategic guidance and direction set by Heads or their duly appointed representatives. This includes attending the meetings of Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers; other Ministerial meetings; the Commonwealth Board of Governors at which all member governments are represented, usually at the level of High Commissioner; the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors; and other high-level meetings.

The responsibilities and contributions of the Secretary-General span international affairs and use of Good Offices (conflict prevention and resolution), economic affairs, Small States and sustainable development. The Secretary General coordinates the Commonwealth Heads of Government and Ministerial Meetings and collaborates with other Commonwealth Organisations including the two other intergovernmental institutions - the Commonwealth of Learning and the Commonwealth Foundation. In order to execute the role and responsibilities of the position, the Secretary-General is expected to undertake substantial overseas travel and to make good use of technology to engage with Commonwealth members.

The Chair-in-Office, that is to say the host of the most recent CHOGM meeting, works and consults closely with the Secretary-General in support of their Good Offices role, in efforts to promote and advocate the collective interests of the Commonwealth in other regional and international fora, and in encouraging the delivery of outcomes in fulfilment of CHOGM mandates and commitments.

As the Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth, the Secretary-General is responsible for the staff of the Secretariat including international civil servants at the Commonwealth Secretariat headquarters in London and at the Commonwealth Small States Offices in New York and Geneva. The Secretary-General is supported by at least one, and not more than three, Deputy Secretaries-General. The Secretariat delivers its core programmes of work in four main areas: (i) policy development; (ii) advisory services; (iii) technical assistance; and (iv) advocacy and consensus building. The Board of Governors oversees the work of the Secretariat, and the Secretary-General is accountable to the Board of Governors and the Executive Committee for the management and organisation of the Secretariat, including the use of member Governments' contributions and pledges and the stewardship of its assets.