



The Commonwealth

A briefing for journalists | October 2022

Fast Facts: Commonwealth Secretary-General

Mandate and Tenure

The Commonwealth Secretary-General promotes and protects the Commonwealth's values and principles as reflected in the Commonwealth Charter. The Secretary-General also represents the Commonwealth globally, and manages the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Secretary-General maintains regular high-level contacts with Commonwealth governments as well as civil society and other leaders. In addition, he or she exercises a 'Good Offices for Peace' role to work with leaders when political tensions arise in member states.

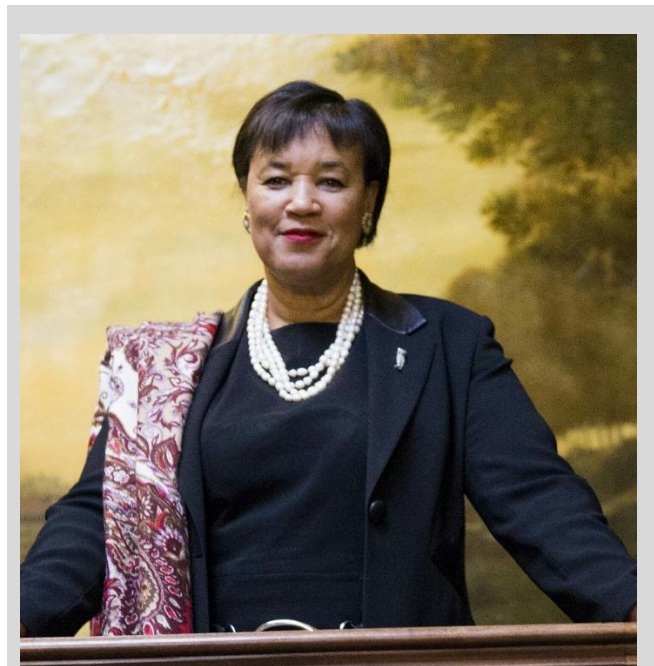
The Secretary-General is selected by consensus by Commonwealth leaders and can serve a maximum of two four-year terms. The post was created together with the Commonwealth Secretariat at the 1965 Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in London, United Kingdom. Since then there have been six incumbents.

Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC became Secretary-General on 1 April 2016 having been appointed by Heads of Government at their meeting in November 2015.

Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC - the new Commonwealth Secretary-General

- Patricia Janet Scotland was born on the 19th August 1955 in Dominica.
- Moved to the UK with her family, growing up in east London.
- Trained as a lawyer and became the first black woman to be appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1991. At 35 she was also the youngest woman ever to be made a QC.
- The first black woman to be appointed Deputy High Court Judge, Recorder and Master of Middle Temple.
- Joined the House of Lords in 1997 as Baroness Scotland of Asthal going on to serve as a minister in the Foreign Office, Home Office and Lord Chancellor's Department.
- Undertook major reform of the criminal justice system, including the introduction of the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act.
- Appointed Attorney General in 2007 - the first woman to hold the post since it was created in 1315.

- Founded the Eliminate Domestic Violence Global Foundation in 2011.
- Appointed Prime Ministerial Trade Envoy to South Africa in 2012.
- Elected as the Alderman of Bishopsgate in the City of London in 2014.
- Other offices include Chancellor of the University of Greenwich, Patron of the Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence, Patron of Lifeline (Trinidad & Tobago) and the Caribbean Science Foundation.



Secretary-General Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland KC

Former Secretaries-General

- Kamallesh Sharma of India (2008-2016)
- Don McKinnon of New Zealand (2000-2008)
- Chief Emeka Anyaoku of Nigeria (1990-2000)
- Sir Shridath 'Sonny' Ramphal of Guyana (1975-1990)
- Arnold Smith of Canada (1965-1975)

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