

Extract from the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting: Final communiqué

Commonwealth Membership

87. Heads of Government reviewed the recommendations of the Committee on Commonwealth Membership and agreed on the following core criteria for Membership:

- (a) an applicant country should, as a general rule, have had a historic constitutional association with an existing Commonwealth member, save in exceptional circumstances;
- (b) in exceptional circumstances, applications should be considered on a case-by-case basis;
- (c) an applicant country should accept and comply with Commonwealth fundamental values, principles, and priorities as set out in the 1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles and contained in other subsequent Declarations;
- (d) an applicant country must demonstrate commitment to: democracy and democratic processes, including free and fair elections and representative legislatures; the rule of law and independence of the judiciary; good governance, including a well-trained public service and transparent public accounts; and protection of human rights, freedom of expression, and equality of opportunity;
- (e) an applicant country should accept Commonwealth norms and conventions, such as the use of the English language as the medium of inter-Commonwealth relations, and acknowledge Queen Elizabeth II as the Head of the Commonwealth; and
- (f) new members should be encouraged to join the Commonwealth Foundation, and to promote vigorous civil society and business organisations within their countries, and to foster participatory democracy through regular civil society consultations.

88. Heads of Government also agreed that, where an existing member changes its formal constitutional status, it should not have to reapply for Commonwealth membership provided that it continues to meet all the criteria for membership.

89. Heads endorsed the other recommendations of the Committee, including a four-step process for considering applications for membership; new members being required to augment the existing budget of the Secretariat; and countries in accumulated arrears being renamed 'Members in Arrears'. They also agreed with the Committee's recommendations on Overseas Territories, Special Guests and strategic partnerships.