



INDEPENDENT FORUM OF COMMONWEALTH ORGANISATIONS COMMONWEALTH DAY FEEDBACK AND NEWS FROM IFCO

IFCO Headlines



David N Jones has been elected unopposed as IFCO Chair and a member of the Steering Committee. Huge congratulations to David - we look forward to his continued leadership in strengthening IFCO and its work, here seen telling the King about IFCO at the Commonwealth Day reception.



On 10 March 2026, a new IFCO Constitution was approved by Commonwealth Accredited Organisations (AOs). It was endorsed by 52 AOs, with 3 AOs abstaining. Since the approval, 3 additional AOs have confirmed their endorsement, bringing the total to 55 AOs supporting the IFCO Constitution and none against out of 78 balloted. AOs can still show support by emailing IFCO.CMW@gmail.com.

IFCO Deadline – Elections for the Steering Committee



The ballot for election of IFCO Steering Committee members has opened and will **close at 23.59 on Friday 10 April 2026**. Please note that this date will not be extended as it is linked to other deadlines and commitments. Each Accredited Organisation has up to 14 votes for the 14 available places on the Committee.

IFCO meeting dates



The new Steering Committee is scheduled to have a hybrid meeting on **Monday 13th April** linked to the Commonwealth Secretariat briefing for AOs on CHOGM preparations. The next hybrid IFCO conference for all AOs is scheduled to be held on **Monday 27th April**.

CHOGM 2026 Update Meeting with Accredited Organisations



The Secretariat has invited Accredited Organisations to a CHOGM 2026 update meeting on **Monday 13 April 2026 12.30-14.30** UK time. If an AO has not received an invitation, contact partnerships@commonwealth.int.

IFCO Commonwealth Day Informal Gathering

There was an excellent turn-out and lively engaging conversations at the now traditional informal gathering organised by IFCO after the Commonwealth Day service. This was a rare opportunity to make personal contact for many in the leadership of Accredited Organisations. The seeds of new organisational partnerships were sown alongside relaxed conversations and a shared sense of celebration of Commonwealth networks and values.



Commonwealth Day Celebrations and Events



Commonwealth Day was celebrated on 9 March. This year's theme was '**Unlocking opportunities for a prosperous Commonwealth**'. Across the Commonwealth, the day was marked with many high-profile events and community celebrations, from London to Lilongwe and Auckland.

The day in London began with a flag-raising at the **House of Commons**, followed by a **wreath-laying ceremony at the Commonwealth Memorial Gates**, commemorating more than 5 million Commonwealth soldiers who served and lost their lives during the two World Wars. This year's ceremony highlighted the theme 'Women in War'.



The multi-faith service of celebration at **Westminster Abbey** in London attended by almost 2,000 people, included His Majesty King Charles III, Her Majesty the Queen, foreign ministers, UK Prime Minister, Commonwealth Secretary-General, High Commissioners, senior government officials, dignitaries and representatives of most Accredited Organisations. More than 700 schoolchildren also attended.



Commonwealth Day
connecting
Northampton & Malawi



A dialogue between Malawi and Northampton marked celebrations arranged by the Northamptonshire Lieutenancy on Commonwealth Day 2026. Organised by the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work and hosted by Northampton School for Boys, the Zoom event linked the CWD event at the UK High Commission in Lilongwe, Malawi social workers, residents from Malawi in the UK and young people at NSB who discussed the value of the Commonwealth. The video of the conversation is available [here](#).



During Commonwealth Week, the **Commonwealth Investment Network (CIN)** held a Summit jointly hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the UK Government, and the Cambridge Centre for Alternative Finance at Cambridge Judge Business School (the latter is the delivery partner for CIN). 7 companies from Fiji, Grenada, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu pitched to international investors. The CIN Accelerator Programme is working to help through technical support, mentorship and investor connections, while working with national investment promotion agencies to strengthen pipelines of investable projects. More information about CIN at : <https://lnkd.in/eSv4XD98>

COMMONWEALTH
Enterprise and Investment Council

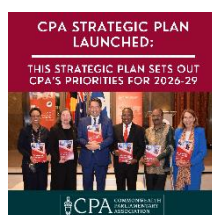
The **Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC)** convened a Commonwealth Week reception and panel discussion at Australia House on 10 March in London, on “Blue Horizons: Financing Resilience Across the Commonwealth,” bringing together government leaders, investors and development partners to explore how finance and innovation can strengthen climate resilience across Commonwealth Ocean economies. particularly for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). [CWEIC Convenes Commonwealth Week Reception At Australia House On Financing A “Blue Commonwealth” - CWEIC](#)

The Commonwealth Secretariat and Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation announced a new partnership to accelerate ocean conservation for Commonwealth countries in Asia and the Pacific ([Commonwealth and Prince Albert II Foundation launch major ocean protection alliance | Commonwealth](#)). This collaboration directly advances the goals of the [Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration](#).

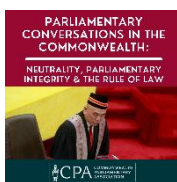


Commonwealth Parliamentarians celebrated Commonwealth Day, including the traditional multi-faith Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey, a video message from Commonwealth Parliamentarians, and a flag raising ceremony in the UK House of Commons. Visit [Celebrations for Commonwealth Day 2026](#).

Other News



The **CPA Strategic Plan 2026-2029** was launched at a reception on 24 February 2026 at the Australian High Commission in London. Commonwealth Parliamentarians, members of the diplomatic community in the UK and representatives of CPA and partner organisations came together to mark the publication ([CPA Strategic Plan 2026-2029 launched at Australia House](#)).



The CPA released the latest episode of its podcast - *Parliamentary Conversations in the Commonwealth* - on 17 March 2026. This episode features the Speaker of Selangor, Hon. Lau Weng San, who discusses strengthening transparency, enhancing accountability and raising institutional standards within the legislative system." [CPA Podcast](#)



Farewell to ASG Prof Luis Franceschi

A glorious send off for ASG Prof Luis Franceschi took place on 25 February at Marlborough House. Staff and several HCs attended. The HCs of Rwanda, Kenya, Tonga as the Chair of the Board of Governors, and the dean of the Diplomatic Corp in the UK, inter alia, paid tribute to his work.

Brigid Watson, CLA Sec Gen, represented all AOs at the event. She applauded Luis' passion and enthusiasm for the work of the Secretariat, supporting governments and for his advocacy work for the 3rd pillar of the Commonwealth which have been both remarkable and inspiring. Prof Franceschi expressed deepest admiration for the work of AOs done with meagre resources and demonstrating a true example of Commonwealth camaraderie and generosity, keeping the Secretariat on their toes! We wish him well.

Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers meet in London

The 26th Meeting of CW Foreign Ministers took place at Lancaster House on 8 March [to drive reform and renewal amid global fractures](#) and discuss the policy priorities for CHOGM later this year in Antigua and Barbuda. For the first time, Foreign Ministers met for a retreat, ahead of their meeting during CHOGM, under the theme, 'The Commonwealth at a Moment of Strategic Opportunity'.





The **Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBWN)** held 2 events in New York during CSW70 (70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women), at the Commonwealth Joint Office (Small States Office).

Unlocking Capital: CBWN with leaders from the Commonwealth and the World Bank addressed [the global implementation gap in the Commonwealth in women's entrepreneurship and legal rights](#), specifically highlighting the urgent findings of the *Women, Business and Law 2026* report.

3-Point Agenda on Gender-Based Violence: 11 Commonwealth Organisations, including CBWN and CTUG, convened to advance [a three-point agenda](#) focused on ratifying international labour and human rights protocols while addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence through multi-sector collaboration.



The April issue of **The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs and Policy Studies** contains a wealth of scholarship and opinion on Commonwealth-related issues, ranging from secessionism in the Western Cape to Taiwan's relations with its Commonwealth diplomatic allies, and from the ICJ advisory opinion on climate change to the case for the Commonwealth Games. Selected articles are also featured on our website, alongside other Commonwealth-related news and commentary. Visit our journal at <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/ctr20> and website at <https://www.commonwealthroundtable.co.uk/>.



The Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC) works across the Commonwealth to support sustainable development, climate action, and community resilience. Recent projects in Kenya, Nigeria, India, Fiji, and Samoa have delivered real impact on the ground, with further initiatives in Uganda, Togo, Ghana, and Nigeria set to reach completion this year. CHEC partners with local organisations to deliver small-scale, community-led projects that make a lasting difference — discover more at www.checinternational.org.

Future Events



CHOGM 2026 Diplomatic Panel Discussion - hosted by the *Malta High Commission in London* and *Kaleidoscope Trust* on: *CHOGM 2026 in a Changing Global Environment - Wednesday 25 March 2026 15:00–16:30*, followed by a networking reception at the Malta High Commission, 36-38 Piccadilly, London W1J 0LE. The conversation will examine how we can bring the equality agenda - especially on gender and the human rights of LGBTI+ communities - to the forefront of CHOGM discussions, among other issues. Panellists are Razmi Farook (Commonwealth Foundation), David N Jones (Chair, IFCO), and Friedel Dausab, an outstanding LGBTI human rights defender based in Namibia who successfully challenged and overturned the country's colonial-era sodomy law in 2024, when the High Court issued its historic ruling.



Inaugural CNMF West Africa Region Conference co-hosted by the National Association of Nurses and Midwives in Nigeria, on 21-23 April 2026 in Abuja. For more information visit

<https://www.commonwealthnurses.org/WA2026/>



World Drowning Prevention Day takes place annually on July 25th, highlighting the profound impact of drowning on communities and the life-saving solutions to prevent it. An estimated 236,000 people drown every year, and 54% of fatal drownings in Commonwealth countries occur among children aged 0 – 14 years old. For more information on World Drowning Prevention Day, the latest RLSS Fatal Drowning in Commonwealth Countries Factsheet and developing

lifesaving skills, please visit [Drowning Prevention - Royal Life Saving Society Commonwealth](#).



Join us at the 2026 Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth Conference in November 2026 for a unique gathering of global leaders, innovators and change-makers. This landmark event promises insightful discussions and exceptional networking opportunities. Find out more and register at: <https://www.rasc2026.com/>.



Call for Expressions of Interest: Implementing the CLA Children's Essay Competition

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association invites [expressions of interest from jurisdictions across the Commonwealth](#) to implement the CLA's Children's Essay Competition and raise awareness of children's rights through schools and communities. Local partners are supported with resources to deliver and adapt the programme, helping educate young people about their legal rights. Submit an expression of interest today to bring the competition to your jurisdiction and make a lasting impact – email info@commonwealthlawyers.com.



Information about the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO)

IFCO is sustained on a voluntary basis, providing mutual support to Commonwealth Accredited Organisations. The IFCO Secretariat can be contacted at IFCO.CMW@gmail.com.

Editing – Bishakha Mukherjee and David N Jones

Text and graphics supplied by Accredited Organisations and Commonwealth websites