

TheParliamentarian



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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARLIAMANTARY DEMOCRACY IN THE COMMONWEALTH

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE



The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) exists to connect, develop, promote and support Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance, and implement the enduring values of the Commonwealth.

Calendar of Forthcoming Events

Updated as at 16 November 2020

Please note that due to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) global pandemic, many CPA events, conferences and activities have been postponed or cancelled. Please check www.cpahq.org or email hq.sec@cpahq.org.

2020

December

1 to 3 December 2020 CPA Virtual Post-Election Seminar: Parliament of Bermuda
7 to 11 December 2020 KwaZulu Natal Legislature CPA Benchmarks Assessment
14 to 18 December 2020 Virtual Commonwealth Youth Parliament

2021

March

Monday 8 March 2021 Commonwealth Day and International Women's Day
23 to 27 March 2021 Mid-Year meeting of the CPA Executive Committee, Gibraltar/online

June

w/c 21 June 2021 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), Kigali, Rwanda – also including: Commonwealth Youth Forum; Commonwealth Women's Forum; Commonwealth People's Forum; and Commonwealth Business Forum.

August

21 to 27 August 2021 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

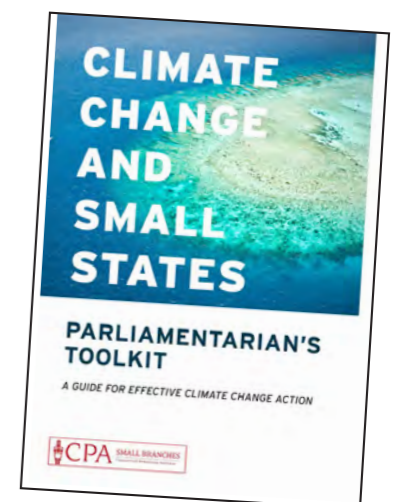
The CPA calendar fosters the exchange of events and activities between CPA Regions and Branches. For further information on any events, please contact the CPA Branch concerned or the CPA Headquarters Secretariat. CPA Branch Secretaries are asked to send notices of CPA events to hq.sec@cpahq.org in advance of the publication deadline to ensure the calendar is accurate.



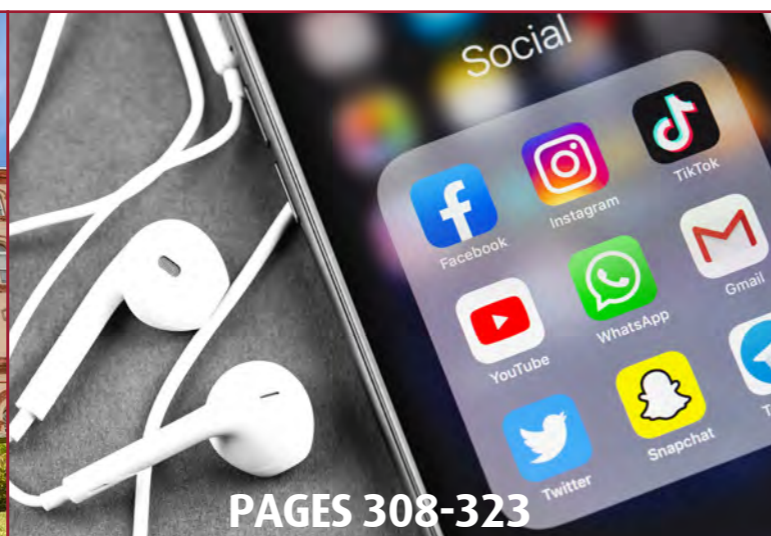
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SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN THE COMMONWEALTH

The Editor's Note

There has been a huge growth in the use of social media in recent years across the world. Commonwealth Parliaments are still exploring how to best use social media effectively in their communications strategies. Finding a way to produce engaging, non-partisan content to interact with stakeholders is a major challenge for all institutions, but perhaps particularly for Parliaments.

The use of social media raises therefore a number of challenges to Parliaments and, to a large extent, requires these institutions to engage in a new style of communication beyond the traditional institutional one.

The challenge for individual Commonwealth Parliamentarians is even more acute as they have to grapple with providing engaging content for their constituents and the wider world while often facing abuse online and challenges to their messaging. However, the benefits for Parliamentarians of being able to speak directly to a wide audience without the 'filter' of the media provides huge opportunities for Members of Parliament, especially during elections. Social media is able to provide connections through spontaneous and informal reactions; social media implies a persona behind its input which gives Parliamentarians the opportunity to 'connect' with their audience.

Social media can also provide many barriers to democracy as personal data is manipulated and 'fake news' is spread virtually at a ferocious pace.

This issue of *The Parliamentarian* examines the many issues around social media and democracy in the Commonwealth.

Hon. Justin B. N. Muturi, EGH, MP, Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya and the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the CPA Africa Region examines the role of social media in parliamentary engagement and looks at how public participation can be expanded for democratic growth.

Hon. Nathan Cooper, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta writes about how Parliaments can embrace social media and digital technology and provides examples of how the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has opened new doors in the COVID-19 pandemic era.

The Chair of the UK Parliament's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Media, **Chris Elmore, MP** reflects on how social media has responded to the current global pandemic and asks if the digital pandemic of misinformation threatens our best hope of ending the current crisis.

Canadian Member of Parliament, **Ms Yasmin Ratansi, MP**

examines the role of social media in connecting with constituents and the impact of social media in elections and asks if social media should be censored and what the role of Parliamentarians could be.

The Deputy Director of the Research Wing at the National Assembly of Pakistan, **Ms Nighat Paristan** provides examples of social media interaction from Pakistan and suggests that social media can be called a 'game changer' in bridging the gap between Parliament and the people.

The **Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)**, **Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA** (Pakistan), writes about the impact of social media on Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians in particular and asks whether social media will be, and should be, the primary tool for Commonwealth Parliamentarians to uphold democracy.

The **CPA Small Branches Chairperson**, **Hon. Niki Rattle**, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands writes about the positive impacts of social media on small territories and legislatures, not least in her own jurisdiction of the Cook Islands, but cautions that we need to ensure that social media does not undermine democratic norms and processes.

In addition to looking at social media and democracy, this issue of *The Parliamentarian* also examines other current issues in the Commonwealth. The **Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Executive Committee**, **Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP** (Cameroon) in her *View* article shares her opening address to the 49th CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference hosted by the Parliament of Malta and CPA Malta Branch with a virtual meeting held from 24 to 25 September 2020 on the theme of '*The Role of Parliaments and Parliamentarians in Times of Crisis*'.

The **CPA Secretary-General**, **Stephen Twigg** in his *View* article for *The Parliamentarian* focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Commonwealth and the role of Commonwealth Parliaments. He also examines the role that the CPA can play and identifying the CPA's strengths to best meet future challenges.

Shri N. K. Premachandran, MP, a Member of Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Parliament of India provides an article on sustainable development in a globalised world.

Former Joint Secretary of the Lok Sabha Secretariat, **Rup Narayan Das** examines the role of Parliament in foreign policy with particular reference to examples from India.

Fergus Drake, Chief Executive of Crown Agents, asks why

Parliamentarians are key to enhancing accountability in health service delivery and provides examples of the work that his organisation has done in several countries.

The City of London's Remembrancer, **Paul Double, LVO, OStJ**, writes about his ancient role and the many links between the City of London and the Commonwealth.

New technology in the UK Parliament has brought automated speech software trials to the Hansard Team and this is described by **Jack Homer**, Deputy Editor of the *Official Report* in the UK's House of Commons.

In the third of his three-part series for *The Parliamentarian*, Parliamentary Consultant at the Lok Sabha Secretariat at the Parliament of India, **Mr Ravindra Garimella**, looks at the origins and history of some of the parliamentary expressions and practices used in Commonwealth Legislatures and in this issue focuses on the role of 'filibustering'.

This issue of *The Parliamentarian* features several articles on the issues surrounding greater equality in Parliaments. **Hon. Mboni Mohamed Mhita, MP**, Member of the National Assembly of Tanzania shares her presentation to the CWP Africa Region Gender Sensitization Workshop in October 2019 on the barriers to women's participation in elections in the Africa Region.

Amanda Ellis is the Executive Director of Global Partnerships for the ASU Global Futures Laboratory and Professor of Practice at Thunderbird School of Global Management in the USA and she shares her article on '*Building Forward Better*' - why women's leadership matters during COVID-19 and beyond.

An article by the **Global Parliamentary Unit at the World Bank** examines how stronger youth and female political representation can transfer knowledge and best practices to those who aspire to become more democratically representative.

This issue also features news and reports of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) activities including the CWP Chairperson speaking at a special session on '*Women Leading Politics and Development*' at the Virtual Global Parliamentary Forum during the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and IMF; a virtual meeting of the CWP Steering Committee to focus on strategic plan and future activities; and the launch of two new CWP guidelines on Gender Sensitising Parliaments and Anti-Harassment Policies for Commonwealth Parliaments

CPA news reports in this issue include: International Day of Democracy; the launch of new CPWD Disabilities Communications Guidelines; virtual Post-Election Seminars in Dominica and Jamaica; a virtual meeting of the CPA Small Branches Steering Committee; a CPA webinar with Commonwealth High Commissioners and representatives of Overseas Territories in London; a CPA webinar



A familiar sign for 2020 outside a hotel in New Zealand.

event with Commonwealth partner organisations to introduce the new CPA Secretary-General and launch the CPA Strategic Plan consultations; a Commonwealth Speakers webinar on COVID-19 responses and Model Law in Parliaments; CPA Small Branches publishing a new Handbook on Lay Members for Commonwealth Parliaments; and the Commonwealth Gladwyn Lecture for 2020.

This issue of *The Parliamentarian* also marks two anniversaries: the 400th anniversary of the first sitting of the Parliament of Bermuda and the 70th anniversary of the re-opening of the UK Parliament's House of Commons after its destruction during the Second World War.

The *Parliamentary Report* and *Third Reading* section in this issue includes parliamentary and legislative news from Canada Federal; British Columbia; Trinidad and Tobago; India; New Zealand; the United Kingdom; Sri Lanka; and Australia Federal.

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat would also like to thank Mr Stephen Boyd, Secretary for the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics at the Parliament of Australia, for his dedication and commitment as the parliamentary correspondent for the Parliament of Australia for *The Parliamentarian* for many years and for his parliamentary service to the Australian Federal Parliament on his retirement. His parliamentary reports and articles about the Parliament of Australia over many years have provided a record of events for future generations and a source of interest for other Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures who want to share their experiences of parliamentary democracy.

We look forward to hearing your feedback and comments on this issue of *The Parliamentarian*, on the issues affecting Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth and to receiving your future contributions to this publication.

Jeffrey Hyland
Editor, *The Parliamentarian*
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THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

View from the CPA Chairperson

This View article was adapted from the CPA Chairperson's opening address to the 49th CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference hosted by the Parliament of Malta and CPA Malta Branch with a virtual meeting held from 24 to 25 September 2020.



**Chairperson of the CPA
Executive Committee, Hon.
Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP,
Deputy Speaker of the National
Assembly of Cameroon**

Firstly, I would like to thank the Parliament of Malta and CPA Malta Branch, and in particular, Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Malta and former CPA Small Branches Chairperson for hosting the 49th CPA British Islands and Mediterranean (BIM) Regional Conference in September 2020.

It was a great honour to have been invited to make the CPA Chairperson's Opening Address at the CPA BIM Regional Conference on the topic of *'The Role of Parliamentarians in Times of Crisis'*. I was delighted to be sharing a platform with my esteemed colleague once again and I am sure that all delegates who attended the Regional Conference were greatly appreciative of the hard work from yourself and your parliamentary team which have ensured that the conference could take place.

I believe that the CPA BIM Regional Conference was the first to be held remotely and its success was testament to the ingenuity of the Parliament of Malta and the wider region. It followed a very effective and fruitful virtual CPA International Executive Committee Meeting that I chaired in August 2020 and I imagine we will be harnessing these new technologies increasingly in the coming months as face to face meetings still remain difficult in many parts of the world.

As background for those new to the CPA, may I briefly state that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which was founded in 1911, comprises some 180 national and sub-national Branches and seeks to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. The CPA connects, develops, promotes and supports Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth.

CPA activities focus on the Commonwealth's commitment to its fundamental political values, including - just and honest government, the alleviation of poverty, fundamental human rights, international peace and order, global economic development, the rule of law, equal rights and representation for all citizens of both genders, the

separation of powers among the three branches of government and the right to participate in free and democratic political process.

CPA Regional Conferences, such as the one held for the BIM Region, are an excellent opportunity for Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff alike to join together – either in person or virtually - and discuss these values and how best to approach them in what is often a challenging and fast-moving global context. These meetings allow us to explore these issues both from a regional perspective and, with the valued involvement of Observer Members and Officers from other CPA Regions, from a broader, holistic Commonwealth angle as well.

During the two days of the CPA BIM Regional Conference, participants had the opportunity to share best practice, generate innovative ways of approaching regional challenges and create long lasting and mutually beneficial connections between Parliaments within the Region and further afield – all key functions of the CPA's work.

Honourable Members, in addition to the CPA BIM Regional Conference, I have been very encouraged to see many successful events this past year being held within the CPA BIM Region, most notably the CPA Small Branches Sustainable Economic Development Workshop in January 2020. Also hosted by the Parliament of Malta and the CPA Malta Branch and attended by 19 Commonwealth Parliamentarians from across our network, including the CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands as well as Parliamentarians from the CPA Branches of Alderney, Australian Capital Territory, The Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, Isle of Man, Jersey, Malta, Northern Territory, Perlis, Seychelles, St Helena, St Lucia and Turks and Caicos. The outcomes from the Small Branches workshop and the subsequent CPA toolkit on *'Climate Change and Small States: A Guide for Effective Climate Change Action'*, are just some examples of the effective impact of the CPA in aiding our membership.

The CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region was also an active participant in the celebration of the CPA community's unique connection of almost 2.4 billion people on Commonwealth Day in March 2020. It was only shortly after this occasion that the Commonwealth was struck by the full force of one of its greatest

challenges yet – COVID-19. My thoughts go out to all those affected by the global pandemic. It has greatly impacted the way in which we go about our everyday lives and has curtailed the means with which Parliaments and Parliamentarians are able to successfully operate and promote the fundamental values of the Commonwealth.

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has raised great challenges for us as legislators, it has also allowed us to embrace new methods of communication and highlighted our ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Adaptation was a key theme for our 64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held in Kampala, Uganda in September 2019 and it is a vital element in how the CPA can be of aid to its Members in times of crisis.

Parliamentarians are now focusing their minds on public health and creating safe and secure environments for their constituents. To succeed in this endeavour, we have had to embrace rapid and uncertain change in the form of technical, social and cultural adaptations; from how we communicate and travel to the ways in which we legislate, represent and scrutinise governments. As such, adapting to and embracing these new ways of working is essential for us to fulfil our civic duties.

Moreover, whilst the whole world has felt the effects of this pandemic, not all of us have been impacted equally. I am therefore greatly pleased to see that work continues to examine how small jurisdictions have managed and attempted to reduce the impact of COVID-19 and the relationship between gender and crisis specific policy. In recognising that crises such as these do not have a uniform impact on the health or socio-economic status of an individual or a jurisdiction, we as legislators can be more tailored and effective in our responses and future planning.

Whilst the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which was due to be held in Kigali, Rwanda in June 2020 has understandably been postponed until next year, the theme of *'Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming'* has never been more relevant. The CPA has, in this time of crisis, maintained a constant focus on innovation and transformation when looking at what we offer to our membership and how we can best support you in times of flux.

In September 2020, for example, the CPA hosted a fully virtual CPA Post-Election Seminar for the Parliament of Dominica, our second such event following a very successful programme for Anguilla earlier in the year in collaboration with the CPA UK Branch.

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat also produced a timely CPA toolkit *'Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures on the COVID-19 pandemic and delivering parliamentary democracy'* and have engaged in numerous online Masterclasses and Webinars.

The CPA has been part of this incredible surge in the



An election vote takes place under COVID-19 regulations.

digitalisation and virtual nature of processes and activities taking place across the Commonwealth. Whilst we may not be able to engage in person during these unprecedented times, the advantage of modern technology is that it allows us to support our membership and has the ability to reach a wider audience.

Inclusion is a key element of the theme of the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) *'Inclusive, Accessible, Accountable and Strong Parliaments: the Cornerstone of Democracy and Essential for Development'*. At our recent CPA Executive Committee meeting in August 2020, Members made the difficult decision to postpone the 65th CPC due to be held in Halifax, Canada in January 2021 to dates later in the year in August 2021. I hope that by that point we are able to meet and discuss this important topic in person, but I am confident that we will be able to adapt come what may.

On 15th September 2020, we marked International Day of Democracy and, in my video message to the CPA membership, I highlighted the importance of scrutiny and accountability as vital components to democracy. As legislators, we must be a voice for citizens and continually adapt our practices to fulfil our critical functions during this crisis - essential in the ever-evolving nature of democracy. Recognising the power of collectively providing an accessible and inclusive space, I am optimistic that our CPA Branches will use their own platforms to encourage greater adaptation and development within their own jurisdictions.

We as Parliamentarians must be at the forefront of responding and evolving in this time of crisis. The last six months has shown us that when pushed we can be more connected, co-operative and flexible than was perhaps initially thought possible. I hope that this spirit of collaboration extends far past the lifetime of COVID-19 and continues for many years to come as we pursue our shared goals.

I look forward to hearing the outcomes of CPA activities and trust that through the sharing of our experiences we can keep on evolving as responsive Parliamentarians and as our organisation demands of us.

SHOULD SOCIAL MEDIA BE THE PRIMARY TOOL FOR COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS TO UPHOLD DEMOCRACY?

View from the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson

In November 2020, history was made. The United States of America elected its first woman Vice-President. That Senator Kamala Harris is a child of immigrants from the Commonwealth (India and Jamaica) is another important milestone. For some, this is democracy at its finest. For those of us in the Commonwealth, we have been luckier as we have had women Heads of State and Heads of Government such as Sirimavo Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka, Indira Gandhi in India, Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan, Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh, Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and currently, Samia Suluhu, Vice-President of Tanzania; Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand; Paula-Mae Weekes, President of Trinidad and Tobago; Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh; and so many more. Nonetheless, most of us in the Commonwealth are cheering on as a sister starts this historic journey for womankind. For me personally, following this epic event, it would not have been possible without the aid of social media.

The larger part of this article talks about social media, parliamentary democracy and whether social media will be, and should be, the primary tool for Commonwealth Parliamentarians to uphold democracy. Central to this debate is whether democracy is recognised as a value or system of representation.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), “democracy has come to be recognised as a universal value which does not belong to any country or region.” A large portion of the work of the IPU is based on the idea that “a strong Parliament is a critical marker for a robust democracy” and that “Parliament is the central institution



Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson, Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA (Pakistan)

through which the will of the people is expressed, laws are passed and government is held to account.”¹

The era of COVID-19 has seen the Executive branch intensifying its domination of the ‘pandemic agenda’ and a plethora of decision-making that lacks democratic control. In my discourse with fellow Parliamentarians, there are questions as to whether the current political scenario and in-built processes are fit and proper to ensure that Parliaments are truly representative and are performing the job they are elected for. Which then begs the question - ‘What is it, exactly, that an elected Parliament is supposed to do (during the pandemic)? A non-exhaustive list would include legislation, passing emergency budgets, oversight of the Executive, debating issues, approving

constitutional changes and generally reaching out to the nation.

Some stellar examples can be found during COVID-19 times in different Commonwealth jurisdictions, with examples including Australia, Botswana, Canada, Scotland, Singapore and the United Kingdom, that adopted innovative digital and social media outreach systems in order to quickly interact with Members and disseminate information. *WhatsApp* groups in Botswana have also proved effective, and at the Scottish Parliament, a Microsoft Teams Live Event was used for the Chief Executive’s first live address to all staff in late April.² This shows that Commonwealth Parliaments have proven nimble at quickly using both digital platforms and social media to find new ways of sustaining communication during crises such as this pandemic.

But what about during ordinary times, i.e. during election campaigns and during normal non-election years? In some jurisdictions, social media is quickly becoming the litmus test for measuring the quality and quantity of democracy and effective representation. There is no doubt that social media is also helping citizens in determining whether their elected representatives are successfully meeting the challenges of the age and where they can draw inspiration from the good practices of other Parliaments. However, is it also the case that social media helps the institution of Parliament to remain relevant in the coming years? A number of aspects, which need to be considered, are changing relationships that Parliament maintains with the public, the media, the Executive branch and with international organisations.

If we consider social media as a tool to enable and measure the quality of democracy within Parliament and parliamentary processes, then each new election in the Commonwealth in the last ten years is an example of what to do or not to do. The first US Presidential election for Barack Obama was largely won on the back of an incredible and new social experiment; Pakistan’s *Tehreek-e-Insaf* is



Left: A woman voter in Sri Lanka shows her inked finger after casting her ballot in the Sri Lankan parliamentary election at the polling station in Colombo on 5 August 2020.

views which governments label as ‘fake news’ or criminal speech.”⁶

There is no doubt that the uncontrolled nature of social media postings means they can be misleading and manipulative and can misinform and lead to what is loosely termed as ‘fake news’. There is now an additional responsibility on Parliaments’ need to manage their use of information and communications technology. It may be easier to manipulate the already marginalised, leading to deeper divisions between rural and urban areas. Hence the need for control and caution is more relevant than ever to ensure social media does not subvert the values of parliamentary democracy and turn it into demagoguery.

one party that also brought about the marriage of social media and political views. There are two kinds of advertising in politics, campaign trail advertising and advertising the good work of the government. The idea behind the former is the use of an advertising campaign through the media to influence a political debate, and ultimately, voters. However, post-election advertising has been said to be akin to political advertising for future campaigns. Again, on social media, this is impossible to stop.

Candidates and governments use social media, but what about the role of Parliament itself using social media, as an effective tool post-election, to influence, inform and involve citizens in public policymaking? The benefits of social media for Parliamentarians, in this sense, are enormous. Newer Parliamentarians, in particular, can benefit from social media, as they have to compete with established players, established causes and established Parliamentarians in their third or fourth terms, or beyond.

Social media is a low-cost, powerful tool to communicate ideas. An effective strategy is capable of disseminating information that empowers the earnest voter in a way that is “faster, cheaper and more pervasive than other forms of communication.” It is capable of encouraging pluralism, accountability and transparency and some Parliamentarians actively use social media during and after electoral campaigns to advance respect for the rule of law, good governance, independence of the judiciary, the rights of civil society, and the democratic values of equality and merit.

Social media has made a dent into the ‘information elite’ and is here to stay. However, during COVID-19, many jurisdictions in the Commonwealth have reported excessive censorship under the guise of emergency legislation and policy.³

Some COVID-19 lockdowns have been used as an excuse to arrest more journalists and block scrutiny by the media, and “too many had also betrayed the past struggles for press freedom and democracy by working ‘hand in hand’ with the power-hungry politicians in power today.”⁴

Furthermore, “COVID-19 has brought more censorship and disinformation to South Asia, as to other parts of the world. Recent events have shown how politicians misuse power to spread misinformation and rumours for partisan advantage. The pandemic has prompted sweeping laws with harsh penalties for those who express

A glaring example of the misuse of social media by various groups and not knowing where to draw the line was revealed to us during incidents of abuse of MPs on social media. In the UK, the government reached out to social media companies to demand support for general election candidates subjected to intimidation and abuse during the campaign. Ministers asked Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to create a ‘one-stop shop’ source for advice on how candidates can seek action to deal with online bullies and trolls. A number of UK women MPs stated that they were standing down from the UK Parliament at the last election in part because of the stream of threats that they had faced on online platforms when they held office.⁵ Again, this aspect of social media could be actively subverting the cause of parliamentary democracy.

Finally, an often ignored, but forward looking, procedural question is “does social media present a substantive challenge to parliamentary procedure? And, if so, can existing parliamentary conventions and practice adequately respond to the challenges of the digital age?”⁷ There are reports of incidents where social media was used to violate or circumvent a standing order or parliamentary convention, or to challenge parliamentary privilege. The author feels that the answer lies in the adaptability of both Parliaments and social media to ensure that social media advancement aids both Parliamentarians and democracy.

Where there is conflict, new thought processes and methodologies must be adopted by the Commonwealth in its effort to both lead and guide the world into an era of responsible and free social media.

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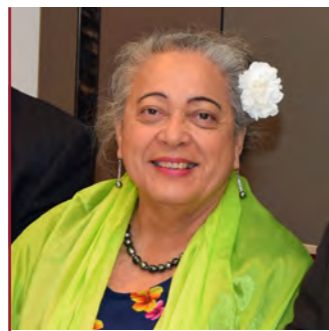
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THE CHALLENGES OF UTILISING NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR SMALLEST DEMOCRACIES IN THE COMMONWEALTH

View from the CPA Small Branches Chairperson

Social media has been defined as a series of online platforms, albeit a website or application, that allows people to engage in multi-directional communication and share information on the internet. Its unprecedented levels of interactivity, enabling multiple people to connect instantaneously regardless of where they are in the world, marks a stark departure from the traditional, one-directional, media of decades, and centuries, gone by, such as newspapers and magazines, radio and television. Interaction on social media has now become the norm for large swathes of the global population – Facebook, the world’s largest social media platform, boasts over 1.5 billion users worldwide – causing nothing short of an information revolution and upending the previous domination held by those traditional custodians of information exchange.



Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches, Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands

This upheaval has brought both tremendous opportunities and challenges to modern societies, which will only intensify as technology advances at a near exponential rate and as governments struggle to keep pace with relevant regulation and legislation needed to check technology and social media’s march.

The growth of social media and the concurrent technological revolution has and will touch every corner of the global community; the institution of Parliament is no exception. Commonwealth

“For every challenge, however, social media, and by extension, digital innovation, has come with as many opportunities and benefits for Parliaments, particularly during the current COVID-19 crisis. The CPA Headquarters Secretariat has recorded evidence of the positive use of social media and technology in implementing initiatives and strengthening relationships with its membership, in spite of the restrictions brought about due to the pandemic.”

Legislatures, small and large, cannot ignore this transformation. Although at the forefront of the maintenance of democratic societies, Parliament, through its often cumbersome and characteristically historic working processes, has not always been the harbinger of technological innovation. However, since the advent of social media, Parliament and Parliamentarians have made progress integrating its usage into their activities – from political messaging on individual Member’s personal Twitter handles to the streaming of parliamentary sittings on many Parliaments’ official Facebook pages. The benefits of this connectivity, not least the opening up of the democratic process through little more than the click of a few buttons, are undeniable. But with the benefits, the spread of social media brings an equal number of challenges which

are revealing novel and exacerbating pre-existing threats to the democratic process. These effects have initiated countermeasures and forced legislatures to adapt and improve their own working practices but also the governance of their respective jurisdictions. These contestations should provide Commonwealth Legislatures with lessons and food for thought as we power further into the information age.

In any democratic country, the integrity of the electoral process is reliant upon a system that integrates established or nascent democratic norms, societal values affirming notions of right and wrong, and a robust administrative and legal framework. However, through the spread of disinformation accelerated by social media, these underpinnings have been strained. Many charges by different countries of misinformation being used to influence electoral outcomes, fundamentally compromises the rights of voters to a fair process. Misinformation is defined as false or inaccurate information, especially that which is deliberately intended to deceive - it should be stressed, however, that this is not a new phenomenon brought about through social media. Those previously mentioned media industries and mediums have long been guilty of propagating misinformation; or what can also be characterised as ‘fake news’. What is new, however, is the scope and speed at which social media can create, foster and spread misinformation. The case of foreign interference in the US Presidential Elections in 2016, whereby Facebook was used to target misinformation to millions of American would-be voters, is perhaps the highest-profile example of recent

years. But similar processes are happening across the world, including in Commonwealth territories. Parliament, as the main body of oversight and scrutiny, plays a leading role in mitigating and preventing such abuses.

The great challenge with this is that, perhaps unlike traditional forms of media, social media platforms, through their sheer volume of active users, have proven almost impossible to effectively regulate – from both public and private actors alike. The challenge also involves balancing the need to uphold the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and expression with regulating and minimising the spread of misinformation. This brings to light a stark political divide between those who believe that the former takes precedence over actions towards the latter and those who believe regulation is the main priority.

Relevant for Parliament is the use of social media as a platform for abuse and hateful messaging towards Parliamentarians, which has seen a troublesome increase in recent years. The regulatory challenges and near anonymity that users can achieve online means that would-be abusers can act with impunity towards public officials. Even if these users remain a very small minority of the total numbers of users online, this can still create a markedly hostile and intimidating online environment. The only way this behaviour can be effectively mitigated is through a combination of regulatory measures in place by social media operators and national and local legislation as well as policies to monitor the implementation of such methodologies. Conversely, there also needs to be a Code of Conduct in Parliaments which ensures the responsible use of social media by Members of Parliament.

For every challenge, however, social media, and by extension, digital innovation, has come with as many opportunities and benefits for Parliaments, particularly during the current COVID-19 crisis. The CPA Headquarters Secretariat has recorded evidence of the positive use of social media and technology in implementing initiatives and strengthening relationships with its membership, in spite of the restrictions brought about due to the pandemic. Not least among these was the successful conducting of the first virtual CPA International Executive Committee Meeting through videoconferencing software. These technologies and mediums have provided a much-needed lifeline in enabling the CPA’s vast network of Commonwealth Legislatures to remain connected in the absence of in-person communications and interactions.

As Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches network, it is enormously encouraging to see what potential the effective use of social media and digital innovation can also have on small territories. Although small island states and territories are often disproportionately affected by the world’s most pressing



challenges, including climate change and economic vulnerability, their size can also bring enormous advantages. This is no more evident than in the application of digital innovation. Through the virtue of their smallness, small territories can act as incubators for new technologies and practices that can then be applied globally on a much larger scale. Importantly, the improved connectivity from social media and digital technologies has and will increase resilience in small territories themselves and strengthen progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in territories with multi-island communities and large geographic spread of population centres.

I have seen first-hand the positive impacts of social media on small territories and legislatures, not least in my own, the Cook Islands. Our Constitution directs the Parliament of the Cook Islands to broadcast all parliamentary meetings via the radio throughout the country - the only media used for many years until we reviewed and updated the Parliament website a few years ago. Since 2019, we have also formed an official Parliament Facebook page, in addition to adding live streaming capabilities to all our meetings. The impact this has had on our democracy has been overwhelmingly positive. In particular, Cook Islanders living overseas or on isolated outer islands have been brought closer to the democratic process, where they can witness first-hand the contributions of their Members of Parliament.

In regards to relevant protections from the misuse of social media, the Constitution of the Cook Islands, along with a relevant legislative framework and parliamentary practices and procedures, all work to ensure that social media does not undermine democratic norms and processes and that relevant actors, including from within the media and technology industries, have an appropriate legal and ethical framework to operate within.

Turning away from social media and technological innovation, in favour of archaic practices, is certainly no solution, and Commonwealth Parliaments and Parliamentarians must embrace the coming information age. The challenge will be finding an appropriate balance between utilising these technologies for the betterment of our democracies and guarding against their misuse.



THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ACROSS THE WORLD AND IDENTIFYING THE CPA'S STRENGTHS TO BEST MEET FUTURE CHALLENGES

View from the CPA Secretary-General

2020 has been dominated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world. My thoughts are with those who have lost their lives, families who have lost loved ones and the many people who are living with COVID-19.

Recently, I took part in a webinar organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat to consider the legislative approaches taken by Commonwealth countries to address the pandemic. It was a welcome opportunity to take stock of the situation, to share best practice and to consider what lessons we might learn from 2020 for the future.

Any emergency situation poses a challenge for Parliaments and Parliamentarians – how best can a balance be struck between enabling governments to tackle the crisis and, at the same time, providing effective oversight and scrutiny? Earlier editions of *The Parliamentarian* in 2020 provided a fascinating insight into how Parliaments have responded to this year's crisis in a variety of jurisdictions including the Maldives, the Isle of Man, Kenya and Australia.

We know that the virus has affected different countries in different ways and that the policy approaches taken by governments have varied both in terms of the public health response and the fiscal/economic dimension. Going forward, there will rightly be a plethora of opportunities to consider the different responses and to assess their impact, including parliamentary inquiries. One thing that strikes me, at this stage, is the importance of trust and consent to the effectiveness of a country's efforts to tackle the virus.

Earlier this year, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat published a COVID-19 toolkit to support Parliamentarians in their work. The toolkit highlighted the importance of a cross-party approach. Rightly, the New Zealand Parliament's Epidemic Response Committee



Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Stephen Twigg

“A worrying feature of the pandemic which has been widely written about this year is that, in some countries, the response has served to accelerate existing trends towards authoritarianism, the weakening of civil society and the scapegoating of minorities. In such circumstances, strong and independent Parliaments are more essential than ever.”

has earned widespread praise. It was set up in March of this year. It was chaired by the Leader of the Opposition, had an Opposition majority and existed for two months. It was disbanded when the country's alert level was lowered.

Of course, trust and consent are not just about bipartisanship in Parliaments, as important as that is. It is crucially about the relationship between governments and citizens. The emergency public health measures adopted to tackle the pandemic rely, in large part, on the participation of the people – for example, social distancing or wearing face masks. Emergency provisions are most likely to be effective if they enjoy the respect and support of citizens.

A worrying feature of the pandemic which has been widely written about this year is that, in some countries, the response has served to accelerate existing trends towards authoritarianism, the weakening of civil society and the scapegoating of minorities. In such circumstances, strong and independent Parliaments are more essential than ever. We also know that it is often the poorest and most marginalised communities that have been hit hardest by the impact of the pandemic including its economic effects.

The CPA's Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures provide an invaluable set of tools to strengthen the work of Parliamentarians. The CPA's Model Law for Independent Parliaments is a resource to help enable Parliaments to exert their independence from governments in line with the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles. During this crisis, effective oversight and scrutiny are more important than ever. We have seen the passage of emergency legislation and budgets across Commonwealth countries. Post Legislative Scrutiny of such measures is a vital function of the parliamentary process.

Another feature of 2020 has been the truly remarkable adaptation by Parliaments to the crisis, with new modalities of working being adopted in many jurisdictions including online participation by Members in parliamentary proceedings. These changes have, of course, been an essential component of the public health response to COVID-19. Nevertheless, there will be an opportunity for Parliaments to consider retaining some elements of these changes on a permanent basis. Clearly, there are advantages and disadvantages to virtual meetings. Once social distancing measures are no longer required, a return to 'in person' plenary sessions is very likely to be the norm. However, for Committees, I could see some Parliaments opting for a hybrid approach in which Members who might be away – for example, in their constituency -



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could join Committee meetings remotely. Online platforms also have great potential for engagement with citizens, both for Parliaments in their general work and for individual Parliamentarians at a local level. However, there is the important issue of the 'digital divide' which must be addressed as part of these discussions so that citizens without digital access or technical know-how are not excluded.

The CPA itself has adapted our ways of working to the events of this year. We have now held two Virtual CPA Post-Election Seminars, in Anguilla and Dominica. In August 2020, our CPA Executive Committee met virtually. Since taking up this role in August 2020, I have had a large number of introductory virtual meetings with important stakeholders including the Speakers of Kenya, Bangladesh and Kiribati.

Against this background, I am pleased to have launched a consultation process on the CPA's next strategic plan. I am very keen to have input from Parliamentarians and Parliamentary staff across the Commonwealth as well as from external partners. The consultation runs until 27 November 2020 and you can find out more information at www.cpahq.org/cpahq/consultation.

The CPA's 2018 strategic plan set out to strengthen the organisation in several key areas – including the CPA Headquarters Secretariat's programmes, our finances and our IT. I pay tribute to the work that has been done since then which has seen real progress across all these areas.

Our next strategy will take us to the year 2025. What sort of CPA do people want to see in five years' time? In particular, how can we best provide Parliamentarians with the tools they need to be effective and, at the same time, be an influential voice standing up for the values of the Commonwealth as set out in the Commonwealth Charter? How can our excellent CPA Benchmarks

Above: Many Commonwealth Parliaments have adapted to the new circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic this year to ensure that parliamentary democracy continues, such as the hybrid sittings in a 'socially-distanced' House of Commons at the UK Parliament.

for Democratic Legislatures contribute even more to efforts to protect and extend good governance and independent Parliaments across the Commonwealth?

In my first three months in office, I have been highly impressed by the passion, commitment and experience of our Members across the CPA's nine regions. I believe that we can be proud of the work that we do but there is always scope for improvement and an imperative to ensure that we are meeting contemporary challenges. The purpose of the CPA 2025 consultation is to assist us in identifying our strengths and areas where we could improve as well as considering the external context and how best the CPA can work to meet its challenges.

2020 has been a very difficult year for communities and families across the world. It has reminded us of our inter-connectedness and has reasserted the importance of multilateral bodies, including the Commonwealth itself. It has also served to emphasise once again the scale of the challenge we face to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals across the board including health, education, climate change, poverty and inequality.

Strong, independent Parliaments will be essential if we are to rebuild in ways that are both sustainable and equitable. The CPA will endeavour to ensure that Commonwealth Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff have the support and resources needed to be as effective as possible during these critical times.

International Day of Democracy 2020 highlighted the importance of democratic processes during the current global pandemic as Commonwealth Parliamentarians speak about what democracy means to them

"As the world confronts COVID-19, democracy is crucial in ensuring the free flow of information, participation in decision-making and accountability for the response to the pandemic."
— United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres.

The United Nations has highlighted the importance of democratic processes to mark International Day of Democracy 2020. This year's International Day of Democracy was an opportunity to urge governments to be transparent, responsive and accountable in their COVID-19 response and ensure that any emergency measures are legal, proportionate, necessary and non-discriminatory. Democracy is built on inclusion, equal treatment and participation — and it is a fundamental building block for peace, sustainable development and human rights.

The unprecedented COVID-19 global crisis has resulted in major social, political and legal challenges globally. As states around the world adopt emergency measures to address the crisis, it is critical that they continue to uphold the rule of law, protect and respect international standards and basic principles of legality, and the right to access justice, remedies and due process.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) marked this special day and many of its 180 Branches in Parliaments and Legislatures across the Commonwealth celebrated International Day of Democracy 2020 with different events and activities. In her video message to Commonwealth Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon, spoke about the importance of democracy in the Commonwealth to mark International Day



of Democracy and encouraged Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth to reflect on what democracy means to them and share their experiences on this important day.

Commonwealth Parliamentarians from Cameroon, Australia, Canada, the Cook Islands and Ghana spoke about what democracy means to them in a series of video messages to mark International Day of Democracy that were shared on the CPA's social media channels @CPA_Secretariat and can also be viewed at www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube.

The Commonwealth Parliamentarians speaking about democracy included: CPA Vice-Chairperson and President of the New South Wales Legislative Council, Hon. John Ajaka, MLC; CPA Small Branches Chairperson and Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands, Hon. Niki Rattle; Hon. Osei Kyei Mensah Bonsu, MP, Majority Leader, Parliament of Ghana; and Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP, Parliament of Canada and CPA Canada Federal Branch Chairperson.

CPA Secretary-General joins virtual roundtable on global democracy to mark International Day of Democracy 2020

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Stephen Twigg marked International Day of Democracy 2020 by speaking at a virtual roundtable event on the 'State of Democracy Globally' organised for UK Members of Parliament and key stakeholders.

The CPA Secretary-General spoke about the role of the CPA in connecting Commonwealth Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to identify benchmarks of good governance to promote democracy and its role in working with both established and newly elected Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to provide continuing professional development in the wider pursuit of democracy in the Commonwealth.

The virtual roundtable was organised by the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (BGIPU) and chaired by former UK Foreign Office Minister and Chair of BGIPU, Rt Hon. Harriet Baldwin, MP. The session also included insights into global democracy from Anthony Smith, CEO of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy; Jon Davies, Branch Secretary and Chief Executive of CPA UK; and Rick Nimmo, Director of BGIPU.

The virtual roundtable provided the opportunity to engage Members of the UK Parliament on the key efforts undertaken by Commonwealth and international partners to advance



democracy globally and to resist attacks on democratic freedoms in upholding vital political rights. Attendees also had the opportunity to review what UK-based inter-parliamentary organisations are doing to bolster and defend democracy through their long-standing programmes and other forms of assistance provided internationally.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association hosts its second virtual post-election seminar in the Caribbean Region for newly elected Members of the House of Assembly of Dominica

Following the success of the first virtual Post-Election Seminar hosted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in Anguilla in July 2020, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat has hosted its second virtual seminar in the CPA Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Region. This seminar was due to take place in Dominica itself, however, since the start of the current Coronavirus global pandemic, the CPA has adapted to deliver its programmes virtually in order to ensure that its membership would continue to be supported during this time of uncertainty.

The CPA Post-Election Seminar for the House of Assembly of Dominica began with the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Hon. Joseph Isaac addressing the Members gathered in the Chamber and guests joining via video link across the Commonwealth. The Speaker welcomed the provision of the seminar for Members and expressed his wish that as a result, Dominica MPs will benefit from the sharing of knowledge and best practice.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg speaking via video link said: *"I know that Dominica plays a very important role in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and I'm delighted to use the opportunity of my opening remarks to reaffirm once again our collective commitment to the Commonwealth values that are more important today than perhaps they have ever been before."*

The keynote address was given by the Prime Minister of Dominica, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit, who said: *"I have always said that to be effective in politics you must first love people. It is critical that as Parliamentarians we remain guided by that basic tenant in all that we do in this House. It is therefore imperative that we as Parliamentarians gather over the coming days to learn and discuss the ways to improve the quality of life of the people whom we represent. When you have concluded the seminar on both the days concerned, I assure you that you will be equipped with a better understanding of what it means to be a Parliamentarian."*

The virtual CPA Post-Election Seminar in Dominica took place from 23 to 25 September 2020 with workshops equipping new and returning Parliamentarians with an in-depth understanding of parliamentary practice and procedure, and the relevant skills required of them in their new roles as representatives. The programme was carefully tailored to the requirements of the Dominica House of Assembly and included the following topics: *the role of Committee Systems, administration and financing of Parliaments, public outreach and engagement*, and much more. The programme was specifically designed for both new and returning Parliamentarians and two additional workshops were held for female Members of Parliament and for Government Ministers.

A key highlight of the seminar was the notable contribution from the Prime Minister of Barbados, Rt Hon. Mia Amor Mottley, QC, MP, who joined the Prime Minister of Dominica, Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit; the Premier of Anguilla, Dr Ellis L. Webster; and other delegates via video link at the workshop for Government Ministers on how to effectively balance important government business with parliamentary and constituency responsibilities.

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson, Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA also joined the



virtual CPA Post-Election Seminar in Dominica at the workshop session on *Empowering Female Voices in Parliament* by sharing her personal experiences as a woman Member in the National Assembly of Pakistan and her role as the CWP Chairperson. She was joined in the session by guest speakers, Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP, Chair of the CPA Canada Federal Branch and Hon. Akierra Missick, MP from Turks and Caicos.

Further notable contributions to the seminar included:

- Hon. Josephine Connolly, MP (Turks and Caicos) and Mr David Christopherson (former Member of Parliament of Canada) sharing the values and challenges in relation to raising issues around amending legislation and sharing best practice on how to maximise the opportunities.
- A session on Committee Systems, with a special focus on Public Accounts Committees (PACs), was delivered by the PAC Chair from the Parliament of Bermuda, Hon. Patricia Gordon-Pamplin, MP together with the PAC Clerk, Ms Jo Corkish from the Parliament of the Isle of Man and Hon. Akierra Missick, MP (Turks and Caicos).
- Examples of good and bad practice in relation to the appropriate behaviours and standards expected in Parliament were outlined by the Speaker of the Parliament of Bermuda, Hon. Dennis P. Lister, JP, MP. The Clerk of the House of Representatives of Trinidad & Tobago, Ms Jacqui Sampson Meiguel similarly shared her perspective during this workshop.
- Hon. Josephine Connolly, MP (Turks and Caicos), Deputy Robert Ward (Jersey), and the Clerk of the Parliament of Bermuda, Mrs Shernette Wolffe each gave insights into the various services and resources utilised by their respective Parliaments, for the purpose of political research.

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat worked closely with the Speaker Emerita of Dominica, Hon. Alix Boyd Knights; the current Speaker of Dominica, Hon. Joseph Isaac and the Clerk of the House of Assembly, Mr Daniel James to deliver the virtual CPA Post-Election Seminar.

To see highlights videos of the opening ceremony please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube.

CPA Secretary-General highlights the importance of the Commonwealth's active involvement in UN Sustainable Development Goals at Annual Gladwyn Lecture

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretary-General Stephen Twigg has highlighted the role that the Commonwealth can play in delivering the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Speaking at the Annual Gladwyn Lecture on 11 November 2020, organised by the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, the CPA Secretary-General focused particularly on quality education (SDG4) and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16). The UN SDGs were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

During his virtual lecture, the CPA Secretary-General emphasised the urgency of the SDGs, invoking the call of UN Secretary-General António Guterres for a 'decade of action'. COVID-19 may have very damaging impacts on global efforts to meet the 2030 target, but the CPA Secretary-General was resolute that the deadline should not be extended, reiterating that it is the duty of governments, Parliaments and civil society to keep the SDGs at the forefront of the global agenda, despite the pandemic.

On education, the CPA Secretary-General highlighted five key priorities: funding, a focus on quality, collaboration, innovation and leaving no one behind. The Commonwealth has already shown leadership in these areas. At the Commonwealth Conference for Education Ministers in 2018, governments and organisations came together to pledge their commitment to the SDGs and, since the pandemic began, the Commonwealth of Learning has shown excellent leadership by supporting quality remote education through technology.

Education, peace and good governance are not simply linked, but interdependent, the CPA Secretary-General said. A safe, well-governed society is imperative for the delivery of quality education, whilst an educated society is well-placed to deliver peace, justice and good governance. It is through collaboration across the Commonwealth that we can jointly advance these values, which are central to the Commonwealth Charter.

Discussing the CPA's contribution to education and good governance, the CPA Secretary-General pointed out the professional development and training that the CPA provides to Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, which is a practical, effective way to build robust democratic institutions. With many governments having adopted emergency powers in response to COVID-19, well-informed Parliamentarians, alert to potential abuses of power, are key to the protection and progression of SDG 16. Another example of the CPA's work towards the SDGs is the upcoming CPA Virtual Commonwealth Youth Parliament, which seeks to combine SDG 4 and SDG 16 by giving young people the opportunity to learn about the institutions of democratic government.

The Annual Gladwyn Lecture, named in honour of Lord Gladwyn, the former patron of the Council and a distinguished diplomat, focusses on an educational topic of relevance to the Commonwealth. Sonny Leong CBE, Chair of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, gave the introduction to the event and Dr Neil Kemp OBE managed the Q&A session. The vote of thanks was given by Alastair Niven LVO OBE.



New dates announced for 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Canada

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the CPA Canada Region have announced that the new dates for the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC), hosted by the CPA Canada Region in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, will be 21st to 27th August 2021. The annual conference has been postponed to August 2021 due to ongoing travel restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic and the quarantine restrictions in place between different countries. The annual conference is the largest annual gathering of Commonwealth Parliamentarians, which brings together Parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and decision makers from across the Commonwealth for a unique conference and networking opportunity.



The announcement follows the decision of the CPA Executive Committee, meeting virtually from 19-22 August 2020, which approved the postponement of the 65th CPC to August 2021. The President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (2019-2021), Hon. Anthony Rota, MP, Speaker of the House of Commons at the Parliament of Canada said: "The CPA Canada Region is pleased to announce the new dates for the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference to be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia in August 2021. We look forward to welcoming Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth next year and to re-committing to the CPA's aims of advancing parliamentary democracy and implementing the enduring values of the Commonwealth." The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was last held in Canada in August-September 2004.

During the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, there will also be a number of additional conferences and meetings including: 38th CPA Small Branches Conference; workshops for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP); 65th CPA General Assembly; meetings of the CPA Executive Committee; Society of Clerks at the Table (SoCATT) meetings. The annual conference will also hold elections for the new Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee for a three-year term.

All eligible CPA Branches will be contacted with further information and invitations to the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Canada. For further information and updates please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/65CPC.

CPA Small Branches network hold virtual Steering Committee meeting to discuss future activities

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Small Branches Steering Committee met virtually on 14 October 2020 to discuss the strategic plan and future activities for 2021. The CPA Small Branches network represents the Parliaments and Parliamentarians in the smallest jurisdictions in the Commonwealth and brings them together to discuss their unique challenges and to identify their particular needs and requirements in parliamentary strengthening, development and cooperation.

The CPA Small Branches Steering Committee meeting was chaired by the CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands, and Committee members attending included Hon. Joy Burch, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Australian Capital Territory (representing the CPA Australia Region); Deputy Lyndon Trott from Guernsey (representing the CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region); Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Yukon (representing the CPA Canada Region); and Hon. Hima Douglas, Speaker of Niue Assembly (representing the CPA Pacific Region). The meeting was also attended by the CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg.



CPA Secretary-General meets virtually with Commonwealth Parliamentarians in the Isle of Man

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg had the opportunity to meet virtually with members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Isle of Man Branch at their Executive Committee meeting. The CPA Secretary-General met with the President of Tynwald, Hon. Stephen Rodan MLC and the Speaker of the House of Keys and Chairman of the CPA Executive Committee, Hon. Juan Watterson, SHK, along with members of the CPA Isle of Man Executive Committee, who were holding their meeting at the Legislative Buildings in Douglas.

The CPA Secretary-General congratulated the CPA Isle of Man Branch for taking such an active role as a Branch of the Association and on the many innovations in Tynwald that have made for a more effective and modern legislature. The CPA Secretary-General also spoke of the support to the smallest jurisdictions in the Commonwealth and the work of the CPA Small Branches network. The CPA is unique in that it works with national, sub-national, provincial, state and territorial legislatures in the Commonwealth – including the Crown Dependencies and the Overseas Territories - to network, share good practice and innovative work to strengthen the role of Parliament as an institution.



A valuable resource in strengthening the capacity of Parliaments – CPA Small Branches publishes Handbook on Lay Members for Commonwealth Parliaments

The CPA Small Branches network has launched its new Handbook on Lay Members for Commonwealth Parliaments, which serves as an information resource for encouraging the adoption of lay members into parliamentary systems. Small legislatures are often met with the challenge of having fewer Members than are required to form Parliamentary Committees, boards and commissions; bodies that are crucial in ensuring that Parliaments function effectively in their role of holding the Executive to account. This new handbook is unique in that it is one of the first of its kind to explore this issue and delve deeper into the various ways in which the adoption of lay members into a parliamentary system can eliminate such problems. Although this handbook is more notably for the benefit of small states and territories, its contents are no doubt a valuable resource for all Commonwealth jurisdictions.

The handbook defines a lay member in the parliamentary context as "a member of the public (not considered a Member of Parliament), invited to sit on a Committee, board, Commission (or other unit within the parliamentary system), in order to bring an independent and external perspective to deliberations." In exploring what a lay member is and the various challenges and motivations behind adopting them, it is hoped that there will be a greater understanding of what benefits this change may bring.

The CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands welcomed the handbook promoting the adoption of lay members, stating "For forty years, the CPA Small Branches network, has sought to find effective and practical approaches to help strengthen the capacity of Parliaments within smaller jurisdictions and territories across the Commonwealth. This Handbook, a first of its kind to look at this issue, will be an invaluable asset to those legislatures that wish to learn more about the nature of lay members and how they can effectively be incorporated into parliamentary systems across the Commonwealth."

To download a copy of the CPA Lay Members Handbook please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/smallbranchesresources



Helping Parliaments to become 'disability confident' in their communications with persons with disabilities – CPA launches its Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines for Parliaments

The Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network has published two new toolkits as part of its Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines. These toolkits on 'Facilities of Inclusion' and 'Linguistic Principles' provide guidance to Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures on how to enhance and sensitize their communications with persons with disabilities.

Parliamentarians with disabilities are represented in national, sub-national, provincial and territorial Parliaments across the Commonwealth and across the nine Regions of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). The CPwD network provides a means of supporting the capacity of Parliamentarians with disabilities to be more effective in their roles and helping to improve the awareness and ability of all Parliamentarians. The network also encourages all Parliamentarians to include a perspective mindful of disabilities in all aspects of their role - legislation, oversight and representation - and helping Parliaments to become institutions that are sensitive to issues surrounding disabilities.

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat has conducted research amongst its membership of 180 Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures as well as non-governmental organisations to create these two Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines for Parliaments. The guidelines provide various examples of best practices that can be adopted by both Parliaments and Parliamentarians in order to continue to ensure that they sensitively address Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff with disabilities.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg welcomed the launch of the new inclusive guidelines for Parliaments and said: "The inclusion of Parliamentarians with disabilities is of vital importance to advancing parliamentary democracy across the



Commonwealth and is a key priority of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The two new guidelines will support CPA Branches in becoming more 'disability confident' in their communications with and about Parliamentarians with disabilities across the Commonwealth."

The Speaker of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly and CPA Executive Committee Regional Representative for the CPA Canada Region, Hon. Kevin Murphy, MLA contributed the forewords for the two guidelines and said: "Giving a meaningful voice to persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Parliaments and Legislatures leads to improvements in the following three functions of a Parliament. Oversight will be more comprehensive; representation will be more equitable; and legislating will be more sensitive."

Please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/disabilitiesresources to download a copy either of the Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines.

Helping Parliaments to legislate on disabilities and ensure that they represent, educate and advocate for persons with disabilities – CPwD launches two new videos to highlight the issues facing people with disabilities

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) has published two new videos through its Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network to highlight the issues facing people with disabilities. These new videos on legislation and representation, education & advocacy provide guidance to Commonwealth Parliaments and their Members on how to enhance these aspects of their institutions.

The first video on legislation features New South Wales Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, Hon. Gareth Ward, MP and Liesl Tesch, AM, MP, both of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.

"We don't want to see government raise the floor but remove the roof and encourage everyone to achieve their full potential" - Hon. Gareth Ward on the perspective of the New South Wales Parliament on disability legislation. "The voice of the advocacy agencies and the groups that we have contact with from our previous lives and bringing that voice into the Parliament is really important [with] policy development" - Liesl Tesch on the role of non-governmental actors in the process of policy development by Parliaments.

The second video on representation, education and advocacy features Dr Floyd Morris, former President of the Senate of Jamaica and leading disability rights advocate. "There are over 1 billion persons with disabilities living across the world and out of that over 80% of them reside in developing countries so [they are] a significant constituent" - Dr Floyd Morris on persons with disabilities as a constituent worldwide. To view the new videos please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube.



Commonwealth Parliamentarians examine the response of Parliaments to global crises at virtual 49th CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference

Over fifty Parliamentarians from more than thirteen Commonwealth countries and territories joined a virtual conference to discuss the response of Parliaments in times of crisis with a special focus on the current COVID-19 pandemic. The 49th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) British Islands and Mediterranean (BIM) Regional Conference, was hosted by the Parliament of Malta and CPA Malta Branch with a virtual meeting from 24 to 25 September 2020.

The regional conference was opened by the Speaker of the House of Representatives at the Parliament of Malta, Hon. Angelo Farrugia, who spoke of the need for Parliaments and Parliamentarians to learn from each other in these challenging times for all jurisdictions. The Speaker highlighted the importance of how Parliaments react to the current crisis and how it presented an opportunity to rethink how Parliaments operate. The current global crisis had enabled technological innovation to flourish and Parliaments had adapted their procedures to continue to operate.

The Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon, addressed the opening of the regional conference and said: "I believe this is the first CPA BIM Regional Conference to be held remotely and its success is testament to the ingenuity of the Parliament of Malta and the wider region. I imagine we will be harnessing these new technologies increasingly in the coming months as face to face meetings still remain difficult in many parts of the world." To read the CPA Chairperson's full opening address please turn to page 286.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg attending his first CPA Regional Conference since his appointment said: "The impact of COVID-19 has been felt across the Commonwealth on health, on the economy and on public finances. COVID-19 has impacted on everyone, but it has hit some harder than others. It reminds us why the work of the CPA networks – the CPA Small Branches network, the Commonwealth Women



Parliamentarians, and the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities - are of such vital importance." The CPA Secretary-General also spoke of the importance of the UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals which focus on tackling poverty, addressing climate change and environmental degradation and promoting positive good governance around the world.

Delegates attending the virtual BIM regional conference participated in workshops on a number of topics including: the parliamentary responses to COVID-19; the economic impact of COVID-19 on small jurisdictions; the impacts of COVID-19 on women and men in policy-making; examining if the innovations introduced in response to COVID-19 made Parliaments more resilient.

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) British Islands and Mediterranean Region held a meeting of the regional Steering Committee during the virtual regional conference and the BIM regional conference also incorporated the CPA BIM Region's Annual General Meeting.

CPA Secretary-General addresses virtual seminar for new and returning Jamaican Parliamentarians

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Secretary-General Stephen Twigg recently welcomed new and returning Parliamentarians in Jamaica to the start of a five-week virtual seminar which will support Members to effectively carry out their duties. The seminar, organised by the Jamaican Houses of Parliament in partnership with the Management Institute for National Development (MIND) and supported by the CPA Headquarters Secretariat, will focus on training Members of Parliament to legislate and scrutinise in a transparent, accountable and efficient manner.

The CPA Secretary-General praised the organisers of the seminar for their commitment to parliamentary development through continual engagement with the CPA, noting the planned Jamaican delegation to the upcoming Virtual Commonwealth Youth Parliament. He told attendees that post-election seminars "are such an important part of the way in which Parliaments can prepare for the challenges that lie ahead."

During the virtual seminar, which will take place once a week over the course of a five-week period, Parliamentarians will study topics including the constitutional and legal framework of parliamentary democracy, Standing Orders, practices and committees, public finance and management. Hon. Jose Vanterpool, MP, a Member of the Anguilla House of Assembly gave a virtual presentation at the Jamaica Post-Election Seminar on the Constitutional and Legal Framework of Parliamentary Democracy. The Member has recently completed a CPA professional development programme.



Commonwealth Parliamentarians attend Virtual Global Parliamentary Forum with World Bank and IMF to discuss development priorities

More than 200 Parliamentarians from 82 countries including many Commonwealth Parliamentarians attended the four-day Virtual Global Parliamentary Forum from 12 to 15 October 2020 on the occasion of the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and IMF. The World Bank Group organised forum was the first of its kind and was themed 'Achieving a green and inclusive recovery post COVID-19'. The event gave the opportunity to exchange and learn about actions Parliamentarians could take in their own Parliaments to pave the way for a resilient and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Forum highlighted that poverty and inequality are rising rapidly, with the first increase in poverty in over 20 years threatening to push more than 100 million people into extreme poverty by the end of this year. The World Bank President, David Malpass emphasised the importance of Parliamentarians in helping the World Bank define its development priorities, implement evidence-based policies, and translate its global mandate to country outcomes. The IMF Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva emphasised that Parliamentarians speak for the people which is precisely what makes their voices so powerful.

The Global Parliamentary Forum was timely in connecting Parliamentarians with development experts and leadership from the World Bank Group and IMF as well as their global peers during the COVID-19 pandemic to share effective policies and practices for improved outcomes at the country level. The role of Parliamentarians has grown ever more important during COVID-19 as they have passed emergency legislation and stimulus packages, performed crucial checks and balances to oversee their governments' handling of the crisis, and implemented reforms. The main global challenges discussed throughout the forum included debt transparency, jobs creation, empowering women and girls, transitioning towards a green economy, and partnering with the private sector.

Hon. Marlene Mahaloo Forte, MP, Attorney-General of Jamaica said: "As Members of Parliament, we know first-hand what is happening on the ground. We see the people whom we are elected to represent, how their lives are impacted, and what has been unleashed upon them in the wake of COVID-19."

During the forum, it was highlighted that the World Bank's broad and fast response to COVID-19 had provided US\$160 billion in commitments and support being delivered in 111 countries for emergency health response, as well as the IFC's US\$4 billion platform for the development of vaccines for developing



countries. The IMF has also provided US\$100 billion in support for 81 countries and debt relief to the 29 poorest countries.

UK Parliamentarian, Liam Byrne, MP, Chair of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and IMF said: "These are important discussions we as Parliamentarians will steward over the next year. Zero-ing in on the purpose of finance is a good place to start in order to make ethical, green and inclusive investment decisions."

The momentum of the forum continued with a special session co-hosted by Women Political Leaders in honour of Beijing +25 entitled 'Women Leading Politics and Development'. The session brought together a high-level panel of female parliamentary leaders, including former CPA Chairperson, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh, to discuss how women's increased political participation can lead to a more inclusive and resilient COVID-19 recovery and foster sustainable growth for flourishing societies.

The Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MP (Pakistan) spoke on the panel and said: "The one thing that the pandemic has taught us and brought us together on is, in terms of women's issues, there's no better time than now to stop calling them 'women's issues' and to start calling them 'national issues'."

The discussion panel demonstrated that female participation in politics will bring more inclusive policymaking and leadership styles to the table. Parliaments with greater female participation tend to pass laws to improve gender and human capital outcomes, and their inclination for collaboration, empathy, compassion, and building unity across party lines have shown to be particularly impactful in the face of COVID-19.

Commonwealth Parliamentarians recognise importance of public financial oversight at virtual CAPAC Workshop for Public Accounts Committees

Over 85 Commonwealth Parliamentarians from the CPA Asia, Africa, Pacific, Caribbean and British Islands and Mediterranean Regions attended a virtual Westminster Workshop on Public Financial Oversight from 19 to 23 October 2020. The workshop was targeted for the Chairs, Members and Clerks of Public Accounts Committees across the Commonwealth and was hosted by the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC), which is administered by the CPA UK Branch. Spread over four days and split into two programmes for different regions of the Commonwealth, each programme explored important functions of Public Accounts Committees, including questioning, holding governments to account, and reports and recommendations. Sessions examined what makes an effective Public Accounts Committee, with keynote addresses from Meg Hillier, MP, Chair of the UK Parliament's Public Accounts Committee, and Gareth Davies, Auditor General and Comptroller of the UK National Audit Office.



Commonwealth Parliamentary Association webinar emphasises the role of building effective partnerships with Commonwealth organisations in achieving its strategic goals for 2022-2025

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has emphasised the key role of building effective partnerships with Commonwealth organisations in achieving the organisation's strategic goals for 2022-2025 during a CPA webinar event. The CPA webinar on 'The Commonwealth in 2025: Building effective partnerships' was attended by over 40 Commonwealth organisations and partners representing a wide range of disciplines.

The Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon, opened the webinar and spoke of the challenging times that all organisations are facing with the external flux and uncertainty of COVID-19. The CPA Chairperson said: "The CPA will prioritise its strategic objectives and will continue to work closely with partner organisations in the Commonwealth."

The webinar event provided an opportunity for the recently appointed CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg, to meet virtually with representatives of many Commonwealth organisations and external partners and to discuss the upcoming work of the CPA and in particular, the new CPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The CPA Secretary-General spoke of his commitment to engage and consult with as many Commonwealth partners as possible during the planning for the new CPA Strategic Plan and said: "The CPA recognises



the importance of consultation with organisations at local and regional level as well as national and international."

The webinar also held a Q&A session facilitated by the Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, Dr Joanna Newman MBE which saw questions from a number of different Commonwealth organisations including the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), the Commonwealth Equality Network and the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network.

To hear the CPA webinar visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association provide sponsorship for Commonwealth Music prizes

The Commonwealth Youth Orchestra and Choir (CYO) has announced the winners of two of its landmark music contests – the Commonwealth Music Competition and the Commonwealth Children's Choir Competition 2019. The results were delayed until recently due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

It was announced that Ian B. Wilson, a secondary school headteacher from the United Kingdom, was the winner of the Commonwealth Music Competition 2019, which was sponsored for last year by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Wilson's winning composition, A Commonwealth Childhood, has recently been published by Kingfisher Music and he said: "I'm delighted to be chosen for the Commonwealth Music Competition Prize 2019. The CYO is a cause close to my heart. I feel full of pride whenever I watch the children from our school singing in the children's choir and it has given me huge pleasure to write for them."

The three joint winners of the Commonwealth Children's Choir Competition 2019, also sponsored by the CPA, were also announced as Bishop Anstey Junior School Choir from St. Ann's Valley on the outskirts of the Trinidad and Tobago capital, Port of Spain; Creative Saint Helena from the South Atlantic Island; and Star School Glee Choir, a primary school in the London Borough of Newham in the United Kingdom. As part of their entry in the Commonwealth Children's Choir Competition, the choirs were asked to write 500 words about the importance of music in their communities.

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Stephen Twigg, one of CYO's Commonwealth Honorary Vice-Presidents, said: "I am delighted that the CPA has been able to support the Commonwealth Youth Orchestra and Choir for many years, particularly given the value of its community engagement at grassroots levels through music within the Commonwealth. I would like to congratulate Ian B. Wilson and the three children's choirs on their awards. I look forward to continuing the CPA collaboration with CYO in educational projects involving young people in all 54 nations of the Commonwealth."



Above: Commonwealth Music Competition prize winner, Ian B. Wilson pictured outside the UK Parliament with the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Stephen Twigg.

Commonwealth Speakers emphasise the importance of independent Parliaments during COVID-19 pandemic at CPA webinar for Presiding Officers

Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers from Australia, India and the Maldives have emphasised the importance of independent Parliaments and Legislatures, especially during the current COVID-19 global pandemic, during a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association webinar.

The CPA webinar for Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth provided a timely and unique opportunity to examine the nature of Parliaments as independent institutions in the context of COVID-19. The webinar was introduced by Matthew Salik, Head of Parliamentary Development at the CPA Headquarters Secretariat who spoke about the launch of the CPA's Model Law for Independent Parliaments earlier this year and the CPA's work with Commonwealth Legislatures on establishing Parliamentary Service Commissions and ensuring that Parliaments can remain robust, effective and independent institutions.

Hon. Kate Doust, MLC, President of the Legislative Council of Western Australia spoke about how the COVID-19 global pandemic had placed an increased spotlight on the way that Parliaments function and had accentuated the already considerable internal and external pressures that Parliaments face. She also thanked all parliamentary staff who had worked so hard to ensure that Parliaments could continue to function during the pandemic.

Hon. Hitendra Nath Goswami, MP, Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly and CPA Executive Committee Member for the CPA India Region spoke of the challenging times that the Parliaments in India are facing with the uncertainty of COVID-19, but that scrutiny of legislation had continued as most Legislatures had robust procedures in place. He also highlighted that many Parliaments were facing challenges in maintaining public interaction with their Legislature, as often the public are not currently allowed into the Chamber – however many Parliaments have utilised technology to overcome these challenges.

Hon. Mohamed Nasheed, GCSK, Speaker of the People's Majlis of the Maldives spoke about how many Parliaments across the Commonwealth have responded quickly to adjust existing practices and procedures to be able to continue their scrutiny of the Executive and of legislation. The provision of new technologies to facilitate hybrid Parliaments was a huge factor in the continuation of parliamentary procedures and the Speaker



highlighted that the Maldives were the first Parliament in the Commonwealth to sit virtually at the outset of the pandemic.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg spoke at the webinar about how Parliaments in the long-term can establish policies, strategies and powers to give them the necessary resources to function independently and effectively. As democratic institutions, Commonwealth Parliaments must ensure public confidence in their ability to manage their affairs and to conduct their essential legislative, oversight and representative functions, especially during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The CPA Headquarters Secretariat is providing assistance to Commonwealth Parliaments through its programme of seminars and its toolkits, like the Model Law for Independent Parliaments and the CPA's Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures, provide Legislatures with a robust framework of parliamentary procedures.

The CPA webinar for Speakers and Presiding Officers will be available for the benefit of all Commonwealth Parliaments on the CPA's YouTube channel at: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube. To download a copy of the CPA's toolkit on Model Law for Independent Parliaments please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/modellaw.

Two virtual CPA roundtable events engage with Commonwealth High Commissioners and Overseas Territories representatives in London

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters Secretariat held two virtual CPA High-Level Roundtables with Commonwealth High Commissioners based in London and representatives of the Overseas Territories to discuss key issues facing the Commonwealth.

During the first roundtable, participants heard from the newly appointed CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg and guest speaker, Her Excellency Winnie Kiap, High Commissioner of Papua New Guinea to the UK on the topic of the 'Challenges Facing Island States in the Commonwealth'.

The second virtual roundtable discussed the topic of 'Working Towards a Common Future' ahead of the CHOGM 2021 conference in Rwanda next year and attendees heard from guest panellists, Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP, CPA Canada Federal Branch Chairperson and Member of the Canadian House of Commons; Her Excellency Rethabile Mokaeane, High Commissioner of Lesotho to the UK; and CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg.

During the roundtable, the CPA Secretary-General also launched an 8-week consultation with key stakeholders on the CPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the future direction for the organisation.



Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretary-General addresses the Senate of Kenya Liaison Committee on the importance of Parliamentary Committees during COVID-19

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Stephen Twigg has addressed the Senate of Kenya's Liaison Committee via video link on the work of the CPA and the role and operations of Parliaments and their Committees in the COVID-19 and post COVID-19 period.

The Senate of Kenya Liaison Committee's annual workshop brings together the Chairs of the 17 Committees of the Senate with Members and external stakeholders to review their activities and to identify opportunities for further development and improvement. The two-day workshop was opened by Rt Hon. Senator Kenneth Lusaka, the Speaker of the Senate of Kenya. The workshop session chaired by Senator Mohamed Faki Mwinyihaji, Chairperson of the Sessional Committee on Delegated Legislation and Senator for Mombasa County welcomed the CPA Secretary-General to address delegates.

The CPA Secretary-General spoke to Senators of the benefits of modern technology and the key role that it had played this year in Parliaments across the Commonwealth, through still being able to function and fulfil their civic duties. He also stressed the importance of acknowledging the digital divide in the Commonwealth, and the fact that so many citizens with no or limited connectivity had not benefitted from increased use of technology.

The essential role of Commonwealth Parliamentarians in scrutinising legislation was emphasised by the CPA Secretary-General, particularly in the context of emergency legislation and COVID-19. Engaging with citizens and civil society was key and it is crucial for Commonwealth Parliamentarians and governments to champion transparency and ensure emergency legislation is both proportionate and time limited.

The CPA Secretary-General concluded by focusing on the vital role of Parliamentary Committees in holding the Executive to account, building expertise in particular thematic areas, proposing and reviewing legislation and applying scrutiny to the use of public funds.



CPA Secretary-General highlights Commonwealth Parliaments' legislative responses to COVID-19 during Rule of Law webinar

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg has spoken at a webinar to discuss the legislative responses of Commonwealth Parliaments during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The CPA Secretary-General spoke about the responses from some of the CPA's membership of 180 Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures to the need for urgent and effective legislation during the current pandemic while recognising the challenges of maintaining legislative oversight and scrutiny.

The CPA Secretary-General also emphasised the vital role of Parliamentarians during the current global pandemic and the balance that legislators have to strike between enabling governments to tackle the crisis whilst still providing effective oversight. In particular, the CPA Secretary-General highlighted the role of Post-Legislative Scrutiny and the importance of emergency measures being both proportionate and time limited.

Organised by the Rule of Law Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the webinar focused on the different legislative approaches adopted by Commonwealth countries in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect which enforcement measures, including emergency legislation, have had on constitutional rights and on the separation of powers.

The panel discussion was moderated by Marie-Pierre Olivier from the Commonwealth Secretariat's Rule of Law Division and panellists included: Justice Jody Kollapen, Judge of the High Court of South Africa and Chairperson of the South African Law Reform Commission; Tushar Mehta, Solicitor General of India; Mr Frank Ally, Attorney-General of the Seychelles; Geoff Lawn, President of the Commonwealth Association of Legislative Counsel, Western Australia.

The panel also discussed good practice in enforcing public health legislation while respecting the rule of law and explored how Commonwealth countries could respond to similar public health challenges once the pandemic is over.



Parliament of Bermuda celebrates its 400th anniversary

The Parliament of Bermuda has celebrated its 400th anniversary. Bermuda's first Parliament met in 1620 in St. Peter's Church in St George, known as 'Their Majesties Chappell', which is also the oldest Anglican church outside of England. The gavel used by the Speaker at the House of Assembly in Hamilton was made from a cedar tree that still exists in the churchyard of St Peter's. Bermuda's Parliament has been in continuous existence since 1620 and it has the distinction of being the oldest Parliament in the Commonwealth outside of Westminster in London.

A number of events planned for the 400th anniversary of the first sitting of Bermuda's Parliament had to be postponed in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, however some events including a Youth Parliament, an art competition, a public debate and a commemorative stamp launch did take place. The theme of the anniversary is 'Bermuda: Future Matters'.

Recently a ceremony was held to mark the occasion of the 400th anniversary and the Throne Speech for the new session of the Bermuda Parliament attended by the President of the Senate, Mrs. Joan Dillas-Wright, MBE, JP and the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Hon. Dennis P. Lister, JP, MP as well as the Premier of Bermuda, Hon. E. David Burt, JP, MP and many current and former Speakers and Members of Parliament.

The Governor of Bermuda, H. E. John Rankin read a message of congratulations from Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth and Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, to the people of Bermuda which said: "On the occasion of celebrations to mark the 400th anniversary of the Bermuda Parliament, I have pleasure in sending my warm congratulations to the people of Bermuda. I have fond memories of my visits to the islands, including in 1953 when I opened Parliament on the first stop on my Commonwealth tour and most recently in 2009. I send best wishes on this auspicious occasion and for the future."



The historic nature of the occasion was noted in the Throne Speech read by the Governor of Bermuda, which said, "The Legislature convenes today within earshot of the venue where, 400 years ago, an Assembly, composed only of white men, was summoned to meet by the then Governor Nathaniel Butler. In these four centuries, the walls of those chambers in which the Legislature has met could speak of debates on slavery, universal adult suffrage, the end of capital punishment, human rights and all manner of laws meant to 'serve and regard the public.' Today, black and white, women and men represent a people whose vote is of equal value across an Island that has surpassed the likely dreams of those who met in that first Assembly, only 11 years after the Sea Venture happened upon this uninhabited North Atlantic paradise. More than ever, the yoke of representative service weighs heavily on those who have taken it up. Four hundred years later, the Commonwealth's oldest representative body outside the United Kingdom's Parliament will be summoned again to deliberate and act in unprecedented ways in these unprecedented times to meet equally unprecedented challenges."

Bermuda's Parliament is one of the oldest known Legislatures in the Commonwealth and dates back to 1st August 1620. On that day the then incumbent Governor, Nathaniel Butler, summoned a General Assembly to convene at St Peter's Church in the town of St George. The Assembly was the forerunner of Bermuda's present House of Assembly. Since 1684, when direct administrative control of Bermuda's affairs was transferred to England, Bermuda's Governors, representing the authority of the Crown and acting on instructions, have played a major Executive role in Bermuda until the 1960s when, following the Constitutional Conference in 1966, Bermuda moved from a representative to a responsible form of government.

In 1815, Hamilton replaced the town of St George as the capital of Bermuda. In the same year, the Parliament, the courts and all public offices were transferred to the new capital. The first gathering of the Assembly took place in the Town Hall on Front Street in Hamilton on 13th January 1815. In 1826 the Assembly moved to the Sessions House on Parliament Hill, which has been the meeting place for the Parliament of Bermuda ever since.

UK Parliament marks 70th anniversary of the re-opening of the House of Commons

The Parliament of the United Kingdom recently celebrated the 70th anniversary of the re-opening of the House of Commons. The second chamber at Westminster had been destroyed during the Second World War by a series of incendiary bombs.

On the nights of 10 and 11 May 1941, bombs rained down on the Palace of Westminster and the roof of Westminster Hall was set ablaze. The fire spread from the House of Commons chamber to the Members' Lobby, causing the ceiling to collapse. By the following morning, all that was left of the Victorian chamber was a smoking shell. The Luftwaffe attack was the biggest air raid on London during the Second World War, resulting in



thousands of casualties and damage to the House of Lords chamber, the Clock Tower, Westminster Abbey and the British Museum. The destruction of the House of Commons chamber forced Members of Parliament to relocate to the grandeur and space of the House of Lords. From there, in 1943, then UK Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, decreed that the House of Commons chamber must be 'restored in all essentials to its old form, convenience and dignity', insisting that the crowded intimacy of the old chamber must be replicated. 'We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us,' he said famously.

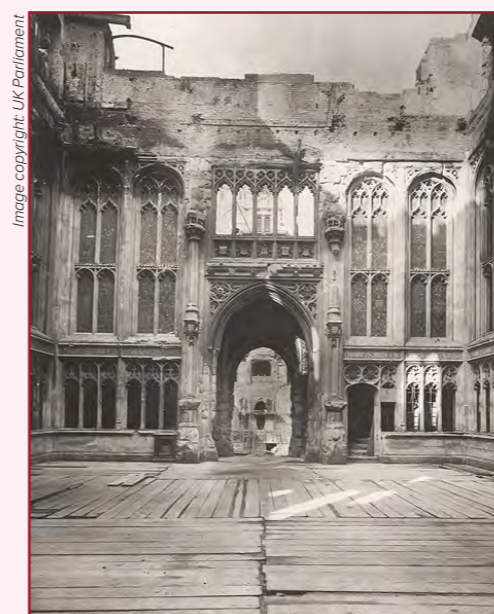
The recreation of the House of Commons would be an emblem for the future as symbolised by the incorporation of the surviving but burnt arch from the old chamber at its entrance. Work on the new chamber began in May 1945 and it would cost more than £2m - almost twice the original budget. Architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott was faced with the challenging task of fitting additional room for MPs and visitors above an already limited space of 21 x 14 metres at floor level. He also had to hide the latest heating, ventilation, lighting and telephony equipment behind a gothic surface, which would blend with the rest of the Victorian Palace of Westminster.

When he saw the finished chamber in October 1950, *The Times'* architecture correspondent praised Scott's technical achievements, but dismissed much of his styling as incongruous and clumsy pastiche. But, 70 years later, Scott's Commons chamber is much admired, especially for its outstanding craftsmanship, as exemplified by the Speaker's chair. It is seen by some as a masterpiece of 'neo gothic'.

King George VI presided over the opening of the new chamber on 26 October 1950, with a grand and high-profile ceremony in Westminster Hall, attended by hundreds of Parliamentarians and overseas dignitaries. Twenty-nine Commonwealth Speakers were in attendance in the House of Commons gallery, as MPs occupied their new green benches for the first time. Some 56 gifts from Commonwealth countries – such as dispatch boxes from New Zealand and the inkstands from St Lucia – were and remain a strong and tangible symbol of the strong connections with the UK Parliament and the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy. Hansard records show that on 26 October 1950, 'the House met in the new Commons chamber at a quarter past ten o'clock'.

Reflecting on the 70th anniversary of the re-opening of the House of Commons chamber, the current Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP said: "Our parliamentary democracy has and will endure everything that is thrown at it, be it bombs or - as we are experiencing now - COVID. The challenges may be very different, but 70 years on - with our chamber filled with screens and tape to enable virtual participation and keep us socially distanced - we continue to demonstrate flexibility and resolve to ensure democracy continues."

Source: UK Parliament.



Left: The bomb damaged UK House of Commons in 1941.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association CPA Photo Gallery



New Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretary-General holds his first bilateral meeting with the Commonwealth Secretary-General

The role of Commonwealth partnerships was emphasised when the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC and the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Stephen Twigg held their first virtual meeting to discuss ongoing partnerships, closer Commonwealth collaboration and strengthening ties between the two organisations.

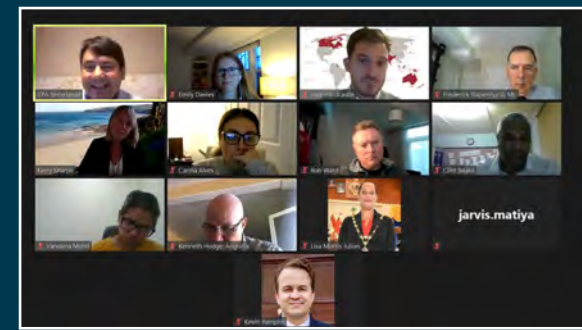
Also joining the virtual meeting were: Dr Tawanda Hondora, Adviser and Head, Rule of Law Section; Luis Franceschi, Deputy of the Governance & Peace Directorate; Deputy Head of Commonwealth Secretary-General's Office, Senyo Agbohlah; and Emily Davies, the CPA Secretary-General's Head of Office.



CPA Australia Region hold virtual meeting with new CPA Secretary-General

As part of the new CPA Secretary-General Stephen Twigg's induction programme, he has been meeting with all of the nine CPA Regions and Regional Secretariats. The CPA Secretary-General recently met virtually with the CPA Australia Region at a meeting that was attended by Speakers, Members and Clerks from across the Region as well as the CPA Vice-Chairperson, Hon. John Ajaka, MLC,

President of the New South Wales Legislative Council and the CPA Executive Committee Regional Representative, Senator Hon. Scott Ryan, President of the Senate of Australia.



Commonwealth Parliamentarians from small jurisdictions at CPA fundamentals course with McGill University

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Stephen Twigg joined Commonwealth Parliamentarians on the CPA Small Branches Fundamentals Course with McGill University, Canada during their online residency week. The CPA Secretary-General gave a presentation on the work of the CPA and gave his reflections as a former Parliamentarian.

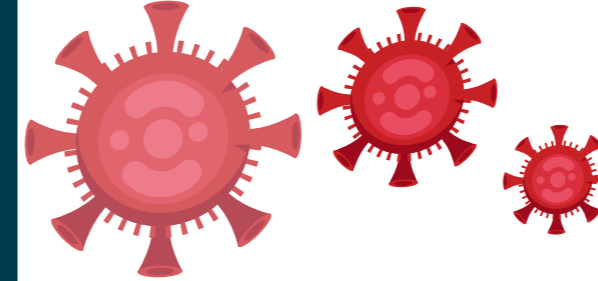
CPA Secretary-General meets former UK diplomat who worked for the Commonwealth and United Nations

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Stephen Twigg met with Sir Peter Marshall recently to discuss issues around the Commonwealth and the United Nations. Sir Peter is a former Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General (1983-1988) and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations in Geneva (1979-83) as well as many other roles. He recently wrote an article for *The Parliamentarian* on 'The Commonwealth and the United Nations: 75 years of international symbiosis' to mark the UN's 75th anniversary.



Virtual CPA Trustees meeting held

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association held a 'socially-distanced' meeting of the CPA Trustees chaired by the CPA Treasurer, Hon. Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin, MP (Malaysia) and attended by the CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg, the CPA Finance Director, Paul Townley and new Trustee, Deputy Lyndon Trott (Guernsey) who joined the meeting via video link.



CPA TOOLKIT FOR COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTS ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND DELIVERING PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

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www.cpahq.org/cpahq/coronavirus

The outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and its spread to at least 180 countries has consequently plunged many Parliaments and Legislatures across the world into a state of emergency. Commonwealth Parliaments and Parliamentarians are grappling with many different issues both to implement the emergency health measures during this global pandemic while at the same time looking at new ways to conduct debates, scrutinise and pass legislation, hold parliamentary committees and question the actions of their governments.

THE 'CPA TOOLKIT FOR COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTS AND LEGISLATURES ON THE COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) PANDEMIC AND DELIVERING PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY' provides various measures and recommendations that can be adopted by both Parliaments and Parliamentarians in order to continue to deliver on the Legislatures' role of scrutinising legislation and delivering democracy during a global pandemic.



COVID-19

DELIVERING PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

CPA Toolkit for Commonwealth Parliaments



COVID-19 is a global outbreak of a new coronavirus. It is a highly contagious virus that causes respiratory illness ranging from the common cold to severe disease. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new virus that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC is a global outbreak of a disease. A pandemic is a global outbreak of a disease that spreads between people in many different countries. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a highly contagious and spreading virus that has caused a global pandemic. It was first identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019, and the COVID-19 outbreak was characterised as a pandemic by WHO.

COMMON SIGNS OF INFECTION include:

- Respiratory symptoms
- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties

SYMPTOMS include:

- Increase in acute respiratory infections
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Kidney failure
- Death

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS include:

- Physical health of the general population
- Physical health of the general population for those who suffer from the virus, but also through lack of knowledge on how to prevent and control spreading measures
- Social care provision, particularly for elderly or vulnerable groups
- Mental health, particularly through stress, anxiety, and isolation
- Health services - a global pandemic will have a high effect on the public health services in any jurisdiction.

PREVENTION includes:

- Washing of hands frequently and thoroughly with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
- Maintain social distancing: Maintain at least 2 metres (6 feet) between people, especially those who are coughing or sneezing.
- Practice respiratory hygiene: This means covering mouth and nose with either the bent elbow or a tissue when people are coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth: Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to the eyes, nose or mouth.

ECONOMIC IMPACT includes:

- Customers buying less
- Travel industry decline
- Growth could stagnate
- Financial markets decline





SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARLIAMENTARY ENGAGEMENT: EXPANDING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOR DEMOCRATIC GROWTH



Hon. Justin B. N. Muturi, EGH, MP is the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya and the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the CPA Africa Region. He holds the record as the longest serving Chairperson of the Public Investments Committee (PIC) in the Parliament of Kenya. Prior to his election to Parliament in 1999, he served in the Kenya Judiciary for more than 15 years, rising to serve as Principal Magistrate and Chairperson of the Kenya Judges and Magistrates Association.

Social media has been, and to continues to be, a key information tool in the ever-evolving digital era. It holds great influence in the various spheres of life whether social, economic or political. Over time, social media has developed into an avenue not only for entertainment but also for conveying and gathering information, for advertisement, including political advertisement as well as for targeted mass mobilization.

'Social media' describes a collection of online systems that allow for the production, storage and distribution of user-generated content allowing for the creation of a virtual social space where groups of users can come together in synchronous and asynchronous interactions. These interactions can be structured (such as threaded responses to blog posts that are moderated), semi-structured (e.g. the discussion amongst groups of friends within extended Facebook social networks), or unstructured in nature (such as in Twitter, where topics are not 'owned' but tied together through the *ad hoc* application of hashtags that can be used to locate and link together posts by a variety of different users).¹ The main social media platforms include *YouTube*, *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*.

In the political sphere, the use of these platforms has made great impact in the development and entrenchment of political

democracy around the world. From mass mobilisations during elections to vote-pitching by political parties and players, the influence keeps evolving day by day. Politicians especially, have noted the peculiar nature of opportunities that are provided by the various platforms and have taken advantage of these opportunities to advance their political agenda. Political parties use social media to directly and continuously engage with voters. Comparatively, social media provides greater reach and can amplify and mobilise political opinions in the remotest geographical areas.²

The conventional, or what is now called mainstream media, has experienced reduced emphasis especially from political fronts. The fact that social media offers a direct link to the masses serves as an advantage over the often perceived biases in the mainstream media where editorial discretion guides what information is passed on to the masses. Cognisant of this, politicians have invested in formidable social media strategies, well assured that the information they intend to pass is conveyed directly to the targeted mass without any editorial oversight, save for the various community guidelines that ensure conformity to set rules and standards on such aspects as hate speech, violence and terrorism, misogyny, etc.

The world over, access to internet continues to grow

exponentially. In a 2015 report, the UN noted that information and communication technology infrastructure are global and are considered two of the most important drivers of development and growth.³ According to the Communication Authority of Kenya, up to 90% of the population in the country has access to mobile telephony and the attendant internet connectivity. Out of these, more than three-quarters have smart phones or other gadgets that can readily access the internet. This, therefore, puts social media as a potential information tool to a large number of the population.

In Kenya, technology, and more so social media, has

"In the political sphere, the use of these platforms has made great impact in the development and entrenchment of political democracy around the world. From mass mobilisations during elections to vote-pitching by political parties and players, the influence keeps evolving day by day."

been used by political players, including politicians, civil society organisations and state agencies, for different purposes. In seeking to elaborate the usage, several aspects will be considered for this article. These are civic education and the development of democracy, political mobilisation and some emerging issues.

As stated above, social media has played a key role in the development of democracy and civic education. Due to the massive reach of these platforms, more people are reached by the conveyed messages on political participation, and human and civil rights compared to those reached through the more conservative media channels.

In Kenya for example, NGOs and other non-State organisations have continuously raised public awareness in the management of public affairs. The *International Budget Partnership of Kenya* for example provides, through their *Facebook* page, an analysis of the budget making process and follows the implementation of each budgetary cycle. This helps in raising awareness and also providing a potential oversight avenue for Parliament by the public. The citizenry is made aware of the processes involved, their input and roles, if any. Through such mechanisms, the populace becomes knowledgeable and is able to question government institutions on the use of public funds.

Other organisations including *Mzalendo.com* follows the activities of Parliament and sends out 'real-time' tweets and posts on matters under deliberation. As an open Parliament, we are amenable to channels that seek to provide relevant information to the people on the activities of the Houses of Parliament.



The Parliament of Kenya.

Similarly, the Parliament of Kenya makes use of its own channels to inform and educate the public on its activities. Through the Parliament of Kenya *YouTube* channel, we are able to provide live coverage of parliamentary proceedings which can be accessed 'on the go'. We also make use of *Facebook* and *Twitter* to update the public on the various activities of Parliament including the progress and effect or interpretation of any resolutions made.

These channels are also used as tools for public participation and for receiving views from the public as a requirement of *Article 118* of the Constitution of Kenya.⁴ Every Bill or subsidiary legislation is uploaded to the channels that are linked to the institutional website. The public is then able to access and make submissions if any on the matters before Parliament.

We have noted great interest from the public with increased participation.

Social media has also been used for mass mobilisations and consolidation towards specific causes. Notably, the importance of social media is not simply that it provides alternative channels for institutional political actors' communication in structured election periods but also acts as an avenue where public opinion is formed, and where interventions in public opinion are possible by an increasing array of institutions and individuals.⁵

Most of these channels make use of audio-visual presentations which are appealing and catchy to many. Pictures, said to be worth 1,000 words, are used to convey chunks of information to the public. Some politicians in Kenya have great social media following, running into the millions, and this offers access to them.

For the public, the fact that one is following a certain political figure gives the impression of a 'one-on-one' relationship thus becoming key opportunities for mobilization. These has been used to move the public toward certain directions for example in voting or supporting a social cause.

For example, when the northern part of the country was hit by famine in 2011, an initiative was established by the Kenya Red Cross Society to raise funds to supplement Government efforts to support the affected families. Using social media, politicians and corporates alike mobilized the public and this saw the raising of more than 100 million shillings. In the political realm, the last two general elections have seen greater voter turnout, and this may partly be attributed to the mobilisation in the social media.

Having noted the above, several emerging issues arise with regards to the use of social



media especially within the political front. To start with, there is a need to exercise caution in the information that goes out to the public. While facilitating civic engagement for a more participatory democracy, social media is often misused for propaganda, hate speech, and disinformation campaigns, which can undermine the pluralistic foundations of democracy.⁶

“While facilitating civic engagement for a more participatory democracy, social media is often misused for propaganda, hate speech, and disinformation campaigns, which can undermine the pluralistic foundations of democracy.”

In the endeavour to educate the people, politicians especially, should ensure there is no disinformation. Fact-checking then becomes an important emerging issue within the social media platforms. It is an open secret that politicians would sometimes make use of disinformation for their own selfish political gains. A legislation will be passed but the interpretation that is made is distorted or out-rightly wrong to create a predetermined notion. This misinformation may be used to pass hate speech, targeted violence and terrorist activities. It is therefore fulfilling to note that some of these platforms, like *Facebook*, have elaborate fact-checking frameworks that ensure that only the properly verified information is posted. Sadly, the current frameworks do not prevent misinformation but provide mechanisms for pulling down already posted data. You will note that sometimes, the information is usually already accessed by thousands of people before the fact-checking and pulling down happens.

It is therefore incumbent on all users, especially political players to ensure only the right information is passed.

As the Parliament of Kenya, we continue to monitor the social media activities and information relating to the institution and correcting any wrong information. However, as a proactive endeavour, we have embarked on opening up the legislative activities and involving all stakeholders to ensure that all resolutions of the Houses and their implications to the country are known to avoid misinformation from other quarters.

Finally, Parliaments have to continue adapting to the digital developments in the world. Whereas it may be said that social media operates as a community with its own rules of informality, Legislatures should not lose their practices and traditions when engaging in the platforms. They should therefore seek to conform to social media rules, while maintaining institutional credibility. In the end, it is for Legislatures to be agile and to

make use of the opportunities offered by the platforms to advance their constitutional mandates.

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EMBRACING SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN PARLIAMENTS

How the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has opened new doors in the pandemic era.



Hon. Nathan Cooper, MLA is the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. He was first elected in 2015, representing the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. In 2019, he was elected to serve as 14th Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and he also serves as Chair of the Special Standing Committee on Members’ Services. Prior to election, he was Chief of Staff and Director of Legislative Affairs for the Wildrose caucus. Previous to this, he served two terms as councillor for the town of Carstairs. He is a strong supporter of the Rotary Club’s charitable and youth activities.

Pervasive. Ubiquitous. Inescapable.

These words can easily describe the impact of digital technologies on human populations globally. In a relatively short period of time such technologies have become deeply entrenched in our lives, in how we communicate with each other, in how we work and play, and in influencing and affecting a multitude of other facets of our daily lives.

Social media, likewise, has changed the way many people connect and access information. Initially something of a curiosity, a way to share pictures and connect with friends, social media has become a multi-trillion dollar business with billions of users worldwide. It is also an effective means of disseminating information, whether used in business or commercial contexts or by governmental and non-governmental organisations. In the parliamentary context social media is an influential tool for elected officials to connect with the public and provide a level of accessibility that the public has come to expect.

In this environment, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has taken a leading role in embracing technology to engage, educate, and inform. Focusing on adapting to the rapidly expanding digital world helped to prepare us for the substantial challenge presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. As direct result, during the spring

2020 pandemic shutdown our Assembly managed to sit for 52 days – the most in Canada – without a major public health incident.

Engaging online

Social media has undergone a considerable evolution since its inception. As social media platforms have evolved over the past 20 years, the darker side of these communication tools has also emerged. No longer are they simply vehicles for posting pictures and connecting with ‘Facebook friends’. In addition to privacy concerns, the rise of social media has allowed and encouraged fake news, hate speech, and even foreign interference in elections.

In spite of these serious concerns, social media offers tremendous value in reaching a large number of people from across a diverse demographic spectrum and a wide geographical area. It provides an opportunity for Parliaments and Parliamentarians to connect with the public and to highlight parliamentary traditions and purposes in a meaningful way. Using social media platforms not only breaks down barriers but also enables Parliamentarians to speak directly to citizens and engage in a two-way conversation.

Currently at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, social media is used to broadcast parliamentary proceedings. Detailed analytics allow us to see how many people are reached, what they are

watching, and what they are talking about while they are watching. In the past these conversations were taking place in coffee shops and around the dinner table; with social media we not only see these discussions, but we can join them.

“Social media has undergone a considerable evolution since its inception. As social media platforms have evolved over the past 20 years, the darker side of these communication tools has also emerged. No longer are they simply vehicles for posting pictures and connecting with ‘Facebook friends’. In addition to privacy concerns, the rise of social media has allowed and encouraged fake news, hate speech, and even foreign interference in elections.”

“Content is now being created with social media in mind to facilitate this engagement process. For example, in Alberta those who are interested in democratic traditions are afforded a behind-the-scenes glimpse into both the legislative process and the Legislature building itself through a video series that is available on several social media platforms.”

The Legislative Assembly of Alberta also uses social media as a way to share information about parliamentary proceedings, committee activities, and programs taking place at the Legislature and has been doing so since 2012. However, the modern institution of Parliament has a responsibility to do more than share information, whether theoretical or practical. Increasingly, it is necessary to engage directly with citizens to help them understand parliamentary processes, as well as the citizen’s vital role in our democracy. In light of reports about citizen disengagement, it is imperative that those responsible for promoting democratic institutions employ the most relevant and effective means possible in an effort to re-engage citizens. In this regard, social media



The Legislative Assembly of Alberta is the legislature for the province of Alberta, Canada, and is located at the Alberta Legislature Building in the provincial capital of Edmonton.

engagement is more than helpful; it is indispensable.

Content is now being created with social media in mind to facilitate this engagement process. For example, in Alberta those who are interested in democratic traditions are afforded a behind-the-scenes glimpse into both the legislative process and the Legislature building itself through a video series that is available on several social media platforms. These videos exemplify how the use of technology, combined with personal storytelling, can inform, educate, and even entertain Albertans about parliamentary institutions.

Videos have been developed to demystify the Assembly, using modern technology to make this content accessible to a wide and diverse audience.

Speaker’s Corner

The ‘Education’ section of Speaker’s Corner, a feature on the Legislative Assembly of Alberta’s website, addresses a number of topics, ranging from an explanation of what the Order Paper is to videos on parts of the Legislature Building that the public may not visit in person. For instance, one video shows viewers a glimpse of the South Members’ Lounge, which is a Members-only area of the Legislature that we have dubbed the ‘Peace Lounge’ because Members from both the Government and Opposition caucuses meet there to discuss what is going on in the Chamber.

In addition, we host a *Facebook Live* video event, offering viewers the opportunity to tour the Chamber, highlighting interesting elements such as the portraits, the Table, the Speaker’s dais,

and the Mace, and ending off by showing viewers a little known area within the Legislature, the Speaker’s suite.

For those interested in policy, we offer a brief explanation of how budgetary estimates are considered in Committee, in an attempt to illustrate how it is Parliament, and not government, that plays the key role in determining whether the government is supplied with the funding it requires.

Lastly, a short video describes the tradition of the parliamentary plant that sits on the Table in the Alberta Chamber. In the video we relate a story of how the tradition extends far beyond Alberta’s history, to the 17th century and the House of Commons at Westminster, where a Member of Parliament is said to have requested that a plant be placed on the Table so that he

would not have to look across at the ‘lying bastard’ on the other side.

Another series of videos, titled ‘*Who Makes Democracy Work*’, contains brief interviews with Assembly staff to explain their roles and illustrate that there are many people who work behind the scenes to support the Speaker and other Members in performing our roles in the Assembly. The videos found under the ‘Events’ series provide Albertans with a front row seat to ceremonial and celebratory events taking place at the Legislature. Many of these videos are also posted to the Speaker’s *Twitter* and *Facebook* accounts.

Users of social media expect to be informed in a succinct and direct way. It is our goal to make the information easily understood by all Albertans of different age groups, with different backgrounds, and from diverse walks of life by discussing topics in a direct, conversational way. Adding a little bit of humour or injecting some enthusiasm to convey our passion for the subject matter also translates well in this medium. In sharp contrast to the complex and text-intensive discussions of the parliamentary authorities, these videos are brief and to the point. Indeed, accessibility is very much about the message itself and the way content is expressed and delivered.

Perhaps most importantly, the information communicated on social media platforms must be available to users in a timely way. While content may remain on social media platforms for quite some time, the material at the time it is posted should strive to reflect what is currently relevant. Immediacy and relevancy are key expectations of social media users. Developing fresh content that is engaging and even interactive is vital.

Making technology work for us

In the COVID-19 pandemic era, programs such as *Skype for Business*, *Teams*, *Webex* and *Zoom* have become common in workplaces and homes around the world. Our Legislature is no exception, as video conferencing is now integral to facilitating parliamentary operations.

Fully adopting this technology was not optional for us. While many workplaces shut down during the early days of the pandemic, it was quickly evident that the people’s business must continue unabated.

In Alberta, Committees of the Assembly have permitted Members to participate via teleconferencing for several years. Starting in April 2020, these Committees transitioned to hybrid meetings, in which Members participated in

person as well as through video and teleconferencing. By allowing some Members, staff and others participating in Committee meeting to work remotely, we have been able to free up Committee room space and meet strict physical distancing health protocols. In addition, the full adoption of video conferencing allows the Assembly to broadcast Committee meetings live on a dedicated television channel and via the Internet. It is another way for us to improve transparency while demystifying the process for the public.

Numerous hybrid Committee meetings have taken place since the Standing Committee on Public Accounts convened its first hybrid meeting in April 2020, one of the first meetings of its kind in Canada during the pandemic. The early feedback has been positive, the technology has worked well, and the Members have been receptive to this new way of conducting meetings.

While digital technologies have been indispensable, the real credit for keeping our Legislative Assembly functioning goes to the Assembly staff that rose to the challenge presented by COVID-19. Modern technology is not always simple. In the case of hybrid meetings, our staff had to integrate new processes with Hansard, broadcasting and Committee operations. They were able to do so and troubleshoot any glitches prior to meetings. At the same time, other staff members worked with Members to develop new Committee protocols, ensuring Members could fully participate in debate, raise points of order, and vote in person or remotely. Training and mock meetings were also part of the preparations for this new way of doing things.

None of this would have

been possible without professional, knowledgeable and motivated Assembly staff. In that vein, I must recognise Dr Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and Research Services, for his invaluable assistance in crafting this article.

We live in a digital world

It has been said that “*technology is neither inherently helpful nor harmful. It is simply a tool ... [The] effects of technology depend upon how it is wielded.*”¹

Here in Alberta, we have been able to use social media and other digital platforms to figuratively open our doors to the entire world, providing the public with new opportunities to engage and learn about our democratic institutions. At the same time, we have been able to harness modern technology to support our Members and to literally keep our doors open during the pandemic era. As Parliamentarians, our role extends beyond debating and legislating. We must all work to defend, maintain, and build faith in our democratic institutions. Technology is a great tool to do just that.

In Alberta, we believe that our parliamentary institutions should not and cannot stand apart from society. More than ever before, the digital world is a part of society. As servants to our Members and to the wider public, we have a duty to both recognize and embrace the potential this technology offers.

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The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta with children visiting the Legislature on Canada Day.



DOES THE DIGITAL PANDEMIC OF MISINFORMATION THREATEN OUR BEST HOPE OF ENDING THIS CRISIS?

The Chair of the UK Parliament's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Media reflects on how social media has responded to the current global pandemic.



Chris Elmore, MP is a UK Parliamentarian representing the constituency of Ogmore in South Wales. He was first elected in 2016 and is currently a Shadow Minister for Scotland and Opposition Whip. He is also a Member of the House of Commons Procedure Committee, Committee of Privileges and Committee on Standards. He is the Chair of the UK Parliament's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Media.

A mere 12 months ago, nobody across the globe could have imagined how much our world was about to change and the extreme level of disruption that was set to plague all our lives. Bringing an end to the COVID-19 pandemic is an ambition every country now craves. Sadly though, we know that there are no 'silver bullet' solutions to this crisis and the future has scarcely looked less certain. Individuals, families, and businesses in the UK and across much of the world are unable to plan from one week to the next, many have suffered intolerable loss, and governments are struggling to keep control of the spread of COVID-19. The world is waiting with bated breath for news of a vaccine – which could be our best hope of bringing an end to this pandemic. Yet mounting evidence suggests that a new, digital pandemic of misinformation about the safety of vaccines now threatens our best hope of an exit strategy. Social media lies at the heart of this phenomenon and it now poses an acute challenge for Parliamentary democracies across the Commonwealth and the world as a whole.

Last month, I led a debate in the UK Parliament on the issues surrounding the so-called 'anti-vax' movement because I believe that government inaction on misinformation now poses a direct threat to our public health and to our economic recovery. As Chair of the UK Parliament's All-Party Parliamentary Group on

Social Media, I've been keenly keeping my eye on how much misinformation is being spread on social media platforms – and crucially, what the social media giants are doing about it. You don't have to look far to realise that some corners of these platforms are rapidly becoming a sewer of misinformation which risks eroding public trust in any potential coronavirus vaccine, before one is even identified.

The anti-vax movement is nothing new though – in fact, it's been around since the days of smallpox. Yet what makes this strain of thought important in 2020, is the exponential levels of oxygen being given to ill-informed falsehoods about vaccines online.

Recent polling from the Centre for Countering Digital Hate lays bare that 31% of the British public would now be hesitant to have a Coronavirus vaccine if one becomes available. A University College London study has also shown that barely half of people in the UK say they are 'very likely' to get vaccinated. This doesn't merely present a risk for those individuals – it presents a risk to each and every one of us, our loved ones, and our wider communities. The CCDH's study showed that so-called 'anti-vax' social media accounts now have 58 million followers and this number is growing rapidly. The 147 largest accounts have amassed over 7.8 million new followers since 2019, representing a staggering increase of 19%. Facebook is

overwhelmingly the leading host of such potentially dangerous information, but the platform is by no means alone. Across YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and various other popular social media sites, this virus of misinformation now presents a real threat for our ability to control the real, and deadly, Coronavirus.

When we look globally, the seriousness of this issue cannot be overstated. Last year, the World Health Organisation officially categorised vaccine hesitancy as one of the top ten global health challenges we now face. In a global study conducted in June of this year, 13,000 people from 19 different countries were surveyed and almost three in every ten respondents stated that they either wouldn't take a COVID-19 vaccine or were neutral; indicating hesitancy. It's clear that the problems associated with the anti-vax movement are far from being confined to the UK's shores and, as Parliamentarians, we have a shared responsibility to ensure robust and decisive action is taken to counter it.

I do recognise that some of the social media companies have taken steps to combat anti-vax misinformation. Last month, Facebook announced that they will be banning anti-vax adverts from its platform. But banning ads alone simply isn't good enough as it ignores the ballooning number of organic posts and high-profile oxygenators who are willing to spread them. Mark



Zuckerberg himself has said that Facebook will not actively take down anti-vax misinformation and conspiracy theories, leaving a void which the instigators of increasingly popular anti-vax Facebook groups are more than happy to fill. This flagrant reluctance to act represents an abdication of the duty of care social media companies should have to protect their users. It also underlines why government action is now urgently needed to create a level playing field across all sites.

Conversely, the commitment YouTube has recently made to remove false content about vaccines is to be commended – and sets a bar which the other platforms must meet. Facebook and Twitter have also started to flag information as disputed, but this needs to go much further. Information that is shared that is palpably false or potentially dangerous needs to be removed; regardless of whether it has been posted by a President, a Formula 1 driver, or a normal person going about their everyday life. The role high-profile public figures have played in at best, not dispelling, and at worst, outright endorsing anti-vax content is truly alarming. Since this pandemic began, we've seen Madonna, Lewis Hamilton, Kanye West, Novak

Djokovic, and other influential names become embroiled in endorsing the anti-vax movement. While I understand that some of these people have since been forced to row back on the comments they have made or the content they have shared, all too often this is only after much of the damage has already been done.

Given that there are too many social media companies who are failing to take sufficient action, it falls to us as Parliamentarians to compel our governments to step in. In the UK, we've been waiting for well over a year now for new legislation to be brought forward to combat so-called 'online harms'. We've now been told that the UK Government won't start the passage of this legislation through Parliament until early 2021. This latest delay means the new protections any new law will bring will come far too late to have an impact on the corrosive anti-vax misinformation we now see spreading at an exponential rate online. It therefore seems obvious that the UK Government – and governments around the world – need to take emergency measures to compel the social media giants to remove blatantly false anti-vax

misinformation from circulating on their platforms. The UK Government has been widely criticised as being far too slow in responding to an ever-growing number of implications this pandemic has brought. This is an issue which they – and governments across the globe – simply cannot afford to be too slow in responding to.

Aside from the action that now needs to be taken by the social media companies themselves, governments must do much more to improve the public's awareness of vaccine safety. I've called on UK Government Ministers to overhaul their communications strategy and bring forward a holistic, six-month plan to better inform the public about the stringent and robust clinical safeguards that are in place prior to the approval of any vaccine. Many of the questions I've received from constituents since campaigning on this issue have centred on arguments stating that 'vaccines should be subject to scrutiny'. This is of course true, but this demonstrates that that the UK Government is systematically failing to promote the rigorous steps that have to be followed before any new medicine or vaccine can be approved. This is a problem which I am sure

is not exclusive to the UK and governments around the world must do much more to work collaboratively on strategies which can help to improve their populations' collective knowledge of this.

The ubiquitous nature of social media and the shared endeavour we all have to finally end this pandemic underscores the importance of Parliamentarians working together to tackle issues like this. I would be very keen to engage with other members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association on any campaigning or legislative progress other countries may have been making on this issue. Our world has grown increasingly divided over the past decade and the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the perilous risks of such division. Our countries entered this crisis together and we must help one another to free ourselves from the constraints it has brought with it. While at first the anti-vax movement may seem obscure, I now firmly believe that it is now an issue which threatens to undermine our ability to end this public health and economic crisis. By working together and taking firm and decisive action, we can ensure that future needless deaths are avoided and that our economies can recover as swiftly as possible.

The UK Parliament All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Media works to drive policy change that maximises the positives and mitigates the negatives of social media. Building on the findings of the #StatusofMind report by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH), the APPG on Social Media was established in March 2018 and responsibility for the APPG was passed from RSPH to the UK Safer Internet Centre in July 2020. For more information visit www.saferinternet.org, [uk/appg-social-media](https://twitter.com/appg-social-media) or follow @socialmediaAPPG on Twitter.



DOES SOCIAL MEDIA BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN PARLIAMENT AND THE PEOPLE IN PAKISTAN?

Can social media rightly be called a ‘game changer’ in bridging the gap between Parliament and the people in Pakistan?

Ms Nighat Paristan is Deputy Director of the Research Wing at the National Assembly of Pakistan.

Social media has revolutionised the modus operandi of parliamentary business and is making strides in promoting public participation in decision making process. In budding democracies, Parliaments are relatively latecomers to the world of social media, but with the passage of time, Parliaments have established their foothold in the digital space, otherwise known as the “vulnerable space for formal political institutions.”

In democratic structures, social media is considered as an effective tool for encouraging ‘social participatory governance’. Social media users are challenging administrative norms and structures and dictating political discourse around the world. Political changes, such as those in the Middle East since 2010, can indeed be seen as a direct result of the use of social media, and are a veritable ‘Facebook Revolution’. During the past decade, social media has started playing a key role in circulating news through digital platforms, beyond national borders, across social, cultural and political niches.

Social media has not only raised the visibility of Parliaments considerably but has also started working as pressure group on the workings of the Parliament and the performance of Parliamentarians. This has resulted in making political processes more democratic,

transparent and participatory.

Professor Tim Unwin in his paper, ‘Social Media and Democracy: Critical Reflections’¹ categorised the prospect provided by digital platforms as sharing liberty, space time liberty and access liberty, which is dramatically changing the contour of public accessibility to their MPs. Social media is challenging the traditional pattern of politics as an important forum of communication. Moreover, it is a disseminator of information and facilitator of political discussions. The Parliament of Pakistan has already started to establish itself in the digital space, to reap the benefits of the accessibility provided by the social media in the changing political spectrum.

Citizen journalism is on the rise in Pakistan. Youngsters are turning towards the internet and local citizen journalism portals and independent blogs to express their opinions. Traditionally, the work of Parliament might have been reported through media commentary; however, due to the wide range of social media platforms available today, Honourable Members of Parliament are tweeting and posting comments to social networks direct from the Chamber and Committee rooms, as and when events unfold, which is helping in mobilizing people around a particular cause or legislation.

The passage of the *Zainab Alert Response and Recovery Act, 2020* in the Parliament of Pakistan is a recent example of social media activism and its role in strengthening the legislative process.

Accessibility and transparency on social media

The Parliament of Pakistan has made advances in facilitating online accessibility. Digital platforms have made Parliament and its Members more transparent and accessible.

Through social media, the public can directly follow different political viewpoints on a debate and in some cases, directly contribute by communicating with Members of Parliament in ‘real time’. Due to the easy accessibility of

“In democratic structures, social media is considered as an effective tool for encouraging ‘social participatory governance’. Social media users are challenging administrative norms and structures and dictating political discourse around the world.”



social media, many constituents are interacting with their elected Member with great ease.

In this regard, the social media team of a former Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan shared their experiences. These included instances when the constituents would tag pictures of broken bridges and roads, flooded streets and parks. The social media team would reach out to the concerned quarters with these complaints and sorted things out right away. The constituents would then be reached out for feedback on the issue’s resolution and the same would be shared on social media.

A study conducted in Pakistan investigates social media as a tool of transparency and good governance in Gilgit Baltistan. This study concluded that social media penetration enables the people and different groups to disseminate information about corruption

and a politician’s wrong doings and it has the potential to create increased transparency; a prerequisite of accountability.²

Pakistan’s demographics and social media statistics offer an excellent explainer on the rationale behind the communication strategies of the leading political parties for the 2018 elections. The population of 210 million in Pakistan boasts over 150 million mobile phone users which include 57 million 3G/4G subscribers. While Facebook has over 35 million users in Pakistan, the most popular website is YouTube closely followed by Google. WhatsApp, Viber, Instagram and Twitter are other popular messaging apps and platforms.

With 64% of Pakistan’s population aged under 30 years old and a voting age

of 18 years, it was evident that Pakistan’s young voters held the key to the political future of their country and social media would be a key communications channel to reach this audience. On the flip side, compared to older generations, the political views of young people were often less rooted in the political history of Pakistan and they were more disposed to political campaigns via social and electronic media. The 2018 election in Pakistan also witnessed a marked shift in the focus of political parties to online campaigning to cater for this vast number of younger voters.³

E-campaigns on social media

In growing democracies, election campaigns are being designed around the increased accessibility to voters that has been made possible by social

media. For citizens, social media served as a mouthpiece to voice their opinion. It enhanced their awareness of political rights and duties and enabled underprivileged voters to confront and question those they voted for.

Digital platforms have dramatically changed the flow of information, the development of political opinion, the behaviour of political parties and election campaigns. During the 2018 elections in Pakistan, the leading political party withdrew the candidature of a strong candidate, when a video surfaced online where he was being stopped by a group of youngsters, during his election campaign, as critical reaction to his performance in the constituency. Social media is indeed helping in evolving a more informed and politically participative culture. The expression of popular will



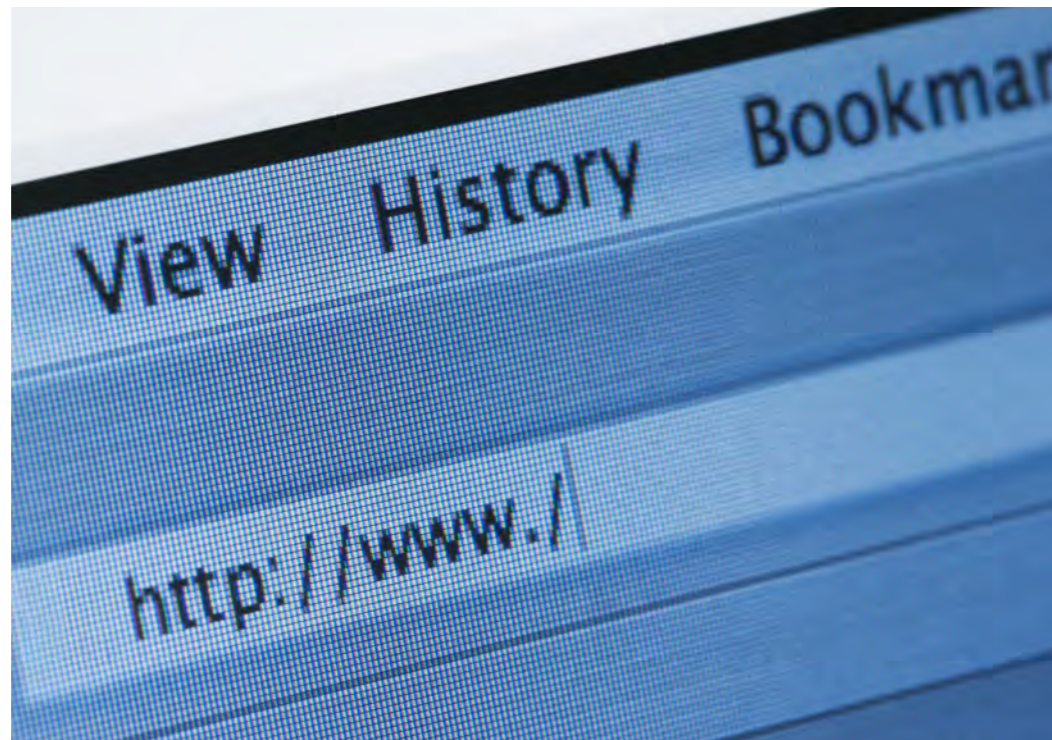
through social media in the 2018 elections has cultivated a new image of voters in the eyes of Pakistani politicians.

The victory of the incumbent Prime Minister of Pakistan in the 2018 election is credited to the effective usage of social media platforms. The youth activism in the 2018 General Elections is an undeniable fact that also shows the close relationship between social media and the emerging democratic trends in Pakistan. Pankaj Mishra has argued that social media is changing Pakistan; it provides direct access for voters to approach candidates and politicians. While free campaigning on Facebook and other social media forums allowed candidates to avoid costs and confines of old media.⁴

Social media has transformed the formal mode of delivery of parliamentary business and procedure. During the COVID-19 crises, the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament of Pakistan held virtual meetings, and the Speaker of the National Assembly and Members of Parliament engaged and participated in these virtual sessions on important national and international issues from their respective Chambers.

Social media influences on Parliamentary business

Recently in an unprecedented event, the National Assembly of Pakistan's Standing Committee on Human Rights held a special meeting on the plea of Pakistani women journalists, who were facing a backlash and threats on social media. A senior politician in the Sindh Provincial Assembly extended his apology to a female colleague after mounting pressure from the public, especially women via social media, for using profane language against her on the



floor of the House.

Although social media is making it easier for people to have a voice in government to discuss issues, to route for causes, and to hold leaders accountable, but the excessive flow of information through social media comes with its own risks. Excessive information and the intensification of communications do not necessarily make people more able and better qualified to take decisions or to influence decision-making processes.

The flux of disinformation on social media has inadvertently brought its own challenges. Since the 2016 United States Presidential election, the issue of social media and misinformation has gained growing attention as a major threat to the integrity of elections. Whether by domestic factors, such as candidates and campaigns, or through foreign-influenced campaigns, the ability of voters to make informed choices based on fair and balanced information has been significantly skewed.

Disinformation, particularly

through social media, has become a serious problem to electoral integrity and citizens' trust in their democratic institutions. Another area of concern is 'deep fake' videos, which use artificial intelligence (AI) to produce falsified videos that are almost undetectable by swapping out someone's face and voice with that of an imposter. These 'deep fake' videos could be used during elections to undermine the reputation of candidates, especially women. In Pakistan, to tackle this situation, the *Election Act, 2017* does, however, allow the Election Commission to constitute a campaign monitoring team, which could examine political adverts online or monitor any violations of the Act or Rules.

Facebook's Head of Global affairs and Communications (and former UK Parliamentarian) Nick Clegg clarified the company's policy recently that it would not 'fact-check' ads or statements from politicians on its platform. Clegg argued that it wasn't

Facebook's place to police free speech or political debate. Instead, he compared Facebook to a tennis court — it is Facebook's job to keep the court in order, but not to "pick up a racket and start playing".⁵

The debate over what impact micro-targeting and fake news have on politics has been raging since the *Cambridge Analytica* scandal and the 2016 US Presidential election. However, it has come into sharper focus now because finally the social media platforms themselves are getting involved. Political advertising doesn't require truthful or factually accurate claims in political campaigns as political ads are micro-targeted and misleading most of the time. In 2008, the then Presidential candidate, Barack Obama became one of the first candidates to use social media advertising in his election campaign. That year, election candidates in the US spent a total of US\$22.25 million on online political advertising.⁶

Though social media is playing a significant role in

“Conclusively, it can be claimed that close relationship between Parliaments and social media has both positive and negative aspects and contours. It has become a necessity for Parliaments of the world to recognise the force of social media and harness this power for the benefits of public. Channelling emerging public opinion and the ever-strong response of the people due to omnipotent nature of social media is the major democratic goal to be achieved.”



political awareness and 'people to Parliament' contact, the challenges it brought in the social and political arena seem insurmountable. Fake news is increasingly seen as a threat to political legitimacy, democratic institutions and social cohesion by governments around the world.

Citizens increasing use of technology and social media presents both opportunities and challenges for Parliaments and Parliamentarians. Unfortunately, social media has become an easy place to castigate and publicly abuse Parliamentarians and other public figures. Although Parliamentarians are public representatives, they are fully entitled to personal space and privacy. The tragedy being faced by public representatives is that they are unable to counter a sea of disinformation about their personal life and their social life on social media. Pakistani democracy like any other democracy is at loggerheads with the increase in social media abuse. The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications,

after consulting concerned stakeholders, has published '*Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Content (Procedure, Oversight and Safeguards) Rules, 2020*', to counter the flow of illegal, blasphemous, obscene or defamatory content on social media.

Conclusively, it can be claimed that close relationship between Parliaments and social media has both positive and negative aspects and contours. It has become a necessity for Parliaments of the world to recognise the force of social media and harness this power for the benefits of public. Channelling emerging public opinion and the ever-strong response of the people due to omnipotent nature of social media is the major democratic goal to be achieved. The Commonwealth family consists of 2.4 billion people and includes both advanced economies and developing countries. The role of social media for integration, creation of opportunities and dissemination of information, bridging the gap created by linguistic diversity in the Commonwealth is hard to ignore. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) through its social media accounts can provide a welcome opportunity to youngsters and a wider audience in playing their role in converting Parliaments into a more open, transparent and accessible space.

There is a greater need for an engaging debate on how to use social media for the better transformation of Parliaments in line with the CPA's *Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Parliaments* (2006, revised 2016), which aspires for Parliament's improved accessibility and openness for all.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN THE COMMONWEALTH: A VIEW FROM CANADA



Ms Yasmin Ratansi, MP is a Canadian Member of Parliament for the riding of Don Valley East. She is Chair of the CPA Canada Federal Branch, Chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Vice-Chair of the GOPAC. As Chair of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, she was proud to have introduced the first report on gender lens budgeting for Parliament. She works to engage multi-faith groups in promoting peace, harmony and respect for each other. She is also a Fellow of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada and a Certified Management Consultant.

The relationship between social media and parliamentary democracy is very pertinent in the current COVID-19 environment. Social media has an important role to play in the democratic process. It allows both Parliamentarians and the electorate to share their views directly, in real-time, unmediated by journalists and other observers.

In this short article, we will explore a few themes, including the positive and negative impacts of social media, the effect on elections, and the impacts on women.

In general, social media provides a good platform for politicians to reach out to groups including millennials and Gen-Z, who tend to rely primarily on social media to stay updated on what is going on locally and around the world.

As stated by Freedom House: *“Social media allows ordinary people, civic groups, and journalists to reach a vast audience at little or no cost.”*¹

However, this can also pose a threat to democratic elections, because the source and veracity of information shared on platforms cannot always be verified in real time, allowing misinformation to spread rapidly.

Some Positive Impacts of Social Media

In the past few years, we have seen the impacts of social media shining a light on injustices and human rights violations all around the world. These platforms have given

a voice to the voiceless and enabled them to express their opinions, and in some cases, overturn governments. Social media has been used to mobilise public opinion and coordinate protests, with the best examples being that of the Arab Spring.

Individuals and groups have used these channels effectively in more targeted campaigns, such as the capture of Joseph Kony, the rebel leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), who had brutalized Uganda and neighbouring countries.

The quick and easy access of mobile phone cameras has also had a dramatic impact on public opinion because people can share footage live with the world on channels including *Twitter*, *YouTube* and *Instagram*, exposing atrocities in real-time. Social media can be used to disseminate information on vote-rigging and voting rights violations.

In Bulgaria, a nonprofit organisation created a mobile app called ‘I vote’ to inform users about their voting rights and obligations and allows them to monitor the fairness of elections.

As Members of Parliament, it is our responsibility to communicate with our constituents and keep them informed of the work we do on their behalf. We are *their* voices to Parliament, *not* Parliament’s voice to them. As such, before the pandemic, I used many forms of communication: paper medium (Householders and 10 percenters), website posts, in-person town-halls and

seminars, opinion columns for local newspapers, coffee ‘meet-and-greets’ at constituents’ residences, school visits and community events. This was complemented by social media posts on platforms including *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *Instagram* to reach out to the different demographics in my riding. Constituents would also receive regular updates over email.

From my perspective, I found that using social media, especially, during the pandemic, has helped my

“The relationship between social media and parliamentary democracy is very pertinent in the current COVID-19 environment. Social media has an important role to play in the democratic process. It allows both Parliamentarians and the electorate to share their views directly, in real-time, unmediated by journalists and other observers.”



constituents stay updated and connected to my work and that of the Federal government. The seven virtual town halls I conducted using social media allowed participants to provide their input on our government’s response to COVID-19. This was invaluable as it allowed the government to fine-tune programs it had created. The input from my constituents and the changes to the programs reinforced the fact that we are their voices to Parliament.

To benefit from social media, people should have access to reliable and affordable internet and mobile networks. The lack of accessibility and affordability can lead to inequity in democratic engagement by the electorate. For the Commonwealth, this type of digital divide may pose challenges for a truly participatory democracy.

Knowing the creativity of human beings, there are alternative solutions to reach constituents, especially those in rural and remote areas.

Through my travels, I have seen villagers sitting around a radio or television to listen to the news, followed by an animated

discussion. Billboards are another form in which the divide can be reduced. Print media in the form of free newspapers, information bulletins or pamphlets can keep people informed on the current state of affairs in the country.

In the case of Canada, there is a dedicated television channel: Cable Public Affairs Channel (CPAC). Here proceedings of both the Canadian House of Commons and the Senate as well as Committee meetings are broadcast live.

Within the Commonwealth, the recording of the proceedings of the House in Hansard provides historical data for the public. The Library of Parliament is another source of verifiable information. To keep democracy accessible, constituents with no access to computers are able to write letters to their Members of Parliament across Canada without postage.

In conducting virtual sessions with the newly elected Parliaments of both Anguilla and Dominica as part of the recent CPA Post-Election Seminars, I was impressed by the creative

solutions they came up with in ensuring that their messages were disseminated to their constituents through billboards and other physical platforms.

Social Media and its impact on Women Parliamentarians

The websites listed below provide ample examples of what women Parliamentarian’s face, including misogyny, insults, ridicule and racism.

Social media provides anonymity to the perpetrators, emboldening them to say things that they would not say in any civilized society. To ensure that such behavior is curtailed, one needs to look more closely at legislation to prevent and punish such appalling behaviour.

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Social media in elections – does social media provide widespread disinformation in elections?

Social media can provide misinformation and fake news. Due to the plethora of platforms available, those who wish to use social media for negative purposes have been able to do so with impunity.

In recent years, some governments have used social media to spread misinformation within their own countries. Authoritative governments have used various methods of censorship towards dissenting voices on social media within their borders. Methods include blocking social media platforms or preventing access to individuals, or certain groups whose members are critical of government policies or actions.² In addition, China’s ‘Great Firewall’ which is a combination of legislative and technological actions that allows the People’s Republic of China to regulate the internet domestically, limiting access to western media and social media applications including *Facebook*.

In recent years, electoral interference by foreign actors has become a major concern for democratic countries especially in light of US intelligence agencies finding that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential elections.³ Some analysts observe that China and Russia are increasingly employing election interference tactics to “influence the political environment by weakening the liberal democratic West and increasing their own economic and political power in the world order.”⁴

A recent *New York Times* article highlighted that Russia and Iran gained access to electoral information and sent threats to voters in Florida.⁵ As stated by some



“During an election cycle in a pandemic, social media gains an even stronger foothold in the ‘messaging’ of election platforms, in candidate debates, and in replacing the more traditional forms of canvassing the electorate. The use of social media platforms in elections, especially during a pandemic, is of paramount importance.”

researchers: “Social media makes a quantitative and qualitative difference to the way instability and distrust can be prosecuted, given its ubiquity and reach.”⁶

Foreign governments have been able to use social media and other online platforms to “influence and further entrench ideological divides and polarize societies along existing political and social cleavage. Ironically, democracies with robust and open media are particularly vulnerable to manipulation as foreign sources can very easily use online platforms to spew hate speech and escalate their impact.”⁷

What is the role of political advertising on social media during an election?

Political advertising by political parties is essential for the electorate to understand where each party stands on key issues including climate change, the economy, social issues, and



The Parliament of Canada.

healthcare. However, traditional forms of advertising are geared to help those political parties with a greater ‘election war chest’. By contrast, political advertising on social media is less costly and has the potential for greater reach.

Social media is a more fluid way for the public to receive daily coverage of elections. However, because of its greater accessibility compared to print media, it has the potential to attract exponentially more ‘followers’ than print or more traditional forms of media. As such, attention must be placed on the effect of content. Unlike newspapers that have editorial boards and professional journalistic standards, the checks and balances on social media are often minimal and, in some cases, absent. Far from adhering to principles of journalism and broadcasting rules and regulations, some creators of content on social media often operate unfettered from laws, regulations, industry, or ethical standards.

During an election cycle in a pandemic, social media gains

an even stronger foothold in the ‘messaging’ of election platforms, in candidate debates, and in replacing the more traditional forms of canvassing the electorate. The use of social media platforms in elections, especially during a pandemic, is of paramount importance.

Should social media be censored, and should it be legislated?

As a provider of fluid information, social media can be used for widespread disinformation in elections. Foreign actors can easily create fake accounts to disseminate fake news to sway the vote. Unfortunately, there are few regulations and lax rules that still allow *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube*, *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and other social media to be easily manipulated by anyone to circulate fake news and mislead the electorate on key issues during elections.

Self-regulation does not work. Trolls, bigots, white supremacists and foreign nations use these spaces to freely distribute lies and harmful,

dangerous rhetoric. Also, there is no way for any platform to fact check all the tens of millions of posts that come up everyday. Governments and civil society need to balance freedom of speech with the public good.

There have been a few recent examples of social media taking action, for example, in the case of *QAnon*, a conspiracy theory website; *TikTok* took steps to block the use of hashtags that were linked with the website or white supremacy. *YouTube* releases a transparency report and provides data on its removals of inappropriate content. Globally, *YouTube* employs 10,000 people in monitoring and removing content. Yet the giants in the social media space, such as *Facebook*, have done nothing with regards to hate speech spread in Myanmar against the Rohingya Muslims.⁸

Facebook, though has taken steps in redirecting fake news regarding the US election by either removing it completely or adding a banner that shows users that the information that is being disseminated is likely or

partly or completely false.⁹

In an ideal world, social media should be censored to disallow fake news. However, the question is how to censor social media in a fair and just way to weed out the bad actors and allow valid information to flow.

Legislators can enact laws that prohibit hate speech, prejudice, attacks on religious and other beliefs. But then an additional question comes up: where to draw the line between the rights of individuals, while at the same time ensuring they are not crossing into harmful territory. Invariably, discussions about the control of misinformation on social media turns into discussions on censorship and free speech.

In Canada, section 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees freedom of expression “including freedom of the press and other media of communication.”

Recently, lawmakers in the United States have called for anti-trust actions against Big Tech, stating that *Facebook* dissuades the free press due to its monopoly. The US Deputy Attorney General on 20th October 2020 sued *Google*

(which controls 90% of the web searches), for antitrust violations, alleging it abused its dominance to stifle competition.

Legislation and ‘PushBack’ from Legislators

On 12 April 2018, the House and Senate in the United States, questioned *Cambridge Analytica* regarding its improper harvesting of roughly 87 million *Facebook* users. Questions arose as to whether the company should be more heavily regulated, and the debate continues.

In Belgium, the country’s Privacy Commission ordered *Facebook* to stop the use of long-term and unique identification codes to track non-users without their consent. This resulted in a Federal court ordering *Facebook* to stop tracking “each internet user on Belgian soil” on their websites.

Nations including Germany, Australia and European Union bloc have enacted effective legislation against the big tech companies.¹⁰

In 2019, under a Liberal majority, the Canadian government introduced Bill C-76. The Bill (now law),

proposed to modernise Canada’s *Elections Act*, also contained provisions to protect Canada’s elections from cyber threats and foreign interference.

In 2020, the Liberal federal government introduced the Digital Charter. This document contains ten principles including, that, digital platforms will not disseminate hate, violent extremism, or criminal content and that Canadians will be able to rely on the authenticity and security of the internet services they use.

Conclusion

In conclusion, technology and the advancement of social media has made the world more interconnected. People have access to parliamentary affairs and geopolitics, and they expect more transparency and accountability from their elected officials.

The advent of technology has enabled Parliaments across the globe, to function virtually, which in turn has had a positive impact in engaging with the electorate on a variety of topics. The virtual meetings have also had a positive impact on the environment and reduction of greenhouse gases, due to limited usage of different modes of transportation and in a vast country like Canada, enabled us to use our time more efficiently. However, there is a dark side of social media that manipulates and feeds off dangerous misinformation that must be vigilantly and actively monitored.

CPA Podcast: Ms Yasmin Ratansi MP spoke alongside Commonwealth Parliamentarians from the UK and Jamaica at a live webinar event on ‘How can MPs continue to communicate with their constituents during COVID-19?’ hosted by the CPA UK Branch in June 2020 - to hear the full discussion please visit www.uk.cpa.org/news-and-views/online-webinar-how-can-mps-continue-to-communicate-with-constituents-during-covid-19/



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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN A GLOBALISED WORLD: A VIEW FROM INDIA

‘Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming’



Shri N. K. Premachandran, MP is a Member of Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Parliament of India. He was elected for the fourth time in May 2019. From 2000 to 2006, he was a Member of Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of the India Parliament. He served as a Cabinet Minister in the State Government of Kerala from 2006 to 2011. He has published articles in various newspapers and periodicals.

A nation’s ability to achieve and sustain long-term economic growth is determined by its propensity to increase productivity through the use of better technology, together with human and physical capital. However, in the never-ending race for social and economic growth by all nations, the word ‘Sustainability’, which is significant for us and more for the coming generations, has been forgotten by most of us. The modern concept of sustainable development was defined in 1987 by the Brundtland Report¹ as *“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”* Thus, when we talk about well-being of our future generations, sustainability needs to be at the core of the discussion.

For India, the underlying principle of development is ‘through everyone’s support, for everyone’s development and towards everyone’s trust’. This mirrors the essence of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of ‘leaving no one behind’. Therefore, Sustainable Development has to address the hopes and aspirations of the millions of people below the poverty line and has to keep the poor and the marginalised at its centre. We are conscious that India’s actions and experience, with its one-sixth of the world’s population have global implications and attract interest

and attention of the world.

As a country leap frogs itself to acquire modern dimensions of development, it realises the need and significance of the growing inter-connectedness and inter-dependence between nation states. India, too, is no exception in this regard. Connection, Innovation and Transformation have been the byproducts of globalisation and the exponential growth of the internet.

In the case of India, we opened our doors to the outside world in 1991, with our policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalization; since then the economic and social growth of the nation had seen a significant rise. When we start thinking about the current world economic conditions, we are exposed to everything and anything in any part of the world, which was seen in the 2008 world economic crisis and the later European economic crisis. In these crises, India was least affected owing to its economic stability, which was mainly due to its strict economic policies along with the support of its strong public sector companies such as the insurance (Life Insurance Corporation) and the national banking sectors. The lesson from these crises is clear; the future lies in controlled and monitored globalization, however, more focus needs to be placed on self-sustaining policies and supporting domestic public companies.

This does not mean restricting globalization policies,

such as FDIs (Foreign Direct Investments) and FPIs (Foreign Portfolio Investments), but the necessity to focus on the domestic sector such as public sector units. This may seem like a socialistic ideology, however, this could be the biggest weapon in the new market or a capitalistic market by providing a competitive market space between international MNCs (Multinational Corporations) and the local market (i.e., either Public Sector Undertakings or other governmental institutions). This could be the balance of a socio-capitalistic market. In this scenario, both the public sector and the private sector could have market competitiveness in a way that benefits both the customer and the companies.

“For India, the underlying principle of development is ‘through everyone’s support, for everyone’s development and towards everyone’s trust’. This mirrors the essence of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of ‘leaving no one behind’.”



However, such a competitive space can be created only if the PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings) are well supported and financed, initially, in the domestic market such as the insurance sector in India. When the whole world economy, was shaken by the 2008 crisis, we strongly believed it was due to the presence of such industries that we never felt the shock of economic breakdown. Since the PSUs are supported by the governmental institutions, they would have a level of accountability towards the customers and the people. At the same time, the presence of private sector companies ensures a competitive field.

This all revolves around the different dimensions of sustainable development. The scenario mentioned above follows a macroscopic approach on economic terms towards ‘Delivering a common future’ where the development of the nation’s economy is intertwined

with that of our partner nations, including the Commonwealth nations. Globalisation has improved lives through technological advancement and economic growth over the past few decades. However, the challenges from a number of financial crises, terrorism or pandemics, or large movements of refugees fleeing conflict zones, bring out the challenges of global inter-dependence. Therefore more, and not less, collaborative and effective co-operation among the Commonwealth is needed to manage the opportunities and challenges that we face collectively.

Reviewing the possibility for the growth of the nation on a micro level, the future could depend on its ‘self-subsistence’. A more elaborate explanation of the term self-subsistence would resonate in the second theme of this article, ‘Indigenous people living in our countries’. An interesting point here is that in India, the whole population

is considered as indigenous people.

As we see now, diseases know no geographical boundaries. The world has suffered the difficult and unpredictable challenges from the spread of pandemics and new diseases claim lives across borders and regions. The world is battling a virulent pandemic in the form of COVID-19 today and we need to act collectively and realise that this moment is a wake-up call for all of us to work together to address today’s challenges. Amid this pandemic crisis, the concept of globalisation, trade, commerce and even the economic machinery of the world are at a standstill.

To overcome these shortcomings and to maintain a state of sustainable development, both, in the economic and the social development, Mahatma Gandhi famously proposed that *“The future of India lies in its villages.”* This was the idealism or foresight of Mahatma Gandhi,

he explained that the real India lies in its 600,000 plus villages. If Indian civilisation is to make its full contribution to the growth of a stable world order, it is this vast mass of humanity that has to be made to live again and converted into a demographic dividend.

The future way forward for almost all nations would be ‘self-subsistence’, it could be implemented by utilising the ‘geographic-specific traditional industrial rejuvenation’. In the present context this might be construed as a concept of anti-globalisation, rather, this could also be seen as an opportunity for developing some of the lost traditional industries. If utilised properly, through value addition and proper marketing on a global level, the export potential of such products could be tapped. This would be pro-globalisation and self-subsistent as they utilise local labor and local resources. These industries employ the indigenous people



of that geographic location. As in the past, they used to depend on the utilisation of the local resources available. In developing and third-world countries, these industries are mainly labour intensive, which have a high employment potential and local resources utilisation. For example, I represent a constituency on the southern tip of the Indian sub-continent called Kollam which is in the State of Kerala. We are known as the cashew capital of the world; cashews are the geographic-specific traditional industry which provides a livelihood for about 600,000-700,000 employees and farmers. There are more than 250,000 employees directly involved in the industry, which is about 10% of the population of the district and 95% of these workers are women.

We were known for high-quality cashew which is of high export potential. However, unfortunately due to the high levels of international competition of products at a lower price and lesser quality,

the local cashew industry in Kerala has plummeted to a record time low leaving a high vacuum of unemployment for the semi-skilled labor force and many such families in despair. This could be attributed to the lack of focus on such traditional industries and more focus on less subsistent investment and developments such as FDIs and FPIs as mentioned before. This COVID-19 period has shed light on the importance of self-sustenance, like in the case of the USA, *vis-à-vis* its requirement of hydroxychloroquine from India.

In this new world of globalisation, we are all interconnected, which from an economic point of view is necessary and unavoidable. However, this also forces us to choose a cheaper product or service from another country rather than producing it locally, such as the cashew industry. In layman terms, it is less dependence on others and more dependence on ourselves. The future in globalisation is not buying

better quality, rather, making better products for self-subsistence. Thus, on a macro-economic level, the importance lies in creating a competitive environment between the private sector and the public sector to maintain a balance of profit for the companies as well as the customers. Similarly, on a micro-economic level, the focus should be shifted towards rejuvenating the geo-specific traditional industries which are highly labour intensive depending on the local people of the geographic area. Thus, the future forward is a combination of the themes in both the articles. A common future has to necessarily be a sustainable one, if we intend to bequeath something credible and lasting for our future generations.

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“In this new world of globalisation, we are all interconnected, which from an economic point of view is necessary and unavoidable. However, this also forces us to choose a cheaper product or service from another country rather than producing it locally, such as the cashew industry. In layman terms, it is less dependence on others and more dependence on ourselves.”

PARLIAMENT AND FOREIGN POLICY: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE



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A recurrent theme of parliamentary surveillance of foreign policy is ensuring the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, and the safeguarding of the national interest of the people and the country. This is ensured through various parliamentary and procedural devices, through the well-established parliamentary conventions and through a network of Parliamentary Committees.

In trying to evaluate the impact of Parliament on foreign policy or in the conduct of the country's external relations, it will be very useful to decipher the nature of the parliamentary polity of the country in the first place. Philip Norton's classification of Legislatures based on 'policy-making Legislatures', 'policy-influencing Legislatures' and 'Legislatures with little or no policy impact' is highly useful in determining the impact of the India Parliament on foreign policy.¹ It must be noted that India is a parliamentary polity, unlike a Presidential government as in the United States of America, the India Parliament does not exercise direct control over the making of foreign policy. Policy-making Legislatures, such as the US Congress, are in a position to not only amend or reject government measures, but also to substitute the same with proposals of their own. In other words, they play an active part in the initiation and formulation of policy. Policy-influencing Legislatures, on the other hand, are restricted only to suggesting

changes and modification in the policy of the government.² The India Parliament falls in this category and as such the role of the Parliament should be seen in the context of a 'policy-influencing Legislature.

Although in principle powers with respect to foreign affairs belong to the Government, at times, the Parliament is taken into confidence, particularly with regard to the declaration of war and the making of treaties, and if any measure calls for an appropriation of public money or for a change in domestic law, then the legislation must be introduced and the Parliament's assent sought. The Parliament of India, however, only discusses issues related to the declaration of war or making of treaties. Motions approving or expressing opinions are declaratory only. But then, these motions can help in authenticating the position of the Government on a particular issue. Yet another factor that inhibits Parliament's involvement in foreign policy-making is cross-party agreement. Although political parties may disagree on emphasis, a broad consensus does exist among political parties, only the degree of thrust varies.

There are several reasons for this bipartisan approach. The major Opposition party, seeing itself as a future Government, will not want to create a rod for its own back when it returns to office. Electorally, Opposition leaders will see the merit of being seen to support the Government when it is acting in the country's

best interest. This, however, is not always the case. The most likely reason, however, for measures of all-party agreement, is that Members on both sides of the House will not wish to allow inter-party squabbles to threaten any perceived national interest or security. The effect of this is well summarised by William Wallace in *The Foreign Policy Process in Britain*.³

“Where the front benches are united, as they most often are, the tradition of bipartisanship in foreign policy serves to damp down debate, to lend respectability of national interest to the accepted consensus and to label criticism as somehow extreme, if not also disloyal.”⁴

A third major obstacle to the influence of Parliament in foreign affairs is what Wallace describes as *“the peculiar secrecy in which foreign policy matters are discussed and decided (in Britain). In seeking to suppress the dissemination of information and raising and airing of contentious issues, the Government will often fall back on the claim of secrecy, arguing that to reveal too much would be to act contrary to the national interest. It is a claim often disputed but one rarely overcomes.”⁵*

The fourth factor is the lack of political interest attached to foreign affairs. Even though some Members of Parliament prefer foreign policy as one of their primary interests, the fact is that the area of foreign affairs is so vast and the Members' time and commitments pressing, that



the amount of parliamentary attention paid to it – other than during a time of national or international crisis – is in reality of secondary importance. A demonstrated interest in the Korean Peninsula, West Asia or South China Sea dispute is probably not going to get a Member re-elected.

Notwithstanding limitations, however, *Entries 10 to 21* in the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution enumerates subjects on which the India Union Government is competent to make laws. They are:

1. Foreign affairs; all matters which bring the India Union relations into relations with any foreign country
2. Diplomatic, consular and trade representation
3. Any matter related to the United Nations Organisation
4. Participation in international conferences, associations and other bodies and implementing of decisions made at these events
5. Entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and the implementing of treaties, agreements and conventions with foreign countries
6. War and peace, especially over foreign jurisdictions
7. Citizenship, naturalisation and immigration
8. Extradition
9. Admission into, and emigration and expulsion from India; as well as matters relating to passports and visas
10. Pilgrimages to places outside India
11. Piracies and crimes committed on the high seas or in the air; offences against the law of nations committed on land or in the air.

The India Parliament, however, often scrutinises the Government's foreign policy



through general debate, but it seldom provides formal, definitive assent to it. A closer scrutiny and analysis of the debates and deliberations of the Parliament of India clearly demonstrates the commitment of the country to the strategic autonomy of its foreign policy and how the Parliament has collectively protected it in spite of the dominance of the Executive and the numerical majority of the ruling party or coalition of political parties. Protection and promotion of national interest has been the driving force for the India Parliament.

The first test of the India Parliament's interest in foreign policy issues was eloquently displayed during the India-China war in 1962. The India Parliament's role in India-China relations, however, predates even the independence of the country and can be traced back to the Provisional Parliament called the Constituent Assembly (legislative). Even before the People's Republic of China was formally proclaimed on 1 October 1949, Professor N. G. Ranga of the Congress Party –

regarded as the 'Father of the House' – moved a cut motion in the lower chamber, Lok Sabha on 4 December 1947 relating to the demands for grants of the Ministry of External Affairs. Professor Ranga said: "*China has become a sort of cockpit between the Soviet Russia and America. Are we going to keep mum about it, are we going to allow becoming an unfortunate victim of these powers as the Republic of Spain has become? Should we not take a positive stand in regard to this?*"

Another Congress Party Member, Brajeshwar Prasad, supporting the sentiment of Professor Ranga, said: "*India and China are destined to be leaders of Asia. Joined together they will be force to be reckoned with.*" He even went to the extent of proposing a federal plan of union, saying, "*it is in common interest of both the states to evolve a federal plan of union.*" This clearly reflected not only the concern of the Parliament at the time, but also the strategic autonomy germane to India's foreign policy articulated through the collective voice of the

Members of Parliament.

Later, however, when the Tibetan crisis broke out, the same Parliament became critical of China, suggesting how the national interest, security, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country was of supreme concern to Parliament. The naivety of then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was criticised by some Members of Parliament, including some from the Congress Party itself. The Chinese invasion of Tibet was discussed in the Lok Sabha on 17 March 1950 in the course of a discussion on the Ministry of External Affairs. Members urged the Government to clearly define India's frontier with Tibet. Participating in the debate, P. C. Barua, a Member of the ruling party, said, "*The McMahon line, which was drawn at a conference in Shimla is a vague boundary. The line is more or less an imaginary one and that is the reason why our statesman in this particular area will be put to great test in the years to come.*"

Intervening in the debate Mr Frank Anthony, a nominated Member of the Anglo-Indian,

said, "*I believe that it is not only self-delusion... dangerous self-delusion either to hope or to believe, however, exemplary our motives in the international plane, however, genuine our desire for neutrality... for friendship with nations, that the communists will in the final analyses respect our neutrality and our loftiness of motives.*"

On another occasion on 20 November 1950, while participating in a debate many prominent leaders of Congress cautioned the Government against adopting a complacent attitude towards China. Professor N. G. Ranga expressed concern at the way the Tibetan question was being handled by the Government. He questioned India's wisdom in having pressed for China's admission to the United Nations at so early a stage.

The on-going standoff between the armies of the two countries which intensified

“As far as the role of Parliament in law making is concerned, there are occasions when legislation initiated by the Executive are scrutinised by Parliament, including by the Parliamentary Standing Committees. The best example of such legislation is the Citizenship Amendment Bill, granting dual citizenship to the Indian Diaspora and voting rights to them.”

recently after the bloody clash in the Galwan Valley on 15 June 2020 also found its resonance in the political spectrum, including in the India Parliament which met briefly from 14 September to 23 September 2020, notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic. Ahead of the Parliament of India session, the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, briefed the leaders of political parties with regards to the prevailing situation in the LAC (Line of Actual Control) including India's response to the challenge on 19 June 2020. The position parties, however, persistently demanded not only a statement from the India Government but also a discussion in Parliament. As per the well-established parliamentary convention, the Minister of Defence, Rajnath Singh made a statement in both Houses of Parliament on 15 September 2020.

As the session was for a very brief period, the India Parliament couldn't discuss the issue further. However, the recently appointed Chief of the Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, briefed the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence earlier on 11 September 2020 and said that the Indian armed forces had taken adequate measures to thwart any effort to alter the LAC. Similarly, senior diplomats from the India Ministry of External Affairs, including Foreign Secretary, Dr S. Jaishankar, who subsequently became External Affairs Minister, as an outreach of Parliament briefed the Chairman and Members of the Committee of External Affairs on the issue of India-China relations. As the proceedings in the Parliamentary Committees are not open to the media and not telecast, then the interaction between the Committee Members and the officials are said to be free and frank. Discussions are substantive and on merit; Members belonging to different

political parties exchange their views and iron out differences, if any. Thus, while analysing the role and impact of Parliament in the making of foreign policy, the role of Parliamentary Committees must be factored.

Yet another issue in which the Parliament of India has shown interest and concerns relates to India's nuclear doctrine, which has a bearing on the country's security and development. The Government of India's decision not to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1967 is often attributed to parliamentary pressure. The stance of the India Parliament with regard to the US-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, also known as the 123 Agreement formally announced in July 2007, which was subject to intense debate from 2005 to 2008, is only too recent in public memory. The nuclear deal ended what is called India's 'nuclear apartheid'. The United Progressive Alliance Government headed by then Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, was almost on the brink of losing a trust vote on July 2008 when the Left parties which had extended outside support to the Government withdrew support for the Government's alleged tilt towards the USA. The Government won the trust vote by a slender majority. The role of Parliament in fine tuning the nuclear deal was eloquent testimony of parliamentary supremacy.

As far as the role of Parliament in law making is concerned, there are occasions when legislation initiated by the Executive are scrutinised by Parliament, including by the Parliamentary Standing Committees. The best example of such legislation is the Citizenship Amendment Bill, granting dual citizenship to the Indian Diaspora and voting rights to them.

The role of Parliament in the making of foreign policy was very

succinctly summarised by Dinesh Singh, India's former External Affairs Minister, in an article in *The Parliamentarian* in 1970. He wrote: "*Attempts by Government to shut out parliamentary scrutiny, or to take for granted parliamentary approval, of the aspects of their foreign relation are bound to recoil. On the other hand, in a parliamentary set-up, the Executive obviously cannot afford to abdicate its responsibility to initiate and implement policies, especially in the matter of the conduct of its foreign relations. There has to be a judicious mixture of Executive initiative and parliamentary control. The exact point where this balance is struck may vary, but in the absence of such a balance, smooth functioning of parliamentary control as well as the conduct of foreign policy by the Executive will be in jeopardy.*"

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WHY PARLIAMENTARIANS ARE KEY TO ENHANCING ACCOUNTABILITY IN HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY



Fergus Drake is the Chief Executive of Crown Agents, a not-for-profit international development company, established in 1833. Crown Agents work reaches over 120 million people in 60 countries, with expertise in Public Sector Transformation, Humanitarian & Stabilisation, Procurement reform, Last Mile Supply Chain, Health System Strengthening and Training & Professional Development. Prior to Crown Agents, Fergus was Executive Director of Global Programmes at Save the Children UK from 2009 to 2017.

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most pivotal event in our lifetime, already disrupting how we work, socialise, travel and in some cases, changing the nature of relationships between state and citizen. Apart from the staggering statistics on the number of deaths, particularly among the poor, vulnerable, women and ethnic minorities, it is having a toll on family violence, mental health, education opportunities and of course livelihoods. While the extent of the economic damage is still unclear, a baseline forecast by the World Bank envisions the deepest global recession since World War II.

The challenge ahead

In attempting to respond to the health emergency, governments have had to rapidly re-allocate financial and human resources to secure the drugs and equipment required to adapt control and treatment measures. At the same time, businesses and households' need for financial support to survive the resulting economic downturn continues to grow. These competing needs are forcing governments to make difficult decisions about how to allocate limited public resources to best mitigate the health and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, while retaining the confidence of their citizens.

It is clear COVID-19 has and will lead to serious fiscal stress within governments' public finances and reduced revenue collections due

to the contraction of productive sectors and overall GDP, causing increased unemployment and necessitating massive budgetary reallocations to finance urgent expenses in health and other essential services. For example, growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is predicted to fall to -3.3% in 2020, pushing the region into its first recession in 25 years. Projections suggest that COVID-19 could push 71 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, 40 million of whom would be living in Sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, the global extreme poverty rate would increase for the first time since 1998 and progress made since 2017 would be wiped out.

Against this backdrop,

identifying savings and maximising the effectiveness of all possible resources is key, particularly for developing countries that do not have reserves for economic recovery. But even before the pandemic, appropriate and efficient resource allocation, particularly for health service delivery, was a challenge for many governments.

This article aims to share our experience of working with governments to build an evidence base for effective allocation and expenditure of resources in health service delivery. Given the crucial role Parliamentarians play in overseeing government expenditure, it will also outline ideas, resources and ways

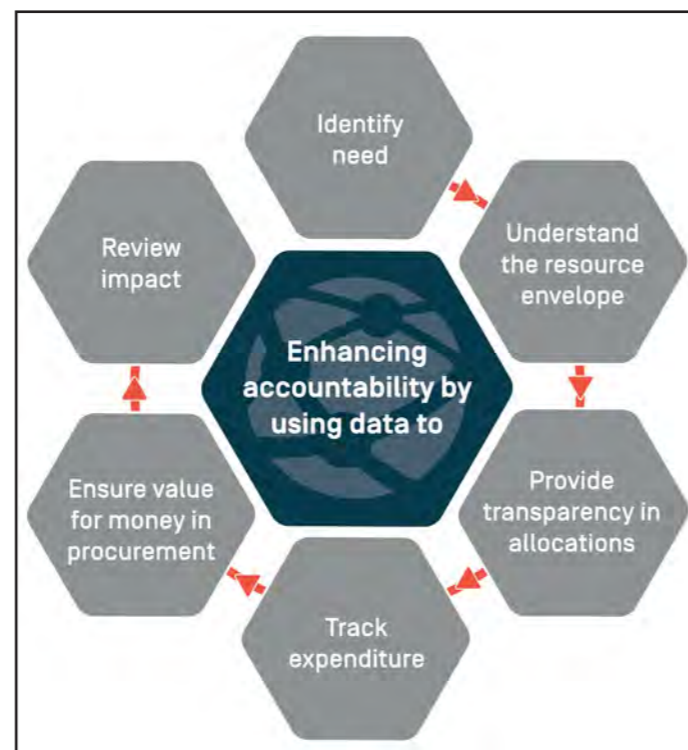


Image: Crown Agents

in which legislators can use their powers to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of available resources. Ultimately, we hope our contribution will inspire the reader to consider untried ideas in his/her respective country to ensure cost savings, and, at the same time, make sure that those with the most severe health and livelihood needs are served in this difficult time.

Our findings: Data and transparency are key

Evidence exists that where governments are accountable and transparent, their health and economic response to the pandemic has been more rapid, effective and credible with citizens.¹

This analysis aligns with our experience - which is that the use of data to identify needs and make resource allocations, provide transparency, track expenditure, and identify value for money in procurement

maximises efficiency and effectiveness of scarce resources.

Whilst we recognise that accessing robust data may be a challenge in many contexts, we also have experienced the huge potential increased accountability has for tangible health outcomes for the public and strengthening the citizen-state relationship. In public financial management and procurement reform, for example, the use of data to inform decision-making at each stage of the financial management process makes a profound difference in creating truly transformative outcomes for citizens.

Maximize resource allocation by using data to identify demand

Local epidemiological data can support identification of demand for health services or treatment and help maximise the efficiency of resource

allocations. For example, in delivering ASCEND, a UK Government-funded programme working with 11 Health Ministries to eliminate and contain Neglected Tropical Diseases, we identified that federal government grants for NTD programming were equally disbursed across all provinces and municipalities of one of the target countries, even though the diseases are not thought to be prevalent in all areas. As a result of these findings, the Ministry of Health and Population has now introduced less strict grant conditionality to ensure subnational governments have the flexibility needed to respond to local variations in health.

Ensure value for money through tracking expenditure

Effective systems for tracking the use of public funds are crucial to ensuring that they are used for their intended purpose, are properly accounted for

and deliver value for money. In Nepal, for example, we have been working with a local software developer to deliver a web-based system for local government budgeting, accounting and financial reporting. The system is used throughout the country and enables tracking of expenditure based on gender, caste, religion, ethnicity and age. It is also tracking spending in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This data is made available to local assemblies and the wider public through an internet browser, enabling them to hold government to account for how funds have been used.

Parliamentarians have a variety of tools at their disposal to ensure expenditure is adequately allocated and tracked: Firstly, Parliament can draw on audit reports for figures on all domestic health sector expenditures – planned and actual – when the accounts are presented to Parliament as part



“Parliamentarians have a crucial role to play in monitoring whether scarce resources are used effectively and whether resource allocation and economic recovery plans take into account the most vulnerable and socially excluded in society.”

of national budgets and plans. In addition, Parliamentarians can challenge their governments through Question Time as well as the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and demand reporting on the use of all international assistance intended for the health system. Similarly, legislators can exercise parliamentary oversight by reviewing constituency health expenditure to identify whether funds have been spent effectively and whether there are any over or underspends.²

Ensure resource allocation is inclusive and sustainable

The speed of responses to COVID-19 has necessitated emergency expenditures and reallocations. However, generally the presentation of budget plans to Parliament is an opportunity to scrutinise allocations and ensure these are in line with need and policy priorities. As governments develop economic recovery plans, Parliamentarians can provide oversight of the implementation of additional spending by ensuring there is

attention to resources reaching those most in need and that new policies achieve the right balance of maximising revenue and stimulating growth. Parliamentarians also have an important role to play around intergenerational equity regarding the additional borrowing to finance these plans and who will eventually pay back this debt. An excellent resource for evidence-based policy responses for good public governance, including guidance on legislative budget oversight of emergency responses, has been published by the OECD and can be found in the link below.³

Coordinate donor fund allocation with existing domestic allocations

Understanding the total resources available for health services requires transparency in all foreign and domestic contributions and allocations. For many developing countries, donor funding represents a significant proportion of national health budgets. Ideally, donor resources are placed into a sectoral budget for management by the relevant Ministry. This enables all funds to be aligned with and reported on through existing government systems. It also enables oversight of total health funds, enabling resources to be allocated according to need, avoiding duplication. This leads to greater ownership, lower delivery costs and strengthening of existing systems.

Make savings through transparency in public procurement

Public contracts are the second biggest item of spending for most governments, thereby presenting a high corruption risk but also offering a transformative opportunity for

public finances if well managed. Good public procurement means efficient provision of quality-assured life-saving health equipment like PPE and ventilators to hospitals and patients; and assurance for all that public funding is being used effectively for the public good.

Having worked directly with 45 countries on their COVID-19 responses and procuring over 2.4m items of PPE, Crown Agents has experienced first-hand how effective public procurement can impact on the functionality of health systems, and on the consequent preparedness of entire countries for health crises. Effectiveness can be strengthened when governments identify where they can improve value for money in public sector procurement and then implement reforms to learn from any cost savings in future.

This can be done by:

- Supporting the application of **transparent, consistent practices** and the **use of data in tender evaluations** in line with Open Contracting Global Principles.
- **Establishing clear and comprehensive benchmark prices**, so unrealistic bids are not accepted.
- **Preparing Standard Contractor Qualification Criteria**, to establish a set of minimum contractor qualifications with respect to past performance, experience of personnel and financial resources of the Contractor’s company, to ensure only credible bidders can tender.
- **Selecting/preparing the applicable general and special conditions of contract**, to ensure appropriate legal

protections for the Government in the event of contractor non-performance.

- **Applying a standard Value for Money (VFM) assessment methodology** across all tenders, leading to a standardised approach to VFM negotiations.

The financial savings resulting from applying these practices can be significant. Together with the Government of Ghana, for example, we have reviewed over US\$400m worth of public contracts to build hospitals, colleges and housing. In the first six months of 2019 alone, this review generated over US\$20m in savings. In Ukraine, similar methods generated US\$62m worth of savings on oncology medicines since 2016 in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, by using global tenders for high quality medicines, engaging 95 international companies in the bidding process as opposed to five local bidders. As a result of improved public procurement, hospitals had a sufficient supply of life-saving stents, which caused deaths by heart attacks in Ukrainian hospitals falling by 20% in 2018.

In order to ensure that public procurement provides value for money, Parliamentarians have a variety of legislative powers at their disposal: Firstly, they can establish legal frameworks for procurement; debate and approve annual and supplementary budget authorisations; request reports from, or hold hearings with, government and industry officials regarding specific tenders and contracts; hear testimonies by government officials; and, in some cases, approve procurement awards above a certain amount.⁴ Further ideas and guidance on strengthening transparency



Image: Crown Agents

over procurement during COVID-19 from the Open Contracting Partnership can be accessed through the link below. Support to improving procurement practice, in the form of best practice principles and frameworks, is available.

Action points for Parliamentarians at a glance

Parliamentarians have a crucial role to play in monitoring whether scarce resources are used effectively and whether resource allocation and economic recovery plans take into account the most vulnerable and socially excluded in society. They can do this by:

- Ensuring services get to those in need by supporting data-driven resource allocations.
- Strengthening transparency by applying global standards and guidance for public

procurement.

- Identifying savings and maximise efficiencies by using the Public Accounts Committee to review audit findings and demand transparency in international assistance.
- Monitoring impact by working with local constituencies, civil society and groups like the Open Government Partnership to track expenditure.
- Contributing to a strengthened social compact through increased state-citizen trust, underpinning future post-COVID-19 improvements in revenue collections, service delivery, and health and education outcomes for all.

Conclusion

COVID-19 and its impacts remain a huge socioeconomic challenge for the global community. This article aimed

to provide some food for thought on how resources can be used most effectively in some areas of health delivery and procurement, freeing up domestic resources where possible. We hope that this knowledge will be useful for Parliamentarians in exercising their oversight duties as well as starting the conversations needed with their governmental counterparts to ensure that wastage of public resources can be minimised wherever possible.

For further information about the work of Crown Agents please visit www.crownagents.com.

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THE CITY OF LONDON, ITS REMEMBRANCER AND THE COMMONWEALTH

The City of London's Remembrancer writes about the many links between the City of London and the Commonwealth.



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The City of London occupies a special place in the British constitution. Avid internet surfers may have found it described as 'a city within a city', referring as it does to the ancient capital occupying just one square mile in the centre of the London metropolis. Described by the Roman historian and politician, Tacitus, as "a busy emporium for trade and traders", it is now the home of one of the world's leading - if not the leading - international financial centres. Yet the nature of the government of the City of London has a primarily Saxon origin and it still enjoys a degree of independence from its slightly less historic neighbour to its west at the Palace of Westminster. When it comes to its officials, that distinctiveness is represented in parliamentary affairs by the Remembrancer.

The Remembrancer is the product of the first Elizabethan age, the office having been created in 1571. The circumstances of its creation, like the reason for the name of the Office, is unclear. The government of the City of London did suffer from a record keeping problem in the 16th century and an official to keep matters 'in remembrance' – to report and record City affairs and keep the records in order, is one explanation. That, however, does not really accord with the person first chosen to undertake the role, Thomas Norton. He was well known in the Court of Queen Elizabeth I. He had been tutor to

the children of Lord Protector, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, who governed the country in the first years of the reign of boy king Edward VI and was married to the daughter of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. His patron was William Cecil, Lord Burghley, principal adviser to Queen Elizabeth I for most of her reign and Thomas Walsingham, Elizabeth's spymaster. He also had political experience as a Member of Parliament, a position he maintained as one of the four Members then representing the City of London on becoming Remembrancer.

With all that background it is difficult to reconcile the notion of an essentially clerical job as a record keeper. Looking at Norton's activities, which were really as much concerned with the nation's than the City's

concerns, added to the fact that, somewhat mysteriously, the identity of those he was to be accountable to in the City of London was not stated in his instrument of appointment. It might be concluded that he was really as much the agent of Queen Elizabeth I than he was the City's. This supposition is reinforced by the fact that the City of London was rather keen to get rid of the office when Norton died. It took a letter from Queen Elizabeth recommending diplomat, Dr Giles Fletcher, another well-known figure at Queen Elizabeth's Court and a former Member of Parliament, to the Office of Remembrancer. While Remembrancer, Fletcher acted as Queen Elizabeth's Ambassador to Russia and was made the Queen's Master of Requests to act for the Lord Privy Seal.

Below: At Guildhall in March 2007, the President of the Republic of Ghana John Agyekum Kufuor speaks at a banquet hosted by the Lord Mayor of London, John Stuttard and the City of London during the Ghanaian State Visit to the United Kingdom.



Image: City of London Archives.

Over the centuries which followed the public expression of the work of the Remembrancer lessened, and became more orientated towards the City of London's affairs and its relationship with the United Kingdom's Parliament at Westminster, although it is fair to say there have been instances where those who have held the office have taken very public positions on issues of the day. Most notably was Brass Crosby who, with John Wilkes, had a leading role in the early attempts during the 1760s and 1770s to publish parliamentary proceedings, then a breach of parliamentary privilege. How views about the public's right to information of all types have transformed.

The role of Remembrancer today reflects its past but is very definitely now 'official' and not 'political'. He (there has yet to be a she in the role) is the official level channel of communication between the City of London and the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The Remembrancer is one of the City of London's Law Officers, and the Office is customarily held by a barrister (as with the current incumbent). He acts as the City's Parliamentary Agent, promoting the City's private parliamentary bills. The City of London is one of the very few bodies which promotes its own measures in this way. He also acts as a general guardian of the City's constitution and monitor of the City's interests in Parliament. The Remembrancer has a similar 'go-between' role for the City with the Royal households for state and major public events and ceremonial occasions, and with the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the London-based diplomatic corps on protocol, inward official visits

and events. This continues the City of London's long history of involvement in such occasions.

All the elements of the role have, in various ways, Commonwealth links. The Commonwealth features as a continuous item of business in the ongoing work of the Office in parliamentary briefings to Members of the House of Commons and House of Lords in the United Kingdom's Parliament. The House of Lords debate on the Commonwealth, typically held annually, is one example of this feature, but the Office also inputs into more specifically focused proceedings, such as the recent House of Lords International Agreements Sub-Committee Inquiry into UK-Australia Trade Negotiations. Through its work on events, the Office has made the official arrangements for welcoming thousands of Commonwealth dignitaries to the City of London over the decades. Occasions marked at Guildhall and Mansion House in the City of London have ranged from health conferences, Commonwealth Games and national day receptions to State Visits, usually in the form of major formal dinners or banquets with accompanying business events. Ghana, South Africa and Singapore are more recent examples of these Visits. A dinner was even held in 1982 to mark 100 years since the arrival on UK shores of the first shipment of refrigerated New Zealand lamb!

However, it was in 1954 when the Royal Yacht Britannia (carrying onboard Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and The Duke of Edinburgh) entered the City of London after a very long Royal tour of the Commonwealth, that the City would host one of its most notable Commonwealth events. Two weeks later, the then Lord Mayor of London, Sir Noel Vansittart Bowater,



Image: City of London Archives.

Above: At the Commonwealth Flag Raising at Guildhall in the City of London on 11 March 2019, the City Remembrancer and Chief Commoner of the City of London with pupils and teaching staff from a London primary school for the annual Commonwealth flag raising ceremony.

hosted the young Royal couple at a Mansion House luncheon, where he described the couple's six-month long Commonwealth tour as "an achievement of inspired conception and brilliant execution."

Events to mark Royal homecomings were once customary in the City of London and, in the days before 24-hour news reporting (let alone social media) provided a platform for the sharing of insights from their journeys to all parts of the globe. For example, in 1954, Queen Elizabeth II reported on the developments in geothermal power generation she had witnessed in New Zealand, the Flying Doctor

Service in Australia and the opening of the Owen Falls Dam in Uganda. In 1961 at a Luncheon hosted at Guildhall by the Lord Mayor, The Queen shared accounts of her journey to India, Pakistan, Nepal and Iran, from which she and Prince Philip had recently returned. Joined by leading figures of the day (including then UK Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan and a number of Her other serving Commonwealth Prime Ministers who had travelled to London for the event), The Queen described the occasion as having the "particularly pleasant feeling of a family gathering", and warmly recalled the hospitality she and Prince Philip



Right: At the Commonwealth High Commissioners' Banquet at the Guildhall in 2016, the Company of Pikemen and Musketeers form a guard of honour for Her Majesty The Queen accompanied by the Lord Mayor of London, Jeffrey Evans to mark the inclusion of Epping Forest in The Queen's Commonwealth Canopy initiative.

had received on their journey.

The types of events that the Office of the City Remembrancer organises on behalf of the City of London may now have evolved, but the City's commitment to the Commonwealth remains. Occasions such as the (pre-lockdown) Red Cross Australian Bushfire Appeal event, co-hosted by the Lord Mayor of London and the High Commissioner for Australia to the United Kingdom and attended by HRH The Prince of Wales, demonstrate the close and enduring bond between the City of London and the Commonwealth nations.

New expressions of the bond develop, as with the event each year in March, when the Commonwealth Flag is now raised above the Guildhall in the company of local schoolchildren to mark Commonwealth Day (this year also marked with an event by the Commonwealth Youth Choir), and the developing relationship with Goodenough College, the postgraduate London residential campus with strong City of London and Commonwealth connections of which the current Remembrancer is a Fellow.

The Office works closely with the Royal Commonwealth Society in jointly hosting the annual High Commissioners' Banquet. This historic event, first held in 1874, provides an opportunity for the business



Image: Gerald Sharp Photography/City of London Archives.

community and broader international contacts to come together in the grand surroundings of the Guildhall, and is one of the City's principal annual diplomatic Commonwealth engagements. Beyond events, the Office was fortunate to have the opportunity to play a leading part in securing agreement for the City's inclusion of the 6,000 acres of Epping Forest, north of London, as part of the Royal Commonwealth Society's Queen's Commonwealth Canopy initiative. Separately, through collaboration and links with Commonwealth institutions, the City of London Corporation is seeking to refine its ability to promote UK trade and investment opportunities across Commonwealth member states. In 2015, the Office was active in engaging in the process by which the City of London Corporation became a founding partner (now Strategic Partner) in the establishment of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC) – as part of its plan to enhance its contacts with business and its decision makers and across the Commonwealth generally.

The importance of

friendship is as deep rooted in the City of London as it is in the Commonwealth and in 1996 and 2013 respectively, two great friends from South Africa – Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu - joined the list of world figures who have received the City's 'right hand of fellowship' when they were admitted as Honorary Freemen of the City of London. These occasions are another aspect of City tradition arranged through the Remembrancer for the City of London Corporation. Nelson Mandela was the first Head of State in Office since 1768, and the first ever Commonwealth Head of State to be honoured in this way (other recipients having been heads of government rather than Heads of State when admitted). In addressing guests at his Freedom Ceremony, Mandela spoke fondly of his admiration for multi-cultural London. Archbishop Tutu, speaking at his own Freedom ceremony, referenced one of the more traditional reasons for obtaining the Freedom when he likened the novel privilege of driving sheep over London Bridge to his "life as a shepherd with a difficult flock, needing to

be driven in the right direction."

Though most of the practical reasons for obtaining the Freedom of the City have disappeared, it remains a unique part of London's heritage and key to furthering mutual understanding and diplomatic relations more generally. In 2014, Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore was received by the then Lord Mayor, Dame Fiona Woolf, at Mansion House for his Freedom ceremony. Admissions are sometimes held there - the Lord Mayor's official residence - but are more usually held at the Guildhall. In addition to Heads of Government, a range of Commonwealth High Commissioners have received the Freedom of the City of London in ceremonies arranged through the Remembrancer's Office. The privilege has also been extended to successive Secretaries-General of the Commonwealth.

The Office has either collaborated with or played host at the Guildhall on behalf of the City of London to a number of Commonwealth Parliamentary Events – including Commonwealth Speaker conferences, the

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association International Parliamentary Governance Seminar in 2009, and receptions to mark the Association's 'Magna Carta to Commonwealth Charter' and 'International Parliamentary Conference on National Security' conferences (held in 2015 and 2017 respectively).

In both 2009 and 2015, Serjeants at Arms and security professionals from across the Commonwealth were welcomed to Guildhall dinners organised by the Office of the City Remembrancer. At the 2015 event, which celebrated 600 years of the Office of Serjeant-at-Arms, Sir David Wootton (the Lord Mayor locum tenens at the time) noted that Guildhall was just three years older and went on to introduce the City's own Serjeant at Arms and Common Cryer – the admittedly highly experienced Colonel Geoffrey Godbold – whom he remarked 'didn't look a day over 599'!

The Remembrancer's work keeps him mainly in London but there are occasions when Commonwealth engagement occurs abroad. In April 2019, the current Remembrancer joined over 130 drafters and guests from the Commonwealth and

beyond, at the Conference of the Commonwealth Association of Legislative Counsel (CALC) in Livingstone, Zambia and subsequently at the Commonwealth Law Conference. The trip was not only an opportunity for debate and discussion on legislative and procedural matters in Commonwealth jurisdictions, but also allowed for engagement on broader cultural fronts such as at the Livingstone Museum in the margins of the conference and in fostering broader mutually beneficial connections for which the Commonwealth is so well suited.

If the Remembrancer has a primarily domestic focus, the same certainly cannot be said of the Lord Mayor of London. The Lord Mayor plays a leading role in promoting partnerships and dialogue between the City and business around the world. Spanning almost 900 years, the Lord Mayor of London is one of the world's oldest continuously elected civic offices and has in the past been held by non-British born citizens of the Commonwealth. Indeed, Lord Mayor, Sir Leslie Boyce (1951 – 1952) was born in Taree, New South Wales, Australia, and Lord Mayor, Peter Gadsden (1979

– 1980) hailed from Mannville, Alberta, Canada.

A large part of the Lord Mayor's job is to serve as an international ambassador for the UK based financial and professional services sector, promoting both the City of London's and the UK's regional offer, in priority growth markets overseas. This ambassadorial role incorporates a packed programme of overseas visits, with Commonwealth destinations and attendance at related events (such as the Commonwealth Heads of Government CHOGM Business Forum in Malta in 2015) regularly featuring in the programme. The Remembrancer's Office input into this programme is primarily in providing diplomatic or political advice.

The emergence of Commonwealth countries as a major economic force in which UK based financial and professional services sector has substantial engagement further emphasises the desirability of enhancing relations generally. Following the establishment of an office in Mumbai in 2008, India now forms an integral part of the Lord Mayor's Overseas Visits programme along with those of the City's Chair of Policy. More recent visits have emphasised infrastructure development and public private partnerships. On visits to Australia and New Zealand, delegations led by the Lord Mayor have focused on key industries such as green finance, cyber security and asset management. The establishment of a 'FinTech Bridge' between the UK and Australia to encourage industry partnerships followed one such visit.

Between 2014 and 2019, the Lord Mayor made three visits to Canada, four to both India and South Africa and six to Singapore. Other Commonwealth countries that

the Lord Mayor has visited include Cyprus, Malta, Sri Lanka and Malaysia, as well as numerous countries in Africa, including Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Mozambique, Zambia and Nigeria. The current Lord Mayor, William Russell has not escaped the impacts of COVID-19, and subsequent travel constraints have resulted in his programme of overseas visits 'going digital'. Exceptionally, Lord Mayor Russell will serve a second term and the resumption of in-person visits is keenly awaited. Though physical visits may now be on the 'back burner' for the moment, 'virtual' overseas visits comprising of high-profile meetings carried out via video conference, have proven themselves to be valuable alternatives – with the Lord Mayor already having completed extensive 'virtual' visits to Australia and Singapore. The City's aspirations to enhance Commonwealth relations are evident, with engagement at the next CHOGM in Rwanda (whether virtually or in person) a highlight in the pipeline for 2021.

As the UK embraces a new global outlook, the Remembrancer and his colleagues at the City of London Corporation will continue to foster the City's relationship with Commonwealth organisations, engage with friends, both old and new, from across the fifty-four nations and carefully follow and feed into Commonwealth business raised in the UK Parliament. As with the City of London itself, one could write volumes of books on the history of the Office of the City Remembrancer and could also, no doubt, be reassured that there is far more yet to come.

For more information about the City of London please visit www.cityoflondon.gov.uk.

Above: At Guildhall in October 2014, the President of the Republic of Singapore, Tony Tan Keng Yam signs the City of London's distinguished visitors' book, observed by his wife Mary Tan and the Lord Mayor of London, Fiona Woolf.



Image: City of London Archives.



HANSARD TECHNOLOGY: ALL CHANGE FOR THE OFFICIAL REPORT

New technology in the UK Parliament brings automated speech software trials to the Hansard Team.



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The term 'Hansard' has long been well known around the Parliaments of the Commonwealth as the verbatim record of what is said in a national, state or provincial Parliament.

Thomas Curson Hansard added his name to the UK publication in 1829, and in the UK House of Commons a full report was defined in 1907 as one *"which, though not strictly verbatim, is substantially the verbatim report, with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected, but which on the other hand leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument."*

When I joined Hansard in the UK House of Commons in 1997, many aspects of the Official Report had changed significantly since it came into being, although the 1907 terms of reference remained the same. One example of fundamental change is that the verbatim record is now available for free and from a single authoritative source; originally there were multiple competing accounts, each of which cost money to buy.

But in the past 25 years the technology used to produce and publish the written record has transformed almost beyond recognition.

The advent of resilient, reliable audio recording has meant our 90-strong staff no longer rely on shorthand and stenography. Hundreds of

cassette tapes, which were carried around between offices and Committee Rooms at the Palace of Westminster, have been replaced by a digital audio recording and playback system.

Since the 1990s, the number of daily Hansard editions produced in printed form has declined dramatically, falling in the House of Commons from over 10,000 to fewer than 500. The entire Hansard archive has been digitised using optical character recognition, increasing many times over the volume of content accessible online, and there is an ongoing project to improve its searchability and accuracy.

Hansard is now predominantly read online by a much larger readership, with millions of unique page views on debates such as those prompted by public e-petitions, and it is published within three hours of the words having been spoken. Proceedings in the UK Parliament are also watched online, with a huge increase in the amount of live video being streamed since fibre connectivity was installed in Parliamentary Committee Rooms.

It was against this background of change that Hansard in the UK House of Commons embarked on a trial of using customised automated speech recognition (ASR) technology to assist with producing and publishing the official record.

We wanted to explore two things. First, at a very simple level, could the dramatic

improvements in accuracy reported in this technology be translated into an effective tool to assist with the production of the record? Previous trials in the 90s and early 2000s using off-the-shelf products had foundered at an early stage. Secondly, could we use a customised audio-to-text alignment system to enable Hansard reports to be displayed as subtitles on video-on-demand and bring to our video archive the same searchability that the Hansard text enjoys? In both cases, we didn't have the capacity to rebuild our existing systems from the ground up, and therefore wanted the technology to be capable of easy integration.

We had a good starting point. Thousands of hours of recordings with accompanying transcripts form a good basis for 'training' a speech recognition

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system - something Quorate Technology specialises in. The company was formed in 2012 as a spin-out from Edinburgh University, and took time to understand our workflows and appreciated that ASR technology could at best assist, rather than replace, the professional Hansard reporter.

We began by deciding the best way of sharing the data for the trial. Although it is all publicly available, we had a large task to do in matching audio recordings with transcripts and allowing them to be processed in a meaningful way. In the end we managed to process several thousand public meetings. This allowed the creation of a language model - based on the words and phrases used in parliamentary proceedings - as well as an acoustic model based on the phonic characteristics of our recordings.

Ideally, speech recognition systems are trained using clean audio recordings and fully verbatim transcripts. One difficulty for us was that Hansard contains a varying amount of text that is not spoken, such as procedural items or voting lists. Some things are left out because they are usually redundant in the written record, such as Members being called to speak, while others, such as names, constituencies and party affiliations, are added.

Our audio recordings also contain periods of silence, and sometimes - believe it or not - periods where there's a lot of background noise and even the odd bit of shouting. The volume in the Chamber can range from extremely quiet, as it is often during an Adjournment debate, right through to the noise of Prime Minister's Questions.

Once the models were built, we ended up with two things: a near-live ASR system and an audio-to-text alignment



The UK House of Commons

system. We called the first the 'live recogniser', as it listens to what is happening on the public broadcast and produces text in a near-live fashion. Between 1 September and 23 October 2020, this amounted to 1,202 hours of recordings.

The level of accuracy attained is impressive at around 90% on average, but crucially our reporters, who work with five-minute chunks in order to ensure speedy production, can use or discard this material as they like. Sometimes a completely accurate representation of what has been heard is very useful to a Hansard reporter, but sometimes it is less so, especially if there are stutters or false starts, or a lot of background noise.

One good thing about building a bespoke language model is that the 'house style' - the rules on whether words are upper or lower case, on how numbers and dates are rendered, or on contractions such as 'hon. Gentleman' for 'honourable Gentleman' are automatically incorporated without the need for manual tweaking.

The alignment service

takes a transcript and uses the accompanying audio to populate it with time codes. In layman's terms, we were able to prove that transcripts could be consistently aligned with video so as to be used as subtitling or to allow better video search. Although sometimes long periods of silence, such as during votes, cause problems, the trial was an object lesson in how to deal with them. The format in which the aligned transcripts are delivered means that they are compatible with mainstream video players.

The alignment service opens up the intriguing possibility of aligning Hansard with the broadcast audio archive extending back to 1989.

Does ASR have a long-term future for Hansard? Undoubtedly it does. It can help reporters who are processing a huge amount of spoken words and need to concentrate on clearly presenting what has been said, and on understanding the argument, rather than on typing. We have also started to realise its huge potential in terms of aligning text with video, and we will be looking to how to advance these benefits in future.

Knowing when, as well as how, to make best use of the technology is fast becoming part of the skillset of our reporters. It also seems likely to help open up the role to a much wider group of potential candidates, as it is clear that today's recruits expect a dynamic working environment to include the types of innovation they use daily in their personal lives.

At the same time, human intelligence doesn't look like being replaced just yet. What would Thomas Curson Hansard make of today's operation? I don't think it wouldn't be completely unfamiliar. While a lot has changed in Hansard over the years, our key aims - an authoritative and accurate report, produced in a speedy fashion - remain the same.

For more information about the work of Hansard at the UK Parliament please visit <https://hansard.parliament.uk/>.

For more information about Quorate Technology, developed as a spin-out from The University of Edinburgh's world-leading Centre for Speech Technology Research please visit <https://quoratetechnology.com/>.



PARLIAMENTARY EXPRESSIONS AND PRACTICES

In the third of a three-part series, this article looks at the origins and history of some of the parliamentary expressions and practices used in many Parliaments and Legislatures in the Commonwealth and beyond.



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PART THREE

'Filibustering'

Another parliamentary expression used in the legislative context is 'Filibustering'. What does 'Filibustering' mean in the parliamentary/legislative context?

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines 'Filibuster' as "prolonged speaking or other action which obstructs progress in a Legislative Assembly while not technically contravening the required procedures." In its historical context, the term has been defined as "a person engaging in unauthorised warfare against a foreign state."

'Filibustering' is to deliberately waste time during a debate by making overlong speeches or raising unnecessary procedural points. In this way a Bill or a motion may be 'talked out': ie stopped from making progress within the time allowed.

A 'filibuster' is a parliamentary procedure where debate over a proposed piece of legislation is extended, allowing one or more Members to delay or entirely prevent a vote on the proposal. It is sometimes referred to as 'talking out a Bill' or 'talking a Bill to death' and characterized as a form of obstruction in a Legislature or other decision-making body.

Ancient Rome

One of the first known practitioners of the 'filibuster' was the Roman Senator, Cato the Younger. In debates over Legislation, he especially opposed, Cato would often

obstruct the measure by speaking continuously until nightfall. As the Roman Senate had a rule requiring all business to conclude by dusk, Cato's purposefully long-winded speeches were an effective device to forestall a vote. Cato attempted to use the filibuster at least twice to frustrate the political objectives of Julius Caesar.

Etymology

The term 'filibuster' ultimately derives from the Dutch 'vrijbouter' ('freebooter', a pillaging and plundering adventurer). The Oxford English Dictionary finds its only known use in early modern English in a 1587 book describing 'filibutors' who robbed supply convoys. In the late eighteenth century, the term was re-borrowed into English from its French form 'filibustier', a form that was used until the mid-nineteenth century.

The modern form 'filibuster' was borrowed in the early 1850s from the Spanish form 'filibustero', and was applied to private military adventurers like William Walker who were then attacking and pillaging Spanish colonies in Central America.

Eventually, over the course of the mid to late nineteenth century, the term 'filibustering' became common in American English in the sense of 'obstructing progress in a Legislative Assembly'.

Examples of 'Filibustering' in the US Congress

The 'filibuster' is a powerful legislative device in the United

States Senate. It is not part of the US Constitution, becoming theoretically possible with a change of Senate rules only in 1806, and wasn't used until 1837. It was strengthened in 1975 and in recent decades has come to mean that most major legislation (apart from budgets) requires a 60% vote to bring a Bill or nomination to the floor for a vote. In recent years, the majority had preferred to avoid 'filibusters' by moving to other business when a 'filibuster' is threatened and attempts to achieve cloture (closure) have failed. Defenders of the tool call the 'filibuster' – 'The soul of the Senate'.

US Senate rules permit a Senator or Senators to speak for as long as they wish and on any topic they choose, unless 'three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn' (usually 60 out of 100 Senators) bring the

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The Congress of the United States of America.



debate to a close by invoking 'cloture' (cloture is a US term closure according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary) under Senate Rule XXII.

The removal or substantial limitation of the 'filibuster' is called the constitutional option by proponents, and the nuclear option by opponents. Under current US Senate rules, a rule change itself could be 'filibustered', with two-thirds of those Senators present and voting (as opposed to the normal three-fifths of those sworn) needing to vote to break the 'filibuster'. Even if a 'filibuster' attempt is unsuccessful, the process takes floor time.

On 21 November 2013, the Democratic-controlled US Senate voted 52 to 48 to require only a majority vote to end a 'filibuster' of all Executive and judicial nominees, excluding Supreme Court nominees,

rather than the three-fifths of votes previously required. A three-fifths supermajority is still required to end 'filibusters' on legislation. On 6 April 2017, the Republican-controlled Senate voted 52 to 48 to require only a majority vote to end a 'filibuster' of Supreme Court nominees.

While talking out a measure is the most common form of 'filibuster' in the Senate there are nevertheless other means of delaying and killing legislation. As the Senate routinely conducts business by unanimous consent, one Member can create at least some delay by objecting to the request. In some cases, such as considering a Bill or resolution on the day it is introduced or brought from the House, the delay can be as long as a day. However, because this is a legislative day, not a calendar day, the majority can mitigate it by briefly adjourning.

In many cases, an objection to a request for unanimous consent will compel a vote. While forcing a single vote may not be an effective delaying tool, the cumulative effect of several votes, which take at least 15 minutes apiece, can be substantial. In addition to objecting to routine requests, Senators can force votes through motions to adjourn and through quorum calls. Quorum calls are meant to establish the presence or absence of a constitutional quorum, but Senators routinely use them to waste time while waiting for the next speaker to come to the floor or for leaders to negotiate off the floor. In those cases, a Senator asks for unanimous consent to dispense with the quorum call. If another Senator objects, the Clerk must continue to call the roll of Senators, just as they would with a vote. If a call shows no quorum,

the minority can force another vote by moving to request or compel the attendance of absent Senators. Finally, Senators can force votes by moving to adjourn, or by raising specious points of order and appealing the ruling of the Chair.

The most effective methods of delay are those that force the majority to invoke cloture multiple times on the same measure. The most common example is to 'filibuster' the motion proceeding a Bill, then 'filibuster' the Bill itself. This forces the majority to go through the entire cloture process twice in a row. If, as is common, the majority seeks to pass a substitute amendment to the Bill, a further cloture procedure is needed for the amendment.

The US Senate is particularly vulnerable to serial cloture votes when it and the House have passed different versions



of the same Bill and want to go to conference (i.e., appoint a Special Committee of both chambers to merge the Bills). Normally, the majority asks for unanimous consent to:

- Insist on its amendment(s), or disagree with the House's amendments
- Request, or agree to, a conference
- Authorise the Presiding Officer to appoint Members of the Special Committee.

If the minority objects, those motions are debatable (and therefore subject to a 'filibuster') and divisible (meaning the minority can force them to be debated, and 'filibustered', separately). Additionally, after the first two motions pass, but before the third does, Senators can offer an unlimited number of motions to give the Special Committee Members non-binding instructions, which are themselves debatable, amendable, and divisible. As a result, a determined minority can cause a great deal of delay before a conference.

In the United States House of Representatives, the 'filibuster' (the right to unlimited debate) was used until 1842, when a permanent rule limiting the duration of debate was created. The disappearing quorum was a tactic used by the minority until Speaker Thomas Brackett Reed eliminated it in 1890. As the membership of the House grew much larger than the Senate, the House had acted earlier to control floor debate and the delay and blocking of floor votes.

US State Legislatures

In only 13 State Legislatures in the United States have 'filibusters' been used, namely Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Nebraska, South Carolina, Texas, Utah and Vermont.

Filibustering in the UK Parliament

In the Parliament of the United Kingdom, a Bill defeated by a 'filibustering' manoeuvre may be said to have been 'talked out'. The procedures of the UK House of Commons require that Members cover only points germane to the topic under consideration or the debate underway whilst speaking. A few instances of 'filibustering' manoeuvres in the House of Commons and House of Lords are outlined below:

- In 1874, Joseph Gillis Biggar started making long speeches in the House of Commons to delay the passage of Irish coercion acts. Charles Stewart Parnell, a young Irish nationalist Member of Parliament, who in 1880 became Leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, joined him in this tactic to obstruct the business of the House and force the Liberals and Conservatives to negotiate with him and his party. The tactic was enormously successful, and Parnell and his MPs succeeded, for a time, in forcing Parliament to take the Irish Question of return to self-government seriously.
- In 1983, John Golding, MP talked for over 11 hours during an all-night sitting at the Committee Stage of the British Telecommunications Bill. However, as this was at a Standing Committee and not in the House of Commons chamber, he was also able to take breaks to eat.
- On 3 July 1998, Michael Foster, MP's Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill was blocked in Parliament by Opposition 'filibustering'.
- In January 2000, 'filibustering' directed by Conservative MPs to oppose the Disqualifications Bill led to the cancellation of the

day's parliamentary business on the Labour Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Tony Blair's 1,000th day in office. However, since this business included Prime Minister's Questions, Rt Hon. William Hague, the Conservative Leader at that time, was deprived of the opportunity of a high-profile confrontation with the Prime Minister.

- On Friday 20 April 2007, a Private Member's Bill aimed at exempting Members of Parliament from the Freedom of Information Act was 'talked out' by a collection of MPs, led by MPs Simon Hughes and Norman Baker who debated for 5 hours, therefore running out of time for the parliamentary day and 'sending the Bill to the bottom of the stack'. However, since there were no other Private Members' Bills to debate, it was resurrected the following Monday.
- In January 2011, Members of the House of Lords, including most notably John Prescott, were attempting to delay the passage of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill 2010 until after 16 February, the deadline given by the Electoral Commission to allow the referendum on the Alternative Vote to take place on 5 May. On the eighth day of debate, staff in the House of Lords set up camp beds and refreshments to allow Members to rest, for the first time in eight years.
- In January 2012, MPs used 'filibustering' to successfully block the Daylight Savings Bill 2010-12, a Private Member's Bill that would put the UK on Central European Time. The 'filibustering'

included an attempt by Jacob Rees-Mogg, MP to amend the Bill to give the county of Somerset its own time zone, 15 minutes behind London.

- In November 2014, MPs Philip Davies and Christopher Chope successfully 'filibustered' a Private Member's Bill that would prohibit retaliatory evictions. Davies' speech was curtailed by the Deputy Speaker, Dawn Primarolo for disregarding her authority, after she ordered the MP to wrap up his then hour-long speech. A closure motion moved by the government, which was agreed to 60-0, failed due to being 'inquate' (ie the Assembly not having a quorum)
- In October 2016, Government Minister, Sam Gyimah, MP 'filibustered' a Bill sponsored by John Nicolson, MP that would pardon historic convictions of homosexuality (which is no longer an offence), replacing an existing law that requires each pardon to be applied for separately.

The 21st century record for 'filibustering' was set on 2 December 2005 by Andrew Dismore, MP for Hendon. He spoke for three hours and 17 minutes to block a Private Member's Bill, the Criminal Law (Amendment) (Protection of Property) Bill, which he claimed amounted to 'vigilante law'.

Interestingly, both Houses of the Australian Federal Parliament have strictly enforced rules on how long Members may speak, so 'filibusters' are generally not possible. In the Parliaments of France, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Hong Kong, South Korea, the Senate of the Philippines, to name a few there are instances of 'filibustering'.

In local unitary authorities

The Parliament of India.



(local councils) of England, a motion may be carried into closure by 'filibustering'. This results in any additional motions receiving less time for debate by Councillors instead forcing a vote by the Council under closure rules.

'Filibustering' in the Parliament of India

In the Parliament of India, 'filibustering' in its intrinsic form does not as such exist.

'Budget'

The origin of the term 'budget' can be traced to the late Middle English period from an old French word 'bougette', a diminutive of 'bonge', a 'leather bag' from the Latin 'bulga', a leather bag or knapsack of Gaulish origin.

Elsewhere origin of the term 'budget' has been traced to the early fifteenth century to the word 'bouget', meaning 'leather bag, wallet or pouch'.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the UK House of Commons, in presenting his annual statement was said to 'open the budget'. In the late nineteenth century, the use of the term was extended

from governmental to other finances.

Erskine May's *Treatise*² on the *Law, Privileges Proceedings and Usages of Parliament*, provide: "The consideration of the financial statement for the year made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer,³ is the most important business of Ways and Means. This statement, familiarly known as 'the budget', is made when the Minister has completed his estimate of the probable income and expenditure for the financial year. In it the Chancellor of the Exchequer develops his views of the resources of the country, communicates his calculations of probable income and expenditure, and declares whether the burdens upon the people are to be increased or diminished. The economic aspect of the budget is important, and taxes are imposed for their economic effects as well as for raising revenue to meet the expenditure for the year. The annual Financial Statement and Budget Report is made available immediately at the conclusion of the budget speech, as are the

terms of the budget resolutions."

The position in India

In the Constitution of India, the term 'budget' is nowhere mentioned. In the Constitution, the term 'Annual Financial Statement' under article 112, is used which, *inter alia*, states that the President shall in respect of every financial year cause to be laid before both the Houses of Parliament, a statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for that year and it has been referred to as the Annual Financial Statement in the said article. The term 'budget' has been taken as a synonym for 'Annual Financial Statement'.

However, the term 'budget' finds mention in the *Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha* in Chapter XIX – Financial Business – Budget. At the very outset *Rule 204(f)* of the Rules provide that "The Annual Financial Statement or the Statement of the Estimated Receipts and Expenditure of the Government of India in respect of each Financial year (hereinafter referred to as 'The

Budget') shall be presented to the House on such day as the President may direct..."

The term 'budget' is used in all other relevant Rules under this Chapter in the Rules of Procedure.

Conclusion

This series of articles has attempted to dwell upon and elucidate many of the often referred to parliamentary expressions and practices, based on a wide range of sources available, and to bring together these expressions in one place for ease of reference.

References:

- ¹ Based on available sources on internet/web
- ² Erskine May's *Treatise on The Law, Privileges Proceedings & Usages of Parliament* (12th edition) p.831.
- ³ At times the First Lord of the Treasury, if a Member of the UK House of Commons, as in session in session 1908, or the Lord Privy Seal as in Session 1921, Parl. Deb (1908) 188, c445; HC Deb (1921) 141, c67.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians launches two new guidelines on Gender Sensitising Parliaments and Anti-Harassment Policies for Commonwealth Parliaments

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network has published two new sets of guidelines to assist Commonwealth Parliaments.

CWP Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines

The *CWP Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines: Standards and a Checklist for Parliamentary Change* has been launched to highlight the importance of gender sensitising across all Parliaments in the Commonwealth.

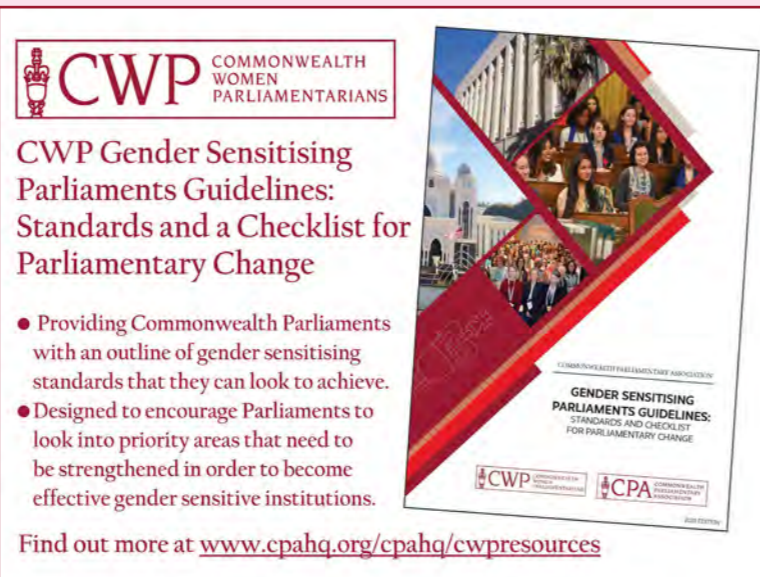
The Guidelines build on the recommendations proposed in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Gender Sensitising Parliaments Report that was produced in 2001 following analysis by a study group of women Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth. Now updated to reflect the current issues that hinder the process to achieving gender equality, the new CWP Guidelines provide Commonwealth Parliaments with an outline of gender sensitising standards that they can look to achieve.

Produced by Sarah Childs, Professor of Gender and Politics at Royal Holloway, University of London on behalf of the CWP, the newly released guidelines are designed to encourage Parliaments to look into priority areas that need to be strengthened in order to help legislatures to become effective gender sensitive institutions.

The CWP Chairperson, Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA (Pakistan) said: *"The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians recognises the important role it plays in raising and addressing issues relating to gender equality, in particular, the representation of women in Parliaments. The network will continue to encourage and support Parliamentarians, of all genders, to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role - legislation, oversight and representation and to help Parliaments become gender sensitive institutions. Through the implementation of this important document, I am confident that Parliaments will be empowered to successfully initiate gender sensitive reforms. The CPA and CWP stand ready to support any CPA Branch that is interested in adopting gender sensitive practices to ensure they can successfully create and permanently maintain both a culture and environment that responds to the needs and interest of persons of all genders."*

Professor Sarah Childs said: *"It's been 20 years since the CPA and CWP published its first Gender Sensitising Guidelines; much has changed in the intervening years. In many Parliaments there are more women elected. But most Commonwealth Parliaments – indeed most of the world's Parliaments – fail to deliver equality of representation for women. And, in too many places, women are still fighting for gender equality."*

The CPA and CWP were right to draw attention to the failings of democracy back in 2001 and it is even more important to do



Find out more at www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwpresources

so today, in 2020. COVID-19 has revealed and exacerbates many longstanding gender inequalities and injustices. To redress these, the voices, experience, and expertise of women must be central to political decision-making and women must be present as decision makers in our political institutions. The 2020 Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines are especially designed to help Commonwealth Parliaments create the necessary conditions to deliver on their responsibility to reach the standard of gender sensitivity; to identify the actors and means through which reforms are implemented, and Gender Sensitising Parliaments Standards maintained."

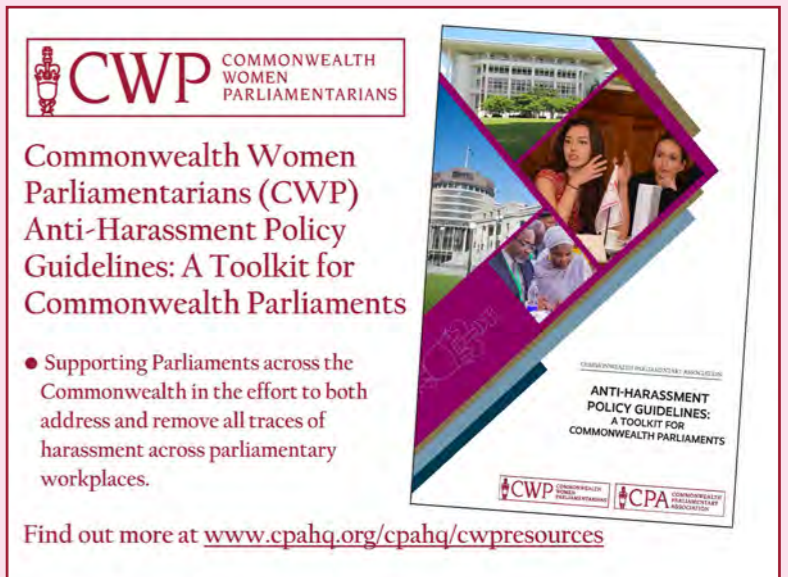
Anti-Harassment Policy Guidelines for Commonwealth Parliaments

The new CWP Anti-Harassment Policy Guidelines are designed to support Parliaments across the Commonwealth in the effort to both address and remove all traces of harassment across parliamentary workplaces.

The guidelines define harassment as *"unwanted behaviour directed at an individual with the purpose or intent of humiliating, disrespecting, intimidation, hurting or offending them."* They have been designed to support all Parliaments regardless of their experiences to endorse and uphold a zero-tolerance approach to harassment, which could include, but is not limited to, a wide range of unwanted sexual, discriminatory, physical and psychological behaviours or actions.

Drawing from a wide range of anti-harassment policies and procedures from Parliaments in the Commonwealth, these guidelines provide a detailed step-by-step approach that offers insights and case studies on what appropriate methods should be included when developing or updating their respective anti-harassment policies.

The CWP Chairperson, Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA (Pakistan) said that *"At the 6th Triennial CWP Conference, held in the margins of the 64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Uganda in 2019, the issue of bullying and harassment in the workplace was highlighted as an important issue which needed to be tackled across the Commonwealth and beyond. The devastating consequences of this unacceptable behaviour are far-reaching and as both a visible and representative institution, all Parliaments must show leadership and set an exemplary standard for all by taking a proactive role in having such policies in place."* The CWP Chairperson also said that *"both the CPA and the CWP network will continue to work with all 180 Parliaments and Legislatures represented in the CPA's membership to combat harassment in all its forms."*



Find out more at www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwpresources

*Please note: These toolkits are published by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for the benefit of its membership and for the wider international community. These toolkits do not supersede existing national guidance and plans. Rather, these toolkits should be used to augment existing relevant national plans and focus the support of the international community.

To download a copy of the new CWP Gender Sensitising Parliaments and CWP Anti-Harassment Policy Guidelines please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwpresources.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Chairperson holds virtual CWP Steering Committee to focus on strategic plan and future activities

The Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA (Pakistan) held the bi-annual meeting of the CWP Steering Committee online to discuss the planning of future activities of the network and proposals for the CWP strategic plan.

CWP Members reviewed and approved a new approach to utilising the CWP Regional Strengthening Funds and budget for 2021 as well as looking ahead to activities to mark International Women's Day in March 2021 on the theme of #ChooseToChallenge.

CWP Members attending the meeting which was held in two parts included: CWP Vice-Chairperson, Hon. Zainab Gimba, MP (Nigeria) representing the CWP Africa Region who was elected for a second term as Vice-Chairperson; Hon. Lisa Thompson, MPP (Ontario) representing the CWP Canada Region; Hon. Samantha Sacramento, MP (Gibraltar) representing the CWP British Islands and Mediterranean Region; Ms Aisha Ghaus Pasha, MNA (Pakistan) representing the CWP Asia Region; Hon. Michelle O'Byrne, MP (Tasmania) representing the CWP Australia Region; as well as the CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg and CPA Deputy Secretary-General, Jarvis Matiya.



For more images of CWP activities and events please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/flickr.



BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS IN THE AFRICA REGION: A VIEW FROM TANZANIA



Hon. Mboni Mohamed Mhita, MP is a Member of the National Assembly of Tanzania. She was first elected to Parliament in 2015. She has served as a District Commissioner and a Member of the Regional Council of Tanga. She was also the Deputy Secretary-General of the Pan African Youth Union from 2014 to 2017.

Being a woman is a gift from God. We are here for a reason. The issues of women's participation in elections, women and the media, the economic empowerment of women and women's rights to own land, are all issues of women's empowerment. Women's empowerment in different sectors promotes women's rights and this will ensure a gender equitable Africa.

One would ask, why is women's participation so crucial? And why the scarcity of female candidates and officials? Are women uninterested? Unwilling or uncertain? Is the political system unresponsive and impenetrable? In simple language one can ask, is it the issue of the driver or the road? And the answer is 'both' the driver and the road.

Over the years, women have faced barriers and roadblocks to their participation in elections, either to vote or to be voted for. And with prominent efforts by our foremothers and sisters, we have witnessed a tremendous improvement in some parts of the Africa region. We have witnessed women moving from back sitters to decisions makers. Irrespective of these progressive development women's contributions still has minor impacts on decision that effect society as a whole.

A young girl once asked me, why are women still marginalised in some countries?

And I replied to her, my beloved daughter, women

are still being marginalised and have minor impacts in decision making because of the following:

1. Cultural and social barriers
2. Logistical barriers.

Cultural and Social Barriers

This area focuses on the lack of education for women and girls. In many cultures where girls' education is not prioritised, women are often less educated than men. As a result, women may be illiterate and unaware of their rights to vote, rights to compete in elections or how to fulfill the necessary requirements of candidacy.

There are many issues that contribute to the lack of education for young girls in the Africa Region, including drop out due to pregnancy, early marriages and hygiene and sanitation.

Patriarchal systems have convinced society that politics is for men; and as a result women fail to participate fully in politics by being sidelined or by excluding themselves from participating in electoral processes and hence a violation of their domestic right to equal participation in elections.

There is a lack of political will and commitment due to the lack of civic-voter education.

The responsibility of household responsibilities and domestic chores falls on women and many women therefore cannot afford to spend time on other issues due to their family obligations. Families do not grant that opportunity

“Over the years, women have faced barriers and roadblocks to their participation in elections, either to vote or to be voted for. And with prominent efforts by our foremothers and sisters, we have witnessed a tremendous improvement in some parts of the Africa region. We have witnessed women moving from back sitters to decisions makers. Irrespective of these progressive development women's contributions still has minor impacts on decision that effect society as a whole.”



for women and it takes a very understanding and supportive husband or partner to grant that opportunity to a wife.

Logistical Barriers

What are the logistical barriers that women face when wanting to participate in elections in the Africa Region?

Often the political systems and the party systems don't have processes that encourage women's participation. Many party systems have been disregarding the discussion on gender equality and women's empowerment, and hence gender equality is implemented through the will of a political leader at his or her discretion.

There is often a lack of internal party democracy and transparency and the absence of gender sensitivity within the party structures. There is a lack of women's caucuses in some party systems. Women caucuses in party systems have been at the forefront in advocating on the 'Women's Empowerment Agenda', especially in enhancing women's engagement in electoral processes.

There are national barriers as some governments have not dedicated a commitment to promote women's empowerment.

There is often a barrier with funding as generally, when money dominates elections, women are most likely to lose out. Women are often faced with the challenges of a lack of resources to facilitate their participation or campaigns. Many women are unemployed and have no access to self-employment, and for those who have access to funds, they often have lower incomes for many reasons including family obligation and occupational segregation.

There is also the problem of corruption and we have witnessed election processes in some parties and other elections that have prioritised people with access to money.

For women in electoral processes in some areas, they are being subjected to sexual exploitation and corruption in order to acquire posts or to advance their positions.

For many women, health provisions can be a barrier to election participation. Women who are heavily pregnant cannot participate fully in electoral processes due to pregnancy complications. Society is convinced that a pregnant woman might not be able to fulfill and dedicate time in the role. But also, a pregnant woman cannot stand all day

Above: Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) from the CWP Africa Region welcomed Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan, Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania (front row centre); the International Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA of the National Assembly of Pakistan (front row left); and the CWP Vice-Chairperson, Hon. Zainab Gimba, MP, Nigeria (front row, third from right) to the CWP Africa Region Gender Sensitization Workshop on the theme of 'Advancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes' in Arusha, Tanzania from 25 to 29 October 2019.

long in waiting lines, waiting to vote and fulfill her rights to equal participation in elections. And same applies to women who have recently given birth.

Threats of violence and intimidation can discourage women from fulfilling their electoral processes, due to physical insecurities and worries of leaving their families behind.

In both rural and urban areas, some women lack the legal documents and identification, such as birth certificates and national identity cards, that prevent them for participation in elections.

Positive Progress

Despite these many exhausting barriers and roadblocks that hinder women to participate fully in electoral process, many Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians have overcome these barriers. There is a story behind each and every one of us.

It is encouraging to see how some countries in the

CWP Africa Region have made progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Through equal access to democracy, women's empowerment aims to move women from oppressed powerlessness to positions of power.

So what is our role as Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians?

I would say, our role is to continue to find durable solutions that will give opportunities to women towards the realisation of their rights and enhance women participation in electoral process.

We have witnessed the African Union and African Heads of State taking initiatives on advancing women empowerment.

In Tanzania, the government of the United Republic of Tanzania under the leadership of H.E President John Magufuli has taken a number of initiatives



“The Parliament of Tanzania, under the leadership of the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Deputy Speaker has 145 female MPs out of 393 MPs in total, which is equivalent to 36.7%, exceeding the Commonwealth target of 30%.”



Above: The Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon addressed the Parliament of Tanzania in April 2019 and commended the Parliament for its gains in gender equality by achieving 36.7% women Members of Parliament. The CPA Chairperson was received by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania and CPA Tanzania Branch President, Rt Hon. Job Yustino Ndugai, MP at the main Parliament building.

to ensure that the United Republic of Tanzania is gender equitable. The President of the United Republic of Tanzania has shown his commitment to ensure that women are empowered by ensuring that social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure improves the wellbeing of women and girls. Through implementing the education and training policy (2014), this has made a remarkable achievement in reaching education for both girls and boys. This includes free education from primary to secondary schools. It goes without saying that free access to education has contributed in promoting gender equality and empowerment of girls. Enrollment in primary schools has increased by 7.9% from 8,639,200 school pupils in 2016 to 9,317,791 in 2017.

The President has also made remarkable achievement, for the very first time in Tanzania – we have a female Vice-President. H.E Samia Suluhu Hassan, we call her ‘Mama Samia’.

The President of Tanzania has continued to take dynamic measures to empower women with a view to make them fit

for decision making positions and leadership posts; this is testified by the decision of President John Magufuli to appoint women in various leadership positions including key government posts. We have a woman Deputy Speaker, women Judges, women Ministers, women Parliamentarians, women Regional Commissioners, District Commissioners and other posts.

The United Republic of Tanzania has continued to champion the empowerment of women economically by fulfilling women’s access to soft loans. By doing so, the local Authority Act has been amended which grants a contribution of 10% of a local authority’s own source revenue for facilitating economic activities - with 4% women, 4% youth, 2% people with disabilities accessing the funds. In most constituencies, the government has empowered women’s groups through the 4% by distributing more than 50,000USD equivalent to 120,000,000 Million Tsh over a two to three-year period.

The Parliament of Tanzania, under the leadership of the

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Job Ngugai and the Deputy Speaker, Hon. Tulia Ackson, has 145 female MPs out of 393 MPs in total, which is equivalent to 36.7%, exceeding the Commonwealth target of 30%.

The Speaker has solidified gender equality norms in the Parliament and the Parliament functions are based on gender sensitivity. From the top leadership of the Parliament, there are quotas in different representative positions, such as Committees and deployments.

The Parliament of Tanzania has a very active women’s caucus – the Tanzania Women’s Parliamentarian Group (TWPG) - which is constantly advocating for women’s issues, especially in capacity building, so as to enhance their ability to engage in electoral activities.

With such leaders in the CWP Africa Region – we are

convinced that we are on the right track in enhancing women’s empowerment through active participation in electoral processes.

What can be done next?

Women need to actively participate in electoral processes – to vote or being voted for. As Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, we should use our networks from regional level to local level and advocate on gender equality.

- A key focus should be on:
- Advocating for women’s access to education, especially in cultures where girls’ education is not prioritised.
 - Discouraging girls from early pregnancies.
 - Discouraging girls on early marriages.

We need to raise and co-ordinate public debates in schools and local authorities on the issues of women’s rights,

women’s empowerment and the importance of political processes being inclusive of women. This will promote civil education and enhance the level of women’s participation in politics; within the party systems and in our communities, village leadership, councils, Parliament and public offices.

As Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, we should ensure that we champion legislation and policies that support women’s equal participation in politics and ensure that they are passed. We should be inspired by the African Union Agenda 2063 and other legal frameworks including the declaration on gender equality in Africa (SDGEA), the Maputo Protocol, the Beijing Declaration and the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in particular, SDG5.

We need to work to develop capacity building and economic activities for women. This will enable women to be part of the

nation’s growing economy and this in turn creates a cycle that sustainably alleviates poverty, and this will build women’s capacity to access resources that will facilitate them.

We need campaign finance reform by setting overall campaign expenditure limits.

Involving men in most women’s empowerment workshops and seminars from a local level – villages and councils - to a national level. This will help to alleviate patriarchal systems in society.

We should advocate in our party systems for the establishment of women’s caucuses. These women’s caucuses must focus on the sustainability of women’s empowerment and the enhancement of women’s participation in elections.

Women leaders should unite and continue to act on empowering women and adequate steps should be taken so as to eliminate inequalities in

society as this will help to reduce women being marginalised and increase access politics through the electoral processes.

Governments and party systems need to promote women’s rights so they could be ‘agents of change’ for sustainable socio-economic development and security around the world.

Without women’s empowerment and gender equality in electoral processes, societies will not be able to achieve their full development potential. Without women, there is no democracy, or I would rephrase it as ‘No democracy without women’.

We need to concentrate more effort in improving the following:

- Access to education for women and girls
- Availability of civil education
- Promoting gender-balanced legislation
- Pushing for the legal frameworks that support women’s empowerment
- Capacity-building for women in leadership
- Economic capacity-building for all women
- Combating corruption
- Engaging men in all gender equality workshops and seminars

- Internal democracy in parties
- Establishing women’s caucuses
- Establishing a system of women holding positions in governments through quotas and affirmative action
- Workshops for women’s empowerment from a village level through to national level.

Women’s empowerment is a process, for women to take on decisions with regards to our lives. It is a process to raise the status of women in the eyes of our society. It is a process to continue establishing mechanisms for women’s equal participation and equitable representation at all levels of the political process. I conclude by reminding ourselves that the greatest need of the hour, is the change of social attitudes towards women.

This article is based on a presentation given at the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Africa Region Gender Sensitization Workshop on the theme of ‘Advancing Women’s Participation in Electoral Processes’ in Arusha, Tanzania from 25 to 29 October 2019.

Below: The International Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) are pictured with Hon. Tulia Ackson, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania (second from right) and the CPA Africa Regional Secretary, Mr Steven Kagaigai, Clerk of the National Assembly of Tanzania (pictured centre) at the CWP Africa Region Gender Sensitization Workshop in Arusha, Tanzania in October 2019.





'BUILDING FORWARD BETTER' - WHY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP MATTERS DURING COVID-19 AND BEYOND



Amanda Ellis is Executive Director, Global Partnerships for the ASU Global Futures Laboratory and Professor of Practice at Thunderbird School of Global Management, USA. She is a former New Zealand Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva (2013-16). An economist by training, Amanda held senior roles at the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and Westpac Banking Corporation. Amanda is a founding member of the Financial Alliance for Women and the recipient of the TIAW Lifetime Achievement Award for services to women's economic empowerment.

"This is how we can emerge from the pandemic in all of its dimensions: by recognising that women are not just victims of a broken world; they can be architects of a better one,"
Melinda Gates¹

As we deal with the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on women, minorities and the poor, much has been written about the effectiveness of the leadership traits exhibited by women.² Comprising only some 8% of political leaders globally, women have accounted for an estimated 40% of the most successful responses to COVID-19! *New York Times* columnist Nick Kristoff's comparative analysis³ pointed out that women-led countries have a six-times lower death rate than those led by male counterparts in similar countries.

What has been different in women's leadership? Emphasis on consultation and collaboration with scientists and experts; compassion for putting people's lives first – which also turns out to be best for the economy in the long run; transparency, flexibility and a willingness to admit mistakes; clear, consistent communication and encouraging values of cooperation and empathy.

So why, in 2020, are there still so few women in leadership?

September 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality,

Development and Peace convened in Beijing.⁴ As we approach that milestone it's an opportune time to take stock and reflect on progress. It is sobering how much the odds are still systemically stacked against women.

The playing field is still far from level for women, girls and LGBTQ+. There have been noble declarations and good intentions of gender equality since the founding of the United Nations. From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1947, to Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 in 2000, through to UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, governments have committed and recommitted.

But where is the follow through? Not a single country has yet achieved full gender equality in practice in 2020. The World Bank Women Business and the Law project tracks legal progress as it impacts the business world and it is depressing to note that in only eight of 193 UN member countries is gender equality even fully legislated! This has implications for everything from land tenure to business loans, creating sub-optimal outcomes for people, profits, and planet.

The impact of COVID-19 on women

Crises expose underlying fragilities and exacerbate existing inequalities. The UN Secretary-General's policy brief⁵

underscored the regressive impact of COVID-19 on gender equality. For example, while women make up only 39% of global employment, they account for 54% of overall job losses; women's jobs are almost twice as vulnerable to the crisis as men's and women are both victims of the digital divide and at increased risk of domestic violence. In addition, women are the majority of health care workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also the 'triple care' burden many women face at home in trying to manage a remote role, take care of children engaged in home schooling as well as assisting elderly relatives at heightened risk of COVID-19. Women's unpaid contributions to health care alone equate to 2.35% of global gross domestic product, or the equivalent of nearly \$1.5 trillion.⁶

Why gender equality matters for everyone

Research clearly shows the central importance of women's economic well-being to that of family, community, and society. Recent McKinsey research⁷ suggests as much US\$13 trillion could be added to global GDP in 2030 by taking gender-informed action to address COVID-19. Emerging data suggests that only 17% of economic and social protection policies implemented by governments are gender sensitive. The G7 working group on women's economic empowerment has



provided excellent guidance to governments to alert them to the critical importance of a gender lens in COVID-19 response and recovery plans. It is past time to dismantle the obstacles to gender equality, for everybody's sake.

Systemic gender inequality and fewer women leaders are linked to slow progress on sustainability outcomes too. Research from the IFC⁸ and Foreign Policy⁹ reveals women are more likely than their male counterparts to put a premium on sustainability, both in politics and in business. This is of critical importance given the links between COVID-19 and the climate crisis. As a recent report from UNEP¹⁰ pointed out, we need to address not just the symptoms but the underlying causes of the pandemic if we are to prevent further and potentially much more serious outbreaks of zoonotic diseases, as well as the forecasts of severe climate-induced damage. Trillions are being borrowed against the future to combat the impacts of COVID-19. That money needs to be spent not to return to some fictional 'normal' that will

continue to rapidly accelerate catastrophic climate change, but to re-invent a future that keeps our planet habitable. IMF Chief, Kristalina Georgieva so well describes our current imperative: not to build back better, but "to build forward better."¹¹

Why women entrepreneurs are key to building forward better

Despite the systemic obstacles, innovative women 'solutionaries' are architecting transformative futures not only in government, but also in public service, business, in the climate movement and in entrepreneurship.

The International Leadership Association (ILA) is a partner in an innovative global business competition to showcase women entrepreneur 'solutionaries' who are supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals and leading the way to make our societies more resilient and sustainable. Launched by the UN Secretary General and the Council of Women World Leaders at the UN General Assembly in 2018, the WE Empower UN SDG Challenge

honours women entrepreneurs who are modelling sustainable business practices and gender equality in support of the UN SDGs. WE Empower invests in their growth - including an ILA leadership coach for each of the awardees - and ignites awareness about the positive multiplier impact they have as women leaders in their communities, thereby aiming to change social norms and provide positive examples of the transformative possibilities of innovative women-led business models.

While women have been hardest hit by COVID-19, they are also often leading the way in 'building forward better'. Many women entrepreneurs have responded to the incredible challenges with both grit and innovation, pivoting rapidly to cope with the impact of the crisis and help create better futures. Lina Khalifeh from Jordan took her business training women to deal with domestic violence online; Leah Lizarondo from the USA doubled the number of volunteers helping to provide much needed free food to those in need; young water engineer Christelle Kwizera from Rwanda used her WE Empower grant money to ensure local schools had running water for access to hand washing; Bessie Schwarz from the USA is working in 20 countries with Big Data to inform grassroots women's groups about flood prevention.

As the UN Secretary General points out, "how the world recovers from COVID-19 is a 'make-or-break moment' for the health of our planet...to rebuild a world that is cleaner, fairer and safer for all." To build forward better, we must live up to our own existing promises of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, to truly level the playing field for the benefit of all. We must not waste the COVID-19 crisis. Let's embrace

the transformative leadership we need and shift perspectives to recognise, as Melinda Gates so eloquently asserts, "that women are not just victims of a broken world; they can be architects of a better one."

This article was first published on the International Leadership Association (ILA) website on 13 August 2020. Amanda Ellis is the Co-Chair for the ILA 2021 Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. Find out more at www.ila-net.org.

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LEVERAGING WOMEN AND YOUTH FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE FUTURE

The Global Parliamentary Unit at the World Bank examines how stronger youth and female political representation can transfer knowledge and best practices to those who aspire to become more democratically representative.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the world was healthier and more educated than ever, with countries making significant gains in human capital outcomes, particularly for girls.¹ Sierra Leone was one such country thanks to efforts like the government's flagship program for *Free Quality School Education* launched in 2018. The programme is being supported in part by the Free Education Project, which takes an inclusive approach to quality education by increasing the retention of girls, especially in secondary school, and improving the learning environment for children with disabilities. In response to COVID-19, the project is also supporting provision of distance learning and communication campaigns on prevention.

Further East on the Atlantic coast of Africa, Ghana's government is enhancing its social protection system and the implementation of its main social safety net programmes through the *Ghana Productive Safety Net Project*. One of its programs, Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW) provides up to 180 days of work over two consecutive agricultural off-seasons through work such as maintenance and rehabilitation of rural roads and small earth dams and dugouts, soil conservation, and tree planting. The programme ensures that at least three-fifths of the beneficiaries are women. And provides daycare at all project sites to enable women to care for their babies whilst working. When COVID-19 hit Ghana, about 14,000 individuals

from nearly as many households were working under LIPW. As the government closed schools to help slow the spread of the virus, LIPW reduced work hours to allow mothers and caregivers to attend to their children while continuing to pay full daily wages.

As we approach the end of this incredibly tumultuous year, governments and policymakers have been forced to acknowledge the gaps in critical services such as healthcare systems, social welfare mechanisms and education. Two demographics impacted the most are women and youth. As many as one billion children in the developing world alone are missing school, some due to lack of digital means to pursue distance learning.² Girls are especially vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 with the convergence of school lockdowns and loss of family livelihoods. The majority of healthcare workers on the frontlines of the emergency pandemic response are women, and many more work in sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, such as hospitality, retail and restaurants, putting them at risk of falling into or remaining in poverty. Beyond school lockdowns, youth are already preparing to face years of hardship on the job market and expecting to struggle to sustain livelihoods.

Real change often starts at the policy level

Just like programs such as the *Free Quality School Education* programme or the *Ghana*

Productive Safety Net Project, we know specific measures are needed to continue promoting education, reducing gender inequality and creating job opportunities for youth, both men and women, boys and girls. While the pandemic has allowed governments to see the glaring gaps in gender inequality and opportunities for youth, it also gives them the occasion to move into action to close those gaps.

"The one thing that the pandemic has taught us and brought us together on is, in terms of women's issues, there's no better time than now to stop calling them women's issues and to start calling them national issues" - Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MP (Pakistan), Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP).

During the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and IMF in the week of 12-15 October 2020, the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network, Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MP from Pakistan, spoke about an initiative that she and other Parliamentarians in Pakistan implemented to bring specific financial and other essential services to women and the vulnerable. She explained that it is incredibly difficult in Pakistan for young girls to access the internet or shops, and many do not have a bank account. That is why, when rolling out a programme to help 140 million families receive three months' worth of food aid, the government included the same mandatory checks needed to

open a bank account for all men and women to be financially viable to receive this aid. As a result, nearly 60 million more women and girls now have bank accounts simply because they completed these checks and have an ID card.

Female and young lawmakers like Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan are valuable in bringing the voice of their demographics into policy discussions. There is no doubt about it – the more diverse an elected representative body, the more it allows for policies that reflect the interests of all people it is supposed to represent, including minority groups. For instance, countries with more women in Parliament are more likely to have gender-equal inheritance and property ownership laws, by challenging patrilineal inheritance.³ There is also evidence to suggest that legislation on sexual harassment in employment is more prevalent in countries where more women are in legislative office. Both policies have the ability to protect and empower women's economic rights.⁴ And yet the number of female and young Parliamentarians globally is still unsuitably low. While the percentage of women Members of Parliament worldwide has more than doubled since 1995 to nearly 25% today⁵, 25% of legislators is not sufficient to represent the 50% of society that women comprise. And with currently 1.8 billion people aged 10 – 24, only 2.2% of MPs are under 30, 15.5% are under 40, and still only 28% of MPs are under 45.⁶

Right: A special session on Women Leading Politics and Development was held at the Virtual Global Parliamentary Forum during the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and IMF, 13 October 2020.



Many developing economies have the demographic advantage of being young, and this youth will need to be adequately represented in parliament on issues that disproportionately affect them such as education, digitalisation, job creation and the pressing issue of climate change.

"Women have to demand their space. It is for us now as Members of Parliament to actually help Malawian women to get this space. Education, education, education for me is key for girls" – Hon. Catherine Gotani Hara, Speaker of the Parliament of Malawi.

Furthermore, adequate representation in the Legislature is not only about rights, it makes economic sense. For example, bridging the gender gap promotes economic growth and poverty reduction. And in terms of human capital – the contribution of health and education to the productivity of the next generation of workers – the loss of human capital wealth due to gender inequality was at twice the value of global GDP in 2018, at US \$160.2 trillion.⁷ On the flip side, global wealth could increase by \$172 trillion if women had the same lifetime earnings as men, and human capital wealth could increase by about one fifth globally.⁸

Similarly, young MPs are best placed to understand the challenges disproportionately affecting young generations. As technology becomes more pervasive in everyday life and in the workplace, youth are best placed to harness it for growth and innovation,

whilst at the same time being disproportionately affected by increasing automation that is set to pose a challenge to low-skill jobs of the future. Policy measures will need to pay special attention to the effects of the pandemic on youth, as this generation of students could already lose an estimated \$10 trillion in earnings over their lifetime due to school closings if no active effort is made to encourage students back into school.⁹

As the world reflects on ways to build a more sustainable future, young MPs should be at the forefront of this transformation and participate in calls for a greener, smarter post-COVID society. This is why the World Bank recently launched The Global Young MP Initiative¹⁰ in 2018 as a global platform for Parliamentarians to share best practices and explore innovative policy solutions to challenges affecting young generations. The aim of this platform is to create a network where an action plan for next steps can serve as a blueprint for policy solutions to challenges faced by youth today and in future.

"The most important challenges remain the construction of schools, hospitals, housing and above all employment, which involves

employing more than 60% of the population. The immensity of our challenges is therefore a set of opportunities for young people who are motivated by the desire to build the present and the future of the country at the same time," - Hon. Patrick Muyaya, a young MP from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Making sure that we are building a sustainable and inclusive future is not a sprint – it is a marathon. With the converging crises of climate change, COVID-19, and conflict that threaten progress made in development, the best way to reach the finish line will be by making sure no one is left behind with the right measures and adequate political representation needed to secure this future. Political representation in Parliament will need to align itself with real demographics, to include women and youth to best tend to the needs of these sections of society.

And for this, global cooperation will be important – international institutions, governments and civil society can lift each other up in tackling minority inequality, where countries with stronger youth and female political representation can transfer knowledge and best practices to those who aspire to become more democratically representative.

To find out more about the Global Parliamentary Unit at the World Bank visit www.worldbank.org/en/about/parliamentarians.

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Parliamentary Report

NEWS AND LEGISLATION FROM COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTS



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PARLIAMENTARY REPORTS FROM TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Trinidad's President calls for action on issues facing the nation as Trinidad and Tobago's new Cabinet is sworn-in

The President of Trinidad and Tobago, Her Excellency Paula Mae Weekes declared that the nation, which celebrated its 58th anniversary of independence on 31 August 2020, cannot be said to be a 'place of peace'. The President made the statement following the swearing-in ceremony of the country's new Cabinet, which came after the General Elections held on 10 August 2020.

The People's National Movement (PNM) won 22 seats, one less than before the election, while the United National Congress (UNC) won 19 seats, one more than before the election.

The President said: "Now I have to confess, somehow when I am in this company, auntie-tantie jumps out. And so I say to you, Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, on behalf of us all, I urge you to roll up your sleeves, put your hand to the plough and get down to

the serious business of good governance for the people of Trinidad and Tobago," adding that a change of government is a serious juncture in any country's development.

The President noted that the PNM has been given, "a fresh mandate to continue, complete and correct plans and policies", and she highlighted among several other issues, that Tobago's self-government, constitutional reform and racism need to be addressed, adding that she will speak to the issue of racism in the near future.

"Let us not ignore that whilst some exercised their franchise enthusiastically, many did so out of a sense of duty, unhappy with the alternatives on offer, perhaps feeling the pressure of Hobson's choice. Yet others declined to vote. I do not want us to forget, even for a moment that at this time Trinidad and Tobago cannot be said to be a country at peace with itself," the President recalled.

She reminded those Ministers sworn-in that they have taken a solemn oath to do their duties and to do right to all

manner of people without fear, favour, affection or ill-will. "This is your touchstone and you will be judged unsparingly. A democracy functions best when its standards bearers are true to their oaths of office, fulfilling their duties and upholding the expectations of the high offices to which they have been elected or appointed. Failure is not an option," she added.

President Mae-Weekes hailed those who faced the polls, especially a number of young people who participated in the vote. She noted that it was heartening to witness a significant number of young people putting themselves forward in parties, old and new, ready to receive the baton.

The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Hon. Dr Keith Rowley, MP, in addressing the newly sworn-in Cabinet, pointed out that his Government's tenure will be over 60 months and it is not counted in years. "This is a 60-month journey and rest assured, that nobody will be allowed to fall asleep because their conduct and performance

will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. As Prime Minister, I assume full responsibility, and I want to thank the national community for giving me another opportunity to continue in public service."

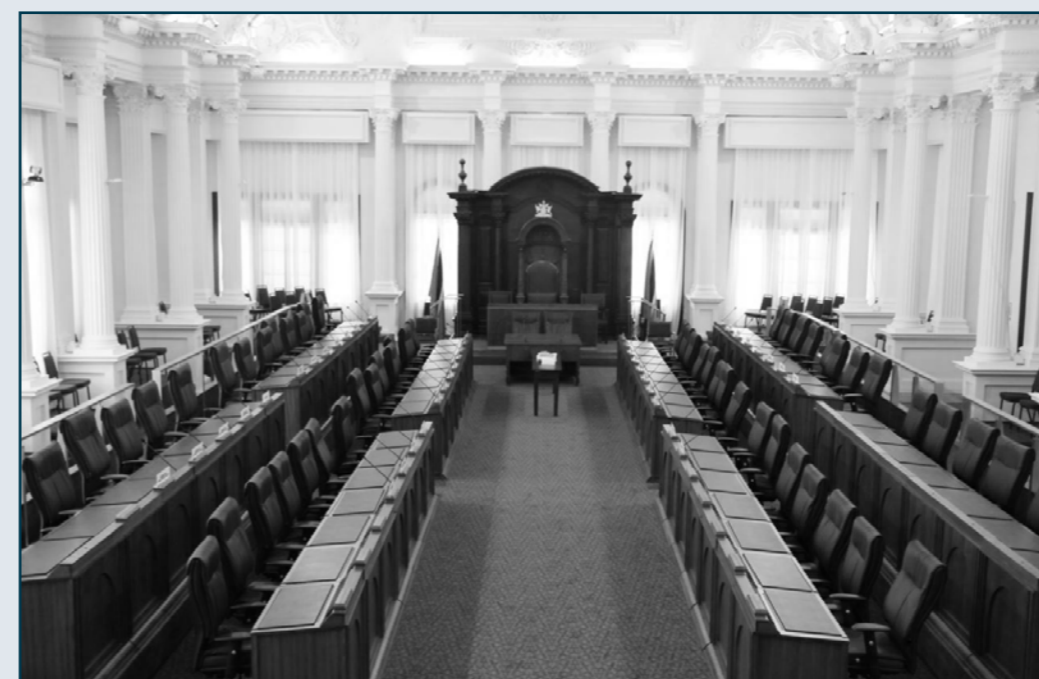
There had been a 10-day delay following the general election on 10 August 2020 due to several recounts, before the 23 Member Cabinet was formally sworn-in on 20 August 2020 at the President's House. In addition, the Prime Minister, now in his second consecutive term, appointed several Ministers of State in different Ministries to assist the respective Cabinet Members.

Trinidad and Tobago Election Results

The People's National Movement (PNM) won the popular vote in the elections. According to the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC), the PNM had gained 322,250 votes, while the United National Congress (UNC) won 309,188 votes.

The UNC Leader, Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, MP had claimed that the election was fraught with irregularities in many constituencies, and the party had called for recounts in the marginal seats of San Fernando West, St Joseph, Tunapuna, Toco-Sangre Grande and La Horquetta/Talparo. Many political pundits had suggested that these five marginal seats would define the outcome of the elections, however the PNM won these marginal seats following recounts.

The UNC Leader refused to concede defeat on election night, but following the recount, she stated that after some days of reflection and monitoring of the progress of the election recount process that she was satisfied that the people had spoken and



the PNM party would form the new Government before congratulating them.

Trinidad and Tobago's President calls on MPs to become more trustworthy and fulfil their duties

At the opening of the First Session of the 12th Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, on 28 August 2020, the President, **Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes** called on all Members of Parliament to become more trustworthy in the eyes of the people.

Stating that she was asking on behalf of the 658,000 citizens who had done their civic duty in voting in the recent elections, the President said: "You all took an oath this morning to conscientiously and impartially discharge your responsibilities to the people of this nation. The essence of the relationship between Members of Parliament and the public is one of trust, confidence and fidelity. Notwithstanding some significant milestones over the years, the strength of that bond has been eroded by the failure of successive Parliaments to deliver consistently on the reasonable expectations of the populace.

Your core function is law-making, an essential service in our democracy, one in which gives you the power to transform the lives of our citizens and our nation. Each of you seated in these chambers has the primary purpose of conducting the people's business. Your being here today suggests your willingness to discharge your duties in a thorough and responsible manner and to treat all persons equally."

The President said to the 41 MPs and 31 Senators present that whether they arrived via the ballot box or by virtue of selection, it is vital at this time that they have full grasp of their remit and their limitations and that they are totally committed to the task at hand.

"That is the only way you will be able to keep the promises inherent in your oath. Can we trust you to measure up to the standards required of high office?" she asked.

"You have heard no doubt that with great power come great responsibility. Apart from your legislative function, there are other requirements and expectations of you. I see many new Parliamentarians among your number. You will have to mature into your role very quickly. Make no mistake, your grace period, if indeed, there was one, was between the election or your appointment and the convening of Parliament today, and from today you are expected to get down to managing the affairs of the public. The novelty of being a Parliamentarian is not an acceptable excuse for any shortcomings", she said.

This country's first female President continued: "Parliamentary debates can sometimes be long and tedious, but that does not give you carte blanche as Members to become disengaged from the process. How many times has the public been witness to Members who were nodding off, engrossed in their phones or otherwise showing no interest in the ongoing debate? However, challenging the process, Members of the public expect you to remain alert in order to actively defend their interests."

Trinidad and Tobago Parliament First Sitting passes 'COVID-19 mask' Bill

At the first sitting of the new Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, the Public Health (Amendment) Bill was passed. The Bill provides for mandatory wearing of face masks to prevent the spread of COVID -19, and failure to wear face masks citizens could be fined up to TT\$5,000.

The Bill was piloted by the newly-appointed Attorney

General, **Faris Al-Rawi** who said that the regulations will now prescribe by way of publications that the failure to wear a mask in public will attract a fine of TT\$1,000; a second offence TT\$2,000, and TT\$5,000 for the third offence. The Attorney General stated there will be exceptions, such as the age of a person, their medical condition, any physical disability, "or in public circumstances advised by the Chief Medical Officer to guidelines providing for exceptions."

In his maiden contribution, **Saddam Hosein, MP** denounced the measure as the Public Health Regulations were made without parliamentary oversight, however the Bill was approved by the both Houses of Parliament unanimously.

Trinidad Budget 2021 projects TT\$8.2 billion deficit

The 2020-21 Budget was presented in the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament on 5 October 2020, with a projected TT\$8.2 billion deficit, which has now become the norm over the past five years. This is the first Budget in the new Parliament following general elections and it was presented under the theme of 'Resetting the Economy for Growth and Innovation'.

The Finance Minister, **Colm Imbert, MP** presented his sixth budget which contained a 'mixed bag of items', and he highlighted that the budget aims to kickstart the Trinidad and Tobago economy following the COVID-19 pandemic and energy price shocks.

The Finance Minister outlined that the 2021 expenditure is set at TT\$49.73 billion, and projected revenue is TT\$41.364 billion, both less than the 2020 Budget levels, and he announced that there will be a TT\$8.2 billion deficit. He also pointed out that 2021 will be another challenging year, but that the Government hopes to

keep the economy stimulated and keep as many people as possible employed.

"The Budget reflects our understanding of the requirements of our country for the medium term to ensure that our economic recovery is as strong as possible. The Government has been working assiduously to produce the required Valuation Rolls notwithstanding the numerous challenges," he said.

The Finance Minister outlined a range of different measures including the introduction of a property tax. Taxation of commercial, industrial and agricultural properties will also be introduced. The National Petroleum Marketing Company (NP) gas stations will be put up for sale with the first option to existing dealers, and at the same time, he announced that there will be no price hike on gasoline as he confirmed a liberalization of the fuel markets from January 2021, when retail margins will be removed, adding that petroleum retailers and dealers will be allowed to fix their own margins.

The Finance Minister also said that there will be a 12.5% tax applied to luxury imported foods from January 2021 including lobsters, escargot, smoked salmon, pate, calms, strawberries, champagne, apples and grapes.

The Finance Minister stated that he planned to curb the demand for the purchase of new and used cars, which costs the government around TT\$2.5 billion annually in foreign exchange. "To correct this unsustainable situation and suppress demand, as opposed to an outright prohibition, we propose to remove all tax concessions of private motor cars. All private motor cars will now attract customs duty, motor vehicle tax and Value Added Tax, with the lowest rates of duty and tax being imposed on

hybrid cars, electric cars, CNG cars, and small engine cars below 1500 cc, to encourage their use. Further, in January 2021, the permissible age of imported foreign used cars will be reduced to three years and the quota of used cars will be reduced by 30%, and that a quota system for the importation of new cars will come in effect in January 2021."

The Finance Minister also spoke about the need to extend the retirement age to 65 years, and called for Opposition support for legislation for the regulation and reductions in spending on the Revenue Authority, the Gaming sector, the National Statistical Institute, procurement and Public Administration operations.

The Finance Minister announced a further

clampdown on cigarette usage, adding that Government spends TT\$500,000 a year to treat one lung cancer patient. "We are introducing disincentives to constrain smoking habits and that Excise Duty on tobacco products will be increased from October 20. All penalties for selling alcohol and tobacco to minors will be increased from January 1, 2021."

The Leader of the Opposition, **Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, MP** heavily criticised the Government Budget, suggesting that it was outdated 'before the ink dried after it was printed'. The introduction of a property tax was also criticized as it places pressure on the poorest communities. "I have called on the Government repeatedly to hold their hands on the property tax. We are

currently facing a pandemic where thousands of people have lost their jobs, incomes and livelihoods."

Opposition Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, **Dr Rai Ragbir, MP**, disapproved of the Government's administration of health care in Trinidad and Tobago, adding that health care would further deteriorate in 2021 and beyond.

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services, **Ms Donna Cox** replied that over 173,020 citizens were recipients of government grants during the COVID-19 pandemic at a cost of TT\$329,600. Some 25,101 families were assisted with top-ups to existing food support, from the School Feeding Programme and food vouchers and market boxes were given to 24,999 families in

collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries, while 1,399 families received emergency food hampers.

The Minister also outlined that the Ministry has distributed TT\$47,278,912 in subventions to 22 Non-Governmental Organisations, including three statutory boards, to support their work and facilitate the delivery of specialised services for persons with disabilities in their care. The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services estimated that they had reached more than 700,000 citizens. The Minister added: "The provision of these grants and services, which include senior citizens pension, public assistance, disability grants, food card services, cost the taxpayer approximately TT\$5.13 billion."



THIRD READING: BRITISH COLUMBIA

Economic Stabilization (COVID-19) Act, 2020 Bill 18, *Economic Stabilization (COVID-19) Act, 2020*, was introduced on 24 June 2020. The Bill provides financial relief measures to address the effects of the pandemic. It extends the filing and payment deadlines for numerous business taxes, delays commercial property tax late-payment penalties, and extends the time period for municipalities to remit other taxes. The Bill also amends the *Income Tax Act* to facilitate a tax-free emergency benefit of \$1,000 to eligible individuals who were financially impacted by COVID-19. The Bill amends the *Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act* to authorise deficit budgets for the next three fiscal years, and the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* to allow the government, over the next three fiscal years, to present supplementary estimates even when there is a forecast of a budgetary deficit. The Bill also clarifies the use of special warrants when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting during a provincial state of emergency.

During the Second Reading debate, **Hon. Carole James, MLA**, Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, described the unprecedented economic impact of COVID-19 and the Bill's provision of substantial economic relief to British Columbia's citizens and businesses. She noted that economic

recovery from the pandemic will take time, and government's response will result in budgetary deficits to deliver health and economic recovery programs and supports.

The Official Opposition Finance Co-critics, **Shirley Bond, MLA** and **Stephanie Cadieux, MLA**, supported the Bill's objectives, but expressed concern about the projected \$12.5 billion deficit resulting from the government's response to the pandemic. They cited forecasts indicating that 20% of small businesses were expected to disappear in the coming year. While agreeing that tax deferrals provided for in the Bill would benefit small businesses, they advocated for a longer-term extension of deadlines and graduated repayments to assist businesses affected by the pandemic. They also stressed the importance of mechanisms to ensure oversight and accountability for the use of special warrants during a state of emergency. Further, they urged the government to consider reducing the time frame for the extension of the use of special warrants after a state of emergency has ended.

The Third Party House Leader, **Sonia Furstenau, MLA**, shared the Official Opposition's concern about the need for a longer-term approach to tax deferrals, warning that a second wave of COVID-19 cases in the fall may leave many unable to pay their taxes. She remarked that

government programs need to be adaptable to ensure that people and businesses have the necessary financial supports to endure the pandemic. At the same time, she expressed concerns that a delay in the scheduled increase to the carbon tax would have an adverse impact on BC's efforts to fight climate change.

During Committee of the Whole proceedings, Minister James introduced an amendment to Bill 18. The amendment reduced the time frame for the issuance of special warrants after a state of emergency from six months to three months; however, Opposition Members queried what type of situation would justify issuing a special warrant but not declaring a state of emergency. The Third Party House Leader introduced a sub-amendment which removed the use of special warrants in the context of emergency expenditure after the end of a state of emergency. The sub-amendment and amendment were carried and Bill 18, *Economic Stabilization (COVID-19) Act*, passed the Third Reading stage on 29 July 2020.

COVID-19 Related Measures Act, 2020 Introduced on 22 June 2020, Bill 19, the *COVID-19 Related Measures Act*, amends the *Emergency Program Act*, expanding government's powers during and after a



state of emergency. The amendments were made to support government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bill authorises the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to implement regulations to adjust the expiry dates of Ministerial Orders by 45 or 90 days, to facilitate the transition out of a state of emergency. The Bill also allows for the adoption of regulations that protect essential service providers, such as childcare operators and amateur sports organisations, from civil liability for COVID-19 related damages. This protection only extends to providers if they followed public health orders. To provide safeguards against overreach, the Bill includes a sunset clause repealing the Act one year after it is brought into force, creates authority for the courts to oversee actions taken by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, and limits Ministerial Orders by standards of proportionality to determine if the benefit of the Ministerial Order is proportionate to the emergency.

During the Second Reading debate, many Members focused on the exceptional powers that the Bill proposed to provide to government during and after a state of emergency, and the need for the Legislative

Assembly to hold the government's use of these powers to account. **Hon. David Eby, QC, MLA**, Attorney General, explained that several Ministerial Orders pursuant to the *Emergency Program Act* were set to expire at the end of the state of emergency. The Bill would ensure that the government has the flexibility and continuity for regulations and programs that may be required after the end of the official state of emergency. He noted that in view of the Bill's exceptional authorities, the government had provided an advance copy of the legislation to the Opposition parties.

Michael Lee, MLA, Official Opposition Critic for the Attorney General, agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented challenge which justified the Bill's overall objectives. He encouraged the government to examine the approaches taken by other jurisdictions in order to ensure appropriate limitations on regulation-making authorities as well as accountability and oversight for the use of the exceptional powers in the Bill.

The Third Party House Leader, **Sonia Furstenau, MLA**, shared the view that the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the

provision of temporary authorities to the government to adjust emergency regulations, and emphasised the need for checks and balances on the use of these powers. She stated that consideration of the Bill also provided an opportunity for Members to examine the broader context for the government's responsibilities and statutory powers for responding to an emergency. She indicated that climate change will result in increasing numbers of emergency situations, and it will be important to ensure that legislative provisions support a robust response to such situations.

During the Committee of the Whole proceedings, the Official Opposition and the Third Party questioned how the Bill would provide oversight of the government's powers. In response, the government introduced an amendment which requires any order or regulation made related to the COVID-19 pandemic to be reported to the Speaker within five days. Upon receipt, the Speaker must lay the report before the Legislative Assembly as soon as possible.

The amendment was adopted and Bill 19, the *COVID-19 Related Measures Act*, passed the Third Reading stage on 8 July 2020.



PARLIAMENT OF CANADA'S PROROGATION AND SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Prorogation and Speech from the Throne

On 18 August 2020, the Canadian Prime Minister, **Rt Hon. Justin Trudeau, MP**, asked the Governor-General, **Her Excellency Rt Hon. Julie Payette**, to proceed with the prorogation of Parliament, ending the first session of the 42nd Parliament.

On 23 September 2020, the Governor-General opened the second session of the 42nd Parliament with the reading of the Speech from the Throne. Titled 'A Stronger and More Resilient Canada', the Speech focused on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and indicated the four foundations of the government's plan:

- The fight against the pandemic and to protect lives;
- Supporting people and businesses through the crisis and beyond;
- Building a stronger, more resilient Canada; and

- Focusing on core values such as reconciliation, addressing systemic discrimination, gender equality and linguistic diversity.

This was a unique event as it was the first Speech from the Throne to occur both in the temporary Senate chamber and during a pandemic.

Traditions had to be adapted to follow public health protocols, such as Parliamentarians wearing masks and sitting two metres apart in the Senate Chamber as well as a limited number of Parliamentarians being allowed to attend the ceremony in person.

Continued Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

In order to prepare for the beginning of the second session, **Hon. Anthony Rota, MP**, Speaker of the House of Commons, announced that mask-wearing would be mandatory in all common

spaces of the House of Commons precinct. Certain exceptions have been allowed for Members in certain situations, including during sittings and Committee meetings, press conferences and in their private office space. On the same day, it was also announced that previous protective and sanitary measures, such as the suspension of non-essential parliamentary activities as well as public tours, would remain in effect until further notice.

On 19 October 2020, it was announced that plexiglass panels would be installed outside the House of Commons Chamber to enhance protection for Parliamentarians and employees.

Parliamentary Work

On 23 September 2020, the House of Commons adopted by unanimous consent a motion governing the proceedings of the House until 11 December 2020. The motion elaborates on the hybrid system that will be used to conduct Parliamentary and Committee business over the next months. Temporary rules permit Members who participate remotely to be counted for the purpose of quorum and allow documents to be tabled electronically with the Clerk.

In addition, the motion includes a rule for recorded divisions in this hybrid setting, which are in place until the launch of the House of Commons' remote voting application. This new procedure includes a digital bell to call Members to a vote and a roll call in alphabetical order of all Members attending virtually.

Committee meetings may be held either in a hybrid or virtual format. Recorded votes follow the same process as in the Chamber. The motion of 23 September 2020 also re-establishes the Special Committee on Canada-China relations, originally created during the first session.

Changes in the House of Commons and in Cabinet

On 4 August 2020, **Michael Levitt, MP**, announced that he would step down as a Member of Parliament.

On 17 August 2020, **Hon. Bill Morneau, MP**, a Minister of Finance, announced his resignation both as a Member of Parliament and from Cabinet. The following day, **Rt Hon. Justin Trudeau, MP** announced changes to Cabinet: the responsibility for finance was given to **Hon. Chrystia Freeland, MP**, who also retains the position of Deputy Prime Minister. Her former cabinet position, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, was given to **Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, MP** who also remains President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada.

As a result of these announcements, two by-elections have been called in the ridings of Toronto Centre and York Centre for 26 October 2020.

Changes in the Senate

On 24 April 2020, **Hon. Grant Mitchell** retired, after having served in the Senate since 2005.

On 23 August 2020, **Hon. Lillian Eva Dyck** retired, after having served in the Senate since 2005.

As of 26 October 2020, the standings in the Senate were: Independent Senators Group



44, Conservative Party 21, Canadian Senators Group 13, Progressive Senate Group 11, non-affiliated 6 and vacant 10.

Changes in Party Leadership

Two leadership races recently came to an end. Both parties used a ranked ballot to determine the winner. Members of the Conservative Party of Canada had until 21 August 2020 to mail their ballots and the results were announced on 23 August 2020. With almost 175,000 votes cast, **Hon. Erin O'Toole, MP**, won on the third ballot. He replaced **Hon. Andrew Scheer, MP**, who remains a Member of Parliament.

The Green Party of Canada used both online voting as well as paper ballots to select who would replace **Elizabeth May, MP** as leader. The results were announced online on 3 October 2020. **Annamie Paul**, an activist and lawyer, was elected leader of the party. Not currently sitting as an MP, Ms Paul has announced that she will run as a candidate in the

Toronto-Centre by-election of 26 October 2020.

Ethics

As indicated in the previous issue of *The Parliamentarian*, ethical questions were raised regarding the federal government's announcement and subsequent cancellation of the *Canada Student Service Grant*. Two House of Commons Standing Committees held meetings related to the situation. However, those studies ended with prorogation on 18 August 2020.

The subject was brought forward at the beginning of the second session: **Hon. Erin O'Toole, MP**, Leader of the Opposition, sponsored a motion to create a special Committee on anti-corruption to further study the question. The Liberal Party of Canada announced that it would consider it to be a matter of confidence and as such would request the dissolution of Parliament if it came to pass. On 21 October 2020, the motion

was defeated in a 146–180 vote.

Workplace Harassment

In July 2020, allegations were made in the media regarding potential issues of harassment and abuse in the office of Governor-General **Her Excellency Rt Hon. Julie Payette**. Following these claims, the Privy Council Office (PCO) launched an independent investigation on 23 July 2020. On 1 September, PCO announced that it mandated the services of a private firm, with a final report expected in the autumn. The Office of the Governor-General has retained the services of former Supreme Court of Canada Justice, **Michel Bastarache**, as a constitutional advisor.

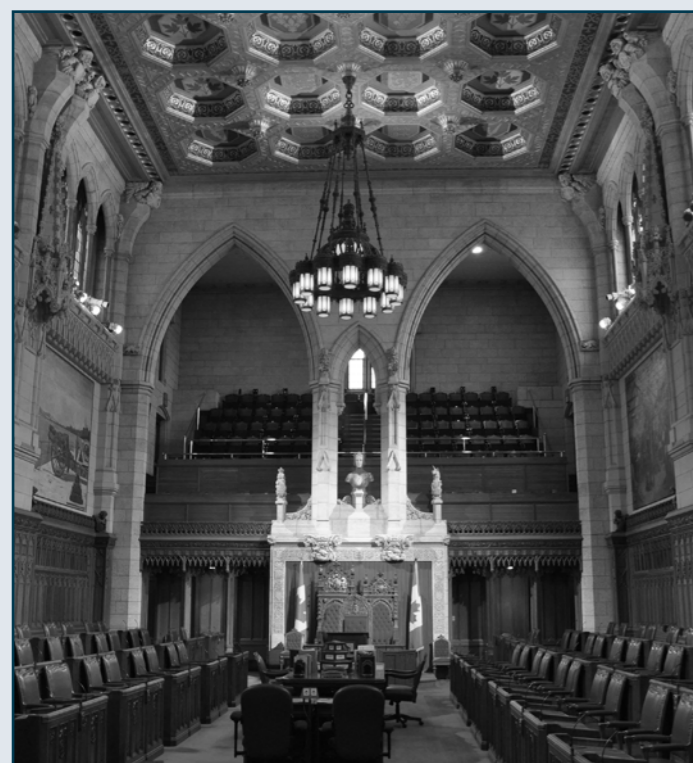
Emergency Debate

On 19 October 2020, an ongoing lobster fishing dispute in Nova Scotia between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups led

the House of Commons to hold an emergency debate which lasted five hours. On 21 October, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans began a study titled 'Implementation of Mi'kmaq Treaty Fishing Rights to Support a Moderate Livelihood'.

In Memoriam

On 18 August 2020, **Rt Hon. John Turner**, Prime Minister of Canada from 30 June to 17 September 1984, passed away at the age of 91. Mr Turner was first elected as a Member of Parliament in 1962 and remained in office until 1976. He returned to the House of Commons in 1984 and remained an MP until 1993. He occupied various positions in Cabinet during his career, including Minister of Justice, Attorney General of Canada and Minister of Finance. Mr Turner was also Leader of the Opposition between 1984 and 1990.



THIRD READING: INDIA



The Companies (Amendment) Bill 2020

The *Companies Act, 2013* was enacted to consolidate and amend the law relating to companies in India. The Act introduced significant changes relating to disclosures to stakeholders, accountability of Directors, Auditors and key managerial personnel, investor protection, personnel, corporate governance and in-house adjudication mechanism to adjudicate civil lapses, without involving criminal courts.

In view of constant endeavor of the India Government to facilitate greater ease of living to law abiding corporates, a

Company Law Committee (CLC) consisting of representatives from Ministry, industry chambers, professional institutes and legal fraternity was constituted on the 18th September 2019, to decriminalise some more provisions of the Act, based on their gravity and to take other concomitant measures to provide further ease of living for corporates in the country. After careful consideration the CLC submitted its report in November 2019.

Based on the recommendations of the CLC and internal review by the Government, it was proposed to amend various provisions of the Act to decriminalise minor procedural

or technical lapses under the provisions of the said Act, into civil wrong: and considering the overall pendency of the courts, a principle based approach was adopted to further remove criminality in case of defaults, which can be determined objectively and which otherwise lack any element of fraud or do not involve larger public interest. In addition, the Government also proposed to provide greater ease of living to corporates through certain other amendments to the Act.

Accordingly, the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2020 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Corporate Affairs on 17 March 2020, seeking to amend the *Companies Act, 2013* to achieve the above objectives.

Key Features of the Bill

- (i) To decriminalise offences under the Act in case of defaults which can be determined objectively, and which otherwise lack any element of fraud or do not involve larger public interest.
- (ii) To empower the Central Government to exclude, in consultation with the Securities and Exchange Board, certain class of companies from the definition of 'listed company', mainly for listing of debt securities.
- (iii) To clarify the jurisdiction of the trial court on the basis of place of the commission of the offence under section 452 of the Act for wrongful withholding of property or of a company by its officers or employees, as the case may be.
- (iv) To incorporate a new Chapter XXIA in the Act relating to Producer Companies, which was earlier part of the Companies Act, 1956.
- (v) To set up Benches of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal.
- (vi) To make provisions for allowing payment of adequate remuneration to non-executive directors in the case of inadequacy of profits, by aligning the same with the provisions for remuneration to executive directors in such cases.
- (vii) To relax provisions relating to charging higher additional fees for default on two or more occasions in submitting, filing, registering or recording any document, fact or information as provided in section 403.
- (viii) To extend applicability of section 446B, relating to lesser penalties for small companies and one person companies, to all provisions of the Act which attract

monetary penalties and also extend the same benefit to Producer Companies and start-ups.

- (ix) To empower the Central Government to allow certain classes of Public companies to list classes of securities (as may be prescribed) in foreign jurisdictions.
- (x) To empower Central Government to exempt any class of persons from complying with requirements pertaining to beneficent shareholding.
- (xi) To empower exclusion from listed companies. The central government, in consultation with the Securities and Exchange Board of India, to exclude companies issuing specified classes of securities from the definition of a 'listed company'.
- (xii) The *Companies Act 2013* requires companies to file certain resolutions with the registrar of companies who are exempt from filing resolutions passed to grant loans or to provide guarantees or security for a loan. This exemption has been extended to registered non-banking financial companies and housing finance companies.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Under the *Companies Act*, companies with net worth, turnover or profits above a specified amount are required to constitute CSR Committees and spend 2% of their average net profits in the last three financial years, towards its CSR policy. The amending Bill exempts companies with a CSR liability of up to Rs. 50 lakh a year from setting up CSR Committees. Further, companies which spend any amount in excess of their CSR obligation in a financial year can set off the excess amount towards their CSR obligations in subsequent financial years.

Periodic financial results for unlisted companies:

The Amending Bill empowers the central government to require classes of unlisted companies (as may be prescribed) to prepare and file periodical financial results, and to complete the audit or review of such results.

Benches of NCLT: The Bill also seeks to establish benches of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal. These shall ordinarily sit in New Delhi or such other place as may be notified.

Debate

During the discussion on the Bill in Parliament, the Minister in charge while replying to the debate *inter alia* stated that not only big companies, but also micro, small and medium enterprises and small companies are also registered under the *Companies Act*. Small companies will also get the benefits of the provisions of decriminalisation being made through the Amending legislation. The Minister also stated that a new chapter is being added in the *Companies Act*, which will be beneficial for the producers' organisations. Incentives are proposed to be given to farmers and producers' organisations and these provisions would include seed capital, funds and direct market access. The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on 19 September 2020 and by Rajya Sabha on 22 September 2020. The Bill, as passed by both Houses of Parliament, was assented to by the President of India on 28 September 2020.

The Bilateral Netting of Qualified Financial Contracts Bill 2020

The Bill would ensure financial stability and promote competitiveness in Indian financial markets by providing enforceability of bilateral netting of qualified financial contracts and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Background

Netting enables two counterparties in a bilateral financial contract to offset claims against each other to determine a single net payment obligation due from one counterparty to other in the event of default. In the absence of a legal framework for bilateral netting, banks are forced to measure credit exposure to a counterparty for over the counter (OTC) derivative contracts based on gross basis and not net basis. This situation significantly increases credit risk exposure and systemic risk in the financial markets in the event of default of a counterparty, besides trapping significant amount of capital unproductively by banks. An unambiguous legal framework for enforceability of close-out netting would reduce the credit exposure of banks and other financial institutions from gross to net exposure, resulting in substantial capital saving on such exposure and reducing the overall systemic risks, thus contributing to the financial stability.

Owing to the emerging global consensus

of the imposition of margins for non-centrally cleared OTC derivatives, it had become necessary for India to implement an exchange of margin system for OTC derivatives to improve stability and the resilience of India's financial system. Such a margin on a gross basis would make the OTC derivative market very costly and may seriously disrupt the OTC derivatives market, as such derivatives account for a significant part of the total derivatives market. The law on bilateral netting would be a significant enabler for efficient margining. The capital saving would enable banks to provide price efficiency in offering hedging instruments to businesses in India, and catalyse the corporate bond market through developing the credit default swap market. It is expected that a law on bilateral netting of financial transactions would further develop the financial market in India.

The Government accordingly brought forward the Bilateral Netting of Qualified Financial Contracts Bill, 2020, which was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Finance on 14 September 2020.

Salient features of the Bill

- (a) Provision has been made for the designation of any bilateral agreement or contract or transaction, or type of contract, as qualified financial contract by the Central Government or any of the regulatory authorities as specified in the First Schedule;
- (b) Enforceability of netting of a qualified financial contract has been provided for;
- (c) Provisions have been laid down for invocation of close-out netting which may be commenced by a notice given by one party to the other party of a qualified financial contract upon the occurrence of an event of default with respect to the other party or a termination event that may, in certain circumstances, occur automatically as specified in the netting agreement;
- (d) It has also been provided that determination of the net amount payable under the close-out netting in accordance with the terms of the netting agreement entered into by the parties and in the absence of the netting agreement, where the parties to a qualified financial contract fail to agree on the sum with regard to the net amount payable under the close-

THIRD READING: INDIA (continued)

out netting, determination of such sum through arbitration;
(e) Certain limitations on powers of administration practitioner have been imposed.

The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on 20 September 2020 and by Rajya Sabha on 23 September 2020. The Bill as passed by both Houses of Parliament was assented to by the President of India on 28 September 2020.

Labour Law Codes

On 19 September 2020, the following three labour law codes were introduced by the Minister of Labour in the Lok Sabha:

- i) The Code on Social Security 2020
- ii) The Industrial Relations Code 2020
- iii) The Occupational Safety Health and Working Conditions Code 2020

Since all three Codes were dealing with labour welfare initiatives then they were listed together for 22 September 2020.

Code on Social Security 2020: The Second National Commission on Labour, which submitted its report in June 2002 had recommended that the existing set of labour laws should be broadly amalgamated into the following groups, namely: industrial relations; wages; social security; safety; and welfare and working conditions.

Following these recommendations

and a tripartite meeting comprising of the Government, employers' and employees' representatives, the India Government decided to bring a comprehensive legislation forward to amalgamate, simplify and rationalise the relevant provisions of nine central labour enactments relating to social security. This amalgamation would facilitate the implementation and remove the multiplicity of definitions without compromising the basic concepts of welfare and benefits to workers.

The Code on Social Security would facilitate the use of technology ensuring transparency and accountability leading to effective enforcement of the provisions of the proposed legislation. Widening the scope of the benefits to fixed-term employees and facilitating the ease of compliance of labour laws would be a big step towards equity and promote the setting up of more enterprises, thus catalysing the creation of employment opportunities.

The Code would bring in a wide range of features including the extension of the coverage of Employees' State Insurance to all establishments employing ten or more employees; the extension of employees' pension and insurance schemes to all industries or establishments employing twenty or more employees; and new penalties for employers who fail to enact this new code.

The Industrial Relations Code, 2020:

Following the recommendation of the Second National Commission on Labour, the India Government decided to bring in legislation to amalgamate, simplify and rationalise the relevant provisions of the following three central labour enactments relating to industrial relations, namely: *The Trade Unions Act, 1926*; *The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946*; and *The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947*.

The Industrial Relations Code would bring the use of technology in its enforcement. All these measures would bring transparency and accountability which would lead to more effective enforcement. The facilitation for ease of compliance of labour laws will promote in setting up of more enterprises thus catalysing the creation of employment opportunities.

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020:

Following the recommendation of the Second National Commission on Labour, the India Government decided to enact the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code which would amalgamate, simplify and rationalise the relevant provisions of thirteen central labour Acts relating to the occupation, safety, health and working conditions of workers. The Code was introduced in Lok Sabha on 23 July 2019 and the same was referred to the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour. The Committee recommended several substantive modifications to the Code and in addition, the India Government also proposed certain changes to the Code in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This Code would introduce a number of measures relating to health, safety, welfare and working conditions of workers.

Discussion on Codes in Parliament

After a combined discussion in the House on all three Codes on 22 September 2020, these were passed by the Lok Sabha on the same day. The three Codes were passed by Rajya Sabha on 23 September 2020. The Codes as passed by both Houses of Parliament were assented to by the President of India on 28 September 2020.



REMOTE PARTICIPATION A FIRST IN AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT CHAMBER PROCEEDINGS

The Australian Federal Parliament has continued to adapt, during the course of 2020, to the Coronavirus pandemic and its impact on Parliamentarians' ability to meet in Canberra for sittings. One notable outcome has been the opportunity afforded to Members and Senators to participate remotely in particular Chamber proceedings. This innovation has been functioning well in both the Australian House of Representatives and the Australian Senate since its introduction in August.

The effect that the pandemic would have on Parliament even planning to meet became apparent as early as 23 March 2020, from which point the sitting calendar underwent a number of revisions. Parliament was able to meet for three weeks in the (southern hemisphere) Winter sittings, albeit with significantly reduced attendance. However, an alarming increase in community transmission of COVID-19 in the State of Victoria during July affected the start of the planned Spring sittings. At the request of the Prime Minister, **Hon. Scott Morrison, MP**, the first sitting fortnight in August was cancelled.

Seeking the agreement of the Leader of the Opposition, **Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP**; the Speaker of the House, **Hon. Tony Smith, MP**; and the President of the Senate, **Senator Hon. Scott Ryan** to the cancellation, the Prime Minister conveyed advice he had received from the acting Australian Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly. This advice was that the "entry of a high-risk group of

individuals could jeopardise the health situation in the Australian Capital Territory and place residents at unnecessary risk of infection." But the Prime Minister also emphasised to his colleagues his view that it would be undesirable to hold a sitting that would effectively exclude Parliamentarians from a single State, when "*our Commonwealth Parliament should have representatives from all members of our federation and it is the duty of Parliamentarians to attend Parliament, if it is scheduled."*

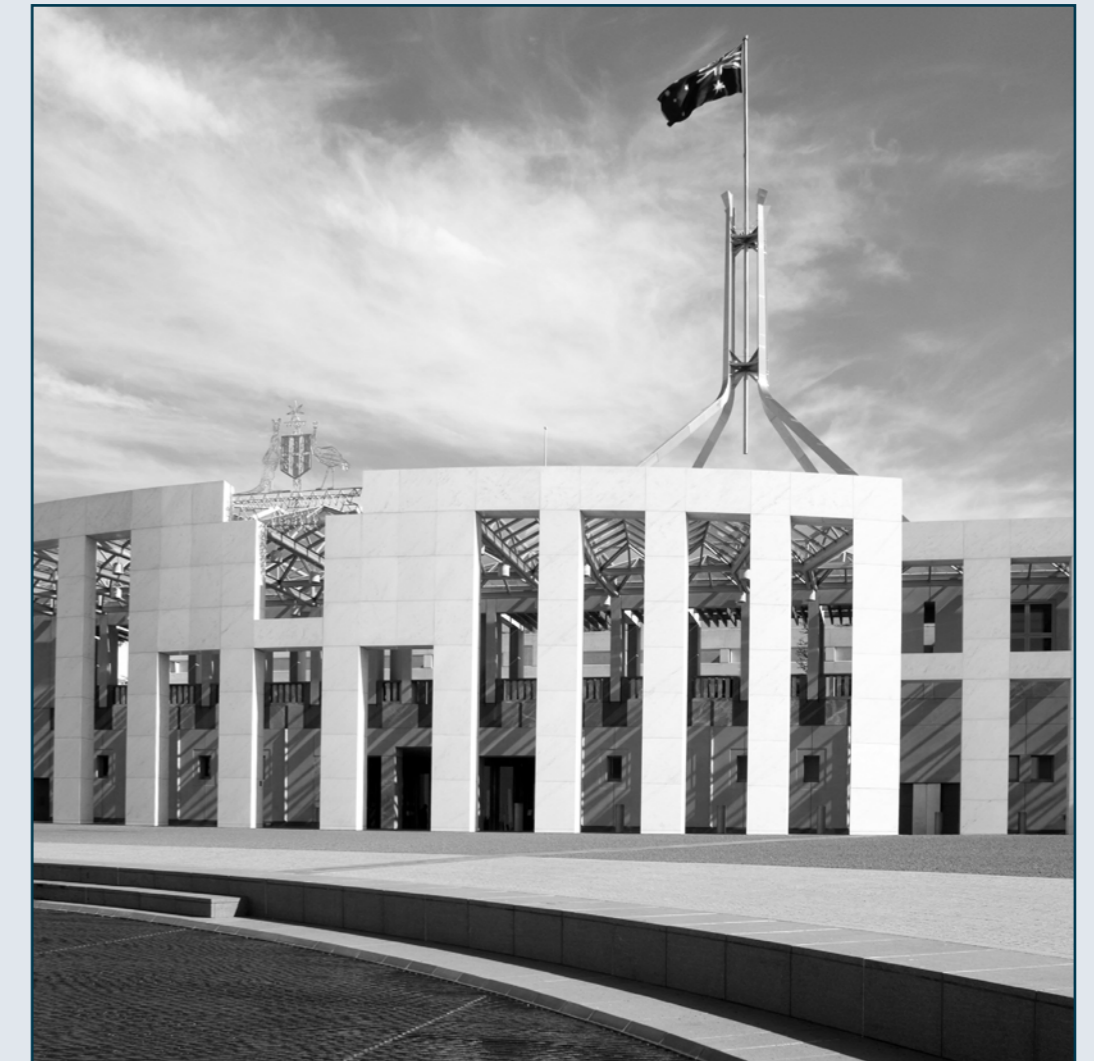
In the weeks following, close attention was paid

to the evolving situation in Victoria, and also in the State of New South Wales, which was experiencing outbreaks in localised 'hotspots'. Preparations for the sitting fortnight due to commence on 24 August 2020 began in earnest; these contemplated a continuation of physical measures to reduce the risk of transmission in the building and especially within the chambers. The measures included:

- Reduced numbers of Members and increased spacing between seats.
- Closure of public galleries.

- Restrictions on numbers of non-Members (limit of five photographers in the Press Gallery; advisers to leave during divisions; reduced service from attendants; Hansard recorders to work externally).
- Doors to remain open, except during divisions, to reduce contact with door handles.

On 17 August 2020, the President and the Speaker issued a joint statement, following consultation with the Acting Chief Medical Officer and ACT Health, containing



arrangements that had been made for the sitting fortnight. The statement noted that Parliament House would be closed to the public and that Members' and Senators' staff should not travel to Canberra unless it was considered absolutely essential. The statement acknowledged that while the wearing of face masks is not mandatory in the Australian Capital Territory, the practice "is encouraged where physical distancing is not possible"; a later joint statement, issued on 15 October 2020, added that the wearing of face masks is also "strongly recommended in those areas of the building where people circulate."

Focus was also given to how procedural rules could accommodate a degree of remote participation. Having foreseen a potential inability to attain the normal requirements for meetings, the House had on 23 March 2020 agreed to a significant resolution. It provided for the House to meet in a manner and form not otherwise provided in the Standing Orders, with the agreement of the Leader of the House and the Manager of Opposition Business (who could also agree on necessary changes to rules and orders). The resolution gave the Speaker the power to determine the manner in which Members may be present, including for the purposes of achieving a quorum. On the same day, the Senate had passed a similar resolution but gave authority for determining the rules and orders for Senate meetings to the Senate Procedure Committee.

These are extraordinary resolutions for an extraordinary time. However, exactly what manner and form such a meeting would take to some extent remains speculative, as to date both the House and



the Senate have been able to achieve quorate meetings in Canberra. But since 24 August 2020, the meetings have also featured and officially recorded contributions of some Members not physically present in the Chamber (and marked absent for the purposes of attendance). In the House, this was made possible through a resolution, also on 24 August 2020, authorising the use of an official video facility for that purpose; further, an *Agreement for Members to Contribute Remotely to Parliamentary Proceedings* made between the Leader of the House, **Hon. Christian Porter, MP** and the Manager for Opposition Business, **Hon. Tony Burke, MP**, pursuant to the 23 March

resolution, defined the level of permitted contributions that could be made by Members unable to attend Parliament because of the pandemic.

The House resolved that Members participating through the official video facility would have their contributions "published and broadcast in accordance with the usual processes and rules, as if the contribution had been made by a Member attending in the Chamber of the House." This ensured that all remarks made by video link were incorporated into Hansard. The Speaker also stated that Members making remarks this way would be protected by absolute privilege under the *Parliamentary Privileges*

Act 1987, as they would be considered to be participating in "proceedings in Parliament."

This confirmed to the well-established acceptance that privilege is engaged in relation to Parliamentary Committee proceedings where Members have participated and witnesses have appeared remotely. Finally, the motion provided that participation by video link would be recorded in the House's official record, the *Votes and Proceedings* (and so, where applicable, this was recorded in addition to the relevant Member's absence).

The Agreement stipulated that Members participating remotely could receive the call for the purposes of participating in Question Time

or contributing to debate (this was changed to 'making a speech' in a second and similar Agreement that was presented on 6 October 2020 for the period commencing that day until the conclusion of parliamentary sittings in 2020). Both Agreements provided that 'remote' Members could not vote or be counted for quorum; move or second any motion; move or second any amendment to a motion or a Bill; propose or support a proposal to discuss a Matter of Public Importance; call for a division or call for a quorum to be counted. Consequently, as the Manager of Opposition Business observed, "The Parliament is here, and it is meeting here...the Parliament is not a virtual Parliament."

Finally, pairing arrangements for divisions have been used extensively in the House since the pandemic began. Since 12 May 2020, pairs (normally an informal arrangement) have also been recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*. This has meant that some Members appear as both absent for entire sittings and yet paired for divisions. The Speaker observed that the recording of pairs appropriately acknowledges that the voting intentions of absent Members can be recorded and, by enabling a reduced number of Members in the Chamber, pairing has allowed legislation to pass which otherwise would not have been possible this year.

Over in the Senate, the Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate, **Senator Katy Gallagher**, had on 7 August 2020 referred to the Senate Procedure Committee the development of rules to allow Senators to participate in Senate proceedings by video link. The proposal had asked the Committee to consider rules on the basis that remote participants may not count towards the quorum and that

Senators must attend the Senate to vote in and call for divisions.

Confirming that it was indeed open to the Senate to authorise participation by video link, the Committee recommended that its use by absent Senators extend to any matter before the Chair, but with certain limitations. These included that participants be limited to moving amendments and requests for House amendments to legislation only in the Committee of the Whole stage. Importantly, the Committee noted that it had developed rules based on an overarching principle that the proceedings of the Senate are to be managed in the Senate itself which, the Committee said, "reflect a view about the primacy of attendance in the Parliament as the key means for Senators to engage in and determine its work." On 24 August 2020, the Senate resolved that the rules for remote participation recommended by the Committee in its report have effect for the following sitting fortnight; on 6 October 2020, it resolved the same for the sittings from 6 to 8 October.

On the final sitting day of the first fortnight during which remote participation was available, the Speaker had cause to remind Members in the House that those participating remotely are bound by the same formality as applies in the Chamber (including the regard to be had to, and authority of, the Chair): "Just before I call the member for Indi, I say to those Members who are remoting in today for question time - I see none on the government side; I see them on the opposition side - that obviously interjections remotely are equally disorderly. It's hard to identify who they are from, although one Member looks particularly guilty. I just

will say that the Standing Orders apply and, if it persists, not only will I enforce the Standing Orders, but you might find yourself disconnected."

A year ago, it would have been difficult to imagine a context in which such a statement would be made during chamber proceedings. But the Parliament has demonstrated resilience and flexibility despite ongoing and unforeseen challenges. This has allowed Parliamentarians, at time when it is more crucial than ever, to continue to speak on behalf of the Australian people they have been elected to represent.

New and Retiring Members in the Australian Federal Parliament

Following the retirement of **Hon. Dr Michael Kelly, AM, MP** (Australian Labor Party), a by-election in the seat of Eden-Monaro in New South Wales held on 4 July 2020 was won by **Ms Kristy McBain** (Australian Labor Party). Ms McBain was sworn in as a Member of the House of Representatives on 24 August 2020 and made her first speech on 31 August 2020. On 18 September 2020, **Dr John McVeigh** (Liberal National Party of Queensland) resigned his seat as the Member for Groom in the State of Queensland. On 8 October 2020, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, **Hon. Tony Smith, MP**, announced that the date of the by-election for Groom would be 28 November 2020.

PARLIAMENTARY REPORTS FROM THE AUSTRALIA REGION

Northern Territory Election 2020

On 22 August 2020, the Northern Territory headed to the polls to elect 25 new Members of the unicameral

Legislative Assembly. A total of 141,225 electors were enrolled to vote. The election was very close: counting continued for two weeks until final results were announced. Ultimately Territory Labor, under the leadership of Chief Minister, **Hon. Michael Gunner**, was returned for a second term of majority government, having secured 14 seats. The Country Liberal Party, led by **Ms Lia Finocchiaro**, won eight seats (up from just two in the 2016 election). In a speech at party headquarters on election night, the Chief Minister pledged to "rebuild the Territory's economy and save lives" in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Australian Capital Territory Election 2020

Residents of the five electorates in the Australian Capital Territory voted in the ACT election on 17 October 2020. Chief Minister, **Andrew Barr, MLA**, was able to claim victory for the incumbent ACT Labor Party for a record sixth consecutive term, with the support of the ACT Greens led by **Mr Shane Rattenbury, MLA**.

Final results took over a week to come in, but the outcome was that 10 Members from ACT Labor, nine Members from the Canberra Liberals and unprecedented six Members from the ACT Greens (up from two in 2016) have been elected to the 25-seat Legislative Assembly. Leader of the ACT Liberals, **Alistair Coe, MLA**, conceding defeat, acknowledged that he was 'disappointed' in the result.

The Chief Minister said that he would negotiate a parliamentary agreement with Mr Rattenbury for Labor and the Greens to govern together, and spoke of his 'humbling year' of government leading Canberra through bushfires and the global pandemic.



Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Coronavirus Economic Response Package) Act, 2020

This Act, which was assented to on 19 June 2020, makes amendments to the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, 1975* in order to waive the requirement for Great Barrier Reef Marine Park ‘permission holders’ to remit the environmental management charge (EMC) to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for the quarter 1 January to 31 March 2020. EMC is a charge imposed on permission holders (such as tourist operators) and the bulk is collected through a ‘standard tourist program charge’ which is paid by visitors taking part in tourist programs in the Marine Park.

The Act is intended to provide financial relief to the Great Barrier Reef tourism industry which has been impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. The *Coronavirus Economic Response Package Omnibus Act, 2020* (assented to on 24 March 2020) waived the EMC from 1 April 2020 – 31 December 2020, so combined the measures in both Acts have resulted in the waiving of

the EMC for 2020 in its entirety.

The Minister for the Environment, **Hon. Sussan Ley, MP** (Liberal Party) told the Australian House of Representatives that “the government values the significant contribution of the tourism industry” for whom the Bill “will provide much-needed relief.” Ms Ley also assured Members that “the government will ensure that there is no reduction in revenue that goes to the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as a result of this amendment.”

Advising the House that Labor supported the Bill and welcomed the financial relief for tourism operators, the Member for Lilley, **Ms Anika Wells, MP** (Australian Labor Party), noted that the Great Barrier Reef, comprising 3,000 individual reef systems is “of unparalleled ecological importance” and she spoke about the cultural and economic value of the Reef, including the 64,000 local jobs it supports. Ms Wells, describing the effects of three major bleaching events in the past five years, also urged the federal government to “commit to a serious plan to tackle climate change.”

These sentiments were echoed by the Member for Warringah, **Ms Zali Steggall, MP** (Independent) who told the House she supported the Bill but that “we must act collectively on climate change and balance our carbon budget.”

Similarly, the Member for Dunkley, **Ms Peta Murphy, MP** (Australian Labor Party) agreed that it was “appropriate to take short-term measures to support small businesses like tourism on the Reef” but called for further legislation to provide the Reef with better environmental protection.

The Member for Dawson, **Mr George Christensen, MP** (Liberal National Party of Queensland), emphasising the plight of tourism operators in the area as a result of the pandemic, stated that the Bill “really is needed” because in the Whitsundays area of Queensland, where the Great Barrier Reef is located, “100% of businesses are directly impacted by the... Coronavirus pandemic [and] over 3,000 jobs have been lost.”

The Member for Leichhardt, **Hon. Warren Entsch, MP** (Liberal National Party of

Queensland) noted that “7,000 businesses have directly benefited from the initiative” and that the measures in the Bill, combined with the Government’s Coronavirus-related JobKeeper program, have “ensured the tourism business and operators have been able to retain staff until things are able to return to normal.”

In the Australian Senate, **Senator Patrick Dodson** (Australian Labor Party) reiterated Labor’s support for the Bill but added that the Reef “brings in \$6.4 billion a year and is worth \$56 billion” and he urged the government to support tourism by working “towards the overall health of the Reef” by committing “to serious action on climate change.”

In her contribution, **Senator Larissa Waters** (Australian Greens) told the Senate that “the greatest relief that the government could provide for the Reef and the 64,000 people who rely on it is to take strong action on climate change.”

Senator Gerard Rennick (Liberal Party) said that the while the Bill will “alleviate some financial pressure on tourism” and “provide a very welcome relief to...small businesses...it is ultimately a short term solution” and, noting that international travel is still a long way off, called on Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk to open Queensland’s borders to interstate travellers.

Finally, **Senator Jonathon Duniam** (Liberal Party) thanked the other Senators who had contributed to the debate and noted that “everyone has touched on the importance of the tourism industry” and that the Bill “is a massive win for that sector.”

Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Cessation) Act, 2020

This Bill was introduced to the House of Representatives on 19 September 2019, and it was on that day referred to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJGIS) for an advisory report. It was finally assented to on 17 September 2020.

The Act implements a recommendation of the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor (INSLM) to amend the terrorism-related citizenship loss provisions for dual-nationals in the *Australian Citizenship Act, 2007* from an ‘operation of law’ model (where certain conduct results in automatic cessation) to a ministerial decision-making model.

The Act’s amendments provide that, at the discretion of the Minister for Home Affairs, a

person who is a national or citizen of a country other than Australia ceases to be an Australian citizen if the person acts inconsistently with their allegiance to Australia by:

- engaging in specified terrorism-related conduct.
- fighting for, or being in the service of, a declared terrorist organisation outside Australia.
- engaging in conduct that results in a conviction for a specified terrorism offence and a sentence of three years’ imprisonment, or periods of imprisonment totalling at least three years.

The Act provides for a period in which individuals subject to a citizenship cessation determination may apply to the Minister for Home Affairs to have the determination revoked. It also amends the *Intelligence Services Act, 2011* to enable the INSLM and the PJGIS to review the operation and effectiveness of the new provisions.

The Minister for Home Affairs, **Hon. Peter Dutton, MP** (Liberal National Party of Queensland) told the House that the terrorism-related citizenship cessation provisions were first introduced in 2015 in response to the threat of terrorist fighters returning to Australia from Syria and Iraq and that the amendments, recommended by INSLM, “build on, adapt and modernise the... provisions [and] strengthen the operation of the measures in response to the increasingly complex challenges facing the national security, defence and international relations of Australia.” The Minister advised the House that in considering whether to cease a person’s citizenship, “the Minister must have regard to certain public interest criteria [which] includes the degree of threat the person poses to the Australian community, Australia’s international relations and the person’s connection with the other country of citizenship” and “as an additional safeguard, the Bill retains provisions that no persons will have their citizenship ceased unless the Minister is satisfied that they are a citizen or national of another country.”

The Member for Isaacs, **Hon. Mark Dreyfus, MP** (Australian Labor Party), advising the House of Labor’s support for the Bill’s replacement of the automatic cessation

provisions with a Ministerial decision-making model, cited INSLM’s concerns that the former “operated in an uncontrolled and uncertain manner” and stated that while the latter is “far from perfect, the model would at least provide the government with the flexibility to manage the risk of potential adverse security outcomes.” Emphasising that “the power to cancel a person’s citizenship is an extraordinary power [that] must be subject to stringent safeguards” Mr Dreyfus expressed some concerns with the Bill, which included that some of INSLM’s key recommendations, including a proposal in relation to the availability of merits review, had not been implemented. Mr Dreyfus finally remarked that passing legislation does not guarantee better security outcomes and that “it will be up to the Minister to exercise the extraordinary powers in this Bill responsibly.”

Opposing the Bill, **Senator Nicholas McKim** (Australian Greens) said that the repeal of the automatic cessation provisions “would normally be...something we would welcome and support” but was concerned that the Bill’s new provisions “will increase the danger that people will be rendered stateless” because, Senator McKim said, the “safeguards in place to ensure that a person is a dual citizen before their citizenship is revoked are weakened by this legislation.” Senator McKim also expressed concern about the lack of merits review in the Bill.

Senator Rex Patrick (Independent) confirmed he would be supporting the Bill but conveyed concerns that “the provision in this Bill for a one-off PJGIS review of the administration of these new ministerial powers is no substitute for ongoing review of operational matters.” Senator Patrick said that the PJGIS should be able to review the operational activities of the “not infallible” intelligence community, upon whose advice, Senator Patrick asserted, the Minister for Home Affairs would rely in making a decision about ceasing a person’s citizenship.

Summing up, **Senator Hon. Michaelia Cash** (Liberal Party) thanked the PJGIS for its work on the Bill, and noted that the government had accepted the three substantive recommendations it had made in its advisory report.

THIRD READING: AUSTRALIA

UNITED KINGDOM PARLIAMENT DEBATES BREXIT AND COVID-19

United Kingdom Internal Market Bill

The UK Government introduced the United Kingdom Internal Market (UKIM) Bill to the House of Commons on 9 September 2020. The Bill seeks to ensure the UK internal market (trade within Great Britain and Northern Ireland) functions smoothly following the end of the Brexit transition period which ends on 31 December 2020. The transition period is the 12-month period in which the UK and EU may negotiate a future framework of their relationship before the UK ceases to be a member of the single market and the customs union. However, the Bill proved contentious as it contains provisions for Ministers to make regulations to determine how EU state aid law is applied, including in a way that could modify the Northern Ireland protocol. The protocol is an agreed part of the UK's Withdrawal Agreement with the EU.

An Urgent Question in the House of Commons on the UKIM Bill was granted on 8 September 2020, before the Bill was introduced to the House. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, **Rt Hon. Brandon Lewis, MP** when answering the Urgent Question told the House: "Our approach guarantees that we will be able to deliver the objectives that we set out for implementing the protocol in a way that protects the interests of the people and the economy of Northern Ireland."

Sir Robert (Bob) Neill, MP (Con) asked the Minister "will he assure us that nothing that is proposed in this legislation does, or potentially might, breach international legal obligations or international legal arrangements that we have entered into?"

The Secretary of State responded by saying "yes, this does break international law in a very specific and limited way... There are clear precedents of this for the UK and, indeed, other countries

needing to consider their international obligations as circumstances change."

This response was used by opponents, including **Andrew Gwynne, MP** (Lab) who, following the Minister during the Urgent Question, said "I am astounded that the Secretary of State has just conceded that he is proposing to break international law."

At Committee stage in the House of Commons, an amendment to the Bill was tabled by Sir Robert Neill and signed by a number of Conservative backbenchers, which would have required the House of Commons to approve a resolution before a Minister could lay regulations that modify the Northern Ireland protocol.

Following discussions with backbenchers, the Government tabled an amendment similar to that of Sir Robert Neill's which was agreed by the House at Committee stage. At the Third Reading division, there were notable abstentions, including former Prime Minister, **Rt Hon.**

Theresa May, MP (Con) and former Attorney General, **Rt Hon. Geoffrey Cox, MP** (Con).

Before the Bill reached the UK House of Lords, it had already been touted in the press that the Bill could face stiff opposition. During a Private Notice Question on 10 September 2020, the former leader of the Conservative Party and supporter of Brexit, **Rt Hon. Lord Michael Howard of Lympne, QC**, Advocate General for Scotland, "How can we reproach Russia, China or Iran when their conduct falls below internationally accepted standards, when we are showing such scant regard for our treaty obligations?"

Lord Keen responded by telling the House "we are not showing scant regard for our treaty obligations. We are endeavouring to allow for a contingency that may arise very soon, which will require us to ensure that we can discharge our obligations to Northern Ireland."



On 16 September 2020, Lord Keen resigned from the UK Government. In his resignation to the UK Prime Minister, he stated: "I have found it increasingly difficult to reconcile what I consider to be my obligations as a Law Officer with your policy intentions with respect to the UKIM Bill."

A regret motion was tabled by **Rt Hon. Lord Judge**, a Crossbench peer and former Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, to the Second Reading motion. The regret motion inserted "but that this House regrets that Part 5 of the Bill contains provisions which, if enacted, would undermine the rule of law and damage the reputation of the United

Kingdom." Lord Judge's motion was agreed to with 395 votes to 169. This was the biggest Government defeat in the House of Lords since the reform of the House in 1999. At the time of writing, the House of Lords were considering over 180 amendments tabled for Committee stage whilst negotiations between the United Kingdom and the EU continued.

COVID-19 response and the use of secondary legislation

A number of MPs raised concerns over the use of secondary legislation by the UK Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondary legislation had often been made under the 'made

affirmative' procedure, meaning the statutory instrument comes into effect before Parliament has considered it, although it cannot remain law unless it is approved by Parliament within a certain time period. Secondary legislation had been used to make provision for local lockdowns (which may include measures such as the prohibition of indoor socialising and curfews for hospitality businesses to stem local outbreaks of the Coronavirus), the use of face coverings in specified public areas and fines for breaching regulations. Many of these regulations were made under the *Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act, 1984* and the *Coronavirus Act, 2020*.

Rt Hon. Matt Hancock, MP (Con), the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, tabled a motion under section 98 of the *Coronavirus Act* to be debated on 30 September 2020. Section 98 provides that the motion, moved by a Minister of the Crown, must be approved if the temporary provisions of the Act which received Royal Assent in March were to remain in force for another six months.

Eight amendments were tabled to the motion, with an amendment by **Rt Hon. Sir Graham Brady, MP** (Con) receiving over 80 cross-party signatories. The amendment would insert the words "provided that... Parliament has an opportunity to debate and to vote upon any secondary legislation with effect in the whole of England or the whole United Kingdom before it comes into effect." The amendment also made reference to regulations made under the *Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act*.

The Speaker of the House of Commons, **Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP**, delivered a statement to the House before the motion was debated. He

began by telling the House: "The way in which the Government have exercised their powers to make secondary legislation during this crisis has been totally unsatisfactory. All too often, important statutory instruments have been published a matter of hours before they come into force." He explained that under *Standing Order No.16* the motion "is only [permitted] a 90-minute debate as [it is] a proceeding under an Act... I have therefore decided not to select any of the amendments to the motion."

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, following discussions with Sir Graham Brady and supporters of his amendment, made the undertaking when moving the motion "for significant national measures with effect in the whole of England or UK-wide, we will consult Parliament; wherever possible, we will hold votes before such regulations come into force. But of course, responding to the virus means that the Government must act with speed when required." The motion was agreed by 330 votes to 24.

Brexit bills and ping-pong

Several significant Government Bills relating to Brexit continue their passage through the UK Parliament as the end of the transition period approaches. The Agriculture Bill passed the House of Lords and returned to the House of Commons with 46 amendments, including six Government defeats. The UK Government was defeated seven times at Report stage of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill in the House of Lords. At the time of writing, both Bills continue to 'ping-pong' between the Houses. The House of Commons returned the Fisheries Bill to the House of Lords with 101 amendments and the Trade Bill awaits its Report stage in the House of Lords.



The Secretary of State responded by saying "yes, this does break international law in a very specific and limited way... There are clear precedents of this for the UK and, indeed, other countries needing to consider their international obligations as circumstances change."



Equal Pay Amendment Bill

The Equal Pay Amendment Bill is one of many Bills whose passage had been delayed due to reduced House sitting hours during the COVID-19 lockdown.

With the Parliament of New Zealand scheduled to rise ahead of the 2020 general election, the New Zealand Government progressed a raft of legislation under urgency in marathon sittings from 21 to 24 July 2020.

All parties supported legislation to amend New Zealand's law on equal pay for women. The Minister for Women, **Hon. Julie Anne Genter, MP** (Green), described the Equal Pay Amendment Bill as: "an important step in the journey towards workplace gender equality, building on the Equal Pay Act to make it easier for women to ensure they are paid fairly for their work."

In earlier readings, several Members referenced the *Equal Pay Act 1972*, which achieved a long-fought for right for women in New Zealand to share the same pay rates as

their male co-workers. However, jobs that are dominated by women remained underpaid and the gender pay gap had not closed.

At the Bill's First Reading, **Hon. Ian Lees-Galloway, MP** (Labour) acknowledged the important role of Kristine Bartlett, an aged-care worker who complained to the Employment Court that her employer did not provide equal pay: "The courage and perseverance of Kristine and her union resulted in a settlement to address gender-based undervaluation in the aged-care sector. They made legal history and breathed new life into a statute that was thought moribund."

Bartlett brought her case in 2013 but it was only in 2017, following a protracted negotiation process, that the claim was settled and given effect to by special legislation. The previous National Government proposed an amendment to the *Equal Pay Act 1972*, which did not pass before the change of Government in 2017.

The Labour - New Zealand First coalition,

with support from the Green Party, ditched the previous Bill and consulted widely with union and business interests, then introduced the Equal Pay Amendment Bill in the House on the 125th anniversary of women's suffrage in New Zealand.

Although Opposition Member, **Ms Nicola Willis, MP** (National) reiterated the Nationals' support for the Bill, she took issue with the Government's decision to replace the former Bill with a new one: "What that meant was we then waited and waited for a Bill to be introduced, and, of course, the Bill was symbolically introduced at the anniversary of women's suffrage, which ... actually, just amounted to delay."

The Third Reading speeches were uncharacteristically short, and few calls were taken, reflecting the unanimity amongst all parties and the lateness of the hour, the Third Reading having begun at 11.37 pm.

On 24 July 2020, the Support Workers (Pay Equity) Settlements Amendment Bill passed its Third Reading with the unanimous support of the House as part of the same marathon sitting.

Speaking at the Third Reading, **Hon. Chris Hipkins, MP** (Labour) explained: "This Bill implements the new pay equity settlements for mental health and addiction workers, and vocational disability workers who are employed by Oranga Tamariki [Ministry of Children] and the Ministry of Social Development." The Bill would bring the pay rates of those workers into line with workers in the aged care, disability, and home and community support sectors, all of whom had benefited from settlement of the claim raised by Kristine Bartlett.

Hon. Maggie Barry, MP (National), the Minister for Seniors in the previous Government, said: "Those of us in this House who have had experience with being involved with aged care and with mental health and addiction care ... will be well aware of ... the work that these people do."

Speaking for the Green Party, **Ms Jan Logie, MP** said: "What a great couple of days for women and for justice in this country, where last night, just on the mark of midnight, we passed the pay equity legislation ... This is a really momentous time for us as a country in terms of righting longstanding wrongs."

Both Bills received the Royal Assent on 6 August 2020.

Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Vaping) Amendment Bill

The Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Vaping) Amendment Bill passed its Third Reading under urgency on 5 June 2020, with support from all parties across the House. This Bill amends the *Smokefree Environments Act 1990* to bring the provisions of the Act up to date and to ensure that all regulated products (tobacco smoking products, herbal smoking products, smokeless tobacco products, and vaping products) are adequately covered.

Hon. Jenny Salesa, MP (Labour) said: "The Bill will prohibit children under the age of 18 being sold a regulated product and will restrict access to a wide range of flavours to specialist R18 vape stores. The Bill also reduces the normalisation of vaping and using heated tobacco devices, prohibits their use in legislated smoke-free areas, and prohibits the advertising and promotion of these products, including on TV and social media. The Bill will also ensure that smokers have access to vaping and heated tobacco devices that meet safety standards. We're here because, on average, every year around 5,000 New Zealanders - or 13 lives a day - die because of smoking or second-hand smoking exposure. This is more than the number of people that we collectively lose from road crashes, alcohol, other drugs, suicide, murders, drownings, and earthquakes combined. ... We're also here because we recognise that vaping products are not harmless and should not be attractive or easily accessible to our tamariki and our young people."

Hon. Michael Woodhouse, MP (National) expressed the Opposition's support for the Bill: "there's actually broad support for this, not only across the House but across society. I do note, however, that the amount of harm that is understood to be caused by the products that we are now regulating is so low that the Attorney-General gave a New Zealand Bill of Rights Act fail on the prohibition on the marketing of these products, because there wasn't sufficient evidence that they were harmful. ... I did appreciate as the health spokesperson at that time, the manner in which the Associate Minister was prepared to engage once she had finally done her bit to bring the Bill into shovel-ready shape for First Reading, that she did engage me. I was wishing that we could have done that sooner."

THIRD READING: NEW ZEALAND

But I think there has been a reasonably constructive process along the way."

Ms Jenny Marcroft, MP (New Zealand First) praised the Minister in charge of the Bill: "This is an amazing tool, and congratulations to the Minister, the Hon. Jenny Salesa, for bringing this to the House. You have made a wonderful contribution to society, to the health of our young people, and for that I commend you."

Dr Shane Reti, MP (National) discussed the effectiveness of vaping: "It's a pleasure to see this Bill finally to the House, because, on net balance, we do believe that the vaping products are effective - that vaping as a mechanism is effective - in smoking reduction."

Ms Marama Davidson, MP (Green) said the Green Party are "pleased, after the careful consideration and work that happened at the Select Committee stage ... that this absolutely is about public health and safety and a positive journey to becoming smoke-free, rather than vaping itself being an activity that stands on its own, and rather than people going towards vaping."

The Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Vaping) Amendment Bill received Royal Assent on 11 August 2020.

The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill

The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill passed its Third Reading under urgency on 4 August 2020. The Bill, in the name of the Associate Minister of Housing, **Hon. Kris Faafoi, MP** (Labour) was first introduced to the House on 17 February 2020 and was considered by the Social Services and Community Committee. Mr Faafoi explained that since the original *Residential Tenancies Act* came into force some thirty years ago, the proportion of New Zealand households in the rental market had increased significantly: "Home ownership is now at a 60-year low, and nearly a third of all households, or approximately 600,000, now live in a rented property." He explained that the Bill aligns New Zealand's rental laws with "the present-day realities of renting", improving tenants' security and stability whilst continuing to protect landlords' interests.

Opposition spokesperson for Housing and Urban Development, **Mr Simon O'Connor, MP** (National) disagreed. Mr O'Connor stated

that landlords would simply leave the market as a consequence of the legislation. "In order to address the issues of a few, this Bill is going to cause problems for all ... That will ultimately see rents increase ... purely limiting the landlords' [rent] increase to every 12 months won't cut it; they will simply double, or take it even steeper."

He also criticised the process employed by the Government, stating that National was "disappointed that, less than two hours ago, the Supplementary Order Paper was tabled." **Hon. Alfred Ngaro, MP** (National) agreed: "I rephrased and reframed the Bill the 'Residential Tenancies (I Hate Landlords) Bill', and that's really clear. Now, some may say that that's a bit harsh, but when you look at the comments that have been made from a number of landlords, when you look at the comments in submissions - we had 1,436 submissions - a number were opposed to this Bill."

The Minister of Defence, New Zealand First Party MP, **Hon. Ron Mark**, confirmed that his party would continue to support the legislation, stating: "New Zealand First has noted in its speeches the concerns of landlords around the removal of the 90-day 'no cause' eviction notice. We are mindful, though, that it's only really been used on 3% of occasions."

Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand co-leader and Government support partner, **Ms Marama Davidson, MP** explained, however, that Māori and Pasifika communities in New Zealand are overrepresented in the rental sector: "Almost half of our population in this country are renting a home and do not own their own home. For Māori, that is well over 60%, and for Pacific Islanders, it is well over that again." She stressed the need to correct what she perceives as a power imbalance between renters and landlords: "Yes, we will see some complaints from those who are wanting to protect that power imbalance ... if people using housing as a business are not able to run a business in a way that is fit for human decency, then that is up to them to choose some other way to run a business."

The Bill was passed with 63 votes to 55 and received the Royal Assent on 11 August 2020.

PRESIDENT OPENS THE 9TH PARLIAMENT OF SRI LANKA

“The Government will take all measures to eradicate terrorism, extremism, underworld activities, and drug trafficking in the country” - President Gotabaya Rajapaksha

The Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is the supreme legislative body of Sri Lanka. It alone possesses legislative supremacy and thereby ultimate power over all other political bodies in the island. The Parliament of Sri Lanka is modeled after the Westminster parliamentary system. It consists of 225 Members known as Members of Parliament (MPs). Members are elected by proportional representation for five-year terms, with universal suffrage.

To fulfil the above for the 9th Parliament, the general election was held on 5 August 2020 to elect 196 Members, with 29 Members selected from the National list to complete the count of 225 Members overall.

The Ninth Parliament of Sri Lanka got off to a smooth

start on 20 August 2020 with the election of a new Speaker and the swearing-in of newly elected Members of Parliament, followed by the election of a Deputy Speaker and a Deputy Chairman of Committees. All three appointments were made unanimously. Matara district SLPP MP, **Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena** was elected as the Speaker of the 9th Parliament in accordance with Standing Order No. 1 of Parliament. He was escorted to the Speaker's Chair by the two MPs who proposed and seconded him following which Abeywardena took his oaths before the Secretary-General of Parliament, Dhammika Dasanayake.

This was followed by all MPs taking their oaths before the Speaker. The MPs read out the oath, made available in all three languages, pledging to uphold and defend the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The new MPs also pledged to “not, directly or indirectly, in or outside Sri Lanka, support, espouse,

promote, finance, encourage or advocate the establishment of a separate State within the territory of Sri Lanka.”

After MPs were sworn in, the name of Kegalle district MP, **Ranjith Siyambalapatiya** was proposed for the post of Deputy Speaker by Minister **Mahinda Amaraweera** and seconded by State Minister **Nimal Lanza** while SLFP Jaffna district Parliamentarian, **Angajan Ramanathan's** name was proposed for the post of Deputy Chairman of Committees by Minister **Nimal Siripala de Silva** and seconded by State Minister **Duminda Dissanayake**.

The Speaker recognised **Dinesh Gunawardena** as the Leader of the House and Minister **Johnston Fernando** as the Chief Government Whip. The Leader of Samagi Jana Balawegaya, Colombo District MP, **Sajith Premadasa** was recognised as the Leader of the Opposition.

Thereafter, sittings were suspended till 3pm, when the ceremonial sitting of the House, presided over by the President

of Sri Lanka, **His Excellency Gotabaya Rajapaksa** commenced.

Arrangements were made under the instructions of the President to hold his arrival at the Parliament buildings in a very simple and charming manner and so accordingly, there were no gun salutes or vehicle parades.

The invited dignitaries arrived from 2.15pm and Members of Parliament were the first to arrive at the Parliament buildings. Following the arrival of the new Speaker of Parliament, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, **Hon. Mahinda Rajapaksa** arrived, followed by the arrival of the President.

The new Speaker of Parliament and the Secretary General of Parliament received the President of Sri Lanka at the main entrance of the parliamentary complex.

The President of Sri Lanka ceremonially declared open the first session of the Ninth Parliament and the Government's Policy Statement as provided by *Article 33(2)* of the Constitution was presented to the House on the same day at 3pm. Presenting the policy statement of the Government, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa emphasised that a constitutional change must be made for a powerful Executive, Legislature and independent Judiciary that ensures the people's mandate. The move will strengthen the President's role and powers because the country will return to its previous constitutional status, in which the President could head Ministries, appoint and dismiss Ministers, appoint officials for the police, judiciary and public service and dissolve Parliament any time after one year.

The President noted: *“The basis of the success*



of a democratic state is its Constitution. Our Constitution, which has been amended 19 times, from its inception in 1978, has many ambiguities and uncertainties, presently resulting in confusion. As the people have given us the mandate we wanted for a constitutional amendment, our first task will be to remove the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. After that, all of us will get together to formulate a new Constitution suitable for the country. In this, the priority will be given to the concept of one country, one law for all the people.

An unstable Parliament that cannot take firm decisions and succumbs to extremist influences very often is not suitable for a country. While introducing a new Constitution, it is essential to make changes to the current electoral system. While retaining the salutary aspects of the proportional representation system, these changes will be made to ensure

stability of the Parliament and people's direct representation.”

President Rajapaksa stated that his Government will take all measures required to exterminate terrorism, extremism, underworld activities and drug trafficking in the country.

The President further stated: *“When we took over the Government, the confidence of the people in the security of the country had been severely dented due to the Easter Sunday attacks that occurred in 2019. Establishing firmly that the prime policy of our Government is national security, we have restructured the security apparatus and intelligence services, eliminating the fears of the people, thereby restoring the security of the country. We have re-created an environment where any citizen can live freely without any fear for the safety of themselves and their families.*

As I have pledged, the launch of the methodical mechanism to protect the people against social evils such as the activities of the underworld and the drug menace that have been a hindrance to the day-to-day lives of the people has also increased the confidence of the public.”

Tabling his policy manifesto in Parliament, President Rajapaksa presented his views on eliminating the corruption and waste in the Government Ministries and institutions as well as the derelictions of politicians in the future.

“In the National Policy Framework ‘Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor’, we promised the people that we would eradicate waste and corruption. This is a core responsibility of all of us. We will take steps to completely eradicate waste and corruption in all the Ministries and institutions. In future I will not hesitate to enforce the law against those who are involved in fraud and corrupt actions, irrespective of the status of any such perpetrators,” the President stated. *“Constantly I will review the progress of the achievement of the goals of the Government that are implemented through Ministries and the public sector. If I find any Ministry failing to achieve its set targets, I will not hesitate to effect necessary changes to implement policies of the Government. In the current*

political culture, most of the people's representatives, after they get elected, neglect the prime duty of going to the people. When I travelled round the country in the recent past, this was confirmed by the people who voiced their grievance on this matter. Henceforth, Ministers, State Ministers as well as Members of Parliament will fulfill this expectation of the people by visiting them often to understand their issues and find solutions to their issues.”

President Rajapaksa emphasised that he will take the country towards prosperity while safeguarding the people and protecting the sovereignty of the country without succumbing to any force. The introduction of a new system to identify the welfare and happiness of the general public, taking forward the projects planned during the Government of Mahinda Rajapaksa, promoting investments of businesses that provide products and services to regional nations, developing the road network in the country, creating the provision of jobs to thousands of youth belonging to low-income families, developing technology in the agriculture, plantation and fisheries industries are some of the objectives of the President's policy statement towards establishing Sri Lanka as the hub and commercial center of Asia.



CPA Patron, Officers, Executive Committee, Regional Representatives, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and CPA Small Branches Steering Committees and CPA Regional Secretaries



Portrait of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

PATRON:
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
Head of the Commonwealth

VICE-PATRON:
Vacant (Canada Region)

CPA Executive Committee

Executive Committee Members' dates of membership are indicated below each name.
Correct at time of printing. *Terms extended as no CPA General Assembly held in 2018 and 2020.

Officers

PRESIDENT: (2019-2021)*:
Hon. Anthony Rota, MP
Speaker of the House of Commons (Canada Federal)

VICE-PRESIDENT: (2019-2021)*:
Rt Hon. Aaron Mike Oquaye, MP,
Speaker of Parliament (Ghana)

CHAIRPERSON OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
(2017-2021)*:
Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP
Deputy Speaker (Cameroon)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON
(2019-2021)*:
Hon. John Ajaka, MLC
President of the Legislative Council (New South Wales)
Regional Representative,
Australia Region (2016-2021)*

TREASURER (2019-2022):
Hon. Datuk Shamsul Iskander Md. Akin, MP (Malaysia)

COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP) CHAIRPERSON (2019-2022):
Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA (Pakistan)

CPA SMALL BRANCHES CHAIRPERSON
(2019-2022):
Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of Parliament (Cook Islands)

The CPA Coordinating Committee comprises the CPA Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer, CPA Small Branches Chairperson and Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson.

Regional Representatives

AFRICA

Hon. Bernard Songa Sibatani, MP, Vice-Chairperson of the National Council, Namibia (2016-2021)*

Hon. Lazarous Chungu Bwalya, MP, Zambia (2016-2021)*

Hon. Dr Makali Mulu, MP Kenya (2017-2021)*

Rt Hon. Sephiri Enoch Motanyane, MP, Speaker of the National Assembly, Lesotho (2017-2021)*

Hon. Mensah Bonsu, MP Ghana, (2019-2022)

Rt Hon. Dr Abass Bundu, MP Speaker of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, (2019-2022)

ASIA

Hon. Dr Fehmida Mirza, MP Pakistan, (2016-2021)*

Hon. Dr Lal Chand Ukrani, MPA Sindh, (2017-2021)*

Hon. Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana, MP Speaker of Parliament Sri Lanka, (2019-2022)

**Executive Committee Members' terms extended as no CPA General Assembly held in 2018 and 2020.*

AUSTRALIA

Hon. John Ajaka, MLC, President of the Legislative Council, New South Wales, (2016-2021)*, Also CPA Vice-Chairperson.

Hon. Bruce Atkinson, MLC Victoria, (2017-2021)*

Senator Hon. Scott Ryan President of the Senate Australia Federal, (2019-2022)

BRITISH ISLANDS AND MEDITERRANEAN

Hon. Stuart McMillan, MSP Scotland (stand-by Branch for Northern Ireland), (2016-2021)*

Hon. Leona Roberts, MLA Falkland Islands, (2017-2021)*

Hon. Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP United Kingdom, (2019-2022)

CANADA

Hon. François Paradis, MNA Québec, (2016-2021)* To complete term started by other Member.

Hon. Kevin Murphy, MLA Speaker of the House of Assembly, Nova Scotia (2017-2021)*

Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP Canada Federal (2019-2022)

CARIBBEAN, AMERICAS AND THE ATLANTIC

Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, MP, Speaker of the House, Trinidad & Tobago, (2017-2021)*

Hon. Andy Glenn Daniel, MP Speaker of the House of Assembly, St Lucia, (2019-2022)

Hon. Dwayne Taylor, MHA Speaker of the House of Assembly, Turks & Caicos (2019-2022)

INDIA

Shri Premchand Aggarwal, MLA Speaker of Legislative Assembly, Uttarakhand, (2016-2021)*
Completing term started by other Member.

Shri Hitendra Goswami, MLA Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Assam, (2017-2021)*

Shri Anurag Sharma, MP, Lok Sabha, India Union, (2019-2022)

PACIFIC

Vacant
New Zealand, (2016-2021)*

Hon. Therese Kaetavara, MHR Deputy Speaker, Bougainville, (2017-2021)*

Hon. Sir Ratu Epeli Nailatikau Speaker of Parliament of Fiji (2019-2022)

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Hon. Suhaizan Kayat, MLA Speaker of Johor State Legislative Assembly, (2016-2021)*

Hon. Mr Lim Biow Chuan, MP Deputy Speaker, Singapore, (2017-2021)*

Hon. Datuk Wira Dr Mohd Hatta Md Ramli, MP, Malaysia (2019-2022)

CPA Small Branches Steering Committee

CPA SMALL BRANCHES CHAIRPERSON
Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands (2019-2022)

AFRICA
Hon. Gervais Henrie, MNA Deputy Speaker, Seychelles (2019-2021)

AUSTRALIA
Hon. Joy Burch, MLA Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Australian Capital Territory (2019-2021)
Also: Vice-Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches 2020-2021.

BRITISH ISLANDS AND MEDITERRANEAN
Hon. Juan Watterson, SHK Speaker of the House of Keys, Isle of Man (2020-2023)

CANADA
Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Yukon (2019-2022)

CARIBBEAN, AMERICAS AND THE ATLANTIC
Vacant
(2020-2023)

PACIFIC
Hon. Tofa Nafotoa Talaimanu Ketu, MP, Samoa (2019-2022)

SOUTH-EAST ASIA
Vacant
(2019-2020)

The CPA Small Branches Steering Committee comprises the CPA Small Branches Chairperson and seven Members who represent the seven out of the nine Regions of the CPA with Small Branches.

CPA Regional Secretaries

AFRICA
Mr Steven Kagaigai
Parliament of Tanzania

ASIA
Mr Syed Shamooh Hashmi
Parliament of Pakistan

AUSTRALIA
Ms Alex Cullum
Parliament of Australia

BRITISH ISLANDS & MEDITERRANEAN
Mr Jon Davies
Parliament of the United Kingdom

CANADA
Mr Michel Patrice
Parliament of Canada

CARIBBEAN, AMERICAS & ATLANTIC
Mr Pedro E. Eastmond
Parliament of Barbados

INDIA
Smt Snehlata Shrivastava
Parliament of India

PACIFIC
Ms Wendy Hart
Parliament of New Zealand

SOUTH-EAST ASIA
Mr Nizam Mydin bin Bacha Mydin
Parliament of Malaysia

CPA Headquarters Secretariat

Stephen Twigg
CPA Secretary-General

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A full listing of all CPA Branches can be found at: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/directory

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee

CWP PRESIDENT
Vacant
Canada Federal (2019-2021)

CWP CHAIRPERSON
Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA, Pakistan (2019-2022)

AFRICA
Hon. Zainab Gimba, MP Nigeria (2019-2022)
Also CWP Vice-Chairperson (2019-2020 and 2020-2021)

ASIA
Hon. Munaza Hassan, MNA Pakistan (2018-2021)

AUSTRALIA
Hon. Michelle O'Byrne, MP Tasmania Acting CWP Rep (2019-2022)

BRITISH ISLANDS AND MEDITERRANEAN
Hon. Samantha Sacramento, MP Gibraltar (2019-2022)

CANADA
Hon. Lisa Thompson, MPP Ontario (2020-2023)

CARIBBEAN, AMERICAS AND THE ATLANTIC
Hon. Jeannine Giraudy-McIntyre, MP President of the Senate, St Lucia (2018-2021)

INDIA
Smt. Kirron Kher, MP Lok Sabha, India (2017-2020)

PACIFIC
Hon. Anahila Kanongata'a-Suisuiki, MP New Zealand Parliament (2017-2020)

SOUTH-EAST ASIA
Hon. Alice Lau Kiong Yieng, MP Malaysia (2019-2022)

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