Commonwealth citizens. A list of these can be obtained from the Commonwealth Institute in London.

Commonwealth Day is celebrated on the second Monday in March each year. The theme for 1998 is sport.

Headquarters: Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5HX, UK.
Website: http://www.commonwealth.org.uk
Secretary-General: Emeka Anyaoku (Nigeria).

Selected publications. Commonwealth Yearbook; The Commonwealth Today; Commonwealth Currents (quarterly); Directory of Commonwealth Organizations.

Further Reading

The Cambridge History of the British Empire. 8 vols. CUP, 1929 ff.
Lampeter, 1992

COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)

The Commonwealth of Independent States is a community of independent states which proclaimed itself the successor to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in some aspects of international law and affairs. The member states are the founders, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, and 9 subsequent adherents: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The common affairs of the CIS are conducted on a multilateral, interstate basis rather than by central institutions. It provides a framework for military, foreign policy and economic co-ordination.

History: Extended negotiations in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1990 and 1991, under the direction of President Gorbachev, sought to establish a ‘renewed federation’ or, subsequently, to conclude a new union treaty that would embrace all the 15 constituent republics of the USSR at that date. According to a referendum conducted in Mar. 1991, 76% of the population (on an 80% turnout) wished to maintain the USSR as a ‘renewed federation of equal sovereign republics in which the human rights and freedoms of any nationality would be fully guaranteed’. In Sept. 1991, the 3 Baltic republics—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—were nonetheless recognized as independent states by the USSR State Council, and subsequently by the international community. Most of the remaining republics reached agreement on the broad outlines of a new ‘union of sovereign states’ in Nov. 1991, which would have retained a directly elected President and an all-union legislature, but which would have limited central authority to those powers specifically delegated to it by the members of the union.

A referendum in Ukraine in Dec. 1991, however, showed overwhelming support for full independence, and following this the 3 Slav republics (Russia, Belarus and Ukraine) concluded the Minsk Agreement on 8 Dec. 1991, establishing a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), headquartered in Minsk. The USSR, as a subject of international law and a geopolitical reality, was declared no longer in existence, and each of the 3 republics individually renounced the 1922 treaty through which the USSR had been established.

B. Turner (Ed.), The Statesman’s Yearbook
The CIS declared itself open to other former Soviet republics, and to states elsewhere that shared its objectives, and on 21 Dec. 1991 in Alma-Ata, a further declaration was signed with 8 other republics: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The declaration committed signatories to recognize the independence and sovereignty of other members, to respect human rights including those of national minorities, and to the observance of existing boundaries. Relations among the members of the CIS were to be conducted on an equal, multilateral basis, but it was agreed to endorse the principle of unitary control of strategic nuclear arms and the concept of a 'single economic space'. In addition, members pledged themselves to discharge the obligations that arose from the international treaties and agreements to which the USSR had been a party. In a separate agreement the heads of member states agreed that Russia should take up the seat at the United Nations formerly occupied by the USSR, and a framework of inter-state and intergovernment consultation was established. Following these developments Mikhail Gorbachev resigned as USSR President on 25 Dec. 1991, and on 26 Dec., the USSR Supreme Soviet voted a formal end to the 1922 Treaty of Union, and dissolved itself.

Institutions. The principal organs of the CIS, according to the agreement concluded in Alma-Ata on 21 Dec. 1991, are the Council of Heads of States, which meets twice a year, and the Council of Heads of Government, which meets every 3 months. Both councils may convene extraordinary sessions, and may hold joint sittings. A Council of CIS Foreign Ministers was also established in Dec. 1993.

At a summit meeting of heads of states (with the exception of Azerbaijan) in July 1992, agreements were reached on the formation of a CIS peacekeeping force; the establishment of an economic arbitration court and a way to divide former Soviet assets abroad; and some progress was made towards the creation of economic co-ordinating structures. At a subsequent meeting in Jan. 1993, Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan agreed on a charter to these ends, to establish a defence alliance, economic co-ordination committee and inter-state court. Three participants (Ukraine, Moldova and Tajikistan) agreed only to a declaration that any state would be free to sign the charter in future, and that an inter-state bank should be set up.

The CIS Inter-State Bank was set up in Dec. 1993, with a starting capital of 5,000m. roubles, to facilitate multilateral clearing of CIS inter-state transactions. Members' contributions (by %), based on their share of foreign trade turnover in 1990, were as follows: Russia, 50%; Ukraine, 20-7%; Belarus, 8-4%; Kazakhstan, 6-1%; Uzbekistan, 5-5%; Moldova, 2-9%; Armenia, 1-8%; Tajikistan, 1-6%; Kyrgyzstan, 1-5%; Turkmenistan, 1-5%.

In accordance with the Agreement on Armed Forces and Border Troops, concluded on 30 Dec. 1991, a peacekeeping force ("white helmets") to be deployed in intra-CIS conflicts at the request of member states, and with the consent of the parties to the conflict, was duly established. CIS members contribute to this force in proportion to the size of their armed forces; the commander is appointed on each occasion by the CIS heads of state. In 1993, the office of Commander-in-Chief of CIS Joint Armed Forces was replaced by that of Chief of Joint Staff for Co-ordinating Military Co-operation.

On 24 Sept. 1993, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed an agreement to form an economic union, with Ukraine and Turkmenistan as associated members. Georgia, which was admitted to the CIS in Dec. 1993, signed some of the provisions. In Oct. 1994, a summit meeting established the Inter-Government Economic Committee to be based in Moscow. Members include all CIS states except Turkmenistan. The Committee's decisions are binding if voted by 80% of the membership. Russia commands 50% of the voting power. The Committee's remit is to co-ordinate energy, transport and communications policies. A Payments Union was also agreed, to regulate payments between member states with non-convertible independent currencies.

On 29 March 1996, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia signed an agreement increasing their mutual economic and social integration by creating a