The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent sovereign states spread over every continent and ocean, sharing ideas and experiences, skills and know-how, and a common language.

Its 2 billion people, who account for nearly 30 per cent of the world’s population, are found in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe and the South Pacific. They are of many religions, races, languages and cultures.

The Commonwealth works to promote peace and international co-operation, democracy and good government, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and the alleviation of poverty through sustainable economic and social development.

These values – the fundamental values of the association – are expressed in two landmark declarations: the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, which was agreed by the Heads of Government of member countries when they met in Singapore in 1971, and the Harare Commonwealth Declaration, agreed at the 1991 Heads of Government Meeting in Zimbabwe.

The Harare Declaration reaffirmed the Commonwealth principles declared 20 years previously in Singapore, and pledged the association to concentrate particular effort in a number of key areas, including:

- promotion of its fundamental political values
- equality for women and men
- the provision of universal access to education
- the promotion of sustainable development
- protection of the environment
- action to combat drug trafficking and abuse, and communicable diseases
- help for small states in tackling their particular economic and security problems
- support for the United Nations and other international institutions in the search for peace, and
- the promotion of international consensus on global issues.

**MEMBER COUNTRY**  **CAPITAL**

1. **ANTigua AND BARBUDA**  St John’s
2. **AUSTRALIA**  Canberra
3. **BENIN**  Porto-Novo
4. **BANGLADESH**  Dhaka
5. **BURUNDI**  Bujumbura
6. **CAMEROON**  Yaoundé
7. **CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**  Bangui
8. **CHAD**  N’Djamena
9. **CHINA**  Beijing
10. **COMOROS**  Moroni
11. **COLOMBIA**  Bogotá
12. **CONGO, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF**  Kinshasa
13. **CONGO, THE REPUBLIC OF**  Brazzaville
14. **COOK ISLANDS**  Aitutaki
15. **THE CO Source text is not fully visible. The diagram is of the Commonwealth map, showing member countries and their capitals.