

Conference Issue: 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

PLUS ▶

'A Collaborative
Commonwealth: Unity,
Diversity and Common
Challenges'

PAGES 6-13

62nd CPC:
Conference
Workshops:
Reports

PAGES 20-64

Spaces for Solidarity:
Engaging Effectively
with Freedom of
Religion or Belief

PAGE 68

8th Commonwealth
Youth Parliament
#CYP8 in British
Columbia, Canada

PAGES 72-76



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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

Confirmed as of 6 March 2017

2017

March

13 March **Commonwealth Day 2017** – 2017 theme: *A Peace-building Commonwealth*

April

1 to 5 April IPU General Assembly, Dhaka, Bangladesh

25 to 27 April Mid-Year CPA Executive Committee Meeting 2017, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia

May

15 to 19 May International Professional Development Programme for Parliamentary Staff (Residency Seminar) - Montréal, Québec, Canada. For more information on this programme, please contact the CPA Secretariat at hq.sec@cpahq.org.

July

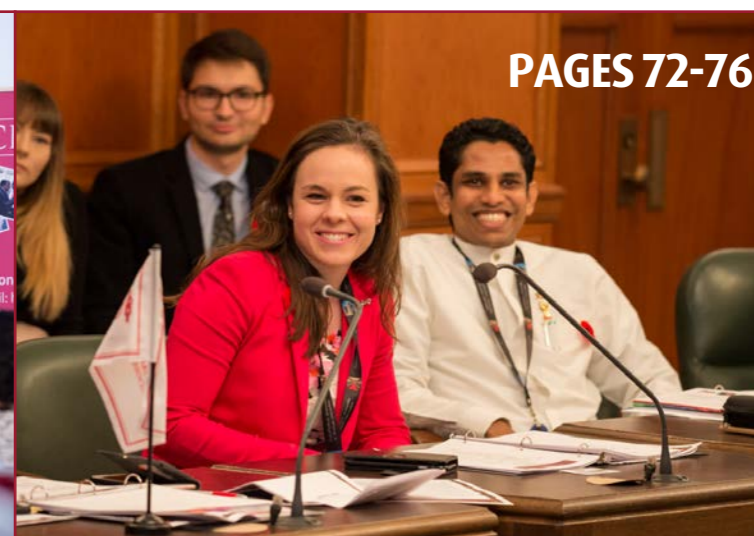
1 to 3 July CPA Post-Election Seminar for the Parliament of Tanzania, Dodoma, Tanzania

18 to 22 July Parliamentary Staff Development Workshop for the CPA Africa Region, Lusaka, Zambia

The publication of a Calendar of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) events is a service intended to foster the exchange of events and activities between Regions and Branches and the encouragement of new ideas and participation. Further information may be obtained from the Branches concerned or the CPA Secretariat. Branch Secretaries are requested to send notice of the main CPA events and conferences to hq.sec@cpahq.org in advance of the publication deadline to ensure the Calendar is accurate.

Further information can also be found at www.cpahq.org or by emailing hq.sec@cpahq.org.

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COMMENT & SPEECHES

Editor's Note
Page 4

Opening address by the CPA Chairperson
The opening of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
Page 6

Keynote plenary by the CPA Secretary-General
'A Collaborative Commonwealth: Unity, Diversity and Common Challenges'
Page 8

Speech by the Commonwealth Secretary-General
Page 12

CPA Conference Photo Gallery
Images from the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
Pages 14-15

Main Conference Group Photo
Pages 50-51

CONFERENCE NEWS

CPA Treasurer and Vice-Chairperson elected
Page 16

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson elected
Page 17

New university accredited CPA Fundamentals Programme launched
Page 18

CPA Small Branches Chairperson elected
Page 19

Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) meetings
Page 65

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture Series launched
Page 66

CPA Caribbean Regional 'Hot Topic' Forum held
Page 67

CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

There is a role for the Commonwealth in fostering Freedom of Religion or Belief
Conference Workshop A
Page 20

The role of the Commonwealth in supporting the outcomes of the COP21 Paris Agreement on Climate Change
Conference Workshop B: *Small Branches Topic*
Page 23

The role of Parliamentarians in implementing and monitoring policies relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
Conference Workshop C
Page 26

Ending violence against women and girls: The impact of social media and the internet in perpetrating violence
Conference Workshop D: *Gender Topic*
Page 29

The radicalisation of young people and how we are dealing with this challenge throughout the Commonwealth
Conference Workshop E
Page 32

The media plays a large role in promoting public mistrust of Parliamentarians
Conference Workshop F: *Debate Topic*
Page 35

5th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference

- Speech by Rt Hon. Rebecca A. Kadaga MP
- CWP Session 1:** Violence and Intimidation of Women during Elections
- CWP Session 2:** Parliament's role in raising awareness of political violence against women and women's equal civil and political rights
- CWP Session 3:** Legislating effectively to protect women from political violence
- CWP Session 4:** The Role of Civil Society and the Media in Tackling Political Violence
Pages 38-55

35th CPA Small Branches Conference

- Small Branches Session 1:** The Role of the Commonwealth in Supporting the Outcomes of the COP21 Paris Agreement on Climate Change
- Small Branches Session 2:** The role of Parliament in the protection and safeguarding of children
- Small Branches Session 3:** Eliminating barriers to women's leadership in politics in Small Branches
Pages 56-64

Spaces for Solidarity: Engaging Effectively with Freedom of Religion or Belief
Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion or Belief (CIFoRB) event
Page 68

Tobacco control and effective parliamentary oversight (SDG3)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) event
Page 70

PARLIAMENTARY REPORTS

8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament CYP8: 'A Platform to Learn and a Platform to Lead'
Reports from the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament hosted by the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Canada by the Speaker and a youth participant
Page 72-76

Isle of Man celebrates 150 years since first general election
Page 76

Parliamentary Report
Featuring parliamentary and legislative reports from Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Australia, Sri Lanka and India
Pages 77-99

CPA Organisational Structure
CPA Executive Committee Members, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee Members and CPA Regional Secretaries
Page 100

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A COLLABORATIVE COMMONWEALTH: UNITY, DIVERSITY AND COMMON CHALLENGES



The Editor's Note

Commonwealth Parliamentarians focus on what unites them to find global solutions at 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

Over 400 Commonwealth Parliamentarians from across the world gathered in London, United Kingdom from 11 to 17 December 2016 for the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (62nd CPC), hosted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Headquarters Secretariat.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference is the annual conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). The unique conference brought together Speakers, Members of Parliament and Parliamentary staff representing the nine regions of the CPA – Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic; India; Pacific and South-East Asia. The CPA reaches all 52 countries of the Commonwealth as well as national, sub-national, devolved and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures bringing together over 180 CPA Branches of the Association.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association organises its annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) where global political issues and developments in the parliamentary system are analysed in conference debates among leading Parliamentarians representing Parliaments and Legislatures throughout the Commonwealth. These plenary conferences were biennial from 1948 to 1959 and annual since 1961. A summary of the main views expressed in conference debates is published as the Conference Concluding Statement which is sent to Members, Commonwealth governments and international agencies. The following CPA Branches have hosted Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences in recent years: 2014 Cameroon; 2013 South Africa; 2012 Sri Lanka; 2011 United Kingdom; 2010 Kenya; 2009 Tanzania; 2008 Malaysia; 2007 India.

The main conference theme for 2016 at the annual event held in London, United Kingdom was: *A Collaborative Commonwealth: Unity, Diversity and Common Challenges*. Workshops and debates were held during the conference on a wide range of topics including the role of the Commonwealth in fostering freedom of religion or belief; ending violence against women and girls; the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Climate Change; and the radicalisation of young people. Conference reports from all of the main workshops and sessions appear in this issue of *The Parliamentarian* and our thanks go to all of the Conference Rapporteurs from across the Commonwealth who have assisted the CPA Headquarters



Jeffrey Hyland, Editor
The Parliamentarian,
Commonwealth
Parliamentary Association

Secretariat with capturing the reports that feature in this publication.

The **Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP**, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh, urged Commonwealth Parliamentarians to work together to find common solutions to global issues as she opened the 62nd CPC. The Chairperson welcomed Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth on behalf of the CPA at the opening ceremony and said: *"The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) provides a unique platform for inter-parliamentary dialogue to take place. The diverse nature of the membership provides the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association with a unique position within the parliamentary community to*

offer a comprehensive perspective on how to strengthen parliamentary democracy Commonwealth-wide and discuss new and innovative approaches on how to do so." To read the full text of the CPA Chairperson's opening speech at the 62nd CPC please turn to page 6.

The opening ceremony of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference heard from the Secretaries-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Commonwealth.

The **Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr Akbar Khan** welcomed Commonwealth Parliamentarians and delegates to the conference and said: *"The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference strengthens our networks and nurtures our shared Commonwealth democratic values. The fact that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association embodies diversity yet shares values of democracy, rule of law and human rights, only serves to strengthen and deepen our unity. The need for the CPA to continue to strengthen its core programmatic work and to translate the practical benefits of democratic governance to the peoples of the Commonwealth has never been greater."* To read the full text of the CPA Secretary-General's keynote plenary at the 62nd CPC please turn to page 8.

The **Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland QC** said: *"The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference is like a beehive. It buzzes with pollinators whose work will result in fruit throughout the Commonwealth. Thanks to Commonwealth Parliamentarians coming together, law reform and progressive social and economic development are accelerated. Exchanges of knowledge and expertise lead to institutions of governance being strengthened, while respect and goodwill within the rich diversity of Commonwealth identity helps build a safer, more prosperous and more inclusive future for us all."* To read the full text of the Commonwealth Secretary-General's speech at the 62nd CPC please turn to page 12.



The Mistress of Ceremonies for the opening ceremony was **Hon. Lindiwe Maseko, MP** (South Africa) who welcomed all delegates before introducing the Commonwealth Youth Choir who performed both the Commonwealth Anthem and the Commonwealth Song under the conductorship of Simon Haw MBE, the Commonwealth Music Ambassador 2016-2018.

During the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, there were a number of additional conferences and meetings including: CPA Executive Committee; CPA General Assembly and Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) Meetings.

The **5th triennial Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference** was held on 14 and 15 December 2016 with over 100 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians attending the conference from 43 countries and 56 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Branches across the Commonwealth. Reports of the CWP conference sessions can be found on pages 38 to 55.

The **35th CPA Small Branches Conference** was held on 13 December 2016 with forty-seven Members of Parliaments and Legislatures from 26 CPA Small Branches attending the conference. The reports of this conference appear on pages 56 to 64.

The Executive Committee of the CPA met ahead of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in London, UK. The CPA Executive Committee represents the nine regions of the CPA. The Executive Committee is chaired by Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh. During the 62nd CPC, a meeting of the CPA Regional Secretaries also took place.

Alongside the substantive conference workshops and the CPA governance meetings, the 62nd CPC also saw a number of additional events.

Delegates at the conference also had the opportunity to attend the **CPA Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic Regional 'Hot Topic' Forum** on the 'hot topic' of the region - *'Seeking to Increase Women's Political Participation'*. The CPA Regional 'Hot Topic' Forum heard from a number of distinguished speakers. The CPA Regional 'Hot Topic' Forums bring together not only Commonwealth Parliamentarians, but also academics, students, civil society organisations and the wider Commonwealth family. Please turn to page 67 to read about the CPA Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Regional 'Hot Topic' Forum that took place in the margins of the 62nd CPC.

The inaugural **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture** was held alongside the 62nd CPC with former Lord Speaker of the UK

Parliament's House of Lords, **Rt Hon. Baroness D'Souza CMG PC**, who spoke of the Commonwealth's enduring political values that bring challenges and opportunities for Commonwealth Parliamentarians. The theme for the new Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture Series is *'The Promotion and Implementation of the Commonwealth's enduring political values - Challenges and Opportunities'*. Please turn to page 66 to read about the CPA's inaugural lecture.

The **United National Development Programme (UNDP)** held a workshop event for Commonwealth Parliamentarians on the UN's *Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: Tobacco Control Frameworks and effective Parliamentary Oversight*. Please turn to page 70 to read about the UNDP event.

A lunchtime event was held for Commonwealth Parliamentarians by the **Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion and Belief (CIFoRB)** on *Engaging Effectively with Freedom of Religion or Belief*. Please turn to page 68 to read about the CIFoRB event.

In addition to the reports of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, this issue of *The Parliamentarian* also reports on the **8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament (#CYP8)** which was hosted by the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia in Canada from 6 to 10 November 2016. **Hon. Linda Reid MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia** reports on the events of the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament and hosting over 60 young participants representing the different regions of the Commonwealth while Laura Elliot from Wales shares her experiences as a young participant in the CYP8.

The *Parliamentary Report* and *Third Reading* section in this issue includes parliamentary and legislative news from Canada Federal, Quebec, India, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Australia States and Territories and the Australia Federal Parliament.

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

Finally, we would like to wish all of our Members and readers a happy **Commonwealth Day 2017** on Monday 13 March. Please do let us know about your celebrations of the day.

Jeffrey Hyland
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**62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
London, United Kingdom
11 to 17 December 2016**

Opening Ceremony - 14 December 2016



A COLLABORATIVE COMMONWEALTH: UNITY, DIVERSITY AND COMMON CHALLENGES

The Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh gave the opening address at the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

Master of Ceremony, Hon. Lindiwe Maseko, Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland QC, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Honourable Speakers, Deputy Speakers, Honourable Parliamentarians, Honourable Members of the Executive Committee of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, distinguished delegates of 62nd CPC, media representatives, friends, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all.

I'm deeply honoured to be here and to have the opportunity to speak before this august gathering as the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We have all gathered here in London this winter morning to celebrate the inauguration of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC).

We bring with us a deep

commitment to uphold the values of Commonwealth – *democracy, development and diversity*.

It is an aspiration to build a collaborative Commonwealth – *unity, diversity and common challenges* – echoed in the theme of this conference. Collaboration is more than hosting events together. It is about true exchange of ideas that can offer innovative solutions to our common problems and challenges.

A collaborative Commonwealth would therefore denote accommodating diversity. Diversity of people and culture is the strength as well as a source of wealth for us.

Commonwealth is the platform to draw upon this diversity and bridge the differences. A collaborative Commonwealth is therefore about creating a common platform to come together to explore diverse ideas and opinions, policies and

programmes. It is about addressing, identifying and facing the common challenges together.

It is the diversity of experience that reflects the richness of Commonwealth.

Each Commonwealth country at different stages in its own history and development, when it comes together, it helps to build a trust within the community, within the Commonwealth family of nations, which is the integral



part of working effectively towards achieving the common goals.

While it is important to celebrate the diversity of people, of culture, of experience and opinions, it is even more important to be embracing and inclusive of this diversity that leads to the unity of nations.

Valuing diversity is an integral part of unity. Unity requires acknowledging that people are different, countries are different; they stand at different stages of development yet face common challenges and can work together.

The critical challenges of the eradication of poverty, the elimination of equality, ensuring food security, adapting to climate change, disaster reduction and many more need to be addressed by Parliamentarians of all Commonwealth nations to bring about positive changes in the lives of 2.4 billion people, nearly one third of the world's population.

Parliamentarians need to come together and join hands in charting out a bright future for the 60% of the Commonwealth that is the youth population. It is time to unite to ensure gender equality. It is for us, the Parliamentarians to reckon how democracy can deliver, in combating emerging challenges posed by globalisation.

The changing pace of globalisation is creating a new order of emerging economics, technology and development. The intricate linkages between national policies and its economy, including trade and finance with that of global markets have brought about new dimensions.

Issues related to energy crisis, the rapid evolution of technology, economic recession, peace and security issues and migration issues transcend national boundaries.

Parliamentarians must take account of changing economic patterns, deepening interdependence and the

prospect of creating greater opportunities for human development and social inclusion, as well as the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Parliamentarians must act to transform and translate their commitments into actions and ensure that democracy delivers in an effectuating manner, and there lies the relevance of Commonwealth.

I would like to conclude with a quote by Robert A. Needham – he's the author of a book named 'Collaborative Commonwealth'. In his book he uses the concept of water. I quote; "the essence of any great ocean, river or stream begins with one drop. Drops come in all sizes, shapes and forms – just like people. Each unique drop was created for a purpose and so were you. This purpose will change throughout the life of a drop which is called emergence. Like you, water can be used over and over again to cause its environment to flourish,

change, evolve and renew."

The metaphor of water is used here to show how each individual aligns with others to form streams. Streams then merge to become rivers, which have power and are movements. These rivers merge to create oceans of great potential to accomplish anything they set their thoughts to.

I found a very interesting definition of politics and I would like to share that with you. "Politics is a medium that takes place within language. It is a matter of providing people with the linguistic and rhetorical abilities both to construct their past and imagine their future. It is a language that gives us latitude, an ability to adapt to changing circumstances and create new ones. How we apply it to new circumstances and conditions will be entirely up to us."

Distinguished delegates, let the language of politics be collaborating with others to bring about positive change.



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A COLLABORATIVE COMMONWEALTH: UNITY, DIVERSITY AND COMMON CHALLENGES

Mr Akbar Khan, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association gave the keynote plenary at the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.



Master of Ceremony:
Honourable Lindiwe Maseko
MP; Madam Chairperson, Hon.
Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury
MP, Speaker of the Parliament
of Bangladesh; Honourable
Officers of the Commonwealth
Parliamentary Association;
Honourable Members of the
Commonwealth Parliamentary
Association International
Executive Committee; The
Commonwealth Secretary-
General, Rt Hon. Patricia
Scotland QC; Hon. Speakers,
Presiding Officers, Clerks,
Branch Secretaries and Heads
of Delegations; Members of the
Diplomatic Corps; Distinguished
Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour and privilege
to welcome you to this 62nd
Commonwealth Parliamentary
Conference in London. I am also
delighted that we are joined here
today by the Commonwealth
Secretary General.

her best wishes for a successful
Conference.
The theme of this 62nd CPC is
'A Collaborative Commonwealth:
*Unity, Diversity and Common
Challenges*'. This is indeed
pertinent as the CPA, the
recognised parliamentary wing
of the Commonwealth, reaches
its 105th anniversary.
From its formation in 1911
as the Empire Parliamentary
Association, to its evolution
as the Commonwealth
Parliamentary Association in
1948, the Association has
steadily grown to approximately
180 branches representing
national, state, provincial
and territorial parliaments
and legislatures, with a total
membership in excess of
17,000 Parliamentarians.

This diversity of
Commonwealth legislatures
inspired by the Westminster
model of parliamentary
democracy is underpinned
by a shared commitment to
the rule of law and individual
rights and freedoms, and by the

pursuit of the positive ideals of
parliamentary democracy.
Distinguished delegates, in
the Commonwealth, we have
large and small States, island
and landlocked, developed
and developing - augmented
by an impressive array of civil
societies, professional bodies
and voluntary organisations all
forming our '*Commonwealth
family*'. Some will argue that
too much diversity can be
destructive of cohesion - as
not all differences can be held
together - and that some can
divide us.

Distinguished delegates,
I would argue that some
differences make for even
deeper unity. This may sound
counter-intuitive but as one
commentator¹ has observed
"*[Everyone] knows that groups
don't have to become identical
to each other in order to [work
harmoniously] together. In fact, it
is often precisely the differences
that make their [relationship]
more interesting and more
enduring.*"

The fact that CPA embodies
diversity; yet shares values of
democracy, rule of law and
human rights, only serves to
strengthen and deepen our
unity.
As observed by Lord Howell,²
a former British Minister of
the Commonwealth: "*the
Commonwealth is a creation
of self-assembly... It...
leads to territory that [other]
organisations do not reach,
and often cannot see. This is
its power and its weakness. It
is a truly vibrant global family of
cultures, economies, societies
and political groups, far from
perfect but looking in the same
direction.*"

Distinguished delegates, the
question is: how can we use
our shared values - the fact
that we are all '*looking in the
same direction*' to overcome
the challenges of our time that
face today's parliamentary
community? Given the limited
time, let me just touch on three
areas.

The first is backsliding on

democracy. The commitment
to representative democracy is
a distinctive core value of the
Commonwealth. Experience tells
us it takes time and nurturing
for democracy to take firm
root. We know that democracy
encompasses values of
responsibility and accountability
where citizens control the
political process.

In recent times we have seen
two Commonwealth states
withdraw from the organisation
amidst concerns of a democratic
deficit and human rights
violations. There have been
more instances of the separation
of powers being undermined
and of powerful Executives
ignoring or seeking to use
Parliament simply as a 'rubber
stamp' and where members
of the Executive do not attend
Parliament in order to avoid
being held to account.

As with any '*family*' it is to

be expected that from time to
time there will be differences of
opinion and on occasion, even
a breakdown in relationships,
but repeated violations of the
Commonwealth's core political
values pose a serious challenge
to democracy if unchecked.

Respect for the separation
of powers and the independent
role of Parliament is crucial
to the healthy functioning of
democracy.

To quote the late Sir Winston
Churchill: "*Democracy is the
worst form of government,
except all the others that have
been tried from time to time.*"

His comment may well
have been prescient, as the
overwhelming evidence today
shows that a healthy democracy
generally means a stronger
economy, higher standard of
living and better human rights
records. Equally, the public's
trust in its representatives

is a fundamental ingredient
to a healthy democracy. If
Parliamentarians demonstrate
high standards of ethics and
conduct consistent with their
important public interest roles,
it enhances public trust and
reinforces democracy.

In this context last year,
the CPA developed the
'*Recommended Benchmarks
for Codes of Conduct applying
to Members of Parliament*'.
Many CPA Branches have
adopted these as a good
practice guide and are using
them to help tackle the public
trust deficit in our Parliaments.
The Benchmarks for Codes
of Conduct state clearly that
as public officers, Members
of Parliament have a fiduciary
relationship with their citizens on
whose behalf they act and they
are entrusted with responsibility
to protect and uphold the
common interest of citizens. In

other words, they must put the
public interest above all others.

This guidance is yet another
example of a collaborative
Commonwealth identifying
unity in diversity to address
the common challenge of
building public confidence
in our Parliaments and
Parliamentarians.

The second area is youth.
With approximately 60% of the
Commonwealth's 2.4 billion
population under the age of 30,
we repeatedly see young people
being portrayed in the media as
disengaged in politics.

From my own engagement
with young people as Secretary-
General, my observation is
that young people, far from
being disinterested in politics,
are increasingly engaged with
issues of relevance to their lives
and are politically active across
social media and other networks.

The challenge is for



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Parliaments to adapt to be more accessible, open and transparent to all citizens including actively engaging young people through greater outreach and the use of digital technology.

This speaks to the need for Parliaments to work harder to capture the views of young people about political issues that are of importance to them. Many Commonwealth Parliaments are stepping up to this challenge through responsive parliamentary outreach - including internship programmes, local youth parliaments and the Universities Model Parliament. Such valuable collaborative initiatives help to bolster and promote the ideals of parliamentary democracy for future generations.

The third area is gender equality. Earlier this year, I heard a Clerk from one of our legislatures describe Parliament as a "microcosm of society".

Democratic Parliaments gain their legitimacy from their ability to represent all the citizens in their country whether minorities, those with disabilities, women, and the young and old alike.

Only through respect for genuine diversity and a willingness to include and embrace different points of view can equitable and inclusive outcomes be achieved for all. This is especially important as Commonwealth parliamentarians consider how best to implement the post-2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals so that no

one is left behind.

In practice, this means Parliaments ensuring a diverse composition and achieving equality of participation.

Although the Commonwealth Charter recognises gender equality and women's empowerment as essential components of human development and basic human rights, we continue to see across the Commonwealth measures of low representation of women in Parliaments. In some Parliaments we have no women at all.

Recent 2016 figures from UN Women show that although the number of Women Parliamentarians has nearly doubled in the last 20 years, this only translates to 22% of women in national Parliaments today.

However, there is reason to remain optimistic. The work of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians has been impressive in supporting greater female representation through:

- inter-generational conferences that encourage young women seeking a more active role in political life;
- Raising important issues like political violence against women; and
- Mentoring programmes to strengthen and inspire female Parliamentarians.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians is an excellent example of collaboration leveraging unity in diversity to

meet common challenges and to create a gender equal and inclusive Commonwealth.

As Her Majesty The Queen, noted in her Commonwealth message this year: *"the willingness to share, to exchange and to act for the common good and by working together; we lay the foundations of a harmonious and progressive society. The greater the diversity of those included in such shared enterprise, the greater the gains."*

Distinguished delegates, I have been Secretary-General for just under one year. It has been a privilege getting to understand the Association; listening to the views of Branches to better serve our membership. Like any organisation that has stood the test of time, it is important to continually adapt to the changing needs of our membership and to demonstrate relevance, added value and good governance.

The need for the CPA to continue to strengthen its core programmatic work and to translate the practical benefits of democratic governance to the peoples of the Commonwealth has never been greater.

In this context permit me to express my sincere thanks to all the vibrant CPA Branches that have so generously and warmly welcomed me this year. I have been humbled by their kindness and strengthened in my resolve to quicken the pace of reform and renewal at the CPA Headquarters to ensure the CPA is truly fit for the 21st century.

As such, this year we have launched a revised CPA Headquarters Secretariat work programme and I would like to share some highlights with you:

- The CPA Roadshow was launched in March 2016 to connect young people with their elected representatives to discuss diversity, development and democracy. The CPA Roadshow has now reached over 8,000 young people across the Commonwealth.
- In November 2016, we inaugurated the Regional 'Hot Topics' Forum in the CPA Asia Region hosted by the Parliament of Pakistan, focussing on 'Democracies in transition and the challenges they face'.
- At this conference, we will roll out a further strand of work. the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture Series; and
- In February 2017, we will launch the flagship programme 'Parliamentary Fundamentals' – comprising two accredited professional development courses on parliamentary governance in association with McGill University, Canada and the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa. These are unique courses, accredited for the first time for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and demonstrate the pioneering and enduring spirit of our Association.



Distinguished delegates, before closing, I wish to take this opportunity to mark my deep respect and appreciation to the late Hon. Request Muntanga, former Member of the Parliament of Zambia, who sadly passed away earlier this year. A strong advocate of the Association, he shared his vast experience as a Parliamentarian with the CPA, including as CPA Treasurer, Executive Committee Member and Trustee. He is fondly remembered by us all.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the outgoing Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson, Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of the Uganda Parliament. Her leadership over the past three years in promoting gender equality and female representation in Parliament has greatly enhanced the CWP across all our regions of the Commonwealth.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the outgoing Vice-Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary

Association, Hon. Shirley Osborne MLA, Speaker of the Montserrat Legislative Assembly, and to outgoing Members of the Executive Committee. Over the past year, their individual and collective commitment to supporting the Association has been invaluable.

I wish to thank the Hon. Chairperson, Co-ordinating Committee and Executive Committee for their guidance and patience during the past year as we set the Association on the road to renewal and reinvigoration. The support, advice and wise counsel of the Regional Secretaries and Branch Secretaries to me over this past year has been invaluable – I am incredibly grateful to each of you.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude the Hon. Speakers of CPA Cayman Islands and Malaysia Branches for demonstrating their commitment to the Association by offering to host the CPC in their respective jurisdictions, for this we are profoundly thankful.

Last but not least, I wish to recognise the CPA Headquarters Secretariat staff members and several branch volunteers from across the Commonwealth for all their hard work in preparing for this conference. Without their commitment and dedication, we would not be here.

Finally, I wish you all an enjoyable and productive conference which strengthens

our networks and nurtures our shared Commonwealth democratic values.

References

- ¹ Dr Peter Bouteneff: 'Unity in Diversity: Opportunities and the Challenges' [text in brackets substituted for the original]
- ² Lord Howell: 'Old links and New ties'





**62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
London, United Kingdom
11 to 17 December 2016**

Opening Ceremony - 14 December 2016

**A COLLABORATIVE COMMONWEALTH: UNITY,
DIVERSITY AND COMMON CHALLENGES**

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland QC gave an address at the opening ceremony of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.



Good morning. Master of Ceremonies, Hon. Maseko; Hon. Chairperson of the CPA, Dr Shirin Chaudhury, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh; Secretary-General Akbar Khan; Honourable Speakers, Parliamentarians, distinguished guests; Commonwealth friends.

I am absolutely delighted to stand before you today and even more delighted to be on a panel with so many remarkable women, and I just want us to note that this may be the first Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in 62 years where you have the Master of Ceremonies as a woman; the Chairperson as a woman; the Secretary-General of the CPA still a man; and the Commonwealth Secretary General, I think a woman. So the Commonwealth is leading the way.

I want to also say thank you to each and every one of you, not just for being here today, but having the courage, the fortitude, the determination and the desire to represent the 2.4 billion people of our beloved Commonwealth.

Very rarely do Parliamentarians get the thanks and the reward that they truly deserve for that courage and for that determination to represent those who may not have a voice. So for all of those who have never thanked you, and particularly for those who never will thank you, I as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth am thanking you from the bottom of my heart.

This conference has many strands of work of which you

collaborate as Members of the CPA and it lies right at the very core of all that the Commonwealth is means and does. One of the greatest pleasures I had sitting on the platform, I have to tell you, is just looking at all of you, and to me I have to confess you all look pretty beautiful. *Why?*

Because I see reflected in all your faces a mirror of our Commonwealth family – different colours, different shapes, different sizes, different cultures – people of faith and those of none, and we represent one third of the world, and what the world sees mirrored in our faces is themselves, and so every time we come together, we collaborate, we think, we share, we listen to each other and we strive to understand, we do something that the rest of the world needs us to do.

I think it is really important that we take a moment to just think about the role that has been entrusted to each of you and those of us who have carried that burden of responsibility of being Parliamentarians in the past; because you are the link between the government and the people – owing your position to having been elected, securing a majority, or having been appointed - and yet you have a duty to those who appointed you and elected you and those who did not; to enact laws which regulate, but at the same time you have a duty to defend those freedoms and liberties which are so precious and so challenged.

The truth is the burden on Parliamentarians has never been greater, because we live

in troubled and troubling times. Friction, misunderstanding, distrust, disharmony. More difficult and more complex than perhaps ever before, and that interconnectedness – the fact that something that happens in one part of our world can trigger a reaction so quickly in other parts - is something that we are all now grappling with. Allegiances are shifting, links are fracturing.

So the world is looking for greater stability; they're looking for the familiar, the trusted, the known, and there like a diamond, lurking at the bottom of a trunk that people haven't looked at very often, there is the Commonwealth. Its value is enhanced by the passage of time - not dimmed, not diminished. The light of that diamond with the fractions dancing, with all the different colours and cultures and experiences of our Commonwealth, its value enhanced, treasured.

It is time for us to look again because our Commonwealth has to deliver for that 60% of young people who are under the age of 30 and who do not yet know each other. Yet they will depend on each other in the future and our Commonwealth way is always to see the bigger picture. To share the concern and the welfare of others, particularly the vulnerable. So by understanding that we all have something to contribute, the recognition of the richness that each can bring and the opportunity to learn together that it is by consensus rather than confrontation that more will be achieved.

It is unique in the Commonwealth

that the four corners of the world meet in our family, and the history that has bound us together has allowed us to know each other. To know and to understand.

Just like any other family, there will be times when there will be irritations and difficulties, but it always comes back to the fact that they are part of our family. We have loved each other for a long time, in good times and in bad, and that strength of understanding, that strength of community and that strength of family is something that I think we should really treasure.

Which is why I have said so many times and will say again - we now have to put the 'wealth' back into 'Commonwealth' and the 'common' back into 'wealth', and we're not just talking about financial wealth. We're talking about the people who are our real gold – to strengthen that social dynamic; to plot and plan together to work out what works, but just as importantly to share with one another that which does not work. If one member of the Commonwealth family spends one penny to do something and we make sure that no other Commonwealth member has to spend the same penny and that they will spend a different one, so that our collaboration will strengthen our understanding and help us better support the people that we all individually serve.

And it's a great privilege and a pleasure for me that I have been entrusted with helping to support you all throughout the Commonwealth,

by helping to support each and every one of our nation states.

So I address you as your Commonwealth Secretary-General but I also can never forget that at heart I have and always will be a lawyer, and so I have been like many of you, also a Parliamentarian and I hope that to my last breath, I shall be a campaigner for social change, particularly working for the inclusion of women and to put an end to domestic violence, and to create a better protective system for all of our children.

And the Commonwealth will always, I believe, be a pioneer for ways of doing things that are innovative, collaborative and above all inclusive. Indeed our Commonwealth theme for this year is 'An Inclusive Commonwealth'.

We bring this to bear in the way we work together on the rule of law, democracy and many aspects of development needed in all of our citizens, if they are to enjoy the benefits of a fair and sustainable social and economic progress.

In many areas of life of vital importance to our citizens, we work for change – all of us in this hall recognise that through the mutual support and encouragement of the Commonwealth connection and its distinctive strength as a network of networks, valuable knowledge is shared and much more can be achieved than if we try to do it only on our own.

Our shared concerns and the approaches that we adopt in tackling them are now brought together in the Commonwealth Charter and I would really encourage each one

of us to use it, to refer to it often in our speeches, in what we say and to make sure those we represent know all about it. We need to foster and cultivate a stronger sense of Commonwealth identity and awareness so that others can draw the same inspiration and encouragement that we all feel when we come together about belonging to this remarkable global family.

Things happen when CPA Members come together that happens nowhere else – not least the laughter, and we need to cultivate that – that stronger sense of identity, that stronger sense of awareness, so that others can emulate what we have. And we must value it and cherish it, not as an heirloom but as a matchless asset and great resource of strength and cooperation in this very fragile world.

The sixteen articles of the Charter ranging from democracy through to tolerance, respect and understanding for gender equality and young people prefigure the seventeen Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whereby we seek to achieve three extraordinary things in the next 15 years. To end extreme poverty; to fight inequality and injustice; and to fix climate change.

These goals, adopted a year ago, match the ambitions of our Commonwealth Charter and our 52 member countries collectively are committed to working on them together in the spirit of goodwill and mutual support. The difference between our sixteen Commonwealth articles and the

seventeen Sustainable Development Goals is that in the latter partnership each has its own separate goal, whereas we see it as being an enabling factor and an integral part to each of our Charter ambitions.

The way we work together has always been in partnership, to deliver all of those aspirations. So partnership is one of the five P's that encompasses all that we seek to achieve in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and all that we work for as a Commonwealth family.

The five P's are People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership and it's not my intention, you'll be pleased to know, to go through all of those today but I know that they are imprinted on each of our hearts. And I just want to say a little if I may about how you can use your influence to raise the profile and make more of our precious Commonwealth inheritance.

Just in terms of wealth, I think you all know that, just by Commonwealth countries working together on trade we have a 19% Commonwealth advantage – cheaper, easier and faster. *How are we going to grab hold of that and make it work better?*

I want us to just harvest that spirit of goodwill – that there are also many practicalities that make it possible, swiftly and collaboratively, to get straight to the nub of the matter when it is considered within a Commonwealth setting and by Commonwealth partners.

We really have to capitalise on our shared inheritances of common law which forms the basis for international law, and on the other factors such as the similarity of institutions and interoperability of systems that combine to give our Commonwealth distinctiveness and advantage.

I have announced that we will be setting up an Office of Civil and Criminal Justice Reform. This is really for us to share templates for legislative reform and the implementation of best practice, to strengthen public safety and help show what has or, just as importantly, has not worked in our Commonwealth jurisdictions.

Each of our jurisdictions is

different and has specific local needs and context, yet there are many similarities, and there are also very deep connections between our peoples and between the institutions which we serve. We can help each other by the really good things that do work, so partnerships with a judiciary, prosecutors, police, national human rights institutions, international agencies and civil society organisations – all vital to the work that we do. In terms of value for money, benefit for our citizens and the improvement of business environments and efficiency, there is a distinctive contribution that only the Commonwealth can make.

Yet what we achieve in the Commonwealth can be copied by others more widely, so there is so much for us to do and I'm conscious that there's much for us to talk about and I have to assure you that I've probably got about another 20 pages that I could share, but something tells me that I will be much more liked if I sit down really fast!

So we have an opportunity to share best practice, we have an opportunity to talk together. I hope that we will really work hard during this conference, and with the wealth of experience and expertise that I see assembled in this very room that we will build on the vast reserves of goodwill, and that we'll animate the Commonwealth, and that change will happen.

In fact I have a feeling that before the conference closes your theme might become 'Unity, Diversity and Common Solutions'. I wish you well. I know the genius in this room has the ability to change the face of the Commonwealth, and I'm looking forward to celebrating and rejoicing everything you do, and hoping that this will be the start of one of the most exciting and creative opportunities for the Commonwealth that there has yet been.

So thank you for being here, thank you for the work you've done before coming, but thank you for the work you will do as a result of being together which you would not have done if you'd stayed on your own. Thank you very much.

62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference Photo Gallery



Images from the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference:
A selection of images from the conference appear on these pages. For more images from the conference please visit the **CPA Flickr Website** at www.cpahq.org/cpahq/flickr where you can view, share and download images. The main group image of delegates from the conference appears on pages 50-51.



Images: CPA Headquarters Secretariat and Nina Hollington Photography

NEWS FROM THE 62ND COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE



New CPA Treasurer and Vice-Chairperson elected at the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

During the 62nd CPA General Assembly which took place at the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Members of the CPA endorsed the appointment of Hon. Vicki Dunne, MLA, Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory as the new CPA Treasurer. The Treasurer, who is a Member of the Association nominated by the Executive Committee,



is elected for three years by the General Assembly and works with the CPA Secretary-General and the CPA Headquarters Secretariat to monitor the finances of the Association. The CPA Treasurer also joins the Trustees board of the Association.

Prior to being appointed as the CPA Treasurer, Hon. Vicki Dunne MLA had been the Acting CPA Treasurer since July 2016 following the passing of the late Hon. Request Muntanga and had also previously been a Regional Representative for the Australia Region on the CPA Executive Committee (2013-2016).

The 62nd General Assembly was followed by the new CPA Executive Committee during which Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon and a



Regional Representative for the CPA Africa Region was elected by Members of the Executive Committee to the position of Vice-Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee. The position of Vice-Chairperson is for a term of one year.

Right: Members of the CPA Executive Committee pictured before the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference when they held a series of governance meetings for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.



Links from the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference:

CPA Flickr Images Albums: For images of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference please visit: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/flickr

CPA Videos: Highlights of the opening ceremony of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and other videos of conference events can be found at the CPA Secretariat YouTube channel: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube

Newly elected Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson pledges to increase women's political participation

The newly elected Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Dato' Noraini Ahmad MP (Malaysia) has pledged to renew the effort to increase women's political participation across the Commonwealth.

The new Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians was elected for a three-year term at the CWP Business Meeting at the fifth triennial conference of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), which took place in London, United Kingdom as part of the wider 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in December 2016.

The new Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Dato' Noraini Ahmad MP is a Member of Parliament from Malaysia whose political career began in 2000 as the Secretary-General of the Young Women's Wing, who was later elected to lead the movement in 2004. Hon. Dato' Noraini Ahmad MP was first elected as a Member of Parliament in 2008, representing the constituency of Parit Sulong. She has served as Deputy Minister of the Human Resource Ministry and is currently the Chair of Malaysian Trade Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE).

In the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Hon. Dato' Noraini Ahmad MP was a Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee Member until 2013 and was the CPA South-East Asia Regional Representative on the CPA International Executive Committee.

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr Akbar Khan said: "I very much look forward to working with Hon. Dato' Noraini Ahmad MP (Malaysia), the new CWP Chairperson during the next three years and wish her all the very best in this important role."

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) is the network of women Members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Parliament and Legislatures.

The CWP network provides a means of building the capacity of women elected to parliament to be more effective in their roles; improving the awareness and ability of all Parliamentarians, male and female, and encouraging them to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role - *legislation, oversight and representation* - and helping parliaments to become gender-sensitive institutions.



The outgoing Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians was Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda who held the position since her election in 2013. Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP worked tirelessly in promoting inter-regional cooperation among members of the CWP. She had established a CWP strategy, which led to many activities, geared towards the strengthening of Women Parliamentarians across the CPA's nine regions; and convened at the CWP Conference women Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth to discuss the key issue of 'Political Violence Against Women'.

Under CPA election rules only female delegates to the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference could take part in the vote to elect a new CWP Chairperson. There were four candidates for the position of CWP Chairperson: Hon. Dato' Noraini Ahmad MP (Malaysia); Hon. Linda Reid MLA (British Columbia, Canada); Ms Joyce Watson AM (Wales); and Ms Poto Williams MP (New Zealand).

Following the election of the new Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), the Steering Committee of the CWP, representing all nine regions of the

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), met to elect Ms Poto Williams MP (New Zealand) as the new Vice Chairperson for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) to serve for one year.

The new Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Dato' Noraini Ahmad MP (Malaysia) was congratulated by three former CWP Chairpersons (pictured left) - Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP (Uganda), Hon. Alix Boyd Knights MHA (Dominica) and Hon. Lindiwe Maseko, MP (South Africa).



NEWS FROM THE 62ND COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE



Commonwealth Parliamentary Association launches new university accredited CPA Parliamentary Fundamentals Flagship Programme for Commonwealth Parliamentarians

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) advances parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance, and by building an informed parliamentary community, capable of deepening the Commonwealth's democratic commitment and co-operation among its Parliaments and Legislatures.

To further this objective, the CPA launched its pioneering flagship programme - the CPA Fundamentals Programme on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure - at the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

This is the first course of its kind and through the new CPA Fundamentals programme, the CPA aims to assist Commonwealth Parliaments in building the capacity of their newly-elected and returning Parliamentarians, by equipping them with:

- Greater depth of knowledge of parliamentary practice and procedure
- Increased in-depth and practical knowledge based on accepted theories and international good practices
- An accredited qualification from an internationally recognised university that will benefit participants for life during and after Parliament.

The programme is interactive and comprehensive,

comprising online modules as well as face-to-face contact sessions on-site with our partner universities. This programme aims to develop well-informed, skilled parliamentary leaders, who will go on to contribute to creating strong democratic legislatures that adhere to principles of good governance.

The unique CPA Fundamentals Programme focusing on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure has two main courses, with one course specifically developed for CPA Small Branches. The CPA works closely with Small Branches (jurisdictions of less than 500,000 people) in all Regions of the Commonwealth to identify their particular needs and requirements in parliamentary strengthening, development and cooperation.

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr Akbar Khan said: *"The new CPA Fundamentals Programme on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure, which launched at the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, will further the aims of the CPA in advancing parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. We are especially honoured to be working alongside two prestigious Commonwealth universities to provide this flagship programme for our Membership and I'm delighted that we have a course specifically for CPA Small Branches."*

The CPA is be working alongside two Commonwealth universities to provide this flagship programme. The CPA Fundamentals course is provided to Commonwealth Parliamentarians in partnership with University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. The specialised CPA Fundamentals course for CPA Small Branches is delivered to Commonwealth Parliamentarians from CPA Small Branches in partnership with McGill University in Canada, in the form of the Professional Development Certificate in Parliamentary Governance.

The CPA Parliamentary Fundamentals Flagship Programme is now available and any newly elected or returning Commonwealth Parliamentarians interested in these programmes should contact the CPA Headquarters Secretariat via email hq.sec@cpahq.org.

Left: The CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan and Dr Judith Potter, Dean of the McGill University, School of Continuing Studies in Canada sign a partnership agreement to deliver the CPA Fundamentals Programme for CPA Small Branches.



Newly elected Small Branches Chairperson speaks of the pressing need of small legislations within the Commonwealth to come together to address common difficulties and strengths and share experiences of their parliaments

The newly elected Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia MP pledged that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) would have a strengthened and renewed focus on assisting Small Branches and their Parliaments and Legislatures.

The Members of the CPA attending the 35th CPA Small Branches Conference in December 2016 unanimously acclaimed the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Malta as the new Chairperson of Small Branches. The role of Chairperson of Small Branches is a new Officer role for the CPA and the new incumbent will sit on the CPA International Executive Committee to bring a voice for Small Branches to the governing body of the CPA.

In his acceptance remarks, the newly elected Chairperson of CPA Small Branches, Hon. Anġlu Farrugia MP expressed his gratitude towards the other CPA Small Branches, which have shown trust in electing him as Chairperson. Speaker Farrugia spoke about the pressing need of small legislations within the Commonwealth to come together, within their 'smallness' to address common difficulties and strengths and share experiences of their parliaments or legislative assemblies.

Speaker Farrugia stated that as a state in the Commonwealth, among other small countries, Malta has learnt to appreciate the strengths of bring a small country: being flexible enough to be able to work with other

parliaments, yet big enough to be influential. Speaker Farrugia also encouraged fellow Parliamentarians to be leaders in understanding their citizens and advocate in the best interest of their countries, both locally and on multilateral levels, especially in contemporary challenges such as youth unemployment, and the ever-increasing importance of combatting terrorism.

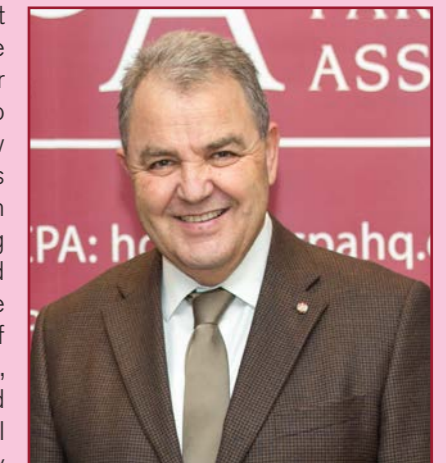
Hon. Anġlu Farrugia MP is the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Malta and he was first elected to the Parliament of Malta in 1996. He has held many positions including Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Chairman of the Standing Committee for the Consideration of Bills and Member of the Privileges Committee before being elected as Speaker in 2013. Hon. Farrugia currently represents the CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region on the Standing Committee of the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (2016-2018).

The election of the new Chairperson of Small Branches took place at the 35th CPA Small Branches Conference held in London, United Kingdom as part of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. Forty-seven Members of Parliaments and Legislatures from 26 CPA Small Branches attended the conference.

Of the over 180 Branches of the CPA, forty-three Branches are classified as 'Small Branches' which are defined as jurisdictions having a population below 500,000 people. The CPA Headquarters Secretariat works closely with Small Branches in all Regions of the CPA to identify their unique needs and requirements in parliamentary strengthening, development and cooperation.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Small Branches

For more information about the work of the CPA in Small Branches visit www.cpahq.org or contact the CPA Headquarters Secretariat via hq.sec@cpahq.org.





**62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
London, United Kingdom
11 to 17 December 2016**

Conference Workshop A - 15 December 2016

THERE IS A ROLE FOR THE COMMONWEALTH IN FOSTERING FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

Moderator:

**Hon. Vicki Dunne, MLA,
Deputy Speaker of the
Legislative Assembly
(Australian Capital
Territory)**

Discussion Leaders:

- **Hon. Umar Buba Jibril,
MP (Nigeria)**
- **Baroness Berridge
(United Kingdom)**
- **Hon. Dr Ramesh
Kumar Vankwani, MP
(Pakistan)**

Rapporteur:

**Mr Neil Iddawala
(Sri Lanka)**

Workshop Report:

Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right of the people. In a country with a state religion, freedom of religion is generally considered to mean that the government permits religious practices of other faiths and sects besides the state religion, and does not persecute believers in other religions.

On 25 November 1981 the 'Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief' was passed in the United Nations General Assembly. This declaration recognizes freedom of religion as a fundamental human right in accordance with several other instruments of international law.

In 1993, the UN's Human Rights Committee declared that article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights "protects theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief." The Committee further stated that "the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief necessarily entails the freedom to choose a religion or belief, including the right to replace one's current religion or

belief with another or to adopt atheistic views." Signatories to the convention are barred from "the use of threat of physical force or penal sanctions to compel believers or non-believers" to recant their beliefs or convert. Despite this, minority religions still are persecuted in many parts of the world.

Religion, Belief and Peace Building

Delegates at the conference workshop discussed the role for the Commonwealth in fostering freedom of religion or belief and they also examined how to improve and support policy directives and the decision making process in respective legislatures.

Although throughout the history, religions or beliefs had contributed more to social change and civilizations, in some contexts, that have led to conflicts. It was noted that 'religious' conflicts are not based on religious beliefs exclusively and instead should be seen as clashes of communities, identities and interests.

Religion and peace



resolve the conflicts between religions or beliefs.

Hon. Umar Buba Jibril, MP (Nigeria) led the discussion by explaining that Muslims and Christians continue to fear discrimination or abuse based on their religious affiliation. Muslim and Christian leaders reported that a lack of trust between members of two faiths continued as a result of the ongoing conflict in the northeast of the country. Some Muslims or Christians who converted to another religion reportedly faced threats and ostracism by adherents of their former religion.

Communities sometimes stigmatized those who did not believe in the existence of a divine being. For example, some secular humanists reported that they felt the need to hide their identities and feign religious devotion to avoid threats of violence.

Many religious leaders publicly supported tolerance and interfaith methods of conflict resolution. Some religious leaders reported that distrust between Christian and Muslim communities and discord among groups within the same faith tradition could threaten interfaith efforts.

Muslim leaders regularly publicly condemned the activities of Al-Qaida, ISIS and Boko Haram as un-Islamic and disassociated themselves from the ideology and actions of the group. The terrorist organization Boko Haram has killed thousands of people in indiscriminate acts of violence and attacks deliberately targeting Muslims who spoke out against or opposed their radical ideology.

In Nigeria, the Constitution bars the federal government or state governments from establishing a state religion. It provides for individuals' freedom to choose, practice, propagate or change their religion and

prohibits religious discrimination. The rights defined in the Constitution cannot supersede the interests of defense, public safety, order, morality or health, or protecting the rights of others.

Finally, Hon. Umar Buba Jibril, MP pointed out that violence related to religions or beliefs is spreading out in many countries, such as Fiji, Nigeria and Pakistan; and the CPA may help to mediate with the proper mechanisms, mainly through capacity building.

Baroness Berridge (United Kingdom) said that she joined with others in celebrating the Magna Carta, which opens with the words: "the English Church shall be free", meaning free from state intervention, which at that time in history, of course, meant free from the King.

Freedom of religion or belief, as set out in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Oslo Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief was adopted in 1998 to be given the highest priority. As the UN Special Rapporteur illustrated in his comments to Baroness Berridge: "There is lots of religion in Vietnam but not a lot of it is free." The declaration is founded on individuals enjoying human rights when the state knows how to behave, knows its own limits and understands its role as protector of its citizens' human rights from violation by third parties. In old communist states, such as Vietnam, religion is controlled by the state.

Baroness Berridge spoke of the common violations against Article 18 which include an inappropriate connection between a religious institution or a faith or a stream of one faith, and the state. Often, that institution or faith has such preference from the state that pluralism is suffocated, and, in the extreme, a religion becomes identified with nationality.



Is Myanmar's identity becoming synonymous with being Buddhist? The Rohingya Muslims are denied citizenship in this country and an outcry by Buddhist extremists led the Government to capitulate and confiscate their only identity document. Therefore, I would highlight that no religion should be given the foremost status in any state.

The UN Special Rapporteur visited the United Kingdom in 2014 and found serious Article 18 violations and "credible information that some individuals whom I wanted to meet with had been either under heavy surveillance, warned, intimidated, harassed or prevented from travelling by the police."

The Human Rights Watch Report: *Persecuting 'Evil Way' Religion*, details state persecution of central Highland Christians, many of whom have fled to Cambodia. Some used

this conflict situation for human trafficking. It might also be worth mentioning how discerning the United Kingdom customer can be and how sensitive brands like Marks & Spencer can be when they source products from many manufacturers in Vietnam and Cambodia.

The digital revolution could create further Article 18 violations. According to a report in *The Economist*, by 2020 80% of adults will have a smartphone that is able to receive different religious messages that either the state or religious leaders will scarcely be able to control. Will many more people start switching faith or start challenging existing political and religious power structures?

Baroness Berridge spoke of the need to monitor what is happening under the new Government of India. We do not want to add into this space a rise of Hindu militancy which





is semi-connected to identity, and to see the persecution of a large number of Muslims and Christians.

Who knows what the future holds? Many Governments, Parliamentarians, religious leaders and royalty have, however, grasped the Article 18 issue, and the Pope's celebrity status at the UN General Assembly in September 2015 is incredibly timely. However, if by 2020 violations have decreased then this will indeed be an achievement through proper training and the leadership of Parliamentarians through the CPA.

Hon. Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, MP (Pakistan) briefed conference delegates that in 1947, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah stated that "...the citizens of the

country would enjoy equal rights irrespective of their religious affiliations..." but it was not materialized in proper way. This resulted in the religious violence and the issues present against the minorities in Pakistan.

In analyzing the violence reported against minorities in Pakistan, it has highlighted the need of an attitude change from grass roots level upwards, including a change of school curriculum because in some school text books, non-Muslims are mentioned as '*Kafir*'.

If a non-Muslim is accused of blasphemy then this can result in hundreds of people in his community being attacked. *"The peak of the religious violence is that 10 to 15 forced conversions are being reported every month and annually 4,000 - 5,000 Hindus are migrating to other*

countries..." Hon. Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani said.

Religious freedom in Pakistan takes many shapes. The Constitution talks about the protection of minorities and equal human rights but it also says Islam is the state religion. He suggested that humanity should be prioritized instead of religion, to ensure that human rights are valued at all levels.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the workshop session, the CPA's potential role in fostering freedom of religion and beliefs was highlighted. In the following ways it could be undertaken: capacity building; awareness on pluralism and principles of Human Rights; promoting inclusivity and religious freedom; promoting co-existence and tolerance at community level; promoting peace education at secondary and tertiary level; and guiding the States in enacting laws against hate speeches and hate incidents.

The protection of religious freedom is an integral element of a functioning pluralist democracy. Whilst there are many different approaches to protecting religious freedoms, it is important that limitations on the exercise of civil liberties are avoided.

It should also be noted that through the directive principles of State policy, the State shall

strengthen national unity by promoting co-operation and mutual confidence among all sections of the people, including the racial, religious, linguistic and other groups, and shall take effective steps in the fields of teaching, education, and information in order to eliminate discrimination and prejudice.

Recommendations from the workshop were:

- The Commonwealth should be able to sanction or call to order States perceived to be impugning freedom of religion.
- Provide a master class and/or bespoke training for Parliamentarians on freedom of religion or belief.
- The CPA may constitute a Committee to discuss loopholes and devise strategies for ensuring protection of an individual's right to freedom of religion.

All recommendations from the workshop were noted.

62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE London, United Kingdom 11 to 17 December 2016

Conference Workshop B - 15 December 2016



THE ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH IN SUPPORTING THE OUTCOMES OF THE COP21 PARIS AGREEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Small Branches Topic

Moderator:
Hon. Ghislain Bolduc,
MNA (Québec)

- Discussion Leaders:**
- Hon. Mike Summers, MLA (Falkland Islands)
 - Hon. Gan Thiam Poh, MP (Singapore)
 - Mr Robert Ondhowe (United Nations Environment Programme UNEP)

Rapporteur:
Mrs. Doris Kapumba
(Zambia)

Workshop Report:
Delegates noted the adverse effects of climate change such as drought, flooding and the rise in sea levels, and the fact that the impact was worse on small island states and developing countries.

Delegates further noted the obligation under the Paris Agreement for countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to below 2% of pre-industrial levels. They acknowledged the difficulties smaller countries encountered addressing the effects of climate change and meeting the reporting obligations under

the Paris Agreement. They, in this regard, acknowledged the need to share best practices and assist small island states and developing countries tackle the problem of climate change. Additionally, they acknowledged the need for the Commonwealth to consider adopting a joint reporting strategy and joint climate change agenda.

Delegates also discussed measures being taken by some countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These included giving incentives to businesses that employed clean energy technology and using renewable energy sources such as solar,

hydroelectric and wind energy and by encouraging the use of electrical vehicles in the transportation industry.

Hon. Cryuff Buckley, MLC (St Helena) raised concerns that small island states sometimes lacked sufficient information to make well informed decisions that took into account their climatic conditions. He illustrated that the design of the new airport in St Helena had failed to take into account the windy conditions of the area. In this regard, he asked how a platform to exchange technical advice and experiences on environmental management





and renewable energy could be created.

Mr Robert Ondhowe (UNEP) said that one of the functions of the United Nations Environment Programme was to create a platform for countries to obtain the information they needed to make appropriate policy decisions. He stated that this had been done for the Alliance of Small Island States. He added that UNEP also brought together a Global Adaptation Network in which the majority of players were small island states.

Rt Hon. Shri Tenzing Norbu Thongdok (Arunachal Pradesh, India) asked whether adopting the 'polluter pays' principle could help arrest climate change. He further wondered whether the advanced nations could be made responsible for providing green technology and financing to address climate change.

Mr Robert Ondhowe (UNEP) explained that in Copenhagen, countries failed to reach an agreement on climate change because different countries failed to agree on who would be responsible for climate finance and providing the appropriate technology. It is for this reason that the Paris Agreement adopted the approach that each country was legally obliged to take some action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He added that climate financing was available for bankable projects and countries were urged to develop such projects.

A Deputy from Guernsey

submitted that the exchange of information was very important for smaller countries. He asked whether there were any concrete incentives to encourage the private sector to develop and adopt clean energy solutions.

He further wanted to know what was being done to make climate change financing more accessible.

Hon. Mike Summers, MLA (Falkland Islands) informed delegates that there was need for an audit to determine what small countries should do to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As regards encouraging the private sector to adopt environmentally friendly technologies, he informed delegates that that was the role of the government. He, however, said countries could encourage companies to invest in greener technologies by giving them grants and demonstrating to them that using renewable energies was in their best interest.

Hon. Lazarous Chungu Bwalya, MP (Zambia) sought clarity on why some countries in the Commonwealth had not yet ratified the Paris Agreement.

Mr Robert Ondhowe (UNEP) informed delegates that some countries employed a dual system where a treaty was signed but only became legally binding upon its ratification. He explained that this enabled the countries assess the financial and other implications of the treaty and whether it was in conformity with their national laws. He clarified that this process was usually what delayed the ratification process. He, however, expressed confidence that all the countries

that had signed the treaty would subsequently ratify it.

Hon. Mike Summers, MLA (Falkland Islands) informed delegates that in some cases countries did not ratify a treaty because they lacked the capacity to carry out its obligations. He proposed that the Commonwealth should consider what it could do to assist such countries.

A Member from Singapore asked whether the new Commonwealth Climate Finance Assistance Hub designed to offer assistance to the least developed countries had been formed.

Hon. Ghislain Bolduc, MNA (Québec) informed delegates the hub had not yet been formed, but that negotiations for its formation were ongoing.

A Member from Singapore said that the CPA was a platform for countries to share their experiences. In this regard, she urged the CPA to establish a mechanism for countries to share experiences on the measures being taken to increase the use of renewable energy sources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions so that countries could adopt the best practices of other countries.

Hon. Ghislain Bolduc, MNA (Québec) informed delegates of measures being taken by some countries to reduce the emissions. He said that in the United States of America, the State of California had many electric vehicles and as a result zero GHEs on vehicles. It had a

lot of electrical loading stations and 20 hydrogen stations. Japan had 120 hydrogen stations. The USA was investing in 4 new nuclear plants and was also planning to

make an investment in offshore windmills in which it expected to put up 300,000 windmills in the next 20 years. In Canada, Ontario was refurbishing all its nuclear plants to make them operate on renewable energy. Quebec had 800 electric loading stations and intend to have 2,000 by 2020. Montreal was investing in a public transport system to remove petrol/diesel cars from the roads.

He added that the countries in North America exchanged experiences on the measures they were taking on a regular basis and urged the CPA to create a forum for members to exchange such information.

Hon. Mike Summers, MLA (Falkland Islands) said that the issue of more investment in renewable energy should be taken to the Commonwealth and that the Commonwealth should consider what resources it should make available to its membership to assist them put in place climate change initiatives.

A Deputy from Guernsey observed that most climate change initiatives were usually strategic and long term while countries had other short term and immediate needs. She asked how a county could prioritise climate change initiatives under such circumstances. She further asked which segments of society supported climate change initiatives.

Hon. Mike Summers, MLA (Falkland Islands) informed delegates that the Falklands



Islands had adopted a system of environmental mainstreaming where each policy, investment or project had to undergo an environmental impact assessment.

Hon. Ghislain Bolduc, MNA (Québec) stated that it was important to educate the population on climate change. It was further important to engage the people on issues of climate change. Canada had also adopted a policy of durable development, which had three pillars; economic, social and environment. In this regard, each law being enacted had to take all these into account.

A Member from India asked how investment in renewable energy projects, such as hydro-electric power, could be achieved in countries where the environmental laws were stringent and the area (for instance an area which is 80% forest) was one in which it was difficult for a project to pass an environmental impact assessment.

Hon. Ghislain Bolduc, MNA (Québec) submitted that the introduction of new projects required wide public consultation, which could take years. He said that public support would increase the chances of a project's success.

Hon. Mike Summers, MLA (Falkland Islands) stated that such a situation presented two competing interests of improving the standard of living of the citizenry on the one hand and the longer term interest of protecting the environment. He said one of the options to consider was offsetting policy; where if a project was likely to have a detrimental environmental impact, the project developers should be required to contribute towards offsetting the damage.

A Deputy from Guernsey asked how the public could be encouraged to embrace renewable energy technology,



such as electric cars, when in some cases taxes were introduced to support these projects and this inevitably transferred the cost to the public.

Hon. Ghislain Bolduc, MNA (Québec) said that public interest in renewable energy technologies could be encouraged through subsidising renewable energy products so that they were cheaper than carbon emitting ones.

Hon. Mike Summers, MLA (Falkland Islands) said that incentives rather than punitive measures were more effective at encouraging the public to embrace greener technologies. He illustrated that rather than taxing petrol cars, for instance, governments should reduce tax on electric cars.

Hon. Gan Thiam Poh, MP (Singapore) suggested that the reduction of greenhouse gas emission should be done gradually and within the means of each country.

Rt Hon. Shri Tenzing Norbu Thongdok (Arunachal Pradesh, India) expressed concern on how developing countries could revert to cleaner energy solutions such as nuclear energy when the United Nations legal framework for nuclear energy was very restrictive.

Hon. Ghislain Bolduc, MNA (Québec) said that currently

nuclear energy produced a lot of nuclear waste which was difficult to dispose of safely. In this regard, nuclear energy was still in a position where globally it was not entirely considered as clean energy. Therefore, many countries were cautious about its use.

A Member from Canada asked what kind of assistance larger countries could give smaller countries to address the problem of climate change

Hon. Mike Summers, MLA (Falkland Islands) said that the larger countries should assist with technology and knowledge transfer.

Mr Robert Ondhowe (UNEP) informed delegates how Philips International had entered into an agreement with some African countries to replace ordinary bulbs with energy efficient bulbs. The carbon credits meant more to Philips than the cost of the bulbs, thus, making the project profitable to Philips. However, most of the countries were too small to meet the minimum threshold for the project to be profitable to Philips. He, thus, recommended that this was an area in which smaller countries could bundle together and benefit from the economies of scale.

Recommendations from the workshop were:

- Commonwealth states should cooperate to establish strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector by developing alternative fuel (ethanol and hydrogen), and vehicle electrification.
- The successful implementation of the Paris agreement requires collective and concerted efforts from all stakeholders, including national and local governments, individuals, businesses and community groups.
- The role of Parliament is essential in implementing the Paris Agreement and initiatives such as the sustainable development goals, including the added value of entities such as UNEP.
- Climate change is an issue for all nations and the Commonwealth should assist smaller nations in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and dealing with the effects of climate change.

All recommendations from the workshop were endorsed.



62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
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Conference Workshop C - 15 December 2016



THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING POLICIES RELEVANT TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

Moderator:

Hon. Tom Osborne,
MHA, Speaker of the
House of Assembly
(Newfoundland and
Labrador, Canada)

Discussion Leaders:

- Ms Maree Edwards,
MP (Victoria, Australia)
- Shri Gaurishankar
Agrawal, MP
(Chhattisgarh, India)
- Mr Charles Chauvel
(United Nations
Development
Programme UNDP)

Rapporteur:

Mr Mark Egan (Jersey)

Workshop Report:

While broadly supportive of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the conference workshop discussed the challenges in raising awareness of the goals and translating them into policy priorities at local and national level. It was noted that the SDGs apply to all countries, irrespective of their state of economic development.

Implementation starts with personal choices but is influenced by the decisions taken by government bodies at all levels. Every country starts from a different position and the work involved in achieving the goals will be significant. Members were concerned about the resource implications and how international aid could assist achievement of the SDGs in developing countries.

Parliaments have a role to play in engaging the public and civil society on the SDGs, discussing and passing legislation and monitoring government action. Members raised questions about how the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) could assist parliaments both in setting up new monitoring mechanisms and ensuring that oversight of work to meet the

SDGs is integrated across the broad span of parliamentary processes.

Mr Charles Chauvel (UNDP) initiated the discussion by asking whether government and parliamentary institutions are in good shape to achieve the 17 SDGs, which are broader in scope than the millennium development goals (MDGs) they have succeeded. The goals apply across all countries and seek to promote dignity, prosperity, justice, partnerships, caring for the planet and the welfare of the people. He argued that Parliamentarians must play a part in achieving the goals, based on inclusive processes, transparency and accountability.

Parliamentarians needed to consider if the public had confidence in parliamentary institutions. For example, was there an up-to-date register of interests so that the public could form a view on whether or not Parliamentarians were influenced by private considerations when taking decisions? The scrutiny function was vital but it was important for compliance with the SDGs to be scrutinised across parliamentary processes and not side-lined in a standalone

scrutiny committee. Parliaments also needed to develop strong relationships with official statisticians and auditors and to engage actively with civil society.

Mr Chauvel suggested that Members of Parliament could champion development issues in party caucuses, in parliament and in the media. He recommended www.agora-parl.net as a useful information source for Parliamentarians active in this area.

Shri Gaurishankar Agrawal (Chhattisgarh, India) argued that national and provincial parliaments were the bridge between action on the SDGs at local, national and international level and were thereby essential partners in achieving the goals. Politicians had a direct understanding of local issues and concerns which must be taken into account in developing policies to achieve the SDGs.

Countries had to take responsibility for achieving the SDGs but this would be challenging for many smaller and less developed countries. Partnership working between countries could help overcome such challenges. It was also important to ensure that national policy priorities reflected the SDGs. India was making



progress on this matter and Shri Gaurishankar Agrawal drew attention to a new financial inclusion programme which was relevant to a number of SDGs.

Ms Maree Edwards (Victoria, Australia) focused on gender equality, which was the subject of one of the SDGs and related to 11 of the 17 goals in total. Collectively the SDGs provided both a commitment to take action and a framework to assess the progress which had been made. While Australia had slipped in international gender equality rankings in recent years, Victoria was leading the way in promoting gender equality, including with a new 'Safe and Strong' gender equality strategy. Although principally aimed at tackling violence against women, the strategy spanned a wide range of areas and explicitly conveyed the economic benefits of gender equality as well as the benefits to men. The intention was to follow up on the strategy with an Act of Parliament.

Gender budgeting, which shows the effect of government spending on the genders, is also now used in Victoria. There had been widespread consultation on the 'Safe and Strong' strategy and it was essential that women's voices were heard on such

matters as well as on the SDGs more generally.

Dr Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar (India) said that all of the SDGs were inter-related. She particularly drew attention to the goals relating to poverty reduction and tackling climate change. People can make choices to help achieve the SDGs, such as eating locally-grown food or even growing some crops themselves. The promotion of breastfeeding was also important.

Hon. Lazarous Chungu Bwalya MP (Zambia) said that public accounts committees would be important in assessing how public money had been spent in order to achieve SDGs and Parliamentarians also had a role to play in setting budgets to achieve policies. He questioned whether it was appropriate for the same framework to apply to all countries, at different stages of development, and suggested that developed countries could play a part in assisting developing countries with the goals.

In response, Mr Charles Chauvel (UNDP) said that although all countries had a responsibility to act to achieve the SDGs, it was appropriate for different countries to act differently depending on their context and priorities. The richest countries should set an example

in terms of the progress made in achieving SDGs.

Hon. Angelo Farrugia MP (Malta) noted that work to address one SDG would be likely to contribute to other SDGs, given the way in which they were inter-linked. He pointed to the success of campaigns on the level of the minimum wage in Malta as an example of how civil society could contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. It might also be appropriate for independent commissioners to be appointed to oversee work on the SDGs, to complement parliamentary oversight.

Hon. Krishnappa Bhimappa

Koliwad MP (Karnataka, India) asked about the assistance which might be available to developing countries to help them achieve the SDG goals. He also sought further information on the role of the CPA in this area.

Speaking in her capacity as Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP (Bangladesh) said that she was interested in hearing suggestions from Members about the practical steps, such as workshops and seminars, which the CPA could organise in order to support work to achieve the SDGs.





Hon. Ekwe Ethuro (Kenya) expressed concern that there might be too many SDGs for all countries to achieve but said that lessons could be drawn from the experience of achieving the previous Millennium Development Goals. Many countries had rightly continued to focus on embedding human rights and there might be a risk that switching attention to the SDGs would lead to a loss of focus on those areas.

Mr Charles Chauvel (UNDP) acknowledged these challenges but said it was important to make incremental improvements in the areas covered by the SDGs.

Shri Niranjan Pujari (Orissa, India) raised the issue of finding resources to achieve the SDGs given the demands placed on governments by other priorities. Hon. Sreeramakrishnan Purayath (Kerala, India) expressed a similar sentiment.

Hon. Lobin Lowe (Malawi) emphasised the importance of raising awareness about the SDGs. Hon. Lechesa Tsenoli (South Africa) asked about the relationship between the SDGs and other fundamental aims of government such as the promotion of equality, which would remain of crucial importance in South Africa.

In answer to Mr Colin Holt MLC (Western Australia), Ms Maree Edwards MP (Victoria)



said she was a supporter of affirmative action, such as quotas, to increase women's participation in politics.

Hon. Michael Waters MP (South Africa) said that in South Africa lack of access to women's sanitary products affected girls' access to education and there was also a problem with 'corrective' rape of lesbians. He did not support parliamentary quotas for women but his party had taken steps to encourage women candidates and this had been successful in improving the proportion of women Parliamentarians to 30% while also increasing the proportion of LGBT Parliamentarians to around 10%.

Dr Dinesh Oraon (Jharkhand,

India) spoke of the need for politicians to facilitate the achievement of the SDG goals by raising their constituents' awareness of government programmes and communicating with government about how such schemes could be made more effective.

Mr Tim Crookall MLC (Isle of Man) also emphasised steps necessary to raise public awareness of the goals.

Shri Tenzing Norbu Thongdok (Arunachal Pradesh, India) argued that resource allocation should be fixed for ten years in order to achieve the SDGs and that short-term adjustments to such funding should be prohibited. In his view there should be greater judicial emphasis on fundamental duties owed by the populace to their community and country, in order to achieve the SDGs, rather than on individual rights.

Mr Tim Crookall MLC (Isle of Man) and Hon. Lechesa Tsenoli (South Africa) suggested that it would be helpful if the workshop recommendations were circulated in advance and were capable of being amended.

During the workshop the following additional recommendations were proposed:

- Each parliament to make a report to the CPA annual

meeting on the progress towards Implementation of SDGs (Peer Review Mechanism).

- CPA to conduct seminars in parliament on the sensitization, processing and implementation of SDGs.

Recommendations from the workshop were:

- Effective parliamentary oversight of the achievement by governments of the Sustainable Development Goals is essential to ensuring the quality of such achievement.
- Parliaments must ensure women's leadership, including best practice strategies developed by women's health, community organisations and networks, to improve gender equality and reduce gendered violence.
- Parliamentarians should proactively centre stage and monitor implementation of SDGs to ensure their rightful place in national priorities to become a reality by 2030.

All recommendations from the workshop were *endorsed*.



**62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
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Conference Workshop D - 15 December 2016



**ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN AND GIRLS: THE IMPACT OF
SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET IN
PERPETRATING VIOLENCE**

Gender Topic

Moderator:

Hon. Alexandra Mendes, MP (Canada Federal)

Discussion Leaders:

- Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP (Canada Federal)
- Hon. Natalie Neita, MP (Jamaica)
- Hon. Ayesha Gulalai Wazir, MP (Pakistan)

Rapporteurs:

Ms Sandisiwe Schalk (South Africa) and CPA Headquarters Secretariat

Workshop Report:

The growing reach of the internet and social media presents opportunities, social connections and networks. However, these social media platforms are used by perpetrators to carry out acts of violence against women and girls.

Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP (Canada Federal) spoke of her experience as a former Chairperson of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women where the Committee

addressed issues such as human trafficking and violence against women. Cyber-violence is becoming increasingly prevalent and the perpetrators are difficult to trace. According to UN estimates, 73% of women around the world have been exposed to or have experienced some form of online violence.

Cyber violence has broad categories as identified by the United Nations:

- Hacking;
- Impersonation;

- Surveillance/tracking;
- Harassment or spamming;
- Recruitment; and
- Distribution of malicious information.

Added to the above is revenge pornography aimed at humiliating and shaming women and girls. The results of cybercrime are often permanently online and victims have little prospect of removing any content about them.

Victims of cyber violence suffer serious consequences,





including murder in some instances and teenagers are driven to suicide. At political level, women tend to be unfairly targeted, stereotyped and bullied using body shaming rather than the focus being on the substance of their work or ideologies.

Laws that specifically address cybercrime are needed as reliance on existing legislation on gender based violence is not sufficient. Input made indicated that most countries in the Commonwealth have legislation that seeks to address cyber violence, however the following challenges were identified:

1. Lack of implementation;
2. Obscurity of perpetrators;
3. Lack of effective instruments for monitoring and tracking of perpetrators;
4. Lack of political will to dedicated resources to eliminate cyber violence;
5. In some instances women and girls are perpetrators themselves against other women.

Hon. Natalie Neita, MP (Jamaica) spoke of the prevalence of violence against women across the world and the especially high levels of murder and violence in her own jurisdiction of Jamaica. Many incidents of this kind also result in images and comment posted online.

As Parliamentarians, how will we implement meaningful solutions to combat these acts of violence against women and girls and to punish those who perpetrate them? Legislation without enforcement is not going to be effective.

Violence against women and girls is both a sign and a driver of gender inequality which influences and is influenced by social constructions. In addition, gender inequality combines with many forms of discrimination to make women and girls even more defenceless against violence.

Social media and the internet are important communications tools for modern life – however social media is often used by devious elements to harass and victimise individuals who use these platforms. In addition, social media is often used to encourage physical violence against women offline.

Hon. Natalie Neita, MP outlined the need for support to be given to strengthening governmental and non-governmental organisations in order to fully implement and advance laws for the protection of women and girls. Gender laws do not belong only in the gender ministry and issues relating to protecting women and girls from offline and online violence should be incorporated



in the policy positions of every sector and should have visible consequences for violation.

Hon. Ayesha Gulalai Wazir, MP (Pakistan) discussed the benefits of technology for some countries of the Commonwealth, particularly but not exclusively developing countries. However the prevalence of violence against women and girls through online and social media is increasing, especially character assassination through the use of images and comments online.

Hon. Ayesha Gulalai Wazir, MP spoke about her own experiences of 'fake news' being posted online about her to damage her reputation and the reaction of people in her community.

Stronger messages should be sent to social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter that these types of crimes are taking place and more should be done by the networks to counteract this.

The moderator, Hon. Alexandra Mendes, MP (Canada Federal) opened

the workshop to questions and comments from Members from the floor.

Hon. Nicole Lawder MLA (Australian Capital Territory) highlighted the online comments targeted towards women standing for Parliament and the focus on appearance rather than what they are saying.

Rt Hon. Maria Miller MP (United Kingdom) spoke of her hope that the UK's Law Commission will be undertaking a review of how effective UK laws are in tackling online crime and the gaps in law to protect women from online violence. Laws need to be developed specific to online crimes and using existing laws for offline crimes are often insufficient.

Hon. Angela T. Didiza MP (South Africa) commented that the speed of cybercrime is rapid but the consequences of cybercrime last for a long time. The processes for investigating cybercrime needs to be speeded up to protect people as investigations are often very drawn out.

Hon. Jennifer Van Den Heever, MP (Namibia) explained that Namibia has ratified many



treaties to protect people from cybercrime but the implementation of legislation is often a challenge. It would be useful for Parliaments to be given assistance and guidance in enacting laws and putting them into practice.

Hon. Ram Niwas Goel AAP (Delhi, India) said that many women are facing problems of violence in their daily lives and stronger legislation is required to assist in combatting this.

Hon. Lazarus Chungu Bwalya, MP (Zambia) explained that Zambia had introduced a number of pieces of legislation to combat gender based violence in different communities. Commonwealth countries needed to share their knowledge in this areas.

Hon. Joyce Watson AM (Wales) spoke of the effect

on Parliamentarians of online comments towards Members and how this also effects the institution of Parliament. The role of civic education has a role to play in helping to combat those that perpetrate online gender-based violence.

Hon. Mosalla Martha Mokotla, MPL (Free State, South Africa) said that often the perpetrators of cyber violence against young women and girls are other women. The issues surrounding cyber violence need to be addressed through education and to ensure that perpetrators are not placed in positions of responsibility.

Hon. Nafaitoa Talaimanu Ketu, MP (Samoa) shared his experiences of cybercrime as a former police officer with the workshop. Police need to be better equipped to



combat cybercrimes and the Commonwealth can also play a role in sharing information to help address these problems.

During the workshop the following additional recommendations were proposed:

- The Commonwealth should ensure transfer of technology and knowledge used to track cyber violence to less developed countries.
- Inclusive government approach and multi-sectoral approach should be adopted to elimination of cyber violence.

Recommendations from the workshop were:

- Parliament must ensure that Parliamentary Committees on Cyber Crime are resourced with technical

assistance to adequately respond to cyber threats through Computer Incident Response Teams.

- CPA should develop digital literacy initiatives that provide: awareness campaigns and strategies to address cyber violence; computing and social media workshops to empower women through technology.
- The internet and social media provide young people with a range of benefits, and opportunities to empower themselves in a variety of ways. Young people can maintain social connections and support networks.

All recommendations from the workshop were *endorsed*.





**62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
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Conference Workshop E - 15 December 2016



THE RADICALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND HOW WE ARE DEALING WITH THIS CHALLENGE THROUGHOUT THE COMMONWEALTH

Moderator:

Hon. Don Harwin,
MLC, President of the
Legislative Council (New
South Wales, Australia)

Discussion Leaders:

- Hon. Justin Muturi,
MP, Speaker of
National Assembly
(Kenya)
- Hon. Sultan
Mohammad Khan,
MPA (Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa,
Pakistan)
- Mr Achaleke Christian
Leke, Commonwealth
Young Person
of the Year 2016
(Cameroon)

Rapporteur:

Mr Tom Duncan, CPA
Regional Secretary,
Australia (Australian
Capital Territory)

Workshop Report:

Delegates in the conference workshop discussed the important topic of the radicalisation of young people and how parliaments within the Commonwealth are dealing with this challenge.

Discussion leaders from Kenya and Pakistan discussed their perspectives and experiences from within their jurisdictions. The workshop also heard from an outside expert - the Commonwealth young person of the year from Cameroon - who shared his experiences trying to combat youth radicalisation and create a space for young people to promote peace.

Delegates and discussion leaders compared their experiences of what the causes of radicalisation of young people were, noting that younger people were more often the target of such approaches - one discussion leader pointed out that you never hear about older people retiring and being lured into terrorist acts. Some causes discussed in the workshop include the use of gangs, convicted terrorists using jails to convert young people,

poor governance and a lack of democracy which contributes to intolerance and injustice, and the internet including social media.

The first discussion leader, Hon. Justin Bedan Njoka Muturi, MP (Kenya) pointed out that young women and men have been used as conduits for carrying out acts of violence and crime not only in terrorist organisations but by militias and organised gangs. He noted that studies now show that more young people from western countries are joining terrorist organisations, including young people from the Commonwealth. He quoted the MI5 Chief stating in November 2001 that terrorists were methodically

and intentionally targeting young people and children in the UK, and they had seen individuals as young as 15 implicated in activities related to terrorism.

In his own country of Kenya, the *Al-Shabaab* (meaning 'the youth') which is

behind many of the terrorist attacks in Kenya, has made a concerted effort to recruit Somali youth in diaspora communities, with the result being that a number of youth Somalis as well as young people from America and Europe have travelled to Somalia to train and fight alongside *Al-Shabaab*.

Hon. Justin Muturi, MP noted that one of the outcomes from the CHOGM meeting held in 2015 was to combat radicalisation, with the Commonwealth counter-terrorism unit unveiled at the summit being one of the measures to strengthen the ability of Commonwealth countries to counter extremist



narratives, This would result in increased co-operation between countries around the world to share best practice and new approaches in countering radicalisation and assembling a team of experts seconded to the unit to work with civil society networks and Commonwealth governments including though capacity building.

Using youth as agents of change was also discussed, with the discussion leader pointing out that young peace-builders in African countries have also set up regional youth spaces following capacity building events by the Commonwealth Youth Peace Network (CYPN) which is focussed on youth-led peace building and conflict prevention strategies.

Hon. Justin Muturi, MP outlined to the conference workshop Kenya's recent experiences with terrorism since 1980 which were linked to religious extremism, and he detailed a series of incidents which had affected the country and had resulted in a significant loss of life, suffering and pain as well as a downturn in some sectors of the economy owing to insecurity problems. He then listed what he saw as the factors contributing to radicalising in Kenya which included:

- Structural and Institutional factors, including poor governance, radicalisation in prisons, geographical location and regional conflict and infrastructure (i.e. ease of travel, access to social media platforms etc);
- Socioeconomic factors i.e. extremist organisations target young people that have no access to education or employment and thus are attracted to the promise of material wealth; and
- Political factors including marginalisation and discrimination and prolonged and unresolved conflicts.

The discussion leader concluded his remarks by reflecting that there is a strong link between governance, democracy and development; the stability that the youth felt in their environments. He also stated how this environment can be exploited; and that forums such as this workshop are essential to identify the bigger picture and offer solutions towards peace.

The second discussion leader, Mr Achaleke Christian Leke, Commonwealth Young Person of the Year 2016 (Cameroon) congratulated the CPA for bringing this topic for discussion at an international conference workshop, and indicated that it was quite relevant to the work that he had been doing as the Commonwealth Young Person of the Year. It was his view that society needed to create a space for young people to progress peace.

Mr Achaleke Christian Leke then presented to the workshop a short *YouTube* video on young people and radicalisation. Amongst the points made in the video were that:

- Young people between 7-24 years old are the targets of violent extremist groups as soldiers and agents of violence in conflict situations in the African continent.
- The absence of violent conflicts in Cameroon is a source of inspiration to many African countries.
- Cameroon's greatest fear is the recruitment of young people as soldiers.
- Women especially are vulnerable, often being caught between being soldiers, sex toys or subjects of violent acts towards them.



- Recruiters of young people prey on socioeconomic and political challenges affecting young people, e.g. religious differences, exclusion, unemployment and poverty.
- Those recruited pay a high price in terms of loss of childhood, physical and psychological damage which can have long lasting effects.
- The video concluded with a statement by the discussion leader that *"There is still hope for our generation. We need to stand up as ambassadors of peace, not ambassadors of violence."*
- Enact laws to prevent the existence of violent extremist groups, circulation of arms and promotion of youth participation in conflict prevention and peace building processes.

The third discussion leader, Hon. Sultan Mohammad Khan, MPA (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan) stated that Pakistan had been one of the most affected countries in terms of violence in recent years, and that more than 50,000 lives had been lost in the last decade. His country was particularly affected by the radicalisation of young people, and he noted that approximately 30% of the overall population of Pakistan was aged between 15-29.

The video urged state and other development stakeholders to:

- Create and promote institutions to provide sensitisation and experience sharing initiatives among young people so as to condemn violence, conflicts and imbibe in young people a culture of peace;
- Reshape the educational system towards building skills, changing mentalities and encouraging young people to face challenges; and





Hon. Sultan Mohammad Khan, MPA then outlined the stages of radicalisation, whereby people start off as peaceful and tolerant, but as time goes on it can develop into intense dislike/dismissive of each other, then intolerance of diversity of opinion, then polarisation of minds, then sympathy for violence, then support for violence which ultimately leads to actual involvement in violence. He noted that the youth – some as young as 12 and up to 25 – are most affected by radicalisation, and that you never hear of a retired person turning into a terrorist.

He noted that there are different kinds of radicalisation: religious, socio-economic disparity, ethnic and racial tension and Shia and Sunni. He pointed to various causes of radicalisation of youth, including a high level of religious intolerance, lack of a democratic structure and poor governance, the school curriculum not being altered to address the issue, and an educational disparity.

In proposing a way forward to address the issue, Hon. Sultan Mohammad Khan, MPA suggested that a holistic approach across the political, social, education and policing spectrums would be beneficial. He quoted the American scholar Bruce Hoffman (an American scholar who has spent years studying the phenomenon) who stated recently that “Fighting

terrorism should be like a game of chess but the US approach has been more akin to playing chequers.”

He noted that there is a short term strategy (which he likened to fighting fires) but the preferred approach was a long-term one which involved practical measures, one of which was, just as we have done with the sustainable development goals, to formulate procedures and goals to prevent and contain radicalisation and to promote de-radicalisation set up a monitoring/grading system evaluating attainment of such goals.

A number of delegates participated in the discussion that followed the presentations by the discussion leaders, with a number of questions being raised for the discussion leaders to address. Shri Bishnu Pada Ray, MP (India) pointed to the use of the internet and social media in particular as causes for the problem being discussed. He suggested that using the internet and social media to both break the myth of agents of violence and counter their messages could be a useful solution.

Hon. Kholiswa Claribell Fihani Magwaxaza, MPL (Eastern Cape) posed the question to the discussion leaders - *who benefits from radicalisation and what is the basis of radicalisation?*

In reply, Mr Achaleke



Christian Leke indicated that there are so many drivers to radicalisation – education/ failure to respect the social contract, grievances and greed.

Hon. Helen Sambili MP (Kenya) queried what were the practical measures countries and governments can take to prevent radicalisation?

In reply Mr Achaleke Christian Leke reminded delegates that there was a roadmap that the United Nations had provided by way of a UN Resolution 2250 – Youth, Peace and Security, and he urged countries to utilise that.

Hon. Titus Thwala, MP (Swaziland) asked what role was being played by the African Union and the United Nations.

Hon. Justin Muturi, MP and Mr Achaleke Christian Leke both replied outlining a number of actions that had occurred, with the latter suggesting that speaking up at forums like these give hope, and that we need to stop blaming and work together to address the issue.

At the end of the conference workshop, the moderator, Hon. Don Harwin, MLC (New South Wales) put forward the recommendations proposed by the discussion leaders which were all unanimously endorsed by the workshop.

Recommendations from the workshop were:

- Parliaments must ensure that governance, structural and developmental challenges that engender radicalisation are prioritized and addressed, and that human rights-based counter-radicalisation programmes are adequately resourced.
- Parliaments should partner with young people for sustainable peace, prevention of violent extremism, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 2250 – Youth, Peace and Security.
- Formulate practical steps, procedures and goals to contain and prevent radicalisation. To promote de-radicalisation and set-up a monitoring/ grading system evaluating attainment of such goals.

All recommendations from the workshop were endorsed.

**62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
London, United Kingdom
11 to 17 December 2016**

Conference Workshop F - 15 December 2016



**THE MEDIA PLAYS A LARGE
ROLE IN PROMOTING PUBLIC MISTRUST
OF PARLIAMENTARIANS**

Debate Topic

Moderator:
Hon. Imran Ahmad, MP
(Bangladesh)

- Discussion Leaders:**
- Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson, MLA (Northern Ireland)
 - Senator Nigel De Freitas (Trinidad and Tobago)
 - Shri Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, MP (Rajasthan, India)

Rapporteur:
Mr Mark Jones (New South Wales)

Workshop Report:

The conference workshop took the form of a debate, with two of the discussion leaders speaking in favour of the motion that “the media plays a large role in promoting public mistrust of Parliamentarians,” and one speaking against.

The majority of speakers in favour of the motion highlighted examples of factual inaccuracies in news reports, perceived media bias and the rise of social media. Arguments against included the importance of freedom of speech, journalists holding politicians to account for their actions and a free press being the fourth estate in a modern democracy.

During a vote at the end of the workshop, the resolution was carried by 16 votes to 6.

Discussion

The first discussion leader, Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA (Northern Ireland) was speaking in favour of the motion and began her comments by suggesting that she expected the “media promoting public

mistrust of Parliamentarians” would be a common challenge to Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth.

Whilst acknowledging the importance of a free press, as well as the checks and balances that it provides, Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA said that the nature of the modern press fuels low voter turnout or even depresses it. She claimed that focusing on frivolous details distracts from the substance of policy and the impacts of decision making, and turns politics into a soap opera.

Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA also said that expenses and salaries of Parliamentarians was

a common source of negative media coverage. Social media was described as a powerful tool to get the message across to the electorate, but the desire for instant news results in stories written and published without due care.

Shri Sukhendu Sekhar Roy (Rajasthan, India) also spoke in favour of the motion. He described a free media as one of the crucial pillars of democracy and as well as being the ‘Fourth Estate’ in conjunction with the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. He also highlighted that Parliamentarians rely on the media to spread their message





to the people and hold the Executive to account.

Shri Sukhendu Sekhar Roy called for a strong and efficient statutory framework to protect the rights of the media, whilst ensuring that public and individual rights are not breached by their activities. He spoke of the importance of freedom of speech and expression and how these values are fundamental rights in India's constitution.

Shri Sukhendu Sekhar Roy spoke of the need for the media to ensure that freedom is wisely and responsibly exercised and the corresponding responsibilities are consciously fulfilled. He also stated that the media had the freedom to shape and animate public opinion and therefore wield a huge influence on society.

He encouraged Parliamentarians to build a strong, professional relationship with the media through their inclusion in policy deliberations and described how the media provides a conduit through which public opinion is communicated to Parliamentarians, creating a two-way flow of information.

Senator Nigel De Freitas (Trinidad & Tobago) started his contribution by stating that as most of the people in the room are politicians, it would be safe to assume that they will have

grappled with the media at some point. Speaking against the motion, he contended that it's not the media causing in the public mistrust of politicians, it is politicians themselves through their conduct.

Senator DeFreitas said that the media provides a magnifying glass of what is happening in reality and that freedom of speech dictates that the media must be allowed to report what they see. He also said the media played an important role in holding politicians to account, particularly with promises made before an election, and ensuring they are delivered when in a position of power.

He argued that Parliamentarians no longer have a private life because they will always be seen as being a community figure wherever they go and the rise of social media has led to more intense and continuous scrutiny of their actions. In doing so, he called for further training in handling the media before Parliamentarians enter public life.

Baroness D'Souza (United Kingdom) asked participants to consider the role of the media in a modern democracy. She suggested that it was to inform, to educate, to entertain, to hold the government to account and to hold power to account.

She stated that the concept of a balanced and responsible press was challenging to define, because who decides what is balanced and responsible. She also argued that the legislation of press freedom can be very dangerous and questioned if you have the right to shut someone down who offends you, even if the same thing will not

offend someone else.

Hon. Ntloho Motsamai (Lesotho) believed that it was an indisputable fact that the media plays a large role in the public mistrust of Parliamentarians, providing the example that the media mainly focuses on Members of Parliament sleeping and showing empty seats in parliament, whilst failing to show all of the hard work that is done.

Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA returned to the discussion by telling participants that whoever buys the biggest advert in the local newspapers often receives the most favourable coverage in their news section. She continued that this was

problematic as older generations have a greater level of trust in the printed media. She also suggested that women being disadvantaged from entering politics as they do not want to deal with the media scrutiny.

Shri Sukhendu Sekhar Roy then added that people expect Parliamentarians to adhere to the highest standards of ethical and

moral values in the discharge of their public duties. The media focus on negative coverage of Parliament harms the individuals, the institution and parliamentary democracy itself. He called for Parliamentarians and the media to respect each other and develop a healthy and cooperative working relationship, complementing and supplementing a strengthening of the democratic set up, and facilitating the emergence of a more informed democracy.

Workshop Moderator, Hon. Imran Ahmad MP (Bangladesh) then joined the discussion, observing that during the United States election, the opposite effect was studied, whereby the whole media was in favour of Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump won the election. He said that he doesn't know how much blame we can put on the media for their reporting and how much blame we should put on Parliamentarians for their actions.

Dr Duncan McFetridge MP (South Australia) stated that the media are not the enemy of the Parliamentarian; they are a tool to be used to communicate with your community. In cases of Parliamentarians abusing the perks of power and privilege, it's not the media's fault if they then report their actions.



Speaker Anġlu Farrugia MP (Malta) said that the question is not about the freedom of the press, it's about the question that the media are promoting public mistrust of politicians. He suggested that the upcoming generation has a great level of apathy with politics, which is leading to greater mistrust. Speaker Farrugia also described the interesting media platform in Malta, whereby every political party has its own radio station and TV station.

Hon. Eleni Mavrou (Cyprus) claimed the motion is not 'black and white', but various shades of grey. She stated that mistrust is not always the fault of the media and that we should look at the behaviour of politicians. In recent times in Europe, Parliaments have had to make difficult decisions and that this had an impact on the perception of politicians.

She also claimed that social media has exaggerated the idea of emotion over reason and that the speed of reporting events is leading to false reporting or inaccurate reporting. Concerns were also raised over the concentration of ownership of media, as well as algorithms of social media resulting in people only seeing posts that agree with their world view. As a result, she claimed that people are losing the ability to hear the opposing view and to debate.



Miss Robyn Lynes (Bahamas) outlined her belief that the media does promote the mistrust of politicians, but they do not cause the public mistrust of politicians. The example was provided that politicians are the least trusted profession and doctors the most trusted, however, if the media only reported about doctor's patients dying on the table, then they would become just as distrusted. She added that if the media tries to villainize you, the people will defend you if you have done a good job

Ms Jan Logie MP (New Zealand) believed that in New Zealand the media thought a change in government would make for better news stories, so the media appeared to be biased in the build up to the election. She also said there is an issue with political commentators who are seen as journalists but can never be independent, due to their affiliation with political parties.

Senator Paul Routier (Jersey) said that potential new politicians are not prepared to put themselves through the media scrutiny that accompanies the role and called for the media to ensure accuracy in their reporting.

Hon. Russell Wortley MLC (South Australia) said that politicians have brought a lot of the problems on themselves,



arguing that it is politicians causing corruption scandals, citing the example of the recent UK expenses scandal. He agreed that MPs do not generally receive good coverage and that in the 24/7 media cycle, journalists are under pressure to find new stories. He also said that the media always focus on the negative piece of news rather than the positive and can turn on someone like a "pack of dogs."

Discussion leader, Senator Nigel De Freitas claimed that in the modern era, people thirst for information faster. As a result, journalists are placing less emphasis on accuracy and more emphasis on the speed information gets out there. He argued that celebrities battle negative publicity and recover because they have public relations teams, and that politicians have not caught up when it comes to public relations.

In closing, the workshop moderator, Hon. Imran Ahmad MP said that he has been a Member of Parliament for 30 years. During this time he has learnt that it is important how you interact with your constituents, and from day one, he has tried to keep public and private life separate. He stated that the media has tried to portray him in a negative light many times and that is strategy was to ignore them. He claimed that if you engage then you open a 'Pandora's box'.

His final words concluded that the media is essential to keep Parliamentarians accountable to their constituents. He claimed that people make mistakes, but if they are intentional then Members of Parliament need to be taken to task.

Recommendations from the workshop were:

- The media portrayal of politicians and Parliamentarians fuels public mistrust, deflects young people from politics and compromises those who work for constituents in public office.
- The media acts as an ombudsman for every endeavour in public life. Its accurate coverage of Parliamentarians can encourage introspection and requisite course correction.
- The CPA should provide masterclasses or training for Parliamentarians on interaction with members of the media, effective communication and the use of social media.

The first and third recommendations from the workshop were *endorsed*. The second recommendation from the workshop was *noted*.

NEWS FROM THE 62ND COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE



Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians discuss new ways to tackle political violence against women at CWP triennial conference

Women Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth have gathered in London, United Kingdom for the triennial conference of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), as part of the wider 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. Over 100 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians attended the conference from 43 countries and 56 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Branches across the Commonwealth.

The theme of the fifth Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference was *'Political Violence against Women'*.

Political violence against women remains one of the key obstacles adversely affecting the welfare of many democracies within the Commonwealth and beyond. This manifests itself in terms of physical, sexual and psychological violence. It is commonly observed that women face violence and intimidation when they decide to run for political office.

The conference saw leading figures in Commonwealth Parliaments addressing delegates. The CWP conference included four wide-ranging sessions for Commonwealth Parliamentarians on the following topics: *Violence and Intimidation of Women during Elections; Parliament's Role in Raising Awareness of Political Violence against Women, and Women's Equal Civil and Political Rights; Legislating Effectively to Protect Women from Political Violence; The Role of Civil Society and the Media in Tackling Political Violence against*



Women. Reports of all of the CWP Conference sessions appear in this issue of *The Parliamentarian*.

The CWP also held a gender-related workshop at the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference on *'Ending violence against women and girls: The impact of social media and the internet in perpetrating violence'*. It was noted that the growing reach of the internet and social media presents opportunities, social connections and networks - however, these social media platforms are used by perpetrators to carry out acts of violence against women and girls. You can read the report of this workshop on page 29.

The CWP Conference was opened by the outgoing Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda who had held the office since her election in 2013. Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP had worked tirelessly in promoting inter-regional cooperation among members of the CWP. She established a CWP strategy, which has led to many activities, geared towards the strengthening of Women Parliamentarians across the CPA's nine regions; and has convened women Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth to discuss the key issue of *'Political Violence against Women'*.

The Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh congratulated Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP on her leadership, her dedicated and committed work that has brought about positive results for the CWP. The Chairperson went on to state that gender equality must be factored into food, energy and water policies in each respective jurisdiction. It is important that women take their place in Parliament to ensure that this may come about.



The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr Akbar Khan, in addressing the CWP Conference on *'Political Violence against Women'* said: *"It is not only for female Parliamentarians to carry the torch against political violence against women, but it is for all Parliamentarians, including men to champion inclusion and gender equality. It is also for Parliament as a public institution itself to set an example for all of society to follow by raising awareness of the issue and taking steps to eliminate violence against women through adopting structures, operations and methods of work, which promote zero tolerance of such behaviour. I congratulate Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP, outgoing Chairperson of the CWP for convening a conference on such an important barrier preventing women from entering public office. On behalf of the entire CPA Membership, we are incredibly grateful to her for her leadership over the past three years. I very much look forward to working with Hon. Dato'*

Noraini Ahmad MP (Malaysia), the new CWP Chairperson during the next three years and wish her all the very best in the important role."

Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands and Pacific Regional Representative on the CPA Executive Committee also spoke at the opening of the CWP Conference and said: *"Women must look to assume leadership roles within their respective parliaments. The topic of the fifth triennial conference, Political Violence against Women, is of the utmost importance, as it is essential that women have full, unfettered and free access not only in the ability to seek office, but also to perform their duties without being subjected to threats, intimidation or violence of any kind."*

The opening of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference also featured a poetry reading (via video link) by Zoe Duhaime from Victoria, British Columbia, Canada and guest speaker, Ms Brigitte Filion from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) is the network of women Members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Parliament and Legislatures. The CWP network provides a means of building the capacity of women elected to parliament to be more effective in their roles; improving the awareness and ability of all Parliamentarians, male and female, and encouraging them to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role - legislation, oversight and representation and helping parliaments to become gender-sensitive institutions.



NEWS FROM THE 62ND COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE



Speech by Rt Hon. Rebecca A. Kadaga MP, outgoing Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) at the Official Dinner of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, December 2016

"My dear colleagues of the CPA and the CWP. It is with immense gratitude to God Almighty that I address you today, maybe for the last time in the capacity of Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP). It is with great emotion that I say this.

As you are aware, my tenure as Chairperson of the CWP comes to a close during this Conference. And in compliance with the provisions of our constitution, I am required by law to handover the machinery of the Chair to another person who will steer CWP even further.

For me, it has been a very interesting time working with all segments of the CPA and in particular the CWP to provide leadership to our Association. Whatever the experiences we had in the course of providing leadership these three years, the time has come for us to leave.

As written in the scriptures in the book of Ecclesiastes 3:1: *"To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven."* There was time to assume office and now is time to handover.

In any fruitful administration the world over, a leader must work with teams made of supportive individuals – this has been the same case during my term of office. This is therefore a day and opportunity to thank the people who have contributed towards the continued growth and success of the CWP.

I want to thank my Parliament of Uganda for the support during my campaign for election as Chair and also for its support during my term of office. I want to thank all the CPA Branches for the incredible support and to the CPA Executive Committee. I want to thank the Chairpersons of the CPA Executive Committee – past and present. Thank you to Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP; to Rt. Hon. Sir Alan Haselhurst MP and to my predecessor as CWP Chairperson, Hon. Alix Boyd Knights MLA. I would like to thank the CPA Headquarters Secretariat; colleagues from the CPA Africa Region; and I would also like to thank my team from the Parliament of Uganda who have supported me immensely during this period.

I have been Chairperson of the CWP for just over 3 years. In this job, in the world today, that is long enough, for me but more especially for the Association. It is not easy to make this speech today. There is a judgment to be made on my

leadership – that I am profoundly aware. And in the end that is, for you, the people to make. I can only describe what I think has been done over these last three years and perhaps more important why.

In September 2013 when I assumed this office and up to this moment, it has been a period of studentship and learning about the capacities, talents and dispositions of the women of the Commonwealth. It was also an opportunity to offer leadership in both fruitful and in challenging periods. In the course of offering leadership, we enjoyed the times, we also experienced frustrations and encountered a number of challenges that time will not permit me to recount here.

In all, I found the women of the Commonwealth to be of immense promise, potential and faith in the future of their states; women with unquestionable commitment to equity, fairness and justice, all of which constitute the basic ingredients of democracy. It is in the process of attaining these values or the pursuit of these principles that sometimes portray the women activists as being uncompromising.

I am handing over the reins of the CWP with a great sense of fulfillment based on our modest accomplishments. Admittedly, we did not take all the women in the Commonwealth to the enviable and lofty heights we desired and worked rigorously to attain. But certainly, we have laid a solid platform for the continued and steady increase of our women in leadership.

The core notion of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians as founded by women delegates at the 1989 plenary CPA conference is to discuss ways to increase female representation in Parliament and work towards the mainstreaming of gender considerations in all CPA activities and programmes.

Approximately, three years ago in August 2013, in Johannesburg, South Africa, I was so proudly elected Chairperson of the CWP by you, fellow women Parliamentarians. I stood before you and vowed to strive for enhanced political party participation, more equity for women, and more access to justice; to use my previous experience I have from the CWP Africa Region to ensure that the people we lead have the best services. I think therefore that we are at that stage where it is crucial to take stock of the progress we have registered in as far as increasing women's participation is concerned.

Some of our countries have really good world rankings. Of course, we continue to pride ourselves in the example of Rwanda which stands at number one for female Members of Parliament with 61%; but we are also equally proud of South Africa, Namibia, Uganda, Tanzania, the United Kingdom,

Seychelles and Mozambique who have all achieved percentages well above 30% for women's representation in Parliament.

We have worked tirelessly to ensure that women's leadership in political decision-making processes improves them. We have demonstrated political leadership by working across party lines through women's parliamentary caucuses - even in the most politically combative environments - and by championing issues of gender equality, such as the elimination of gender-based violence, parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws and electoral reform and I am proud of these efforts.

I am also happy to report that the CWP family continues to grow every day. During my term of office, we have been honoured to witness the opening of new CWP Branches and Chapters.

We have also intensified efforts for advocacy and mobilization for women's emancipation. This we have been able to do through networking and most crucially through events such as regional and branch workshops, conferences and seminars. For us at the CWP, we believe that regular meeting and discussions are crucial cogs in pushing the agenda.

I am also proud to note that during the past three years, I and my gallant colleagues of the CWP have been fighting against violence against women and various other forms of women's rights abuse. We have stood and condemned the activities of Boko Haram; we have protested the honour killings in India and the Sudan and we continue to pressure governments to take action where these violations continue to take place. And I can assure you that we have been unwavering in the pursuit of respect for the human rights of women.

We have also made a number of administrative achievements and adjustments. We were able to put in place a CWP Strategic Plan which helped us to streamline the process of envisioning our desired future, and translating this vision into broadly defined goals, objectives and a sequence of steps to achieve them. One unique feature of our strategic plan is that it is encompassing the ideas and inputs of all the CWP regions. This was crucial in ensuring that no one is left behind and also due to the fact there are diverse issues and challenges in the different regions which needed to be captured. I am happy with the progress of the implementation of this strategic plan because amongst other things, it has also helped us secure more funding from the CPA.

It is foolhardy for one to say that all is well – of course, challenges still exist and huge gaps are still eminently visible for us to fill. Today, the Commonwealth comprises 52 countries, across all six inhabited continents. The members have a combined population of 2.4 billion people, almost a third of the world population, of which 1.26 billion live in India and 94% live in Asia and Africa combined. Women constitute slightly more than half of the world population. Their contribution to the social



and economic development of societies is also more than half as compared to that of men by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. Yet their participation in formal political structures and processes, where decisions regarding the use of societal resources generated by both men and women are made, remains insignificant.

Despite the pronounced commitment of the international community to gender equality and to the bridging of the gender gap in the formal political arena, reinforced by the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action, there are only twelve countries within the Commonwealth where women hold 30% or more seats in the Parliaments.

I continue to be dismayed by the statistics of women in Parliament in some of our other regions. A case in point is the Pacific which stands at a combined average of 13% women's representation in both the Lower and Upper Houses. We need to lend a hand to our sisters in some of these countries where the possibility for increased women's representation is still hindered by wide ranging historical and structural factors.

Despite comprising over 50% of the world's population, women continue to be underrepresented in other aspects of political and public life. According to the United Nations, as of September 2016, ten women are serving as Head of State and nine are serving as Head of Government across the world. Furthermore, only 17% of government ministers are women, with the majority serving in the fields of education and health. Since 1992, women have represented fewer than 3% of mediators and 8% of negotiators to major peace processes. These numbers are too small. These are the places where decisions get made, and simply put; there aren't enough women in them.

With these massive strides forward and the obvious challenges, I take this opportunity to wish all the best to the in-coming CWP Chairperson and her team."



5th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference
'Political Violence against Women'
CWP Session 1 - 14 December 2016



VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION OF WOMEN DURING ELECTIONS

Moderator:
Hon. Shirley Osborne,
MLA, Speaker of the
Legislative Assembly
(Montserrat)

Discussion Leaders:

- Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, MP, CWP Chairperson and Speaker of Parliament (Uganda)
- Hon. Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, MP (India)
- Ms Nerina Cevra (Westminster Foundation for Democracy)

Rapporteur:
Ms Elizabeth Kingston
(Canada Federal)

CWP Session Report:
The first session of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference was on the subject of *'Violence and Intimidation of Women during Elections'*. The session focused on the fact that throughout the Commonwealth, women face violence and intimidation when they decide to run for political office. Such intimidation may range from being assaulted, sexually abused, psychologically manipulated or even murdered. It is imperative that women in public office work to safeguard the protection of their right to serve in political life, and to put in place such measures as to ensure their protection. While violence and intimidation may be dismissed as a cost of doing politics, it rather serves as a severe detrimental cost to the entire political process.

Rt. Hon Rebecca Kadaga, MP (Uganda) stated that violence and intimidation against women during elections poses a serious challenge to democracy and human rights throughout Commonwealth. Moreover,

not many countries have any specific laws in place to confront this ever increasing trend.

Noting particularly the tragic murder of Jo Cox, MP during the United Kingdom 'Brexit' referendum campaign, she noted that many women who campaign are subject to assault, sexual abuse, even death. Also cited was the tendency in South-East Asia for a majority of women not to participate in the political process for fear of violence. Moreover, they receive no support from their own political parties when being

subjected to any measure of intimidation. Women have had their properties vandalized, and have been intimidated in public both physically and psychologically. It was also expressed that social media is a strong disincentive for women looking to seek public office.



Rt. Hon Rebecca Kadaga, MP called upon the countries of the Commonwealth to put in place measures to counteract such violence and to engage in discussions to develop strategies leading to a sensitization of women's rights and stature in society. She called for a greater involvement by civil society, for legislative measures to be introduced in Parliaments to target specifically those engaged in acts of violence directed against women when they choose to stand for political office, for the training of law enforcement officials to provide greater protection for women and for enhanced safety measures by electoral authorities to enable those eligible voting women to feel safe when returning home after voting or when attending political meetings.

Hon. Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, MP (India) noted that violence and intimidation against women is not only pervasive in politics but exists everywhere. She called upon the empowerment of women to combat such violence, citing it as the greatest threat to lasting peace and good government. Due to this tendency, women do not stand for political office in the numbers representative of their numbers in society. They remain conspicuously absent in the political realm. Moreover, the negation of full equal political participation costs communities, societies and nations.

Hon. Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, MP noted that greater empowerment of women would arise through enhanced education and training opportunities. 'Freedom ends when violence abounds', she states. It is a holistic and comprehensive approach, from the state, from Parliament, from political parties, from civil society and from the media that is needed to bring about the



change necessary to allow for women to take their place as full, equal, dignified partners in seeking the strengthening of those democratic values inherent across the Commonwealth.

A particular emphasis was placed on the media and civil society as they play a critical role in raising awareness with voters, thereby creating an atmosphere conducive to allowing women to take their rightful place in political life without fear of intimidation and other forms of violence otherwise directed against them.

Ms Nerina Cevra (Westminster Foundation for Democracy) defined violence against women as the systematic, intentional use of force or intimidation intended specifically to keep women out of politics. As a gender-based violent act, its sole intention is to harm with the effect of influencing the political process through the marginalization of women, thereby preventing them from exercising their rightful duty as legislator and politician. The impact and motive for such actions not only hurts the individual, but also serves as a deterrent for others looking

to enter the political sphere, while signaling to the whole of society that women are not allowed in politics. In this regard, it perpetrates the traditional stereotypical role of women that they should stay at home.

Violence targeting women is more often not reported, and is often dismissed as the cost of doing politics. However, such violence is simply of great cost and harm to the entire political process, and it can be argued that it sets up the next generation of women for failure as well.

Violence comes in four kinds: physical, sexual, economic and psychological and impacts women to a much greater disproportion than their male counterparts. Such abuse of human rights undermines the integrity of democratic practice and culture, yet no international legal document exists to date outlawing such violence and abuse.

Delegates spoke of a real need throughout the Commonwealth and the world for a legal framework to enshrine the issue in national law and policy-making. Women legislators need to talk to their respective governments to a far

greater extent to bring about the change needed to enshrine this cultural shift to ensure full and fair protection for women wishing to seek any measure of public office.

Summary
The session focused on the fact that throughout the Commonwealth, women face violence and intimidation when they decide to run for political office. Such intimidation may range from being assaulted, sexually abused, psychologically manipulated or even murdered.

It is imperative that women in public office work to safeguard the protection of their right to serve in political life, and to put in place such measures as to ensure their protection. While violence and intimidation may be dismissed as a cost of doing politics, it rather serves as a severe detrimental cost to the entire political process.

There were no specific recommendations from the CWP Session 1 – however the summary above from the workshop was *endorsed*.



5th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference
'Political Violence against Women'
CWP Session 2 - 14 December 2016



PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN RAISING AWARENESS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND WOMEN'S EQUAL CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Moderator:

Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, MP, CWP Chairperson and Speaker of Parliament (Uganda)

Discussion Leaders:

- **Hon. Dr Fehmida Mirza, MP (Pakistan)**
- **Hon. Alexandra Mendes, MP (Canada Federal)**
- **Ms Brigitte Filion (Inter Parliamentary Union IPU)**

Rapporteur:

Mr Temwa Nyirenda (Zambia)

CWP Session Report:

The CWP Conference's second session opened with Hon. Dr Fehmida Mirza, MP (Pakistan) who made a presentation in which she explained that, despite women being more than half of the world population, they are still fighting for their rights, which are basic human rights. The importance of gender equality in Sustainable Development was emphasised, quoting former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan who said, *"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting a challenge of reducing poverty, promoting*

sustainable development and building good governance."

It was observed that, in the developing world, women are overwhelmingly deprived of the most basic and fundamental needs like health, education and social participation. Women continue to face the 'glass ceiling' and are victims of a patriarchal mindset.

Further, it was pointed out that women continue to face the critical challenge of political violence which is yet another unfortunate area of women's harassment that is familiar to everyone, yet often ignored. Political bias, faced by women

politicians in their respective parties as well as parliamentary forums, continues to be another matter of concern.

It was noted that gender bias has always been dictated by tradition and not by religion or the law of the land. This challenge is greater in developing countries such as Pakistan, where democracy is still evolving. This has resulted in visible absence of the gender perspective in budget allocations. For instance, health and education in developing countries, explicitly impacting the underprivileged female population, receive a nominal percentage of national budgets.

Against this backdrop, the following recommendations were made:

- global parliamentary bodies such as the CPA should play an effective role in protecting and promoting the cause of women. Therefore, the CPA was urged to consider establishing an Observer and Inquiry Commission under Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians where women's grievances can be redressed;
- the need for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians to regularly monitor the status of women in political participation and publish periodical reports thereof, and exert influence on member states in ensuring transparency and a level political field in and outside parliament; and
- notwithstanding the landmark parliamentary achievements in fighting political violence, it is necessary to partner with the media and civil society as a way of accelerating awareness with female voters, activists and candidates to prepare them against violence in politics. It was hoped that this would greatly help highlight the work of women and expose the discrimination against them.

Hon. Alexandra Mendes, MP (Canada Federal) also made a presentation on political violence against women and women's equal civil and political rights, in which she elaborated that, according to the Inter Parliamentary Union research, parliamentary cultures are sometimes compared to a *'gentleman's club'*, especially from the perspective of women Parliamentarians, and parliaments themselves may be viewed as *'masculine institutions'*. This makes

women Parliamentarians feel like outsiders and experience discomfort in the parliamentary environment. Sadly, this is at times reinforced by male Parliamentarians.

As an example of a best practice, Canada has prioritised ending gender-based violence, including political violence against all women. In this respect, in 2015, a code of conduct designed to foster an environment free from sexual harassment was appended to the House of Commons Standing Orders. The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women is making an effort to address violence against women and girls in Canada through a study on the topic.

In moving forward to address political violence against women and in adapting to some of the good practices alluded to above, the following recommendations were made:

- in addition to recognizing that the problem exists, Parliamentarians need to enact and enforce specific measures on harassment and violence against women;
- creation of parliamentary codes of conduct, in all countries, that address sexual harassment and associated complaint-settlement procedures;
- women need to work individually and collectively to change this culture so that women are represented in parliament and, women's voices and rights are respected.
- while each person regardless of gender has a responsibility to end gender-based political violence, women tend to seek out other women when they experience violence or harassment. Therefore, parliaments



should consider establishing women parliamentary caucuses as a gateway to solidarity in ending gender-based political violence.

Ms Brigitte Filion (Inter Parliamentary Union) reiterated the fundamental role parliaments can play in raising awareness of and addressing political violence against women. It was emphasized that this is possible if both men and women Parliamentarians, and parliaments as institutions, are to set the right example.

In addressing the issue of political violence against women, Ms Filion referred to the IPU Issues Brief on sexism, harassment and violence against women MPs which aims at raising awareness of the human rights violations against women MPs and the obligation of all Parliamentarians to respect and protect the rights of women including women in politics.

The study emphasized that sexist remarks and sexual harassment are two types of violence primarily present in parliament. Despite this, the study noted that, only 35.8% of the parliaments that participated in the study have regulations

and codes to prohibit insulting and vulgar comments and unacceptable behaviour while 21.2% of the parliaments have a policy on sexual harassment against Members of Parliament. Further, only 28.3% have a procedure for settling complaints.

The information from the study clearly demonstrated that parliaments have the responsibility to address these behaviours in their own structures.

In view of the above, it was stressed that some solutions to raise awareness, prevent and address this issue starts with recognising the existence of the problem, naming it and breaking the silence about it. Therefore, the following were recommended as a way forward:

- Parliamentarians should ensure strong and strictly enforced laws on equality and combating violence against women. This in turn guarantees a conducive environment and mechanisms for women to report and lodge complaints against all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence. In order to cover the current challenges, it was noted that the laws should cover new forms of





violence, particularly online threats and other forms of cyber-violence;

- parliaments and political institutions should ensure internal policies, structures and mechanisms that ensure that women politicians work in an environment free from sexist remarks and sexual harassment. She cited Canada as a case in point, where, all House Members must sign a pledge committing to contribute to a work environment free of sexual harassment and to respect the code of conduct in that regard;
- the need for changes to the political culture should be taken on board by all Parliamentarians. There is need to increase the number of women in parliament and solidarity among them. The solidarity expressed by male Parliamentarians was seen as a decisive factor in this regard;
- collaboration or partnerships with civil society and the media in denouncing unacceptable behaviour against women as a viable means of mitigating the political culture barrier that contributes in a way, to political violence against women. In addition, this partnership was viewed as another way of encouraging public debate on ways to make politics more inclusive; and
- guarantee education to the women folk in order to change mentalities, combat discrimination and establish a culture of equality and tolerance.

All of the above recommendations were noted by the CWP and attested to during the session, by positive follow up contributions from member countries such as Canada which



has implemented some of the recommendations outlined.

During discussions, two contributions from Canada and Malaysia further elaborated the presentations and recommendations that were made.

Hon. Yasmin Ratansi MP (Canada Federal) restated the need for Parliaments to ensure that women politicians work in an environment free from sexist remarks and sexual harassment. It was noted that in Canada, as a way of mitigating sexual harassment, it is mandatory for new Members of Parliament to go through training on sexual harassment.

In addition, there is a body that has been constituted to address issues of sexual harassment of either Members of Parliament or staff. In the recent past, two male Members of Parliament were suspended from Caucuses, and not allowed to return because of sexual harassment cases that were leveled against them.

It was noted that these have served as an example to would be offenders. Noting this good practice, the CWP session was of the view that Canada provides information on the disciplinary body to the CWP so that other parliaments could replicate the operations and

mandate of the body.

Hon. Hannah Yeoh (Selangor, Malaysia) emphasised the need to have some form of protection, for men who accidentally commit an act with no intention to assault or discriminate women. Citing the Canadian Parliament 'elbow' incident, which seemed to have been an accident between a male and female Member of Parliament, Hon. Hannah Yeoh stressed that some form of protection for male Parliamentarians who are accidentally caught up in such situations has to be taken into account when enacting legislation that protects their female counterparts from sexual violence.

In conclusion, it is necessary to note that the presentations had no specific recommendations for the meeting to deliberate on. However, during the presentations by the discussion leaders and from the floor, certain actions were proposed as means of raising awareness of political violence against women which have been highlighted in this report. The proposed actions in themselves were a clear representation of recommendations and therefore, this report has recorded them for future action.

Recommendations from the CWP Session 2 were:

- Parliaments should promote institutional reforms and political cultures that guarantee safe working environments for all, including internal policies against sexist language, attitudes and sexual harassment.
- Parliaments must provide conducive political environments for women by focusing on anti-women mind-sets (including within Parties) and to eradicate gender-based violence through effectively executing legislation.
- A Code of Conduct for Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Staff on Sexual Harassment, with training to promote understanding and enforcement with strong consequences for violations.

All recommendations from the CWP Session 2 were endorsed.

**5th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference
'Political Violence against Women'
CWP Session 3 - 15 December 2016**



**LEGISLATING EFFECTIVELY
TO PROTECT WOMEN FROM
POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

Moderator:
Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga,
MP, CWP Chairperson and
Speaker of Parliament
(Uganda)

- Discussion Leaders:**
- Hon. Angela T. Didiza, MP (South Africa)
 - Dr Roberta Blackman Woods, MP (United Kingdom)
 - Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni, MP, Speaker of Parliament (Fiji)

Rapporteur:
Ms. Linda Kolody
(Yukon, Canada)

CWP Session Report:
A dynamic, inspiring, and informative session was chaired by the Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda, and Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) on the topic, 'Legislating effectively to protect women from political violence'. Each of the discussion leaders delivered an insightful, well-received presentation and

Members contributions added value to the wide-ranging discussion.
The first discussion leader, Hon. Angela T. Didiza, MP (South Africa), observed that despite gains such as the extension of the franchise and the creation of enabling instruments, many obstacles remained and that even women holding political office face structural

impediments to the full exercise of their powers.
Hon. Angela T. Didiza, MP noted that negative stereotyping of women by the media, while a more subtle form of violence, can leave real trauma in its wake for women, children, and families. The literal cost of gender-based violence in South Africa had actually been quantified through a KPMG study, which concluded that this type of violence cost





the economy an estimated 0.9 to 1.3% (R28.4 billion to R42.2 billion) of the country's yearly gross domestic product. The study considered not just lost private-sector productivity, but also took into account the costs to government of gender-based violence.

Hon. Angela T. Didiza, MP noted that while many think of the latter as beginning and ending with the criminal justice system, that other areas of the government are impacted, as well. For example, there are the costs associated with the preventative programmes and educational campaigns aimed at wiping out violence against women. There are also after-care costs stemming from the use of health facilities and social services by victims of violence. It was noted that though it is little considered in discussions of gender-based violence, that viewing the violence through the lens of quantifiable costs, could be a useful exercise. In the KPMG report it stated: *"while it's not easy to put figures on names ... figures tell the story. That shakes people up, when they can see how much they actually spend as a result of gender-based violence."*

A similar study had also been conducted in Australia in 2009, which found gender-based violence *"cost the economy of Australia almost 13.6 billion Australian dollars."*

To address the societal issue, Hon. Angela T. Didiza, MP noted that many countries undertook the campaign '16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children', and that in South Africa, it was decided the campaign should be a year long, and so its campaign was called '365 Days for No Violence against Women and Children'.

In a number of countries, targeted legislation had been enacted to address domestic violence, and that certain other

legislation protected women's interests. Notably, in Bolivia, a law concerning harassment and political violence against women came into effect in 2012 to protect women and their political participation. The law establishes penalties for harassment and political violence. In the legislation, political harassment is defined as *"the act of series of acts of pressure, threats, harassment or persecution, committed by a person or group of persons directly or through a third party against women candidate-elected or incumbent-in the exercise of a public or political function."*

Recalling her own experiences, Hon. Angela T. Didiza, MP spoke of the personal violence and intimidation that she faced in running for election in 2016 when her party put her name forward to stand as a mayoral candidate and why she feels that the Bolivian law is especially effective – in ensuring that protections are offered and in establishing penalties where in some cases, a person found guilty *"can be banned from public office forever."*

Some of the gaps that still exist do so because it has been challenging for lawmakers, including women, *"to codify certain issues arising out of women's experience in political office and within political parties."* Although according to parliamentary rules, it is not orderly to impugn someone's character, members find ways around this. For example, in South Africa, where there is a fight for women to achieve 30% representation, *"When you pass by, as a woman, male comrades and colleagues will say, '30%.'"*

In concluding her presentation, Hon. Angela T. Didiza, MP noted it isn't possible to claim legitimacy if women, being half of humanity, aren't *"at the table to determine development and the course*

of action for our countries."

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP (United Kingdom) observed that she would have been giving a *"very, very different"* talk last year, prior to the murder on 16 June 2016 of her friend and fellow Member of Parliament, Jo Cox MP for her political views. Before that brutal tragedy, Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP says her presentation would have focussed on the details contained in legislation.

Despite the fact that the United Nations defined political violence against women as *"the connotation of any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women politicians, including threat of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life"*, Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP observed that increasingly, female activists and voters were found themselves as the targets of harassment and abuse for no reason other than that their participation in political activities.

Ironically, a consequence of the increasing participation of women in politics has been the greater prevalence of violence against them and the UN's Special Rapporteur on violence against women recently identified violence against women in politics to be one of her future priorities.

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP noted that recent Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) research indicated that the global average percentage of women in national parliaments was 22%. In the UK Parliament, the figure stands at 30%. Although in some African nations, over 50% of Parliamentarians are



women, across the world that level of female representation is extremely rare.

The prevalence of violence against women in politics is shocking and recent IPU research found that *"40% of female MPs from 39 countries have received threats of kidnap, assault, rape, death, or even the abduction of their children while in office."* Furthermore, *"one in five women MPs reported being subjected to sexual violence."* In many countries, no statistics are available about violence against women in politics and collecting information about the issue is an important first step to take.

New laws were needed to prevent political violence against women and they should address not only harassment in person but also harassment conducted online. Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP observed that the Istanbul Convention tasked government with bringing forward measures to eradicate violence against women, that it provided unprecedented protections for women and girls and had been described by the UN as *'the gold standard'* for the elimination of violence against women. A debate would take place in the UK Parliament on a Bill whose objectives were to ratify the convention.

The Istanbul Convention stipulated: *"Parties shall ensure that culture, custom, religion,*

tradition or so-called 'honour' shall not be considered as justification for any acts of violence..." Ratifying the convention would legally obligate the United Kingdom to raise awareness of the problem through programmes geared at education, prevention, and the treatment of violence against women, as well as by training professionals.

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP noted that in the UK, men who harassed women in Parliament were increasingly being held accountable for their actions and arrested.

Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni MP (Fiji) had travelled a huge distance from the Parliament of Fiji to speak to the conference. Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni MP observed that while a good deal of the narrative surrounding violence against women concerned issues like domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking, that the violence to which women were exposed due to their roles in politics, leadership, or public life received comparatively little attention.

Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni MP remarked that it had long been widely understood that latter type of violence undermined women's empowerment within the political realm. For that reason, and also because this type of violence served as *"a strong deterrence to young and aspiring women*

politicians ... the political arena must be made safe for women."

Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni MP acknowledged that policies and legislation on violence against women existed locally and internationally, and that certain international instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, had been ratified. As well, she observed that Fiji's constitution affirmed *"our recognition of the human rights fundamental freedoms of all individuals and groups, safeguarded by adherence to the rule of law, and our respect to human dignity and for the importance of the family."*

Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni MP discussed ways in which social media could expose women politicians to violence. Social media could be used as a platform from which to make untrue statements about female Parliamentarians and leaders. Even if the considerable efforts that may be required to have false claims taken down from the Internet meet with success, someone may have downloaded and saved the material beforehand, and so the damaging misinformation may wend its way back into social media, where it can again be forwarded and take

on new life. Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni MP shared a personal incident regarding untrue material being levelled against her online.

In her closing remarks, Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni MP reflected that conferences such as this provide a real opportunity to share experiences and to strengthen a common commitment to protect women from political violence.

Hon. Ntlhoi Motsamai, MP (Lesotho) said that due to the importance and quality of the session, it was her wish that all delegates should attend, so that it would not be women speaking to themselves. Hon. Ntlhoi Motsamai, MP remarked that she was very pleased to see that the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr. Akbar Khan, had attended the session, along with a few male colleagues. She stated that it is her *"strong view that mentorship be taken up so that we can have male champions and take the 'he for she' campaigns"* and issues to a higher level.

Hon. Hellen Sambili, MP (Kenya) noted that opposition



to women in leadership *"keeps mutating."* With respect to civic education, she suggested that focus be on social media.

Ms. Brittany Luaga, MP (Queensland, Australia) noted that a study showed that *"a woman's mentorship of a minority group in their country exposes women Parliamentarians to more sexist remarks and violence."* In light of that finding, she wondered how female MPs who belong to minority groups – such as *"indigenous women, women with a disability, or perhaps women who are lesbian, gay, transgender, or intersex"* could best be supported in politics.

Ms. Jan Logie, MP, New Zealand, wondered whether research had found a connection between homophobia on the one hand, and attacks on women on the other. She proposed that in considering legislative measures *"non-discriminatory policies that covered against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation"* should be contemplated.

Hon. Susasna Dantjie MP (North West Province, South Africa) asserted that what was really needed was action, particularly action in the form of legislation. She wished that Bolivia's innovative legislation to address harassment and political violence against women was available to all.

Ms. Lydia Johnson, MP (KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa)





**62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
London, United Kingdom
11 to 17 December 2016**

A Collaborative Commonwealth: Unity, Diversity and Common Challenges
Hosted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
Headquarters Secretariat





concurrent with an observation one of the presenters had made in that that legislation that is not enforced, is akin to having no legislation whatsoever. She wondered to what extent women were failing to support other women, and noted that sometimes men used women to intimidate other women.

Hon. Akello Judith Franca, MP (Uganda) was interested in learning how easily the Bolivian legislation passed into law, the better for other jurisdictions to adopt similar legislation. Hon. Akello Judith Franca, MP observed that legislative measures should not only focus on women candidates, given that in the most recent election in her country, four women who supported candidates who were not their respective husband's choice (without regard to whether or not the candidates were women) were "thrown out of their marriages."

Princess Kasune, MP (Zambia) challenged women in politics to "really attempt to take advantage of social media because it is not going anywhere." Princess Kasune, MP also asserted that it was "critical that when a woman is being bashed [on social media]... that we, as fellow women, stand up and speak towards that."

Hon. Thagasvari Suppiah (Perak, Malaysia) suggested that by adopting a more empowered mind-set, women could further their cause by projecting to society, "We are one, and we are

a formidable force, and we have to be reckoned with."

Dr Fehmida Mirza, MNA (Pakistan) observed that positive news is not news, as if fails to receive coverage in traditional media. Expanding upon this, Dr Fehmida Mirza, MNA noted that the positive acts taken by women Parliamentarians in their official capacities are not projected in the regular media and she added that rather than looking for male champions, a commitment must first be fostered among women to support other women.

After these questions and comments, the three discussion leaders had an opportunity to respond to some of the contributions from the floor before the recommendations arising from the session were considered and adopted.

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP agreed that it was important to work with men to change a culture that engenders violence against women – however added that first, women must support each other, and the subsequently they could reach out to colleagues who support women's rights. Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP noted that this included efforts to bring more women into parliament as this "changes the culture and enables us to get legislation."

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP said that as far as women from minority parties were concerned, the factor of greatest concern was to protect all women in politics, as by extension, that



would include women from minority parties.

Hon. Angela T. Didiza, MP observed that there seemed to be agreement that "a multiplicity of interventions" was needed. This included legislation and enforcing existing legislation, as well as advocacy, building solidarity and partnerships, and civic education. On the subject of social media, Hon. Angela T. Didiza, MP found merit in the observation that as social media is an unescapable reality, it is important to look at how to engage with it. She observed that the prevention of cybercrime should be considered, as certain digital applications now in use can increase women's vulnerability.

Hon. Angela T. Didiza, MP concluded that role models are important: "If in your home, you have seen your mother being a strong leader, your grandmother, your aunt in society, your mum, you get confidence."

Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni MP related that after the recent elections in Fiji, they now have

the highest percentage of women in parliament ever – at sixteen percent - as well as their first female Speaker. She noted that some of the positive changes could be attributed to changing the electoral system as Fiji adopted the proportional representation list system, and at the party level, 30% of candidates must be women which had made a real contribution to achieving these good results.

Recommendations from the CWP Session 3 were:

- Parliaments should undertake gender mainstreaming in their legislative processes and functions, through gender-based analysis built into standing orders and other rules of parliament.
- Parliament, having promoted the active participation of women in politics, must introduce effective measures to protect women from political violence. #nopolitical violenceagainstwomen
- Parliament must promote good practice in legislating to protect women from political violence and work with Parliaments across the Commonwealth raising awareness of women's issues.

All recommendations from the CWP Session 3 were endorsed.



**5th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference
'Political Violence against Women'
CWP Session 4 - 15 December 2016**



**THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY
AND THE MEDIA IN TACKLING
POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

Moderator:
Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga,
MP, CWP Chairperson and
Speaker of Parliament
(Uganda)

Discussion Leaders:

- Hon. Michelle O'Byrne, MHA (Tasmania, Australia)
- Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Montserrat)
- Hon. Dr Immaculete Swaree Semesi, MP (Tanzania)
- Mr David Donat Cattin, Secretary-General, Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)

Rapporteur:
Mr Mzuvukile Ngese
(South Africa)

CWP Session Report:
Political violence against women remains one of the key obstacles adversely affecting the welfare of many democracies within the Commonwealth and beyond. These manifest itself in terms of physical, sexual, and psychological violence. It is commonly observed that women face violence and intimidation when they decide to run for political office. Such intimidation may range from being assaulted, sexually abused, through hate speech and psychologically manipulated or even murder. Delegates noted the different perspectives presented by the discussion leaders and made several recommendations for the consideration of Parliamentarians within the Commonwealth community.

The discussion leaders and contributors from different Commonwealth Parliaments noted that abuse of language influences certain gender stereotypes

which denigrate women in different political settings. Equally, lack of penal codes in the specific legislations passed by Parliamentarians remain a challenge in many parliaments. To this end, it is imperative that women in public office work to safeguard their right to serve in political life, and to put in place such measures as to ensure their protection. While violence and intimidation may be dismissed as a cost of doing politics, it rather serves as a severe detrimental cost to the entire political process.

Media has played a role in shaping how individuals engage with the political system of their country for many decades. To an extent, even the national consciousness of a country can be impacted by the information citizens acquire about their political system through the media. Although media and civil society have a significant role to play in addressing the challenge of

political violence against women, it is often argued that a majority of influential positions in the media are still occupied by male counterparts who are still illiterate about the rights of women.

To this end, participants in the session endorsed the recommendations that Parliaments and Governments must work with media agencies to counter the use of language that minimises or trivialises violence against women in politics. Parliaments must criminalise political violence against women as such. When committed systematically, political violence against women is persecution, a crime under international law. Civic society must invest in education of a boy child and change of attitudes.

Hon. Michelle O'Byrne, MHA (Tasmania, Australia) was the first discussion leader for the session and she noted that civil society and the media have a great





role to play in tackling political violence against women. There are many challenges that women face in their daily lives from abusive language to social media pressure and Parliamentarians have a responsibility to work with the media and with civil society groups to tackle these challenges.

Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA (Montserrat) reaffirmed the persistent challenge of the negative and stereotypes in the form of language use in politics aimed at denigrating women has to be confronted with an aggressive civic society and women Parliamentarians.

She further recalled global interventions aimed at addressing the challenge. These include the 2002 Beijing Platform Action adopted by the United Nations and pronounce itself on the need to strongly condemn the emotional violence perpetrated against women and the social exclusion it causes to women.

To this end, women must use the necessary policies and legislation passed in Parliaments to combat the challenge of political violence. Platforms such as social media and civic society must be encouraged to act aggressively in exposing political violence and stigmas perpetrated against women.

Hon. Dr Immaculate Sware Semesi (Tanzania) observed that social culture practices and discriminatory attitudes have over time played a detrimental role to the social being of women. The *son* preferences over a *daughter* is one of the principal forms of discrimination and one which has far-reaching implications for women through the preference of the boy child over the girl child. The practice denies the girl child, good health, development, recreations, and economic opportunities. When the girl child has been denied in all these, she will lack confidence to participate in political activities because of her limitations and inability to



compete with men, as they got all the facilities to make them fit in the political competition. This is turn can increase the number of women to be experience violence in politics.

It was further noted that civil society has been successful in shaping global policy through advocacy campaigns, community based organisation and the mobilizing of people and resources. They use several mechanisms of lobbying and advocacy aiming at creating awareness in the community and influence the policy change and decision making. Civil society is at the forefront of educating women, girls and children about their rights and how to demand those rights. They also include boys and men to ensure that cultural norms that perpetuate and engender discrimination are well addressed. Through their advocacy, violation of women's rights in politics can be reduced, since they know their rights and they will be aware of how to compete in politics and once they are politically violated they know where to go.

Equally, civil societies do collect various data on political violence against women and put them on record so as to address these issues with

the public and with decision-making bodies. They develop indicators and collect data on the prevalence, form and impact of violence against women in politics and provide training to law enforcement officials to enable them to recognise such acts, reporting and prosecuting these crimes to the fullest extent of the law. They also provide support and counselling for the women who are the survivors of political violence. Civil societies provide a space for women who are politically violated to give out their complaints and then work to solve those complaints by sending them to legal bodies including the police, the electoral authorities and gender equality offices for justice decisions.

Civil society is obligated to ensure that the economic emancipation of women is highly prioritized by governments worldwide, especially in developing countries, where women are still undervalued and remain largely unrecognised. It is imperative that women are supported to enjoy equal access to opportunities and resources at hand, as well as to opportunities for societal leadership and participation. A just and equal society will only be possible if the structural conditions

that stifle efforts to advance women are addressed.

On the legal framework and policy change, civil societies influence policy making and help to enact laws that abolish discrimination in society. The laws against female genital mutilation and the marriage act are specific laws that have been influenced by the presence of civil societies. Therefore, civil societies also have a role in influencing the government to create laws that will end or reduce the problem of political violence against women.

Civil societies and the media work closely with the community and therefore they know a lot of the issues that are happening in society. Together with other stakeholders they work to make sure they address whatever is happening in society and make it known to the public.

Mr David Donat Cattin (Parliamentarians for Global Action - PGA) argued that sexual attacks against women are not reported and exposed. This is due to the challenge that in some countries the media tend to protect the government and so the facilitation of the truth remains a challenge. It is against this backdrop that mechanisms such as social media and other

stakeholders must be used to expose the untruths, prejudice and stereotypes aimed at denigrating women.

Mr David Donat Cattin further questioned political violence against women and the manner in which it is defined. The contemporary definitions of political violence are not embracing and they do not address the plight of women from the social, economic and political perspective. To this end, action is necessary from the civic society to advocate for the redefinition of the education curriculum to deal with women's issues from the psycho-social perspective as well as the economic angle.

The introduction of mentoring to a boy child with a view to change their attitudes on how they related with the girl child was recommended by the conference delegates from Canada.

Delegates from Kenya also shared their experiences in their own countries regarding political violence perpetrated against women. It was indicated that attention needed to be paid to rural women in relation to the sensitivity they are subjected to by local authorities in the villages.

Parliamentarians from the United Kingdom also shared their experiences and explained that the UK has enacted a number of laws aimed at protecting the rights of women. However there is a need to intensify scrutiny and parliamentary oversight in an effort to ensure that there are penal codes which are



punishable to the perpetrators of political violence against women.

The question of the media was recognised regarding women's political campaigns that are not covered by the media during elections and the kinds of political violence that they are subjected to by male counterparts. This is due to the fact that most of the media institutions are dominated by male journalists.

It is against this background that mechanisms such as introduction of help lines through radio, social media and television must be utilised to expose and report political violence to the concerned Ministries of governments and other state institutions. With respect to civic education, Parliamentarians are encouraged share the good practices of the United Nations with countries and institutions that are already introducing good programmes aimed at improving women's socio-political status in society.

Hon. Lindiwe Maseko MP (South Africa) encouraged Commonwealth Parliamentarians to develop outreach programmes to educate citizens on issues of women's rights as guaranteed in the constitution and different legislations. This should be enhanced through the establishment of partnerships with other state institutions that will include the Judiciary, the Legislature and different ministries of government. This method would effectively assist

women by enlighten them about the value of democracy itself and the extent to which the constitution and legislation improves their lives for the better. Hon. Lindiwe Maseko MP further explained that such programmes can be facilitated through to outreach to citizens and facilitated

by civic education with the support of the constitutional courts.

A large number of recommendations were suggested during the CWP session for consideration by the CPA membership:

- Parliaments should promote institutional reforms and political cultures that guarantee safe working environments for all, including internal policies against sexist language, attitudes and sexual harassment.
- The implementation of laws and inculcating of the culture of accountability must be fostered through penal codes in legislation.
- Laws must be defined in a gender-neutral legislative and theoretical framework.
- Training of law enforcement agencies on gender related aspects of political violence.
- Bring men on board when dealing with the stigma of stereotypes, prejudice and other social impediments and attitudes perpetrated against women.
- Develop relationships with male journalists to discuss some of the gender-related challenges and politically-related violence within the media industry and beyond.
- A Code of Conduct for Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Staff on Sexual Harassment, with training to promote understanding and enforcement with strong consequences for violations should be created.
- Parliaments must provide conducive political environments for women by focusing on anti-women mindsets (including within parties) and to eradicate gender-based violence through effective legislation.
- Parliament, having promoted the active participation of women in politics,

must introduce effective measures to protect women from political violence *#no political violence against women*.

- Parliament must promote good practice in legislating to protect women from political violence and work with Parliaments across the Commonwealth in raising awareness of women's issues.
- That political violence against women is not limited to acts against women running for office but that it has its genesis and perpetuation elsewhere.
- Women Parliamentarians united, should speak out, address root causes of violence against women, perform awareness-raising and place the issue on the agenda in different platforms.

Recommendations from the CWP Session 4 were:

- Parliaments and Governments must work with media agencies to counter the use of language that minimises or trivialises violence against women in politics.
- Parliaments must criminalise political violence against women as such. When committed systematically, political violence against women is 'persecution', a crime under international law.
- That political violence against women is not limited to acts against women running for office but has its genesis and perpetuation elsewhere.
- Women Parliamentarians united, should speak out, address root causes of violence against women, perform awareness-raising and place the issue on the agenda in different platforms.

All recommendations from the CWP Session 4 were endorsed.



NEWS FROM THE 62ND COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE



Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Small Branches address the issues affecting small parliaments and legislatures across the Commonwealth

The 35th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Small Branches Conference took place in London, United Kingdom on 13 December 2016 with forty-seven Members of Parliaments and Legislatures from 26 CPA Small Branches attending the conference.

The conference included three main plenary sessions exploring key themes proposed by the Membership: *'The role of the Commonwealth in supporting the outcomes of the COP21 Paris Agreement on Climate Change'*; *'The role of parliament in the protection and safeguarding of children'*; *'Eliminating barriers to women's leadership in politics in Small Branches'*. Reports of these conference sessions appear in this issue of *The Parliamentarian*.

Of the over 180 Branches of the CPA, forty-three Branches are classified as *'Small Branches'* which are defined as jurisdictions having a population below 500,000 people. The CPA Headquarters Secretariat works closely with Small Branches in all Regions of the CPA to identify their unique needs and requirements in parliamentary strengthening, development and cooperation.

The CPA Small Branches Conference took place as part of the wider 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

The 35th CPA Small Branches Conference was officially



opened by the Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh which was followed by an address from the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr Akbar Khan who welcomed the Commonwealth Parliamentarians to the Small Branches Conference. The Master of Ceremonies for the official opening was Hon. K. H. Randolph Horton, JP, MP, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Bermuda.

Examples of CPA Small Branches include countries such as Barbados and St. Lucia, as well as CPA Branches in UK Overseas Territories such as Montserrat or territories within larger countries like Northwest Territories in Canada.



35th CPA Small Branches Conference

Small Branches Session 1 - 13 December 2016

THE ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH IN SUPPORTING THE OUTCOMES OF THE COP21 PARIS AGREEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Moderator:

Hon. McKeeva Bush MLA (Cayman Islands)

Discussion Leaders:

- Hon. Mike Summers, MLA (Falkland Islands)
- Hon. Toka Hagai (Cook Islands)
- Hon. Cruyff Buckley (St. Helena)
- Mr Robert Ondhowe (United Nations Environment Programme UNEP)

Rapporteur:

Mr Tim Mercer (Northwest Territories, Canada)

Small Branches Session Report:

The first session of the CPA Small Branches Conference was on the subject of *'The Role of the Commonwealth in Supporting the Outcomes of the COP21 Paris Agreement on Climate Change'*.

Many CPA Small Branches struggle with a fundamental dilemma with respect to climate change. Many are island states who stand to feel the negative impacts of climate change first and most profoundly. However, because of their small populations and economies, they have limited ability to influence overall reduction targets and limited resources to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

Notwithstanding, Small Branches feel a responsibility to participate in climate change mitigation as a means of putting pressure on the efforts of large states, particularly those in the developed world.

The Moderator and the discussion leaders for this workshop session represented small island nations

that stand to experience the negative impacts of a warming climate most immediately and catastrophically. Changing ocean currents resulting from warming temperatures may negative impact commercial fishing activities which form a staple of many island nation economies. Warmer temperatures also place the drinking water resources of isolated island states at risk.

Despite the severe and immediate impact of climate change on small nations, they are limited in terms of their ability to reducing carbon emissions to a meaningful degree. When small state reduction targets are included as part of the overall targets of their associated larger nations, the incentive to act is minimized.

Notwithstanding the above-noted paradox, each of the discussion leaders in this conference session expressed a firm commitment to action by small states. Small states can serve as testing grounds for new clean energy and adaptation technologies. Regional cooperation among neighbouring small states can be used to establish more meaningful emission targets and achieve economies of scale for technology acquisition, research and development. Most importantly, small states must lead by example to maintain pressure on larger, high emission nations to take real action to meet the COP21 emission targets.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)





and member parliaments have an important role to play in meeting the COP21 Paris Agreement Goals. The conference workshop was informed that the CPA and its member Parliamentarians must show leadership in encouraging ratification of COP21 by their national governments.

Delay in ratification is slowing down the establishment of implementation rules. The CPA and its members also have an important role to play in ensuring that coherent legislation is enacted amongst signatories and that impediments such as national intellectual property laws do not prohibit the transfer of relevant technologies amongst signatory states. Finally, Parliamentarians must monitor and oversee the implementation of the COP21 Agreement and hold their respective governments to account.

Hon. Gregory Raymond Hall, MP (Tasmania, Australia) described his state's move to 100% renewable hydro energy some years ago only to find it severely restricted as a result of recent droughts. The system, which is now back in full operation, incentivizes the

installation of low carbon energy by individual residents by allowing them to sell excess energy back into their energy grid.

Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP (Malta) described his country's recent initiatives to adopt clean energy generation and waste management practices. He noted that educating other leaders and the public about the science supporting climate change is critical to maintaining pressure on the large polluter states to act.

Hon. Terry Mills, MLA (Northern Territory, Australia) stressed the importance of assessing the public mood for financial and legislative measures to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. The importance of self-interest in creating a more favourable public mood was noted. Citizens must see a payback to adopting greener measures locally and nationally.

Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts MLA (Prince Edward Island, Canada) described the challenges of waste management on a small island state with limited population and incentive for private sector involvement. He also noted the island's complete reliance on ground water and the risks associated with this in a warming climate.

Deputy Jonathan Le Toq (Guernsey) expressed support for the establishment of regional emissions targets, particularly for states like his, which are lumped in with the reduction targets of a much larger state



like the United Kingdom. The establishment of sea defenses was noted as a major adaptation challenge for small island states.

Hon. Dr Daniel Johnson MP (Bahamas) described a recent project to develop and produce small solar cars on his island state and noted the opportunities for cooperation amongst small states to develop and market such clean technology.

Mr John Tangii (Cook Islands) described recent efforts by Australia and New Zealand to assist his state in the development and implementation of green technology and encouraged the CPA to play a coordinating role to encourage more of the same.

Deputy Michelle Le Clerc (Guernsey) inquired as to any successes with tidal energy production.

Hon. Andrew Wall MP (Australian Capital Territory) re-emphasised the importance of self interest in finding and implementing workable solutions. He inquired as to the eligibility of small and large states to access funding from the UNED Adaptation Fund.

In response, Mr Robert Ondhowe (UNEP) indicated a move to eliminate the bifurcation of eligibility for access to the Adaptation Fund between developed and developing states as mandated in the Kyoto Accord

during the implementation phase of COP21.

Hon. Winston Connolly MLA (Cayman Islands) described a motion for the adoption of a climate change adaptation strategy that was unanimously supported by his Parliament as well as a proposed energy policy recently developed by a parliamentary committee that will recommend, amongst other measures, the reduction of import duties on electric vehicles and other green initiatives.

Recommendations from the Small Branches Session 1 were:

- Climate change is an issue for us all, but we cannot do it alone. The key role of the Commonwealth will be to support the smaller nations.
- The CPA can facilitate collaborative action, and it can support Parliamentarians in moving forward in terms of climate action.
- Global appetite for action on climate change has increased, which provides an opportunity for a small, isolated nation, to show global leadership and demonstrate commitment to combat this issue.

All recommendations from the Small Branches Session 1 were endorsed.

35th CPA Small Branches Conference

Small Branches Session 2 - 13 December 2016

**THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT
IN THE PROTECTION AND
SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN**



Moderator:
**Hon K. H. Randolph
Horton, JP, MP, Speaker
of the House of Assembly
(Bermuda)**

- Discussion Leaders:**
- **Mr R. J. Simpson
MLA (Northwest
Territories, Canada)**
 - **Hon. Gregory
Raymond Hall, MP
(Tasmania, Australia)**
 - **Mr Orest Nowosad
(Office for the High
Commissioner for
Human Rights)**

Rapporteur:
**Mr Mark Jones (New
South Wales, Australia)**

Small Branches Session Report:
The discussion leaders began the session by outlining some of the challenges currently facing Parliaments around the Commonwealth regarding the protection and safeguarding of children. In a very open and compassionate discussion, delegates shared their experiences of serious issues facing children in their home countries and jurisdictions, as well as initiatives undertaken by their Parliaments to address them.

Similarities could be drawn in the problems faced by Parliamentarians in ensuring the protection of children, particularly indigenous children and those in the care of the state or in the juvenile detention system. The delegates agreed that whilst the outcomes from Committees and Inquiries were useful for providing recommendations and drawing attention to the issues, real financial support needs to be allocated by governments to ensure the recommendations are implemented and followed through.

Discussion
Opening the discussion, Mr R. J. Simpson MLA (Northwest Territories, Canada) spoke very passionately about the issues affecting children in the Northwest Territories and Canada, with particular regard to the historical and ongoing issues faced by indigenous children. He noted that in his constituency of Hay River North, over 50% of the population is indigenous, compared with only 4% of the total Canadian population. Mr R. J. Simpson MLA also highlighted that around half of the number of children put into care within the child welfare system are from an indigenous background, and 15 times as many indigenous children are wards

of the state compared with the national average.
It was suggested that the current system was failing children, causing them to have "worse long term outcomes", with children taken in to care shown to be more likely to be involved in crime, substance abuse and having their own children taken in to care. He stated the importance of Parliamentarians addressing the root-cause of children being taken away from their families to help break this self-perpetuating cycle. Increased levels of poverty, higher incarceration rates and substance abuse problems amongst the indigenous community must first be acknowledged and addressed





“as part of any honest attempt to truly protect indigenous children.”

Mr R. J. Simpson MLA also spoke about the *“intergenerational trauma”* suffered by native indigenous children, who were forcibly separated from their families and taken to state and church-run residential schools. He detailed the ongoing issues caused by physical and sexual abuse of children in these schools, as well as the statistic that at one period in time *“1 in 4 previously healthy indigenous children died in residential schools.”* He noted the importance of Parliamentarians taking historical factors such as these into consideration when considering new policies, stating that this had *“created a sense of worthlessness that permeates generations”* and *“normalised physical and sexual violence”* within the indigenous community.

Hon. Gregory Raymond Hall MP (Tasmania) began his contribution by stating that *“providing a safe and protective environment for our children to grow and develop is a fundamental responsibility for our society.”* As a part of a bicameral Westminster Parliament, he focused on the scrutiny of the Executive Government by the Upper House, which is comprised mainly of independent, non-party affiliated Members. He also highlighted that this was traditional for the state of Tasmania, where the Upper House is generally viewed as a house of review.



Details were given about the Committee system in Tasmania with particular reference to *“how parliament can play a vital role in providing the best possible outcomes for children who have been caught up in the justice system,”* based on a Select Committee inquiry into a Tasmanian Youth Detention Centre. Mr Hall stated that he believed that the Committee provided a way for Parliamentarians to *“express their views in public and provide information free from repercussions.”*

Despite actions from a number of previous inquiries, the Committee was *“appalled in the lack of cross agency support for children in the youth justice system.”* The Committee took evidence from 44 witnesses and received 42 submissions, as well as visiting the youth detention centre in question, as well as other centres in Australia and New Zealand.

Parliamentarians from the Committee made 32 recommendations to improve the youth justice system and took them to the executive government for consideration. One of the recommendations was the appointment of a specialist Youth Magistrate, which has now been established as a result of the inquiry after the Committee looked at a successful model in New Zealand.



Mr Orest Nowosad (Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights) spoke of the complex machinery of the human rights system, detailing the work of the six United Nations' Committees and how they relate to protecting and safeguarding children. He spoke to the wish of the United Nations to involve Parliamentarians in the work of the Committees, enabling them to follow through on recommendations and see them implemented in countries around the world.

He outlined the details of the communications procedure, whereby children can appear before the Committees and plead areas of concern, with the Committees providing quasi-judicial recommendations that can assist Parliamentarians in their role as legislators. Mr Orest Nowosad encouraged legislators to consider their role with regards to oversight, legislative and budgetary functions, including ensuring that there are appropriate budgetary provisions for addressing issues of the rights of the child.

After hearing the contribution from Hon. Gregory Raymond Hall MP, he also encouraged Parliamentarians to use the Committee system and parliamentary hearings to undertake specialised investigations, as well as to review and study their own framework.

Mr Orest Nowosad also touched on other global issues regarding the protection and

safeguarding of children, including: gender parity and gender respect, corporal punishment and the age of criminal responsibility, stating that in some countries it is still as low as 10 years old.

Senator Paul Routier (Jersey) acknowledged the powerful words of Mr R. J. Simpson MLA, noting that his Parliament currently had a Committee of Inquiry underway for child abuse in institutions as well as a compensation scheme in place for historical child abuse. He encouraged Parliamentarians to learn from the past and detailed Jersey's large investment into children's services. Senator Paul Routier also called for a focus on the whole family to look for signs of risk, as well as teachers and police looking for signs regarding the safeguarding of children.

Deputy Michelle Le Clerc (Guernsey) said that she was a former foster carer of teenage children and this was one of her main reasons for getting into politics. She described the role of *“corporate parenting”*, whereby children under the care of government are the responsibility of Parliamentarians and should be treated as if they were their own.

Hon. Michael Weeks MP (Bermuda) spoke about the endemic nature of child sexual abuse in Bermuda and other countries around the world. He quoted the figures that 1 in 10 children in the United States suffer child sexual abuse, and that the

rate in Bermuda may be as high as 1 in 3 girls, and 1 in 5 boys being sexually abused before their 18th birthday.

He called child sexual abuse *“the most prevalent health problem children face, with the most serious array of consequences”*, affecting all generations, religions and socioeconomic classes. Hon. Michael Weeks MP informed the discussion that one of the reasons that child sexual abuse has been such an issue for Bermuda is due to the subject being *‘taboo’* amongst the tight-knit communities.

The advent of the SCARS (Saving Children and Revealing Secrets) organisation in Bermuda has helped to reduce the stigma around the issue and provided training for people working with children. He proudly stated that Bermuda is the first country in the world to have over 10% of its adult population trained in the prevention of child sexual abuse.

Hon. Michael Weeks MP also issued a call to action for legislators to do more, including: mandating the professional rehabilitation and therapy of convicted child sex offenders; assessment of offenders before their release back into the community; the creation of an accessible sex offenders' register; and mandated training for people working with children.

Hon. Angelo Farrugia MP (Malta) spoke about the topical issue of child refugees in the Mediterranean, referencing the



Convention of Rights of the Child which states that children have to be safe from violence. He also said that there are currently 300,000 child soldiers younger than the age of 8 as well as children fighting in armies around the world from the age of 15.

Hon. Terry Mills MLA (Northern Territory, Australia) spoke about the Australian Government's recent undertaking of a Royal Commission into the detention of children. He also expressed frustration that whilst there was a coordinated national response to equine flu in the racehorse industry, Parliaments across Australia struggle to reach agreement on the protection of children.

Hon. Mike Summers MLA (Falkland Islands) said that denial of child abuse in the community and in Parliament is a major issue to overcome. He also spoke about the Falkland Islands abolishing time limits on prosecution cases for abuse of children, as many cases of abuse can take many years to be revealed.

Senator Robyn Lynes (Bahamas) discussed the impact of social media on children being abused, with people not wanting to come forward for fear of being exposed as a victim. She called for better regulation and monitoring of institutions, stating that children who were abused at home can be exposed to more abuse in the institutions that are supposed to protect them.



Deputy Scott Wickenden (Jersey) called for resource sharing between smaller jurisdictions, stating that the cost of lawyers was prohibitive to small jurisdictions looking into issues and drafting legislation.

In closing, Mr R. J. Simpson MLA said that the situation faced by people in the Northwest Territories was more common than he previously expected, commenting that you could replace *‘Northwest Territories’* with *‘Northern Territory, Australia’* and the historic treatment of indigenous children followed a very similar pattern.

He said that it was time for action rather than recommendations and that he would like to see further movement to keep indigenous children with their families rather than them being taken into care.

Hon. Gregory Raymond Hall, MP supported the words of the Bahamas and said that the issue is too complex to cover in a short period of time. He noted that the Parliamentary inquiry held in Tasmania made a significant difference and most of the recommendations were accepted and adopted, but there were still improvements to be made.

Mr Orest Nowosad concluded his contribution by suggesting that *‘corporate parenting’* was something that should be looked into further. He also described

the *‘anger’* of youth in the world today, calling on Parliamentarians to engage with young people, particularly using social media.

Bringing the session to a close with some final remarks, session moderator, Hon. Randolph Horton MP (Bermuda) stated that many disadvantaged youth in our countries are facing a myriad of issues. He called on Parliamentarians to work harder at finding the solutions and having the will to ensure that they follow through.

Recommendations from the Small Branches Session 2 were:

- In small states the Parliament must play a pivotal role in ensuring legislative and administrative safeguards for our children, including through its committee system.
- Parliamentarians must be keenly aware of the historic and cultural factors that have led to the need to protect certain populations of children.
- Parliamentarians should give due attention to the implementation of human rights mechanisms and recommendations ensuring adequate budgetary provisions for the rights of the child.

All recommendations from the Small Branches Session 2 were endorsed.





35th CPA Small Branches Conference

Small Branches Session 3 - 13 December 2016

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN POLITICS IN SMALL BRANCHES



Moderator:

Hon. McKeeva Bush MLA
(Cayman Islands)

Discussion Leaders:

- Deputy Michelle Le Clerc (Guernsey)
- Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of Parliament (Cook Islands)
- Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Montserrat)

Rapporteur:

Mr John Tangi
(Cook Islands)

Small Branches Session Report:

The session moderator introduced the topic *'Eliminating barriers to women's leadership in politics in Small Branches'* and also the various discussion leaders.

Beginning with the first discussion leader, Deputy Michelle Le Clerc (Guernsey) noted that true democracy ought to provide equal opportunity for women and men. As in her jurisdiction, governments should ensure that adequate funds are available for programmes that promote women to participate and be encouraged to stand for politics and enter into Parliament.

Such programmes in Guernsey has increased the number of women standing in elections into politics and has also attracted 'mentors' to encourage and build confidence in women in this endeavour. In this regard, there was an effective slogan to further encourage women which said *'Women to Win'*. As a result, there was an increase to 30% women Members in Parliament in Guernsey at the most recent election.

In February 2016, under the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), assistance was provided for a successful training workshop

in Guernsey which called for women to 'work together'. The workshop helped to mobilise women and it contributed to the increase in the number of women wanting to stand for parliament and encouraged funding to support this endeavour. Deputy Michelle Le Clerc concluded that making funding and resources available and working together would help to increase the number of women in Parliament.

The second discussion leader was Hon. Niki Rattle (Cook Islands) who as introduced by the Moderator is not a politician, but is a passionate 'humanitarian' worker being a registered nurse, and a long time worker in the Red Cross community at national, regional and global level. She became a Speaker of Parliament in June 2012.

Hon. Niki Rattle noted that this was a topic that she was passionate about, having a 'humanitarian' background. She was disappointed that the tradition of women trying to prove they are worthy to be Parliamentarians and to be in politics, still continues in many of our societies, including the Cook Islands. The trend should be for women and men to be walking and working together. Gender equality should be promoted and

encouraged. There should be a paradigm shift and this should be put into practice to rid our societies of these barriers.

Traditionally, women's place has been in the home, caring for the children, caring for the health of the family, and so on. Because of their varied tasks, women became 'multi-skilled' covering wide-ranging areas and so what better person is there to debate in Parliament about education for example than women?

Hon. Niki Rattle spoke of women's roles in teaching and training the children in the home; looking after the health of the family; and ensuring that water and sanitation are looked after in the home. Women have expertise in all of these roles and so should be speaking about these issues in Parliament.

Hon. Niki Rattle gave two examples from the Cook Islands Parliament to illustrate her point. The first was the example of the election of Members of Parliament onto the Purse Seining (Fishing) Select Committee which resulted in a membership of all male MPs. As Speaker, Hon. Niki Rattle enquired as to the reason for this and was told that women MPs were excluded from the Select Committee in the first instance because it was assumed that men do all of the fishing in



the community. However it was successfully argued that women in the low lying atoll islands do a lot of the fish as well. The result was that two women MPs were included in the new Select Committee.

A second example was the Te Mato Vai Water Project Select Committee which was also a male dominated Committee. Following Hon. Niki Rattle's argument that it was in fact women who were the greatest users of water in the home (for cooking, washing, etc), the membership of the Select Committee was changed to include women MPs.

Hon. Niki Rattle noted that taking small steps will eventually achieve greater things for the inclusion of women in politics and Parliament. Women are the highest number of victims from domestic violence and abuse, yet across the Pacific Region, women have the lowest representation in Parliament. MPs are in the best position to get rid of barriers depriving women of opportunities to enter politics and Parliament by enacting much needed legislation, and to advocate

gender equality in society including Parliament.

Previously, the Cook Islands Public Service across middle management and executive positions were male dominated, however today there has been an increase in women holding these positions. Hon. Niki Rattle concluded that there should be equal opportunity for women and men in all sectors of society.

The third discussion leader for the session was Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA (Montserrat). Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA noted that even in the labour market there are great discrepancies where women are considered second rate and their potential is undermined. These are noticeable in the education sector, health care and so on.

There is also the prevalence of 'private violence' against women. In small island communities where everyone knows everyone else, even small issues relating to a specific woman would result in her being ostracized in the community and their chances of moving to the next level and even into politics would be minimal. On the other hand, men don't experience this

and that there has been a determination and eagerness by women striving to be elected into Parliament on the island.

Senator Robyn D. Lunes (Bahamas) remarked that all of the presentations had been thought-provoking for women not only in politics but in all areas of life. In her view, women are the 'drivers' in society and they ought to be encouraged to come to the forefront and play a leading role where the opportunity arises, in spite of the negative views of others. Too often women in the community are heavily and unfairly scrutinised, yet men are not treated in the same way as women in this regard.

Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA (Montserrat) stated that people need to use gender neutral language to help further progress in this area. For example, policeman should be referred to as police officer. Women should be talking to each other more often otherwise, we will live in a male dominated society.

Hon. Hamdan Bahari MP (Perlis, Malaysia) noted that in Malaysia, the number of women contesting elections and also entering into Parliament has been very low. Yet in the area of academic studies at all levels, women and young girls have excelled exceptionally much more than men and young boys.

Senator Monique Gomes (Bahamas) said that in their society, successful women are viewed by some as being very aggressive and outspoken. Women should be equal with men in all areas.

Deputy Jonathan Le Tocq (Guernsey) stated that historically women were well represented in various areas of society and it was only in recent modern times when there was this discrepancy against women.

Hon. Jefferson Sousa, MP (Bermuda) said that in his view,



men should be encouraging and inviting women to participate in decision-making. Women should be better represented in greater numbers in Parliament and men should be assisting them.

Hon. Nicole Lawder, MLA (Australian Capital Territory) posed the following questions to the session - 'How are women elected into Parliament? Is it based on merit or educational achievements?' and secondly, 'How do we get women to vote and to offer their support electing other women?' These questions are critical in ensuring greater representation of women in Parliament.

Hon. Niki Rattle (Cook Islands) noted one case in the Cook Islands whereby the voters elected as their MP a woman who has always been a very strong pillar in the community but does not have a good academic background as oppose to her male opponent who has very good academic qualifications but only some degree of community involvement.

John Tangi (Cook Islands) noted that the Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament of the Cook Islands is a first term young women MP who defected to the Opposition from the Government side and was elected by a majority of male MPs supported by some women MPs, to be the Opposition Leader.

Deputy Carolyn Fiona Labey (Jersey) agreed with the Bahamas Member that women are heavily scrutinised in society,

Everyone should be encouraging women to engage in politics and get elected into Parliament. This should be a collaborative effort. We should not be relying on women to encourage women, but today everyone should be working together.

Deputy Michelle Le Clerc (Guernsey) endorsed the remarks made earlier in the session for greater collaborative efforts between women and men to assist with the increased representation of women in Parliament and their involvement in politics.

Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA (Montserrat) also stated that previously it had predominantly been women encouraging women, but today it was everyone's responsibility to assist in this area and to encourage women to enter politics and stand for elections.

Ms Julie Edge, MHK (Isle of Man) said that a collaborative effort is necessary to remove the barriers hindering women's involvement in politics and the opportunities for women to stand for Parliamentary elections.

Hon. Nafaitoa Talaimanu Ketu, MP (Samoa) recently passed legislation to improve the representation of women in the Legislative Assembly which was a milestone for the Pacific legislatures. As a result of this Act, five women MPs

were elected as Members of the Legislative Assembly recently.

Hon. Niki Rattle (Cook Islands) stated that today there is an increase in the sharing of responsibilities between men and women in the home environment. For example, some men are caring for the children at home while the women are engaged in paid work either in the civil service or in the private sector to earn an income to support the family. MPs can design policies and pass legislation to improve women's representation in Parliament. However, even in the Parliamentary precinct, steps should be taken to establish a children's care centre for the children of Members to enable young children to be close to their parents during the working day.

The moderator, Hon. McKeeva Bush (Cayman Islands) concluded by stating that in the Cayman Islands, there are opportunities for both women and men alike, with similarly, opportunities for young girls and boys. Academically, young girls excelled much more than young boys at school. Previously, there use to be 'system barriers' either in the civil service or in the private sectors, where discrepancies resulted in disadvantaging women. However today, many of these so called 'system barriers' have been overcome through the recognising of the importance of

gender sensitisation and gender equality in society. Politics on the other hand is perceived as being 'too confrontational' and as a result, there is a reluctance by some women to be involved in politics or even contest Parliamentary elections.

Recommendations from the Small Branches Session 3 were:

- Parliaments must ensure that there is funding and support for campaigns to encourage more women to stand for election and take leadership roles within parliaments.
- Gender Based initiatives on increasing Women's representation in Parliament be backed up by mechanisms, strategies and Fundamental Principles including targets, supported by the CPA.
- The logic would suggest that women experience fewer and less severe obstacles to their leadership ambitions in small branches, but the reality is very different.

The first and third recommendations from Small Branches Session 3 were noted. The second recommendation from the workshop was endorsed.



NEWS FROM THE 62ND COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE



Commonwealth Parliamentary Clerks meet in London for Society of Clerks-at-the-Table meetings held alongside the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

As is the custom, the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) met alongside the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference at the recent conference held in London, United Kingdom in December 2016.

This was the 52nd meeting of the Society. The tradition of the Society is for the meeting to be chaired by the host parliament of the conference, but as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was hosted not by a Commonwealth Parliament, but by the CPA Headquarters Secretariat in London, the Clerks of the House of Commons and Clerk of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom Parliament acted as hosts for the SOCATT meetings.

Around sixty five Commonwealth Parliamentary Clerks and senior officials were able to participate in the SOCATT meetings. Due to the limitations of the conference being held at short notice in London and restrictions on the number of delegates, a number of members of SOCATT, particularly from the Africa and India regions, were unable to join the meetings.

- Over three sittings of the Society, papers were presented on:
- Recent parliamentary developments in the UK - David Natzler and David Beamish, Parliament of the United Kingdom
 - Supporting an inclusive Parliament - Beverley Isles, House of Commons, Canada
 - ICT applications to support House and Committee

Operations - Robyn McClelland, House of Representatives, Australia

- Use of languages other than English in the Chamber - Michael Tatham, Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, Australia
- Support for private members' bills: principles, procedures and practice - Andrew Mylne, Scottish Parliament
- Co-operative government and intergovernmental relations in South Africa - Eric Modibedi Phindela, National Council of Provinces, South Africa
- Petitions and petitioning in the UK House of Commons - Mark Hutton, House of Commons, United Kingdom

Reports on some recent procedural and constitutional developments in their parliaments and assemblies were also given by: Liam Laurence Smyth, United Kingdom, House of Commons; Gilbert Lawrence, Western Cape, South Africa; Michael Sialai, National Assembly, Kenya; Roosme Hamzah, House of Representatives, Malaysia; Tom Duncan, Australian Capital Territory, Australia (presenting on the Parliament of Victoria); Paul Martinez, Gibraltar; and John Tangi, Cook Islands.

At the end of the SOCATT Meeting, the Secretaryship of the Society passed from Crispin Poyser to the new Clerk of the Overseas Office of the United Kingdom House of Commons, Matthew Hamlyn.

For further information about the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) please visit www.societyofclerks.org.

Report written by Mr Crispin Poyser, Clerk of the Overseas Office, House of Commons, Parliament of the United Kingdom.



NEWS FROM THE 62ND COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE



'Commonwealth's enduring political values bring challenges and opportunities for Commonwealth Parliamentarians' says former UK Lord Speaker as the inaugural speaker for new Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture Series

Former Lord Speaker of the UK Parliament's House of Lords, Rt Hon. Baroness D'Souza CMG PC has spoken of the Commonwealth's enduring political values that bring challenges and opportunities for Commonwealth Parliamentarians as she launched the new Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture Series.

As the inaugural speaker in the new Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture Series, Baroness D'Souza commented: *"How should we characterise the world we currently live in? We have conflict, despair, inaction, short-termism, globalisation, growing disparity between the rich and the destitute. I hope that you will agree that there has never been a time when the diversity and unity that the Commonwealth represents has been more needed."*

The Commonwealth occupies a special place in the world and stands for the enduring Commonwealth political values, which are universal and timeless. These include democracy, human rights, the separation of powers, good governance and the rule of law, as stated in the Commonwealth Charter.

Therefore, the theme for the new Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture Series is *'The Promotion and Implementation of the Commonwealth's enduring political values - Challenges and Opportunities'*. The inaugural Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture was held in the margins of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, one of largest gatherings of Commonwealth Parliamentarians in London, United

Kingdom in December 2016.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture Series will offer Members a unique opportunity to hear from distinguished Parliamentarians, such as Baroness D'Souza, who have made an outstanding contribution to their nation's democracy and to the institution of Parliament and all that it represents. Individually, these Members have devoted their careers to public service and have set the bar of outstanding parliamentary leadership. Collectively, this series of lectures will contribute not only to the CPA's continuing dialogue within its membership, but also to reach out beyond to other stakeholders such as members of the international community, the diplomatic corps, civil society and the wider public.

During 2017/18, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture Series will take place across the CPA Regions and Branches with lectures due to be delivered in Africa, Australia, Canada, India and the United Kingdom. Each of these lectures will be delivered by an eminent Parliamentarian in the margins of CPA Regional Conferences or governance meetings.

The lectures will offer unique opportunities for Members and guests to engage with Commonwealth Parliamentarians from both within the Commonwealth Parliamentary community and from further afield. For Members who are unable to attend in person, the lectures will be recorded and made available on the CPA website to encourage the further sharing of knowledge, understanding and best practice.

For more information on confirmed speakers and dates of future lectures, please visit www.cpahq.org. If your organisation is interested in sponsoring a CPA Lecture or other event, please contact hq.sec@cpahq.org.

CPA Secretariat YouTube channel: To view video highlights of the inaugural Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture or to watch the full lecture please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube.



'Increased Women's Political Participation will benefit wider society' says CPA Caribbean Regional 'Hot Topic' Forum

Delegates and participants at the CPA Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Regional 'Hot Topic' Forum have heard from a number of speakers on the need for increased women's political participation for the benefit of wider society as they discussed the 'hot topic' of the region - *'Seeking to Increase Women's Political Participation'*.

The CPA Regional Hot Topic Forum heard from a number of distinguished speakers including: Hon. Shirley Osborne MLA, Speaker of the Montserrat Legislative Assembly and Caribbean Regional Chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP); Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar MP, Leader of the Opposition in Trinidad and Tobago and former Prime Minister; Dr Josephine Ojiambo, Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat; Hon. Rayburn Blackmore MP, Minister of Immigration and National Security, Dominica; and Professor Verene Shepherd, Director of the Institute for Gender & Development Studies and Professor of Social History, University of the West Indies.

The Forum was introduced by Ms Siobhan N. O'Garro and the moderator was Hon. Alix Boyd-Knights MHA, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Dominica.

The CPA Regional 'Hot Topic' Forums bring together not only Commonwealth Parliamentarians, but also academics, students, civil society organisations and the wider Commonwealth family.

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Mr Akbar Khan said: *"Despite constituting half of the world's population, women continue to be disproportionately represented in governance and at all levels of decision-making. The stark reality is that globally, there are 38 countries in which women account for less than 10% of Parliamentarians. It is vital that this burning or*



'hot topic' issue is debated to strengthen the resolve, conviction; courage and determination of women to stand for public office and to make their voices heard through this CPA Regional Hot Topic Forum. This forum is the first in a two-part series for the Region; the second we envisage will be delivered in early 2017, where we will continue this interactive dialogue."

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) launched the CPA Regional 'Hot Topic' Forums in November 2016 in Pakistan in the CPA Asia Region to provide an opportunity for the CPA Membership and the wider community to engage with experts on a particular topic, which is of specific regional relevance. The Caribbean Forum, held on the subject of *'Seeking to Increase Women's Political Participation'*, is the second Regional 'Hot Topic' Forum in the newly launched programme and the CPA Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Region selected the topic.

The CPA Caribbean Regional 'Hot Topic' Forum was held in the margins of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, in December 2016 in London, United Kingdom, hosted by the CPA Headquarters Secretariat. The CPA Secretariat in partnership with the CPA Regions and Branches will be holding CPA Regional Hot Topic Forums across the nine CPA Regions with further forums planned in 2017-18.



CPA Secretariat YouTube channel www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube: To view video highlights of the CPA Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Regional 'Hot Topic' Forum on *'Seeking to Increase Women's Political Participation'* or to view the full session and debate please visit: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube.



**62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
London, United Kingdom
11 to 17 December 2016**

CIFoRB Event - 14 December 2016

SPACES FOR SOLIDARITY: ENGAGING EFFECTIVELY WITH FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion or Belief (CIFoRB) event held in the margins of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference - Report by Baroness Berridge (United Kingdom).



It is always a huge privilege to be among one of the largest gatherings of Commonwealth Parliamentarians and the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held in London, UK in December 2016 was no exception.

This was my first annual CPA international conference, and it seems, I am getting involved at a time of new beginnings. The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Akbar Khan is new in his post, and together with the new Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland, charged the room with a sense of excitement and confidence in the role that Parliamentarians play in ensuring good governance and prosperity for their people. After attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta, it is progress that freedom of religion or belief is beginning to be mentioned by platform speakers.

Given the world we live in, where so many are experiencing conflict and persecution and are targeted due to their religious beliefs, it was heartening to feel that my Commonwealth colleagues - all of us rich in diversity of beliefs, political affiliations, race and nationality - could come together to discuss the

challenges and opportunities for effecting change in our 52 nations.

This was my desire in leading a side event meeting at the conference sponsored by the Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion or Belief (CIFoRB). CIFoRB drew in Parliamentarians from around the Commonwealth to discuss FoRB — freedom of religion or belief — and what it represents to them as elected representatives and to their countries at ministerial, regional and community level.

As you will all be aware CHOGM is due to take place in 2018 in the UK, with the British Prime Minister taking over the Chair. It will be the 25th meeting of heads of government of the Commonwealth of Nations and it is imperative that FoRB becomes a familiar term to all Parliamentarians and Government Ministers.

In many ways the special side event to the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was the starting point. The purpose of this event was to have a focused discussion among Commonwealth Parliamentarians on the importance of FoRB protections, as expressed in *Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

(UDHR), in their countries.

Article 18 affords wide-ranging protections to 'freedom of thought, conscience, and religion'. It thus protects not only religion, but a range of other beliefs, as well as the right not to subscribe to religious beliefs at all. It is not only a right of individuals, but also a collective right of religious communities and religious groups. It includes not only private belief, but also the public expression of belief in civil society and the public sphere. It is not merely a right to believe and to worship, but also inextricably linked to rights of speech, expression, assembly, association and education, alongside the rights to religious practice and observance. These concerns and others were manifest at the Commonwealth gathering, as Parliamentarians

discussed frankly both the problems of recognising and speaking out on behalf of FoRB in their societies, but also the urgent need to do so to prevent conflict and promote security and development in their home countries and around the Commonwealth.

Parliamentarians noted the ways in which religion can seem to be excluded from debate, even within the parliamentary halls themselves. One spoke of attempting to organise a prayer breakfast that was opposed by other Parliamentarians offended by such overt expressions of religion. Determination of when religious expression may be perceived negatively as an offence to the beliefs and feelings of others can be especially difficult in Commonwealth nations that

have seen growing numbers of religiously unaffiliated people and non-believers, as well as those with robust secular, humanist and ethical traditions. What emerged from the Parliamentarians' accounts was a sense of the necessity to find ways to discuss FoRB issues in all their complexity to avoid misconceptions.

When construed as 'religious freedom' or 'freedom of religion', FoRB can give the impression of being about 'religious rights' or 'rights for the religious'. Article 18 has been broadly conceived as including a range of religious and non-religious beliefs. It is, indeed, the case in religiously pluralistic societies that differing beliefs can lead to conflict, discrimination and even outright religious persecution by and among religious groups. But the world's religions are not only powerful sources of human rights in and of themselves, they also bring resources for transforming conflict and securing peace and social development.

Different societies at times may be at different places when it comes to freedom of religion or belief. Nowadays, international human rights doctrine affords what is known as a 'margin of appreciation' when it comes to recognising the efforts that nations make toward human rights realisation. This can vary from society to society. Thus, the discussion among the Commonwealth Parliamentarians became more nuanced when it turned to how FoRB issues are

understood and addressed in their own national contexts.

Some Parliamentarians spoke of the dominant religions in their societies having great political and social power that becomes problematic when used to deny FoRB rights to religious minorities. Recent legislative efforts to grant rights to religious minorities — for example, recognising Hindu marriages and passing laws against forced conversion in Pakistan or revision of citizenship registration rules to allow Pakistani Hindus and other religious minorities to register as citizens in India — attest to new levels of concern about the plight of religious minorities in these Commonwealth nations.

Also raised was the issue of national constitutional guarantees of FoRB rights, along with protections for freedom of expression in ways that are sometimes in tension. Freedom of religion and freedom of expression often goes hand in hand, since many religions deem speech and other forms of expression essential to practicing and propagating their beliefs. Indeed, the intersection between FoRB and freedom of expression has become a key issue in international discussions around topics of blasphemy, defamation of religions, offence to religious feelings, hate speech and even incitement of violence in recent years.

However, neither freedom is absolute, and in some countries, freedoms of speech and expression may be restricted if they offend the religious sensibilities of others or rise to the level of hate speech or incitement of violence. Parliamentarians who attended the FoRB gathering at the conference emphasised the need for dialogue, so that Parliamentarians can find ways to talk about FoRB issues. They also pointed to the need to create spaces for Parliamentarians to work together on common goals related to FoRB in their parliamentary bodies, their nations and home communities and around the Commonwealth. What the gathering on FoRB at the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference showed was the need to find spaces for solidarity and support among Commonwealth Parliamentarians in speaking out on FoRB matters. The day after the CIFoRB event, I was speaking at a workshop at the main conference as a discussion leader on Freedom of Religion or Belief attended by over 40 parliamentary colleagues. It is imperative this issue is recognised and that FoRB is on the agenda at CHOGM 2018. I am acutely aware of the overwhelming and pressing challenges Ministers face at such meetings, but FoRB shouldn't be seen as another issue, rather as a solution. The 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference proved that FoRB is clearly an issue of the moment.

Parliamentarians are quite literally the 'speakers' for the communities and nations they represent — but there are not always 'safe spaces' for speaking on freedom of religion or belief across the Commonwealth expanse. The CIFoRB project I lead aims to empower my fellow Commonwealth Parliamentarians to find spaces, terms and strategies for speaking out in support of FoRB in ways that serve the needs of their constituents and the advancement of their nations. The CIFoRB team looks forward to providing Parliamentarians with the knowledge and tools that they need to achieve these FoRB goals. The need to address FoRB is clearly there - and we at CIFoRB look forward to helping.

Although the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference had not taken place in Bangladesh in 2016, visiting the country is one of my personal resolutions for 2017 and so we look forward to the hosting of the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Bangladesh later this year.

Report by Baroness Elizabeth Berridge. Baroness Berridge is a Member of the House of Lords in the Parliament of the United Kingdom and Co-Director of the Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion or Belief. In the UK Parliament, she Co-Chairs the All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief. ciforb@contacts.bham.ac.uk Twitter: @ciforb_uob





62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
London, United Kingdom
11 to 17 December 2016

UNDP Event - 14 December 2016

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS DISCUSS TOBACCO CONTROL AND EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT



The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held a session for Commonwealth Parliamentarians on the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: 'Tobacco Control Frameworks and effective Parliamentary Oversight' at the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

When Members of Parliament from Commonwealth countries met in London for the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, there was an opportunity to advance tobacco control efforts globally. The United Nations Development Programme, along with the

Convention Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), organized a side event at the conference on the implementation of the WHO FCTC.

The objective of the event was to assist Parliamentarians

in engaging more effectively in developing tobacco control legislation and oversight of tobacco policies, learning from experiences across different countries and settings.

Hon. Alando Terrelonge MP, a first term Parliamentarian from Jamaica, reminded assembled

MPs of the severity of the tobacco epidemic: "Every six seconds someone dies of a tobacco related illness," he said. "Legislation is essential in preventing these unnecessary deaths."

The initiative was driven by the need to help prevent disease

and death caused by tobacco addiction with more targeted laws and regulations.

The building of measures that effectively aid public health have proved beneficial in supporting sustainable development, tackling issues such as poverty reduction, building food security, assisting economic growth, delivering better educational outcomes and improving domestic resource flows.

"Every one of the Sustainable Development Goals has a relevance to tobacco," stressed Lord Faulkner of the United Kingdom. "Take ending poverty in all its forms everywhere. Money spent on tobacco is obviously not available for spending on food, education and healthcare. In some African countries, the poorest households are spending as much as 15% of their disposable income on tobacco," he added.

Parliamentarians in attendance from 10 CPA Branches - the Cook Islands, Jamaica, Namibia, New Zealand,

St Kitts and Nevis, Singapore, Swaziland, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and Zambia - were asked how tobacco control measures can support their own work and advance sustainable development.

The event also proved a good chance to assess the effectiveness of existing tobacco control laws in the countries represented at the event and provided an opportunity to learn from experiences shared between the Parliamentarians.

Hon. Poto Williams MP, a member of the Health Committee of the Parliament of New Zealand, shared that country's experience of tobacco control. "We saw the harm tobacco was doing in our indigenous communities, with smoking rates twice that of the general population," she said. "Targeting prevention efforts [and] recognising the needs of our most vulnerable groups have been central to our successes as we move towards a tobacco-free New Zealand."

In the twentieth century, tobacco killed 100 million people. It is now on track to kill 1 billion during the twenty-first century, and by 2030, 80% of deaths will be in low and middle income countries.

If the WHO FCTC is fully implemented by all 180 Parties to the Convention, it could halt the tobacco epidemic, increase government revenues and help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and global targets to reduce non-communicable diseases.

The event was funded by the European Union and supported by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) and the Framework Convention Alliance. Charles Chauvel (a former MP and CPA member from New Zealand) and Dr Doug Webb, the UNDP officials who organised the event, observed that: "UNDP greatly values its partnership with the CPA. We look forward to continuing to support knowledge exchanges between Commonwealth MPs

and with civil society on issues vital to the promotion of good governance and sustainable human development."

MPs attending the workshop adopted the following resolution by acclamation: "As a contribution to sustainable development, Parliamentarians must be informed, engaged and assisted to draft - and provide thorough oversight on the enforcement of - legislation for tobacco control as guided by the WHO FCTC."

UNDP report by Charles Chauvel, Team Leader, Inclusive Political Processes, Governance and Peacebuilding, United Nations Development Programme. E-mail: charles.chauvel@undp.org or visit www.undp.org





8TH COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT CYP8: 'A PLATFORM TO LEARN AND A PLATFORM TO LEAD'

From 6 to 10 November 2016, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, located in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, was honoured to host the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP8), the first time that this event has been held in Canada.



Hon. Linda Reid MLA has served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Canada since her election to the position in June 2013. Previously, she served as Deputy Speaker from 2009 to 2013. Hon. Reid served as Minister responsible for early childhood development and child care. First elected as a Member of British Columbia's Legislative Assembly in 1991, Hon. Reid is British Columbia's longest-serving current MLA.

Fifty-two young people, aged 18 to 29, from 22 countries, and representing seven Commonwealth Parliamentary Association regions, attended the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP8). Only two regions, India and South-East Asia, were unable to send representatives.

The programme began with a welcome reception at the Robert Bateman Centre, located in the Steamship Terminal in Victoria's Inner Harbour. The Centre houses and displays the iconic work of Canadian artist, Robert Bateman. The welcome reception provided the youth Parliamentarians with an opportunity to get to know one another, engage with me as Speaker, with Mr Abkar Khan, the Secretary-General of the CPA, the six current Parliamentarians who would be their mentors, and with many of the other staff involved in the CYP8 programme.

The official opening of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament, as with all events at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, began with the recognition that the parliamentary precinct is situated on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen people, now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations. This was followed

by a blessing by Elder Mary Ann Thomas of the Esquimalt First Nation. This recognition acknowledges and shows respect for the culture, tradition and wisdom of the Lekwungen people, both past and present.

At the Legislative Assembly, we have a Talking Stick that is prominently displayed in the Chamber, next to the Speaker's dais, and we decided that it would be fitting to use this as the symbol of CYP8, including using it as the Mace during House Proceedings.

The Talking Stick was a gift from the Songhees First Nation to the former Lieutenant Governor, Steven Point, to commemorate the naming of the Salish Sea. In 2014, the current Lieutenant Governor, Her Honour Judith Guichon, presented it to me as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

The Talking Stick serves as a reminder that First Nations and reconciliation should be a consideration in all debates and discussions in the Legislative Assembly. In May 2016, Elder Mary Ann Thomas, along with Elder Elmer George, led a special blessing ceremony of the Talking Stick. Elder Thomas explained that the Talking Stick is about dialogue, relationships, respect and "working together and being patient with one another."

The opening ceremony concluded with a poetry reading by Zoe Duhaime, the City of Victoria's 2015 Youth Poet Laureate and one of the CYP8 youth Parliamentarians. Ms. Duhaime performed her poem entitled 'One Hundred Candle Bonfire' which commemorates the 100th anniversary of the franchise being extended to some women in British Columbia. An excerpt of that poem reads:

*the vote hasn't solved all
but it's a measure of worth
it's a voice
it's a light*

This was a fitting introduction to CYP8, where diversity and inclusiveness were evident early on. The youth Parliamentarians had a wide range of backgrounds and life experience as well as varying levels of parliamentary knowledge. Many indicated that one of the most valuable elements of the programme was the opportunity to network with, and learn from, other young people from across the Commonwealth. As the Leader of the governing Progressive Party, Ashvini Savanthrapadian put it: "The CYP represented an opportunity for people from all backgrounds to have a platform to be heard. A platform to learn. And a platform to lead."

Prior to their arrival, the youth Parliamentarians were provided



Above: Participants, mentors, parliamentary staff and CPA representatives gather for the opening of the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

with party profiles, and based on their preferences, organized into two parties. In the first caucus meeting, each party decided on a name. The Progressive Party formed government with 33 youth Parliamentarians, and the United Nationalist Initiative formed the Opposition with 19 youth Parliamentarians. Each party also elected a leader, and designated a deputy leader, whip and ministers or opposition critics.

For the first time since the Commonwealth Youth Parliament became an annual programme in 2012, both the government and opposition leaders were women.

Subsequent caucus sessions provided the opportunity to learn about party politics and to strategize and network. It was remarkable how quickly each party developed their messaging, and how supportive they became of one another.

An integral part of the programme was the involvement of six current Commonwealth Parliamentarians who graciously served as Mentors during the programme: Spencer Chandra Herbert MLA and Jodie Wickens MLA, Members of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia; Jessica Littlewood MLA, Member

of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta; Kate Forbes MSP, Member of the Scottish Parliament; Adam Marshall MP, Member of the Parliament of New South Wales, Australia; and Chathura Sandeepa Senaratne, Member of the Parliament of Sri Lanka. Each of the Mentors was assigned to either the government or opposition party. The Mentors provided guidance, support, and advice during caucus sessions and House Proceedings, and truly became invested as their assigned party faced challenges and successes throughout the week.

The Mentors also led educational sessions during which they shared their individual experiences and perspectives on a given topic, followed by a question and answer period. Topics included: the role of a Member of Parliament; Question Period; the Media; and Campaign Planning and the Electoral Process.

The perspectives provided by the Mentors were diverse, transparent, and candid, and the youth Parliamentarians really appreciated the opportunity to connect with current Parliamentarians in this educational, and less formal, setting.

Each session of House proceedings began with a Prayer and Introductions and Statements by youth Parliamentarians. These items of routine House business provided the opportunity for youth Parliamentarians to introduce themselves and their home jurisdictions. Many highlighted local culture, natural beauty and resources as well as initiatives and causes they were involved in or passionate about.

Youth Parliamentarian Sara Aslam sought to dispel myths about Pakistan, explaining that "women do actually have a voice. We've had a female Prime Minister, we are not all covered. We are not all behind closed doors, either."

Youth Parliamentarian Anne Ogada from Kenya described the work of Hon. Isaac Mwaura, a Member of the Kenya Parliament who lives with albinism and has created the Albinism Society of Kenya.

Mark Munnich explained challenges faced by indigenous people in Australia, noting that "indigenous Australians are more likely to die 17 years earlier than non-indigenous people... [and] within our justice system, indigenous peoples are overly represented." For several of the young people, this was their first

experience rising to speak in a parliamentary chamber.

Perhaps the liveliest part of each day was the Oral Question Period. Ministers were questioned by the opposition and government members on their portfolios. Key themes raised by youth Parliamentarians included health care, post-secondary education, indigenous people and the environment. The passion for parliamentary debate was clear as the youth Parliamentarians supported and challenged one another by cheering, desk-banging and raising points of order.

The opposition party held the government to account by demanding detailed plans in support of policy, and frequently suggested that government was fiscally irresponsible.

Sky Losier, the Environment Critic, accused the government of "lot of talk, a lot of big talk, a lot of big ideas, but... no plans on how to deliver on these big ideas... this government is acting



like money grows on trees.”

Honeylynn Lisson, a government member, advised the opposition that “I myself, and the rest of the government look forward to hearing some proactive and constructive things that the opposition can suggest in the near future, and I hope that you will stay tuned for what we will provide. The opposition asked the government if we would be willing to work with you, and our Premier said that we would. But in return, we need you to work with us. We need less partisanship, and we need more cooperation.”

Some of the youth Parliamentarians felt that party politics and dramatic performances in the Chamber should be limited given the educational nature of the programme. Others thoroughly enjoyed these realistic elements.

During the week, youth Parliamentarians embraced learning the details of parliamentary procedure, including familiarising themselves with the CYP8 Standing Orders, taking any and every opportunity to raise a point of order. During one lively Oral Question Period, the Government Whip, Jordan Kerr, responded on behalf of government a number of times, causing Aaron McDonnell, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, to rise on a point of order regarding non-executive Members responding during Oral Question Period.

The Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Richard Lee, MLA,

was in the Chair and asked the government to clarify the role of the Member in question. It was subsequently explained that the Member was Government Whip and a Minister without portfolio. As such, as a member of the Executive, it was within his right to respond during Oral Question Period.

On the second day of proceedings, the government introduced Bill 1, the *Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act*. During the second reading debate, government youth Parliamentarian Jamie Murray argued that the Bill “absolutely stimulates job creation and amplifies opportunity.” Farah Hussain, Deputy Premier, further explained that the Bill will “give [youth] an advantage in the job market, allowing them to get good jobs, become active citizens and contribute to our society. This [Bill] is an investment in our young people that will be paid back many times over, during their working careers, in the form of income tax. It is good for our country, and it is good for our people.”

The opposition critic for Justice, Rebecca Cross, voiced concern regarding “the amount of discretionary power the *Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Bill* gives to the Minister of Social Development. The minister is to set targets, but on what basis? What will the government be measuring? What jobs will these internships lead to? What wage will be specified?”

Echoing these concerns, other opposition members called for the creation of an oversight body to monitor the programmes.

Following debate and subsequent amendments, the Bill passed and received Royal Assent. The role of the Lieutenant Governor was played by the Honourable Ingrid Moses-Scatliffe, Speaker of the British Virgin Islands House of Assembly. The British Virgin Islands House of Assembly will host the next Commonwealth Youth Parliament in the autumn of 2017.

One of the highlights of the programme for many of the young people was a mock press conference held in the Members’ Lobby outside of the Chamber. At the outset of the programme, youth Parliamentarians were provided with potentially controversial scenarios on which the press could ask questions.

Mentors and reporters from the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia served as the press. This ‘real-life’ media experience presented a challenge and opportunity. As can be imagined, some of the comments made by government ministers in the heat of the moment at the press conference provided for a lively debate during subsequent Oral Question Periods.

On the final evening, a dinner was held at Government House, the official residence of the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and the ceremonial home of all British Columbians. Government House is located on expansive property in the Rockland neighbourhood, surrounded by beautifully manicured gardens, wooded areas, a pond, and a small orchard. Her Honour Judith Guichon, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, hosted the event. As youth Parliamentarians arrived, they were greeted by an official receiving line, and each had their photo taken. It was a fun and glamorous evening - we were even treated to entertainment by youth Parliamentarian Jabari Lynch who shared his inspiring poem about diversity, entitled

‘*Soup*’, a few lines of which read: *All these different paths together. All these different paths make a whole. All these different paths, yet wholly, all together, All blend to make a unique flavour.*

It was inspiring to see firsthand how CYP8 engaged and empowered young people from across the Commonwealth. The young people really dedicated themselves to the programme, and embraced the opportunities to learn about parliamentary democracy and to network with each other. Opposition Health critic Stefanie Panesar captured the tone of the programme when she wrote: “Not once did I feel that my voice or thoughts were not important; that my opinion wasn’t wanted or appreciated. There was a certain air to this crowd of individuals that welcomed different views and difficult conversations. I know that [there] are foundations for lifelong partnerships which will continue to broaden each of our minds and challenge us to think and act innovatively. Together our voices are amplified and we become stronger than we are alone.”

During the closing ceremony in the Chamber, I wanted to impress upon these young individuals that if you seek to make a difference, anything is possible.

In April of this year, we will mark the 100th anniversary of some women being granted the right to vote and stand for office in the province of British Columbia. The campaign to extend the vote to this first group of women in British Columbia spanned 45 years, but their dedication and commitment changed the nature of politics in British Columbia. Using this story, I reminded the young Parliamentarians that they all have the potential to make a positive difference in shaping the future of their own communities and countries.



8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament: Report by Laura Elliott

Laura Elliott was a young Parliamentarian who participated in the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Canada and represented the CPA Wales Branch. Laura is a History graduate from Northumbria University, who has also completed her PRINCE2 Project Management since graduating and now works for Swansea University in Wales on a renewable technologies project called SPECIFIC. In her spare time, she is heavily involved with the Young Farmers movement - currently Glamorgan County Chairman and Wales YFC Vice Chairman.

The 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament was hosted by the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia in Victoria, Canada. I was fortunate to be selected by the National Assembly for Wales’ Branch of the CPA to represent them at this auspicious event in November 2016.

On Monday 7 November 2016, I was joined in the Legislative Chamber of British Columbia by 60 participants representing Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Branches from eight of the nine CPA Regions.

I was placed on the government side and we named ourselves the ‘*Progressive Party*’ and elected a female Premier and Deputy. I expressed an interest in the Environment portfolio and was selected by the party leaders

to take up office as the Minister of Environment; I had been keen to take on the role given my background – from a farming family and being now employed on a renewable technologies project. We also started to prepare addresses in reply to the Speech from the Throne later in the afternoon. Each party had mentors, actual MPs/MLAs aged under 35 from Commonwealth Legislatures, and ours advised us that our responses should be a nod to our participation at the event and greetings from our home nations.

After the session began it was clear to see that the Opposition had been advised otherwise and our Party Policies were ridiculed and questions were thrown at us during their responses to the Speech from the Throne. Any trepidation about how confrontational the sessions would be ended there!

For the rest of the day we held another Caucus session, had the official photograph of CYP8, prepared for and took part in Question Time (an experience I found to be highly nerve wracking as a Cabinet Minister) and heard mentors discuss the role of a Member of Parliament and introduced our first Bills to the House.



Our Party Whip was excellent and we were frequently protected with ‘*Points of Order*’ and notes being passed down the Chamber as to which way we should be voting. Concessions were agreed between parties outside of the Chamber and then we were instructed as to what the party line would be when these discussions arose.

On day two of the programme, the main business of the day was the second reading of the Youth Apprenticeship and Internship Act which was the Bill introduced on day one. Youth Parliamentarians on both sides of the House spoke to the Bill and I took the opportunity to speak about my experience of youth education and employment in Wales, and how important I feel informal education and soft skills are in creating well-rounded and employable individuals outside of the classroom. It was fascinating to hear other youth Parliamentarians speak about their experiences, although predominantly the addresses tended to be given from a perspective which was inside the sphere of our ‘*Commonwealthland*’, the fictional country that our parliament represented.

During lunch on the second

day, we were addressed by David Spence, President of the Vancouver Island Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society. It was a very interesting talk and added to the value which we attributed to having this experience, something which became clearer as the week went on. Tuesday afternoon was spent continuing the second reading of the Youth Apprenticeships and Internship Act and in Caucus preparing for the Committee of the Whole and Amendments.

During the evening, we spent dinner together watching the results of the US Presidential Election come in - a surreal experience and the atmosphere was quite subdued as the result became clearer. Youth Parliamentarian statements the following day were heavily referenced towards the need to continue to fight for freedom of speech and equality; whilst condemning racism, homophobia, sexism and discrimination. During the morning session it felt like there was more than a matter of miles between us and the USA.

On Wednesday, we had an educational session from MLAs and representatives from local press who discussed the importance of the media in politics and how the relationship



8TH COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT CYP8

typically worked. This was in advance of each party holding a mock press conference.

The most complicated procedural session of the week was the Committee of the Whole. Youth Parliamentarians lead the session and we were fortunate in Government to have a delegate who had taken part in one of these sessions before to guide us through it. It dealt with the step by step acceptance or amendment of the Bill with suggestions made from both sides of the Chamber, all delegates were present and could contribute to the session freely. It was an excellent insight into the stages of progressing an Act of Law, however, we would have benefitted from more time to be able to thrash out all the details as a lot of compromises were made on the wording of the Bill given the limited time available.

On Wednesday evening, we were transported to Government House for the Closing Dinner of CYP8, hosted by the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia. Judith Guichon was appointed in 2012 and is the vice-regal representative of Queen Elizabeth II of Canada in the Province of British Columbia. It was a very great honour to be hosted by the Lieutenant Governor and shortly after our arrival we learnt that some of her most recent visitors had been the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Our final day was very short and contained a question period, by this time a little more jovial and, as Government, we employed the

“filibuster” tactic of talking for as long as possible in answering, to prevent any more questions being asked. I would have laughed if you'd told me at the start of the week that I would be playing for time, waffling on about Carbon Tax in the Chamber!

The closing speeches included an address from Hon. Ingrid Moses-Scatliffe, Speaker of the House of Assembly in the British Virgin Islands who will be hosting the 9th Commonwealth Youth Parliament next year. It was at this point a sense of disappointment dawned, a feeling of sadness that our Parliament was coming to a close, and that a new cohort of delegates would be benefitting from this wonderful event and experience next year.

I was fully prepared that the enormity of the experience would not fully sink in until I returned home. Having been able to reflect on the CYP, it has become clear to me that it was a once in a lifetime opportunity and one I will treasure forever. Being able to gain practical experience of the parliamentary system whilst working with like-minded young people who have a range of different backgrounds and life experiences would be very difficult to replicate elsewhere. The future of the Commonwealth is in very safe hands given the calibre of the people in attendance at CYP8 and I hope that the Assembly will be encouraging of an open dialogue whilst we establish our own Youth Parliament.

ISLE OF MAN CELEBRATES 150 YEARS SINCE THE FIRST GENERAL ELECTION TO THE HOUSE OF KEYS



Pictured outside the Old Court House in Douglas is (from left to right) Dr Kit Gawne text writer, Speaker of the House of Keys, Hon. Juan Watterson MHK and the President of Tynwald, Hon. Steve Rodan MLC.

The CPA Isle of Man Branch are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the first general election of the House of Keys in 2017. The House of Keys is one of the two Houses of Tynwald, or more formally, the High Court of Tynwald, the legislature of the Isle of Man. The oldest continuous Parliament in the world, Tynwald started in 979, although its roots go further back.

The first public election of the House of Keys took place during the period from 2nd to 5th April 1867 and saw 13 of the previous 24 Members elected. The reforms were major steps towards more competent and mature self-government, and political democracy becoming a reality.

To celebrate, the Isle of Man Post Office has issued a special set of stamps in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the first general election of the House of Keys. Four panoramic stamps illustrate the most significant events and individuals that led to the transition to free elections.

President of Tynwald, Hon. Steve Rodan MLC said: “These stamps mark a significant milestone in the life of Tynwald which is the world's oldest continuous parliamentary assembly - the holding of the first democratic popular elections to the House of Keys in 1867. While the vote was then given only to property owning males, a few short years later the Isle of Man became the very first place to give women the vote - in 1881, decades before the UK.”

“I congratulate Isle of Man Post Office for the excellent quality of this special stamp issue, which vividly depicts Election Day in 1867. They will surely be very popular with the public and collectors the world over - the Island already has a very high reputation for its stamp issues, for their design and appeal, and these stamps are no exception.”

Visit www.iompost.com to pre-order the stamps and visit www.tynwald.org.im/education/history/1867/ for more information on the 150 year anniversary celebrations.



Parliamentary Report

NEWS AND LEGISLATION FROM COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTS



THIRD READINGS

Québec, Canada
Page 82

Australia Federal
Page 88

New Zealand
Page 94

India
Page 98



New Zealand: Resignation of the Prime Minister

Page 94

SRI LANKA

Missing Persons Bill passed in Sri Lanka Parliament
Page 78

AUSTRALIA

Reports from Australia Federal Parliament
Page 90

CANADA

Reports from the Fall Sitting of the Canadian Federal Parliament
Page 80

UNITED KINGDOM

Examination of the size of the House of Lords
Page 92

AUSTRALIA

Legislative and parliamentary news from the Australian States and Territories
Page 84

INDIA

Disruption over demonetization discussed in India Parliament
Page 96

MISSING PERSONS BILL PASSED IN SRI LANKA PARLIAMENT

Office on Missing Persons (Establishment, Administration and Discharge of Functions) Bill, a Government Bill, was passed by the Parliament of Sri Lanka unanimously on 11 August 2016 and Speaker, **Hon. Karu Jayasuriya** endorsed its certificate on 23 August 2016. The Act is titled the No. 14 of 2016.

The Bill was introduced in the Sri Lanka Parliament by the Prime Minister, **Hon. Ranil Wickremesinghe** on 22 June 2016 and proceeded through the subsequent processes of Sectoral Oversight Committee, Committee of the whole Parliament, Second Reading and Third Reading in the Parliament.

This Bill was enacted to enable the provisions:

(a) to provide appropriate mechanisms for searching and tracing of missing persons, and to clarify the circumstances in which

such persons went missing, and their fate; (b) to make recommendations to the relevant authorities towards reducing the incidents of 'missing persons' within the meaning of the Act; (c) to protect the rights and interests of missing persons and their relatives as provided for in the Act; (d) to identify proper avenues of redress to which such missing persons or their relatives may have recourse.

This Act enabled the establishment of the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) with a range of powers in terms of addressing the cases of missing persons including those missing as victims of abduction, persons missing in action or otherwise missing in connection with armed conflicts, political unrest and civil disturbances as an

independent entity. Further the Act includes provisions to:

- Search and trace missing persons,
- Provide assistance to relatives of missing persons,
- Set up of a database of missing persons, and
- Set out the procedures and guidelines applicable to the powers and functions assigned to the OMP.

The OMP Act is observed as a significant juncture in the country's journey towards reconciliation which sets out a proper legal mechanism in keeping with the demands for truth and justice by victims across Sri Lanka.

The OMP has a broad mandate. The primary is to search for and trace missing persons and identify appropriate mechanisms for the same, and clarify the circumstances in which such persons went missing.

Other aspects of the OMP mandate include making recommendations to relevant authorities to address the incidence of missing persons, protecting the interests of missing persons and their relatives, identifying avenues of redress available to missing persons and their relatives and informing them of same, and collating data related to missing persons from previous processes carried out by other entities and centralizing all available data within the database established under this Act.

Initiating the Second Reading debate, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Hon. Mangala Samaraweera** emphasized the significance of enacting this historical Bill among all other Bills introduced by the Government recently as the Office on Missing Persons (Establishment, Administration and Discharge

of Functions) Bill, will, hopefully herald, a new era of peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

The Foreign Minister adding to his speech commented that seven years after the end of the brutal war and the defeat and the demise of LTTE terror, Sri Lanka is now ready to win the peace and heal the scars of conflict, sorrow and pain: "this Bill is the first step in healing our own nation and its people so that we could face the challenges of the future as a united nation; unity in diversity!" He further stated that sixty years after independence, two youth insurrections and a 26-year-old war later, Sri Lanka is now ready to commence the healing process of our wounded and fractured nation. Against such a backdrop, this Bill would be the first step in healing our own nation and its people so that we could face the challenges of the future as a united nation; unity in diversity.

Hon. M.A. Sumanthiran, MP, Member of Parliament representing the Tamil National Alliance, congratulated the Government for taking this preliminary step in the process of reconciliation in the country by enacting this Bill. He stressed that whatever steps that are taken

for reconciliation must be founded upon the truth which is aimed by this Bill.

Hon. Bimal Rathnayaka, MP, representing the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, reminded the House of several occasions of missing persons in the history of Sri Lanka and emphasized that their support is extended to this Bill subjected to amendments to be made, as this Bill can make a huge difference in the process of reconciliation. He further expressed his expectation that justice will be done to the families with grievances whose members went missing, through this Act.

The Act mandates to establish an Office on Missing Persons consisting of seven Members who shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Constitutional Council. Such recommendation shall also consist of more than one name for consideration by the President, to be appointed as the Chairman of the OMP. In making recommendations for the appointment of Members to the OMP, the Constitutional Council shall, have due regard to:-

a. ensuring that the composition of the OMP reflects the pluralistic nature of the Sri Lankan society; and

b. ensuring that the Members of the OMP shall be persons with previous experience in fact finding or investigation, human rights law, international humanitarian law, humanitarian response, or possess other qualifications relevant to the carrying out of the functions of the OMP.

In addition to the General Powers, OMP has been vested with following Powers of Investigation by this Act: -

a. to receive, from any relative of a missing person, or any other person or organization, complaints relating to missing persons

b. to initiate an inquiry and/or investigation into the whereabouts and/or circumstances of disappearance of a missing person pursuant to a complaint

c. to take all necessary steps to investigate cases of missing persons

d. to apply to the appropriate Magistrate's Court having territorial jurisdiction, for an order of court to carry out an excavation and/or exhumation of suspected grave sites

e. to request assistance necessary for the achieving of its mandates from any entity

f. to authorize in writing a specified officer of the OMP to enter without warrant, at any time any place of detention, police station, prison or any other place in which any persons is suspected to be detained

g. to make an application to the Magistrate having territorial jurisdiction, for the issuance of a search warrant

h. to refer, after due consultation with the complainant, to the police or any other relevant law enforcement authority all cases of missing persons that have been brought before the OMP not falling within the definition of the expression 'missing persons' as defined in the Act.

The Clause 14 outlines the provision to ensure the rights of missing persons and relatives without any discrimination and Clause 15 denotes the management of the information confidentially.

Amendments for some clauses of the Bill were moved by both the Government and the Opposition and passed in the Parliament unanimously.



CANADA FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS IN THE FALL SESSION

Legislation in the Fall Session

During the fall session, six government Bills received Royal Assent. This brought to 15 the total number of government Bills passed during the Liberal government's first year. Six of these were supply Bills.

During the fall session, the government introduced 16 pieces of legislation in the House and three in the Senate, bringing to 41 the total for the government's first year.

Among the Bills that passed during the fall session were Bill C-2, which made changes to the marginal tax rates for personal income, and Bill C-26, which increases Canada Pension Plan benefits by as much as 50%.

Committee reports

On 1 December 2016, the all-party House of Commons Special Committee on Electoral Reform tabled its report on electoral reform. The Committee had been asked to study voting systems that could replace the current first-past-the-post system, as well as mandatory voting and online voting. Its report did not recommend a specific alternative voting system, but instead recommended a method for evaluating alternative voting systems.

The report also recommended that a referendum be held on whether Canadians prefer the current voting system or an alternative system. As for mandatory voting and online voting, it recommended that they not be implemented at this time.

The Committee noted that those who wanted change were overwhelming in favour

of proportional representation. In a supplementary report, however, the Liberal Members of the Committee said the recommendations in the report were "rushed" and "too radical to impose at this time."

Following the tabling of the report, the Minister of Democratic Institutions, **Hon. Maryam Monsef, MP**, criticized the Committee for failing to recommend a specific alternative voting system; she subsequently apologized. In January 2017, she was replaced as Minister of Democratic Institutions by **Hon. Karina Gould, MP**.

On 1 February 2017, Minister Gould released her mandate letter from the Prime Minister, **Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, MP**, in which he said that because a consensus on a new electoral system had not emerged, he was not asking her to change the electoral system. The opposition parties criticized the Prime Minister for abandoning his commitment to bring about a change.

Other House of Commons Committee reports that were tabled during late 2016 included:

- *Protecting the Privacy of Canadians: Review of the Privacy Act (Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics);*
- *Genetically Modified Animals for Human Consumption (Agriculture and Agri-Food);*
- *Interim Report on Media Study: the Impact of Digital Technology (Canadian Heritage);*
- *After the Warm Welcome: Ensuring that Syrian Refugees Succeed*

(Citizenship and Immigration);

- *Creating the Conditions for Economic Growth: Tools for People, Businesses and Communities (Finance);*
- *Supporting Peace and Development in Guatemala and Colombia for the Long-Term (Foreign Affairs and International Development);*
- *Report and Recommendations on the Opioid Crisis in Canada (Health);*
- *Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities (Official Languages);* and
- *Reaching Out: Improving Service Delivery to Canadian Veterans (Veterans Affairs).*

Senate committee reports included:

- *Interim Report: Outbreak of Bovine Tuberculosis in Alberta (Agriculture and Forestry);*
- *Finding Refuge in Canada: A Syrian Resettlement Story (Human Rights);*
- *Deployment: Prioritizing commitments at home and abroad (National Security and Defence);*
- *Dementia in Canada: A National Strategy for Dementia-friendly Communities (Social Affairs, Science and Technology);* and
- *Pipelines for Oil: Protecting our Economy, Respecting our Environment (Transport and Communications).*

Emergency debate on Refugee Travel

On 31 January 2017, the House of Commons held an emergency debate on the United States' decision regarding refugee travel.

The Senate

To accommodate the increased number of non-affiliated senators, who do make up a caucus as currently defined by the Rules of the Senate, the Senate adopted in December a motion under which non-affiliated senators were given proportional representation on Senate committees. The Senate also adopted a motion that would allow the recently formed Independent Senators Group (ISG) to receive funding. The media subsequently reported that the ISG had been allocated funding with which to establish a Secretariat.

On 1 January 2017, Conservative Ontario Senator **Hon. Nancy Ruth** retired upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of 75.

January 2017 also saw the retirement of two Liberal senators from Nova Scotia, **Senator Hon. Wilfred P. Moore** and **Senator Hon. James Cowan**.

On 31 January 2017, Quebec **Senator Hon. Josée Verner** left the Conservative caucus to sit as a non-affiliated senator.

Non-affiliated New Brunswick **Senator Hon. John Wallace** resigned on 1 February 2017. In doing so, he kept the pledge he made to then-prime minister Stephen Harper to serve only an eight-year term.

In February 2017, the media reported that Harvey Max Chochinov, who in

October had been chosen for appointment to the Senate, had turned down the appointment.

On 8 February 2017, the standings in the Senate were 39 Conservatives, 34 non-affiliated (Independent Senators Group), 8 other non-affiliated and 19 Liberals; there were five vacancies.

Changes to the Cabinet

On 10 January 2017, Prime Minister Trudeau made the following changes to his cabinet:

- **Hon. Chrystia Freeland, MP**, became Minister of Foreign Affairs. Previously the Minister of International Trade, she will continue to be responsible for relations with the United States, including trade relations.
- **Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, MP**, became Minister of International Trade. He had been Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

- **Hon. Patricia A. Hajdu, MP**, became Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour. She had been the Minister of Status of Women.
- **Hon. Maryam Monsef, MP**, who had been Minister of Democratic Institutions, became Minister of Status of Women.
- **Hon. Karina Gould, MP**, became Minister of Democratic Institutions. She had been Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development.
- **Hon. Ahmed D. Hussen, MP**, became Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. He is the first Canadian MP of Somali descent.
- **Hon. Stéphane Dion**, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, left Cabinet and announced that he was leaving politics.

- **Hon. John McCallum**, the former Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, left Cabinet to become Canada's Ambassador to China.
- **Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk, MP**, the former Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, left Cabinet but will continue to serve as an MP.

Plebiscite on electoral reform in Prince Edward Island

In late October and early November 2016, voters in the province of Prince Edward Island, including 16- and 17-year olds, cast ballots in a non-binding plebiscite on changing the province's electoral system. They were asked to rank five different electoral systems by order of preference. The mixed-member proportional representation system came out on top with 52% of the votes, while the

current first-past-the-post system came second with nearly 43% of the votes. However, given that voter turnout was only 36%, Premier Wade MacLauchlan said it was doubtful whether the plebiscite constituted a clear expression of the will of the population and he did not commit to making any changes immediately.

Election in the Yukon

In a territorial election on 7 November 2016, the Liberal Party defeated the Yukon Party, which had held power for 14 years. The Liberals won 11 of the 19 seats in the Legislative Assembly (up from one seat in the previous legislature), the Yukon Party took six seats (down from 12) and the New Democratic Party took two seats (down from six). The main issues in the election were relations with First Nations, resource development and the environment. Liberal leader **Sandy Silver** became premier.



THIRD READING: QUÉBEC, CANADA

Between September and December 2016, the National Assembly of Québec passed 12 public bills (8 unanimously).

Public administration

Bill 87, An Act to facilitate the disclosure of wrongdoings relating to public bodies, was passed unanimously on 9 December 2016. The purpose of the Bill is to establish a protection regime to protect 'whistleblowers' in the public and parapublic sectors against reprisals.

The Act implements *Recommendation 8* of the report of the *Commission d'enquête sur l'octroi et la gestion des contrats dans l'industrie de la construction*: [Translation] "The Commissioners therefore recommend that the Government: Improve the protection regime for whistleblowers in order to guarantee:

- the protection of their identity, regardless of the authority to which they make a disclosure;
- assist them in the disclosure process; and
- provide financial support, if necessary."¹

The Act provides that anyone may make a disclosure regarding any 'wrongdoing' to the Public Protector (Québec Ombudsman) or to the Minister of Families (if the wrongdoing occurred in a childcare centre, subsidized private day care centre or home childcare coordinating offices). Employees of a public body may also make disclosures regarding a wrongdoing to a designated person within each public and parapublic sector entity.

Under section 4, a 'wrongdoing' means any act that constitutes or consists in a contravention of a Québec or federal law, a breach of standards of ethics or professional conduct, a misuse of public funds or gross mismanagement. However, section 5 excludes situations where someone makes a disclosure "for personal purposes rather than in the public interest", such as a disclosure pertaining solely to a condition of employment or whose purpose is to question the merits of the policies of the Government or a public body. In such cases, the Public Protector will stop processing the disclosure (s. 12).

Anyone who has reasonable grounds

to believe that a wrongdoing could pose a serious risk to a person's health or safety or to the environment may, given the urgency of the situation, disclose it directly to the public (or the media), provided he or she first communicates the information to a police force or to the Anti-Corruption Commissioner.

Lastly, the Act prohibits reprisals, such as demotion or dismissal, against a person who makes a disclosure or cooperates in an audit or investigation. Anyone who believes a reprisal has been taken against him or her may file a complaint with the Public Protector or the Minister of Families. Sections 33 to 35 provide penal sanctions for anyone guilty of taking a reprisal.

Energy and resources

On 10 December 2016, the National Assembly passed *Bill 106, An Act to implement the 2030 Energy Policy* and to amend various legislative provisions, by a majority vote. The Act comprises four chapters and over 400 sections.

This Act establishes, in its first chapter, a new government agency: *Transition énergétique Québec*. This agency's mission is to support energy transition, innovation and efficiency in Québec and coordinate the implementation of all of the measures necessary to achieve the energy targets defined by the Government.

The targets to be achieved by 2030 include: enhancing energy efficiency by 15%; reducing the amount of petroleum products consumed by 40%; eliminating the use of thermal coal; increasing overall renewable energy output by 25%; and increasing bioenergy production by 50%.

The second chapter of the Act to implement the 2030 Energy Policy modifies the governance of the *Régie de l'énergie*, a regulatory body authorized to set electricity and natural gas rates. These modifications promote the use of mediation as part of the consumer complaint examination procedure. Chapters 1, 3 and 4 of the Act to implement the 2030 Energy policy include other modifications.

The third chapter authorizes *Hydro-Québec*, the state-owned enterprise that produces and distributes electricity in Québec, to grant financial assistance to public transit authorities. *Hydro-Québec* will also help finance Montréal's electric network project presented by the *Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec*, which manages the pension funds of public and parapublic sector employees.

In its fourth chapter, the Act also enacts the *Petroleum Resources Act*, whose purpose is to provide a legal framework for the exploration for and development of petroleum and natural gas.² In its *2014 Action Plan on Hydrocarbons*, the Government indicated it was in favour of "limited and regulated" development of those resources that is compatible with its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and ensuring the longevity of Québec's petrochemical industry.

Section 55 of the *Petroleum Resources Act* grants companies holding a petroleum production or storage licence a "right of access to the territory" subject to that licence. Those companies may enter into an agreement with the owner of the land concerned. If no agreement can be reached, the company may resort to expropriation proceedings. Under an amendment to the introduction version of *Bill 106*, however, the Government's prior authorization will be required for such expropriations, and the Government may set conditions for granting such an authorization.

Under other amendments to the Bill, regional county municipalities may determine, in their land use and development plans, which territories are incompatible with exploration for or the production or storage of hydrocarbons. Those modifications to local by-laws must, however, receive a favourable opinion from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Land Occupancy as well as from the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

Lastly, section 233 of the *Petroleum Resources Act* establishes an Energy Transition Fund into which the royalties determined by the Government for the

production and storage of hydrocarbons are to be paid.

Environment

On 26 October 2016, the National Assembly unanimously passed *Bill 104, An Act to increase the number of zero-emission motor vehicles in Québec in order to reduce greenhouse gas and other pollutant emissions*.

The Act establishes a system of credits and charges applicable to the sale or lease in Québec, by motor vehicle manufacturers, of new motor vehicles. Almost all manufacturers are subject to the Act.

Under this system, the motor vehicle manufacturers concerned must accumulate a number of credits by selling or leasing new motor vehicles that are completely or partially electrically propelled or by acquiring credits from another motor vehicle manufacturer. Motor vehicle manufacturers that have not, by the end of a three-year period, acquired the number of credits prescribed by regulation must pay a charge to the Government (s.8).

Québec is the first Canadian province to implement a zero-emission vehicle standard. It joins ten American States, including California and several Northeastern States that have seen the number of zero-emission vehicles rise and the price of such vehicles drop. The Québec government believes that adopting this system should cause zero-emission vehicle sales to increase to 15.5% of all vehicle sales in 2025.

References

¹ Commission d'enquête sur l'octroi et la gestion des contrats dans l'industrie de la construction, Rapport final, 24 November 2015, t. 3, p. 111.

² According to the Ministère de l'Énergie et des Ressources naturelles, sedimentary basins with favourable characteristics for hydrocarbons cover an area of more than 200,000 km² along the St. Lawrence River. However, the department estimates that only a small proportion of the total resources can be extracted in a cost-effective manner.

PARLIAMENTARY NEWS FROM AUSTRALIAN STATES AND TERRITORIES

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

ACT Election returns more Members and greater percentage of women

The last sitting of the 8th Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory was held on 11 August 2016 and the Territory went to the polls on Saturday 15 October 2016 (the Assembly has fixed four year terms). It was the first time Territorians elected 25 Members of the Legislative Assembly, up from 17 MLAs.

The make-up of the 9th Legislative Assembly is as follows:

- Australian Labor Party (ALP) - 12 MLAs
- Canberra Liberals - 11 MLAs
- ACT Greens - 2 MLAs

Of the 25 new MLAs elected, 13 were women, which comprises 52% of the Assembly's Members – a first for the Legislative Assembly and one of the largest percentages for an Australian legislature.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Parliament's first purpose-built education centre

The Parliament of New South Wales plays a vital role in educating primary and secondary school students on the topic of civics and citizenship, providing an understanding of modern democracy and how students can contribute in future years.

The Parliamentary Education and respective Chamber and Support Services teams currently deliver tour and role play programmes in the Legislative Chambers to around 8,000 primary and

3,000 secondary school students each year. These include mock sittings, mock committee hearings, seminars and debates. The programmes are a fundamental part of the school visit experience at the Parliament, but are currently offered on non-sittings days only, limiting the number of students who can attend. Funding has now been secured to construct a purpose-built education centre at Parliament House, which will provide a new facility for role-plays, seminars, debates and more, enabling the Parliament to offer important education programmes to more students than ever before. Construction is expected to begin towards the end of this financial year and will continue into 2018.

Update on twinning activities with the Solomon Islands and Bougainville Parliaments

In October 2016 the Usher of the Black Rod from the Parliament of New South Wales, travelled to Honiara to participate in a UNDP workshop for the Speaker and the Clerk of the National Parliament of the Solomon Islands.

At the end of October and early November 2016 the

President of the Legislative Council, **Hon. Don Harwin MLC**, led a delegation of Members to the Solomon Islands, Port Moresby and Bougainville. The purpose of the visit was to undertake a needs assessment for future twinning activities following the end of DFAT funding.

The delegation met and held discussions with the Presiding Officers of our twinned parliaments, Members, and senior officers of relevant public sector departments and agencies. The delegation also held insightful meetings with non-government bodies of civil society.

The discussions with Members were most valuable in that they will shape what will probably be a more Member-to-Member focus for our twinning activities in the immediate future.

The delegation also presented certificates to staff from the Parliament of the Solomon Islands and the Bougainville House of Representatives who had successfully completed the requirements of the customised Parliamentary Law Practice and Procedure course delivered in Honiara during 2016 with the support of the Parliament of New South Wales.

Votes of Members with the care of a child

In 2016, the President of the New South Wales Legislative Council, **Hon. Don Harwin, MLC** referred to the Procedure Committee an inquiry into young children accompanying members into the House. The Committee subsequently tabled its report on 20 October 2016 after examining whether the prohibition of visitors on the floor of the chamber should be relaxed, so as to ensure that Members who have responsibility for the care of young children are not prevented from fully participating in the business of the House.

The Committee recommended that the House vary the standing orders to provide the President with the discretion to have the vote of a Member caring for a child and seated in the President's gallery counted in a division. On 9 November 2016, the House agreed to a new sessional order that implements this recommendation. The President also made a statement on the operation of the rule by stating that Members will need to advise the Chair each time they request to make use of the new provision.

In late November 2016, the Procedure Committee also

commenced two new inquiries – one into the rules for Questions and the other into the rules for notices of motions.

Order for papers from a statutory body: Greyhound welfare

In late 2015, the Legislative Council ordered the production of documents from Greyhound Racing New South Wales (NSW) regarding greyhound welfare. In response, the Government advised that Greyhound Racing NSW, being an independent statutory body, was not subject to direction or control of the Government. No return to the order was received.

Legal advice subsequently obtained from Mr Bret Walker SC concluded that so-called 'independent' entities, groups or persons with public functions, such as Greyhound Racing NSW, are amenable to orders for papers addressed to them by the Council. Mr Walker noted that it then follows that Greyhound Racing NSW is compelled to comply with the order "on pain of its responsible officers being in contempt of the House."

On 14 September 2016, the Council passed a further order for the production of documents on the same matter. The Council asserted that Greyhound Racing NSW is 'obliged' to provide requested papers and also called on the Minister for Racing to require the documents be produced, pursuant to the newly enacted s27 of the Greyhound Racing Prohibition Act 2016 within 28 days.

On 12 October 2016, Greyhound Racing NSW delivered 48 boxes of public documents and 118 boxes of privileged documents. On 10 November 2016, at the request of the Administrator of Greyhound Racing NSW, the Council agreed to treat the index returned on 12 October as privileged and available for inspection by

Members of the Legislative Council only, and an index with confidential information redacted was then made public.

The compliance with the order for papers from a statutory body is a significant development for the Council.

Members of the Committee all spoke in support of the motion, and emphasised the unanimous agreement reached by the Committee members on the report's 35 recommendations. The government's response to the report, received on 2 December 2016, indicated support for a majority of the recommendations, including the establishment of a Stolen Generation's reparation scheme.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

2016 Northern Territory Legislative Assembly Elections

The Northern Territory General Election was held on Saturday 27 August 2016. The Australian Labor Party won 18 seats and the Country Liberals won 2, with 5 independent Members also elected. Of the 25 Members of the 13th Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, 12 are women. Additionally, the new Labor Government appointed the largest female majority Cabinet in Australian history, with 5 women appointed to an 8 person Ministry.

The Northern Territory Legislative Assembly continues a trend of strong Indigenous representation – in every election since the Assembly's establishment in 1974, at least one Indigenous member has been elected – with 6 Indigenous Members elected in 2016.

Standing Orders

The introduction of Standing Order 23A, Speaking in a Language other than English,

provides that a Member must provide an oral English translation prior to speaking in the other language. Additionally, the Member must also table a written translation and provide the original text of the speech in the other language for incorporation into the Parliamentary Record.

On 24 November 2016, **Hon. Yingiya Mark Guyula, MLA**, the Member for Nhulunbuy, gave notice of a motion on use of language in the Legislative Assembly as follows:

1. That this Assembly remove all words in Standing Order 23A and replace with the following: *A Member may rise to speak in any language other than English so long as an oral translation is provided in the English language by the same Member immediately prior to or after the words spoken in the language other than English.*
2. That a new Standing Order 23B be adopted as follows: *A Member may be assisted on the floor of the Assembly by an interpreter to provide interpretation from the English language into the first language of the Member and from the first language of the Member into English. The interpreter will only be present for the purposes of interpreting and not for any other purpose and must vacate the floor when not undertaking those duties.*

QUEENSLAND

Changes in Ministry

On 2 November 2016, the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, **Hon. Leanne Donaldson MP** made a ministerial statement advising the Legislative Assembly of Queensland that rates arrears

owed in respect of her family home had been paid that day. On 3 November 2016, the Minister made a personal explanation advising the House that she had inadvertently omitted listing her mortgage on the Members' Register of Interests and that in 2014, prior to her becoming a Member, she had fallen behind on her mortgage repayments for a short time.

Later in the evening the Minister advised that following Question Time that day, she had become aware that her vehicle registration had not been paid by the due date the previous week, and although she had taken immediate steps to rectify the issue, she had driven the vehicle the day after the registration had expired. The Minister advised that as this did not meet the high standards set by the Premier for all Members of the government, she had decided to resign from Cabinet.

On 8 November 2016, the Leader of the House advised that the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services, **Hon. William Byrne MP**, had also been appointed as the Acting Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries until further notice.

On 29 November 2016, the Premier tabled the gazette notice regarding the appointment of **Hon. William Byrne MP** as Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Economic Development and **Hon. Mark Ryan MP** as Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services. Further the Premier announced the appointment of **Ms Jennifer Howard MP** as Assistant Minister of State assisting the Premier and **Mr Glenn Butcher MP** as Assistant Minister for Local Government and Infrastructure.



Motion to separate Queensland into two states

On 15 September 2016, Mr Robert Katter MP gave notice of a motion for debate that, the House support the separation of Queensland into two states in accordance with section 124 of the Commonwealth Constitution, with the boundaries to be determined by an independent body such as the Redistribution Commission. In considering whether the motion was out of order, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, Hon. Peter Wellington MP was of the view that the proposed motion, if agreed to, would not be effective consent by the Queensland Parliament within the meaning of section 124 because the territory to be separated from the state was not identified with any precision. The motion, if agreed to, would simply express an opinion of the House on the issue and was a matter for the House to determine. The motion was debated that evening and was not agreed to.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Bill 2016

The protection of children has become a controversial topic in recent years. In order to address this issue, the Government of South Australia has been introducing legislative reforms to implement recommendations made by the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report, published in August 2016. On Tuesday 20 September 2016 the Attorney-General moved to suspend Standing and Sessional Orders to introduce two Bills to the House of Assembly of South Australia including the Children and Young People (Oversight and

Advocacy Bodies) Bill 2016 to establish a Commissioner for Children and Young People and establish the Child Development Council. The question on the suspension was put and agreed to. The Bill was read a first time and the second reading was then moved by the Attorney-General. Pursuant to Standing Order 238, the debate must be adjourned to a future day, however at the conclusion of the Attorney-General's contribution, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, moved to further suspend Standing Orders to enable the passage of the Bill through all stages without delay. The motion was agreed to with an absolute majority of the whole number of Members of the House.

The urgency with which this legislation was dealt with indicates the desire of the House to move as quickly as possible to provide better protection to children and young people.

TASMANIA

New 'Family Friendly' Standing Orders

On 15 November 2016, the Standing Orders Committee of the Tasmania House of Assembly tabled a report in regards to the application of the Standing Orders and Rules of the House of Assembly in so far as enabling a female Member, who is the mother of an infant child, to properly participate in the proceedings of the House. The Standing Orders in question were those regarding 'Strangers' in the House. These standing orders were by and large prescribed in 1857 at a time before women had the vote in Tasmania and certainly without the contemplation of women as Members.

The Committee considered a number of options including pairing arrangements, and excepting the infant child of a

Member from the interpretation of 'Stranger'. The Committee unanimously agreed that the greatest opportunity be afforded to Members who are mothers of infant children for their continued participation in the proceedings of the House. The Committee further agreed that provision should be made for a period of maternity leave of absence to be available as a discrete category from the leave of absence generally available to members.

On 17 November 2016 the House agreed to amend Standing Orders 48 and 412 to provide:

- 48. (1) *A Member shall not be absent during the Session for more than Fourteen days at a time, without the express leave of the House, and any Member wilfully infringing this Order shall be held guilty of contempt.*
- (2) *Except that, a Member shall be entitled, without a vote of the House, to 12 weeks maternity leave of absence, such leave to be taken in a consecutive period from the date its commencement is notified to the Speaker in writing.*
- 412. (1) *No Members of this House shall bring any Stranger into any parts of the House appropriated to the Members of this House, while the House, or a Committee of the Whole House, is sitting.*
- (2) *Paragraph (1) does not apply to a female Member feeding, or otherwise caring for, their infant child (who is under twelve months of age) who is not disrupting the proceedings of the House.*

VICTORIA

Changes to Ministers' Statements

Ministers' Statements were first introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Victoria's question time in early 2015 as part of a plan to modernise question time. The new sessional orders stated that government Members could no longer ask questions without notice. Instead, after each question from a non-government Member, a Minister could seek the call to make a statement on new government initiatives, projects and achievements under their portfolio.

The wording 'new initiatives, projects and achievements' was subject to many points of order during Ministers' statements. The Opposition frequently took points of order stating that a Minister wasn't speaking about new information or about their own government's achievements. For example, Ministers often used statements to talk about how federal government decisions affected their portfolio, which was only in order if they talked specifically about a new project or initiative to deal with that external event.

The rules for Ministers' Statements were changed in June 2016 after the Standing Orders Committee reported on its inquiry into hours of sitting and operation of the House. The Committee's majority report did not recommend changes to Ministers' Statements, but a minority report from government Members recommended defining the topic of statements as 'about matters related to their portfolio', removing the requirement that topics be new and about projects or achievements. The minority report argued that points of order during statements were



taking up valuable time, and a broader scope would prevent this and allow Ministers to provide more information. The changes suggested in the minority report were supported by a majority of Members in the House and adopted into sessional orders on 23 June 2016. Since then there are have been far fewer points of order on Ministers' Statements.

Leader of the Government's Period of Suspension

In the Victorian Legislative Council on 9 March 2016, the Opposition introduced a motion seeking to suspend the Leader of the Government, Mr Gavin Jennings MLC, for a period of up to six months for the Government's failure to produce certain documents, arguing that failure to provide these documents constituted an obstruction of a request of the Council. After considerable debate on the motion, the Opposition moved a closure of debate motion on 25 May 2016 (Standing Order 12.25) to end debate and put the question. The closure motion and suspension motions were passed and the Leader of the Government was suspended from the House for 6 months.

Despite the motion including a provision allowing the Leader of the Government to return to the House earlier if all documents were provided, a Member moved

that the suspension be lifted if these provisions were not able to be used successfully. The Leader of the Government returned to the House on the last sitting day of the year - 8 December 2016 - after completing the full six-month suspension. The suspension of the Leader of the Government for the full six months created associated problems for the House, including who would respond to questions asked of his portfolio during question time and whether he was permitted to attend Joint Sittings.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Committee reports

On 17 November 2016, the Education and Health Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia tabled its report, 'Learnings from the message stick: The report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide in remote areas'. The Committee's inquiry came about as a result of a motion moved by Ms Josie Farrer MLA, calling for urgent action to address the high levels of youth suicide amongst Aboriginal communities in remote parts of the State. Ms Farrer was co-opted onto the Committee for the duration of the inquiry.

On the tabling of the report, the Chair of the Committee took the opportunity to also

table a message stick from the community of Beagle Bay. This message stick was handed to Ms Josie Farrer MLA in 2013 by the families of Beagle Bay who had lost relatives to suicide. The message stick has been described as "the baton of life", in the hope that it will encourage better approaches to suicide prevention, and in recognition of the Aboriginal voices that contributed to the Committee's work. The message stick will be displayed in a public area of the Parliament.

There was also a focus on ICT in Committee reports. On 22 September 2016, the Public Accounts Committee tabled its report, 'Doing ICT Better: Improving Outcomes from the Western Australian Government's Investment in Information and Communications Technology (ICT)' and the Education and Health Standing Committee tabled its report, '<System Error> Auditor General's report on Health Department's Procurement and Management of its Centralised Computing Services Contract'.

End of the 39th Parliament of Western Australia

The 39th Parliament of Western Australia ended in a flurry of activity as 21 Bills were passed by the Parliament and sent to the Governor for assent in a hectic final two sitting weeks of 2016. A total of 155 bills were enacted over the four years of the Parliament. This is well down on the recent average of 60 bills a year (or 240 for a Parliament). The Western Australia State General Election will be held on 11 March 2017.

Council Bills Ruled Out of Order by the Speaker of the Assembly

In a somewhat controversial end to the Parliament of Western Australia, in the final sitting weeks, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly ruled out

of order two Bills that had been introduced in and passed by the Legislative Council. One of these bills, the School Boarding Facilities Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2015, was a high profile Government Bill, whilst the other Bill (the Constitution and Electoral Amendment Bill 2016) was a Private Member's Bill promoted by a Member of the National Party, which had the Government's support.

Both Bills were ruled out of order on the grounds that they involved an appropriation of public funds and, as such, should have received a certificate from the Governor and been introduced in the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to s46 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act 1899. The President of the Legislative Council tabled a legal opinion from a senior counsel which stated that, as a matter of law, the School Boarding Facilities Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2015 did not involve any appropriation from the Consolidated Account. The senior counsel also suggested that, despite the previously understood wording of s46, the matter was capable of determination by a court. The prospect of court action attracted some media attention, although the President of the Legislative Council publicly stated that legal action was unlikely to be resorted to in order to resolve the impasse. The School Boarding Facilities Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2015 was renamed the School Boarding Facilities Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2016 and introduced in the Assembly with a Governor's certificate. The new Bill was passed in the Council by means of a suspension of those standing orders relating to the "same question" rule.



Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Act 2016

The *Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Act* is a critical piece of legislation for the Australian Federal government. In the previous parliament, the legislation was rejected twice in the Senate and became a double dissolution trigger for the election held in July 2016.

The Prime Minister, **Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP** on re-introducing the legislation, stated that “following the double dissolution election, which we called as a result of the

Senate twice rejecting this legislation, we have a clear mandate to proceed with our election commitment to re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC). Re-establishing the ABCC will boost economic growth and generate more jobs in the building and construction industry. The building and construction industry is a key driver of growth and vital to the competitiveness and prosperity of the Australian economy.”

Mr Turnbull noted that “the building and construction sector accounts for around eight per cent of gross domestic product.

Unfortunately for too many years, the industry has provided the worst examples of illegal industrial behaviour, unnecessary disruption and unrest. Two royal commissions have now identified systemic unlawful behaviour in the construction industry.”

Mr Turnbull commented that “the main object of this Bill is to provide an improved workplace relations framework to ensure building and construction work is carried out fairly, efficiently and productively for the benefit of all building industry participants and for the benefit of the Australian economy as a whole.”

During debate in the Senate, Labor **Senator Louise Pratt** commented that “the Prime Minister and this government know that this legislation is unpopular; it is not a vote winner; and its basis is completely unfounded and unjustified. It is, in fact, a political witch-hunt.” Senator Pratt noted that “the government established an \$80 million political witch-hunt royal commission in an attempt to justify it unsuccessfully. The royal commission report weakened, rather than strengthened, the case for the re-establishment of the ABCC, and that re-establishment in this legislation is completely and utterly unnecessary. As we know, we already have a building industry regulator in place and therefore the choice before this parliament today is not whether to establish a regulator, because we already have one—the fair work building commission which already has coercive powers. In its last annual report the FWBC had 124 investigations and used its coercive powers on 14 occasions. So, clearly, we have a regulator, and it is working. There is, in my view, no need to replace it, particularly when we know exactly what the legislation before us will do—we have seen it before.”

Independent **Senator Nick Xenophon** commented that “the opposition and others have tried to label the Heydon royal commission - which was not perfect - as a political witch-hunt, but its finding and the large body of evidence presented and the evidence in numerous court proceedings cannot be lightly dismissed, neither can the previous royal commissions. They certainly raise the question of whether our existing legislative framework is strong enough to properly address these issues.”

Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment Act (No.1) 2016

This legislation further strengthens Australia’s national security laws and counter-terrorism framework. The Attorney-General **Senator Hon. George Brandis** commented that “Australians currently face the most significant threat from terrorism in our nation’s history. The Australian Government continues to work diligently towards combatting the threat we face from terror groups and individuals, both overseas and at home. Sadly, by any measure, the threat we face has only risen.”

Senator Brandis noted that “around 110 Australians are currently fighting or engaged with

terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq. At least 58, and potentially as many as 66, Australians are believed to have been killed in the conflict, while approximately 40 Australians have returned to Australia after travelling to Syria or Iraq and joining groups involved in the conflict. Some of these returnees remain a significant security concern. There are about 200 people in Australia being investigated for providing support to individuals and groups in Syria or Iraq, including through funding and facilitation, or are seeking to travel.”

Senator Brandis reported that the National Terrorism Threat Level for Australia is Probable. This means there is credible intelligence that indicates that individuals or groups have developed both the intent and capability to conduct a terrorist attack in Australia.

Some of the key measures in the legislation include enabling control orders to be imposed on persons from 14 years of age; imposing an obligation on a person subject to a requirement to wear a tracking device to maintain the tracking device in good operational order and create offences for interfering with the operation of a tracking device; establishing regimes to monitor the compliance of individuals subject to a control order through search warrants, surveillance device warrants and telecommunications interception warrants; and enabling the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation to furnish security assessments directly to states and territories.

In relation to the need for control orders to be imposed on persons from 14 years of age, Senator Brandis commented that “recent experience, including law enforcement operations, has shown that young persons can pose a significant risk to national security through their involvement in planning, supporting, and executing terrorist acts. Regrettably, recent events demonstrate the necessity of our law enforcement agencies being able to access the full suite of measures in relation to young persons.”

Senator Brandis noted that “the Government has implemented Recommendation 5 of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security to create a special advocate role to represent the interests of persons subject to control order proceedings where the subject and their legal representative have been excluded from hearing or seeing sensitive national security

THIRD READING: AUSTRALIA

information. The special advocate provides an important safeguard in ensuring that the procedural rights of the subject of a control order proceeding are upheld.”

Senator Brandis concluded that “the Australian Government is committed to fulfilling its most important responsibility—protecting Australia, its people and its interests. We will continue to do so while instilling confidence that our national security and counter-terrorism laws will be exercised in a just and accountable way, consistent with the values of a free and open society.”

Labor **Senator Hon. Jacinta Collins** noted the support of the opposition for the legislation. Senator Collins commented that “control orders are a useful tool for our police forces. They are reserved for serious cases and have been used very sparingly since first introduced into Australian law in 2005. As of February this year, just six had been issued. A court can issue a control order only if it will substantially help prevent a terrorist attack, or if the person against whom an order is being made has trained or participated in training with a listed terrorist organisation, engaged in a hostile activity in a foreign country or been convicted of a terrorism related offence. Labor believes that our security agencies and national institutions should have the powers and resources they need to keep Australians safe from the threat of terrorism. Labor’s commitment to our security agencies and institutions extends to ensuring that resources are available to combat the threat of terrorism, and we will continue to support legislative updates to make sure we can meet future demands.”

Senator Collins noted, however, that “our bipartisan assistance to the government on matters of national security is never a blank cheque.” Senator Collins stated that “we pursued improvements in the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, where Labor members and senators closely scrutinised the Bill and heard evidence from security agencies and a range of experts and community groups. We achieved 20 substantial recommendations for improvements to the Bill. In negotiations with the government we pursued these improvements on which we have achieved agreement.”

MEMBERS' TRAVEL SCRUTINIZED IN AUSTRALIA FEDERAL PARLIAMENT

Travel entitlements under scrutiny again

The Minister for Health and Aged Care, **Hon. Sussan Ley, MP**, has resigned after significant public scrutiny of her travel claims. It was alleged that Minister Ley, while using tax payer funded travel entitlements, purchased an apartment on the Queensland Gold Coast. Ms Ley is the member for a New South Wales regional electorate.

On 8 January 2017, the Shadow Minister for Health and Medicare, **Hon. Catherine King, MP**, commented that "what appears to have occurred in this case is that we've got a Minister who has gone to Brisbane to make an announcement that frankly could have been made anywhere - it wasn't a Brisbane-specific announcement. She's then used Comcar - so taxpayer-funded cars to drive to the Gold Coast, and accommodation to stay on the Gold Coast, and made a purchase of an apartment." Ms King noted that the Minister needs to explain whether she has used her entitlements correctly and if not then she should resign.

Ms Ley responded that she "travelled to Brisbane on 9 May 2015 to make a major announcement about the availability of new medicines at a specialist breast cancer clinic and to meet with patients in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast." Ms Ley noted that "while attending an auction was not the reason for my visit to Queensland or the Gold Coast, I completely understand this changed the context of

the travel undertaken. The distinction between public and private business should be as clear as possible when dealing with taxpayers' money."

Ms Ley advised that "I have spoken to the Prime Minister and he agrees that this claim does not meet the high standards he expects of Ministers. I apologise for the error of judgement. Tomorrow I will ask the Department of Finance to invoice me for the costs for the car and travel allowance claimed on Saturday 9 May 2015, including the relevant penalty applied to erroneous claims."

On 9 January 2017, Ms Ley advised that she would stand aside from the Ministry without ministerial pay pending an investigation into her travel entitlements by the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Ms Ley concluded that "I look forward to working with the Secretary to ensure this is done as quickly and transparently as possible and I look forward to resuming my important work in the Health, Sport and Aged Care portfolios at the earliest opportunity." Ms Ley was confident that she had not broken any travel rules but did recognise that it was public perception or the ability to pass the 'pub test' that was critical with these issues.

Ms King responded that "yesterday Sussan Ley said there was consensus between her and the Prime Minister that her claim to purchase an apartment on the Gold Coast 'does not meet the high standards he expects of Ministers.' Despite this clear-cut admission, Malcolm

Turnbull is trying to mask his frontbencher's breach of ministerial standards with a review and delays. Australians deserve better. What does it take for this Prime Minister to come out of hiding and act? How many failings are Turnbull government ministers allowed to get away with?"

The reporting of Ms Ley's initial indiscretion led to more intense scrutiny of her official travel more generally. An analysis of her expense records showed that she had claimed 37 nights accommodation on the Gold Coast involving 27 flights since 2013. When Ms King was asked about this she commented that "well lots of Australians love the Gold Coast, but this Minister seems to really like the Gold Coast. For official business, that does seem a very high number of trips, and I think it's probably worth comparing that against what other ministers' - who live outside of Queensland - travel is to the Gold Coast. Of course you want people to represent the country and to travel around, but that many trips to the Gold Coast over what is a relatively short period of time does seem quite high." Ms King noted public reports that the cost of this would be around \$40,000.

In addition, it has also been alleged that Ms Ley, who is a licensed commercial pilot, has claimed travel expenses of more than \$13,000 to pilot charter planes along commercial routes where there were cheaper commercial options. The reports alleged that Ms Ley regularly chartered planes

between Canberra and Albury even though it is slightly less than a four hour drive.

On 13 January 2017, the Prime Minister, **Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP**, advised that he had received advice from Ms Ley of her intention to resign as Minister. At the same time, the Prime Minister took the opportunity to advise the Australian public of his intention to reform the allowance and entitlement system which would be based on the UK model. The Prime Minister stated that "the Government believes that the work expenses of Parliamentarians, including Ministers, should be administered and overseen by an independent agency. This already happens in some jurisdictions - notably in the United Kingdom. An independent parliamentary expenses authority will be a compliance, reporting and transparency body. It will monitor and adjudicate all claims by MPs, Senators and Ministers, ensuring that taxpayers' funds are spent appropriately and in compliance with the rules. The body will be governed by an independent board, which will include a person experienced in auditing - in audit matters - a person with wide experience in remuneration matters, the President - for the time being - of the Remuneration Tribunal, a former judicial officer and a former MP."

A key feature of the new framework will be a requirement for monthly disclosure of a Parliamentarian's expenses in a readily searchable format.

The Prime Minister noted that "once again, the model is the process that is used in the United Kingdom. We're not slavishly bound to the United Kingdom model, I might add, but that is the very clear direction that we are focused on."

Mr Turnbull concluded that "as politicians, backbenchers and Ministers, we should be as careful and as accountable with taxpayers' money as we possibly can be. We are dealing with other people's money. The Australian people are entitled to see that we are spending it wisely,

appropriately, in accordance with the rules, but also in a manner that gets value for money. In other words, we're spending it as though it was money from a business of our own. We should spend it with even more care and more attention than we would spend our own money. We are fiduciaries for the funds that we have - fiduciaries for the people of Australia."

The Leader of the Opposition, **Hon. Bill Shorten, MP**, supported the need for reform of travel expenses but insisted that reform must go further and look at the

political donations system. In addition, he canvassed the need for a Federal Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC). Mr Shorten stated that "no discussion about electoral reform and rebuilding the confidence of Australians in the political process can take place without having an open and honest discussion about a federal ICAC."

Independent Senator **Nick Xenophon** has called for harsher penalties for breaches of entitlements rules. Senator Xenophon stated that "what dismays me about all this is

back in 2015 I introduced a bill following the 'chopper-gate' scandal involving Bronwyn Bishop that would have led to more transparency, an independent watchdog, greater financial penalties, the public having a right to complain, and also monthly disclosures of polities perks, yet that was rejected out of hand by the major parties." Senator Xenophon said that "right now, the current rules are like being slapped with a wet piece of lettuce."



UK HOUSE OF LORDS DEBATES



The size of the UK Parliament's House of Lords

The size of the upper house of the UK Parliament, the House of Lords, with a membership of over 800, has long been a source of criticism and sections of the UK press have not been slow to use the fact that the House is the largest second chamber in the world to seek to undermine its credibility. Peers are appointed for life and, although there is now a mechanism for members to retire, this is voluntary and still in its infancy. New lists of party political nominations have now become an almost annual feature, with many of the appointments proving controversial both within and outside the House.

Until relatively recently, the proposition that the size of the House was a problem was strongly contested, with the Government, keen to protect the Prime Minister's power to appoint, maintaining that it was important to refresh the membership from time to time and that calls for a reduction in size failed to take into account the part-time nature of the House.

However, over the past year or so a consensus has gathered around the idea that action of some kind is necessary. This has partly been fueled by the press attention given to recent appointments and high profile support from within Parliament but the issue has also been brought into increasing focus by the knowledge that the House of Commons is to be reduced in size to 600, making failure to address the issue in the Lords less defensible.

When the Lord Speaker, Lord Fowler, made the issue

a key part of his election platform in the summer of 2016 it was clear where the balance of opinion lay.

Any reform to the composition of the House of Lords, particular by legislative means, is notoriously difficult to secure. Add to this the various issues which arise with almost any of the proposed solutions and the lack of consensus is not difficult to understand.

The options mooted have included age limits, term limits and a proportional reduction from each of the party groups, either on the basis of attendance and contribution record or on the basis of an election within each group. However there is no obvious correlation between age and the value of the contribution made to the House and age and term limits could disproportionately affect different party groups. Contribution and attendance records also have their difficulties, especially for the Crossbench group where many members, appointed for their expertise in particular subjects, confine the majority of their contributions to these areas.

Any proposal likely to find favour would also need to ensure that the gender and regional balance of membership was not adversely affected. Finally any measures to reduce the size without a new understanding about the numbers coming into the House, or a cap on numbers risk making the entire endeavour futile.

In December 2016, responding to a debate on the issue, the Leader of the House of Lords, Baroness Evans of Bowes Park summed up the

current position: *"We have an opportunity to make progress. It is clear that there is strong feeling across all Benches that the size of the House is an issue of concern and that noble Lords want to continue discussions about how we might address this although I think it is also fair to say that there is not currently clear agreement on what a solution might be."*

Although many Members had used the debate to advocate a Select Committee on the subject, the outcome was the establishment of a 'Lord Speaker's Committee.' Significant in itself as a procedural innovation, the Committee was more significant in being the first formal body set up to look at the issue with the support of the leadership of all benches. The Committee is currently taking evidence on *"practical and politically viable options that might lead to progress"* and is expected to report by

early summer 2017. As the Lord Speaker remarked on setting up the Committee: *"this is not an easy task. However, if this issue can be settled, I hope that the public will be better able to recognise the true value of this House."*

UK international relations debate focuses on Commonwealth benefits

The House of Lords engaged in a debate on the 'UK's international relations in the light of Brexit, including its future engagement with the UN and the United States' following a report from the House of Lords International Relations Committee on the priorities of the new UN Secretary-General.

The UK Minister for the Commonwealth, Baroness Anelay spoke about the intergovernmental organisation's *"immense global reach"* and *"huge potential to exert influence on issues of global importance."*

Emphasising that the Commonwealth could be instrumental in specific UN priorities such as boosting trade and addressing climate change, Baroness Berridge asked, *"When will we, in the words of the noble Lord, Lord Howell, 'utilise this underutilised network'."* She also urged that *"the UK should look to encourage the UN and its Secretary-General to engage with religion and freedom of religion or belief."* The Conservative peer is the director of the Commonwealth Initiative for the Freedom of Religion or Belief - a project which supports Parliamentarians to speak out about the freedom of religion and belief. She joined other members of the House of Lords in highlighting the critical importance of the Commonwealth in international relations.

Other peers, including Baroness Deech also called for more focus on the

Commonwealth from the UK Government.

Court dress and wigs in the House of Commons

Court dress and wigs have been worn by the Clerks at the Table in both Houses of the UK Parliament for several centuries, however from 20 February 2017, Clerks at the Table in the House of Commons have been wearing gowns over dark suits, with court dress and wigs reserved for use on formal occasions only.

This follows a decision taken by the House of Commons Commission. In a letter to the Procedure Committee, the Clerk of the House, David Natzler explained the arguments that had led him to put this proposal forward. The increase in the number of clerks undertaking roles at the Table was one practical factor, but the unhelpful image that court dress can convey was also stressed. The Clerk explained that wigs could present *"an unhelpfully forbidding image to Members who may not realise that part of the purpose of having Clerks at the Table is to advise all Members, not just the Chair; that the image they convey to those watching proceedings live or on television is of quaintness and of a chilling and antique formality, far removed from the desire of the House to present itself as a forum of open debate and scrutiny, reflective of the people we serve."*

The announcement by the Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt Hon. John Bercow, MP received a mixed reception from Members but Mr Speaker stressed his own support for the changes. It is unclear as yet whether the House of Lords will consider following suit.



RESIGNATION OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

Resignation of Prime Minister John Key

On 6 December 2016, at the behest of the leaders of the Labour Party and New Zealand First, the House held an urgent debate on the announcement of Rt Hon. John Key MP (National) to resign his post as the 38th Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Speaking to Mr Key's character, then Deputy Prime Minister Rt Hon. Bill English MP (Leader, National) told the House that Mr Key had "always believed you get the best from people with confidence, not with divisiveness" and that "the way he has conducted his exit from his position illustrates the graciousness and the consideration that he has shown every single day that I have worked with him".

Mr David Seymour MP (Leader, ACT Party) echoed Mr English's praise, describing Mr Key as "one of the most affable, unflappable people I have ever known. At certain times ... I have said to myself: 'That guy is the Prime Minister of New Zealand, dealing with very serious issue X, and doing it in a way that does not show a hint of being flapped under pressure, or of panic.'"



Rt Hon. John Key MP

Hon. Annette King MP (Deputy Leader, Labour) opened her speech with an acknowledgment of the Prime Minister's commitment and lengthy service: "[It] is a time to thank him for his 8 years as Prime Minister of New Zealand. ... [Prime Ministers] work incredibly hard, they make a huge commitment to the country, and it takes a great toll on them and their families. I wish him well in his years ahead."

However, Opposition Members were also critical of the Prime Minister's record. Rt Hon. Winston Peters MP (Leader, New Zealand First) stated: "Eight years ago he campaigned on a four-point plan to solve what he called 'the housing affordability crisis'. He talked of 'the enormity of the problem' and [said] that it was the second-worst housing affordability problem in the whole wide world. ... Eight years later the housing crisis has seriously worsened. ... A generation of New Zealanders is growing up and will never, ever own their own homes."

Ms Metiria Turei MP (Co-Leader, Green) said: "the first thing he did when he became Prime Minister was to give tax cuts to the rich ... leaving working families who were subject to the harms caused by the global financial crisis right out of the picture."

Prime Minister John Key's resignation was effective from 12 December 2016. He was succeeded as Prime Minister and leader of the National Party by his deputy and Minister of Finance, Rt Hon. Bill English MP.

Policing (Cost Recovery) Amendment Bill

The Policing (Cost Recovery) Amendment Bill amends the Policing Act 2008 to enable the police to charge for demand services - defined as those that constitute policing, are provided only by request, and are of direct benefit to the individual or organisation requesting them. Other than vetting services, the Bill does not specify services for which costs can be recovered. The provision for non-demand services, such as conducting criminal investigations or responding to emergency calls, is not affected.

The Bill also provides for the making of regulations to authorize the Commissioner of Police to exempt, waive or refund the whole or any part of a charge or fee prescribed by regulations made under the Bill.

The Minister of Police, Hon. Judith Collins MP (National), moving the third reading on 1 November 2016, noted that "The New Zealand Police is one of the few police services worldwide that does not have legislation that explicitly allows for some degree of cost recovery." Speaking in support of the Bill, Ms Jacqui Dean MP (National) said: "Police vetting is becoming increasingly common and increasingly necessary, and part of employment."

Opposition parties voiced concerns that the Bill does not specify any services other than vetting for which costs may be recovered. Mr David Clendon MP (Green) stated: "It is the thin edge of the wedge of commercialising the services that police provide for us."

Ms Meka Whaitiri MP (Labour) said: "The extensions to the statutory powers given to the New Zealand Police do not just limit it to charging for vetting services ... but actually open the potential to look at generating income through other means."

Mr Jonathan Young MP (National) explained: "What this Bill does is it enables the agency ... to be able to recover its costs ... resources that, in spending on this process, not only can be reallocated to building a very complete and sustainable and efficient vetting process but can enable the existing resources of the Police to be better dedicated to the frontline work that it does."

However, Mr Mahesh Bindra MP (New Zealand First) commented that "police vetting is inseparable from basic policing. The police force and the services it provides are funded from tax revenue, and we believe that it should stay that way."

Hon. Judith Collins MP commended the Bill and said: "Cost recovery by public sector agencies in New Zealand already occurs, and leads to better allocation of taxpayer resources. I believe there is a strong case for this to include cost recovery for policing services where the service is of direct benefit to individuals or organisations." The Bill passed its third reading by 63 votes to 56.

Earthquake recovery legislation

At 12.02 a.m. on 14 November 2016, New Zealand was rocked by a magnitude 7.8 earthquake. The 'Kaikōura' earthquake, centred near the South Island town of Culverden, caused widespread damage to road and rail infrastructure and resulted in the deaths of two people.

On 29 November 2016, urgency was accorded to the passing of two Bills related to the Kaikōura earthquake: the *Hurunui/Kaikōura Earthquakes Recovery Bill* and the *Hurunui/Kaikōura Earthquakes Emergency Relief Bill*. All sides of Parliament worked collaboratively to pass the legislation in a timely manner in order to assist those whose

homes and livelihoods had been affected by the quake.

The *Hurunui/Kaikōura Earthquakes Recovery Bill* was introduced by Hon. Gerry Brownlee MP (National), Acting Minister of Civil Defence, who explained that the Bill set out a proposal that would allow a specified list of legislation to be amended by Order in Council for the earthquake-affected areas, where necessary or desirable for recovery. He added that it was a flexible mechanism to allow the Government to react quickly to a range of issues. There was some question over whether powers should be more broad-ranging to allow for emergency scenarios in the future, or whether powers should be specific to the earthquake in question and the areas affected by it.

Mr Stuart Smith MP (National), Member of Parliament for Kaikōura, returned to Wellington in time for the reading of the Bills. He explained that his constituents were already asking questions about when the legislation would be enacted and when they could start the recovery phase. He said: "I know that it has been over 3 weeks since the earthquake and that a heck of a lot has happened, but if you are the people living in it, it seems a heck of a long time. So they are really very grateful that things are moving. I told them that I was coming back here today and that this would be passed today, so I really do thank everybody across the House on their behalf."

Hon. David Parker MP (Labour) said his view on the proposed powers was "the same as it is in respect of taxation - as little as possible but as much as necessary. So the philosophy that I and the Labour Party took to this Select Committee is that we needed to give the executive as few powers to override primary legislation as is possible but as many as are necessary. With that in mind, I think we have largely achieved that." Mr Parker added there were aspects of the Bill he did not find perfect, but he believed the Bill had "got to a reasonable place".

Ms Eugenie Sage MP (Greens) noted: "some have certainly suggested that it would be desirable to have legislation around recovery from a national emergency prepared as much as possible in advance. Certainly, superficially, that is attractive because it means that the issues are considered in a reflective and a measured way, but I think the shortcoming is that because such legislation is generic, it would have to provide very broad powers and, potentially, larger powers than are needed."

Mr Denis O'Rourke MP (New Zealand First) supported the Bill, saying his party's concerns had been addressed. He said: "all parties worked very well together on the Local Government and Environment Committee, so that after a lot of hard work, I might say, consensus was reached on virtually all of the changes to the Bill".

Compensation for Live Organ Donors Bill

The *Compensation for Live Organ Donors Bill*, a private member's bill, passed into law on 5 December 2016 after receiving unanimous support at its third reading. Its intent is to provide financial assistance to people who choose to donate an organ and, as a result, forgo income during their recovery. The Bill also provides childcare assistance payments for

those who need it during this period.

Opening the third reading debate, Mr Chris Bishop MP (National), the Member in charge of the Bill, noted that "More than 500 New Zealanders are waiting for an organ transplant, and approximately 450 of these people are waiting for a kidney transplant." He explained that "The current compensation regime amounts to the equivalent of the sickness benefit, and it inadequately recognises and supports the hardship that these individuals face when they make the choice to give up an organ in order to save a life."

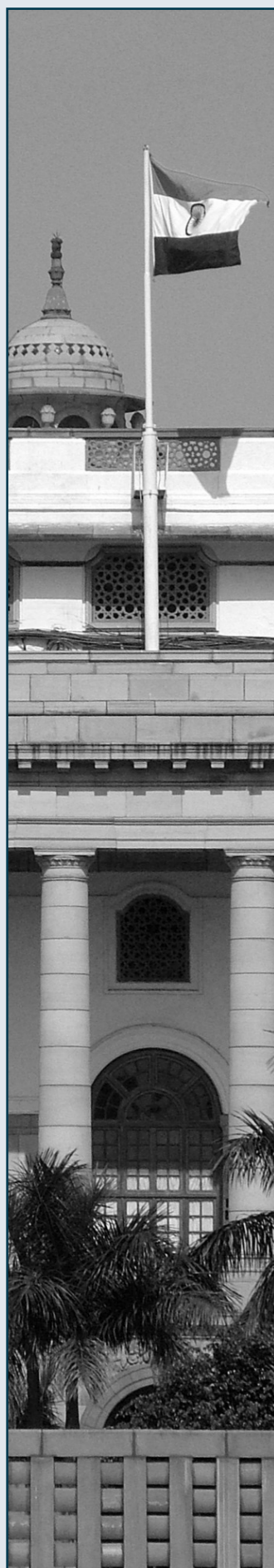
Although the financial assistance was originally set at 80% of the donor's income, a Select Committee recommendation to increase it to 100% was adopted by the House. Responding to this, Ms Catherine Delahunty MP (Green) said: "I am delighted that the Health Committee persuaded the Government - not the Government, but the owner of the Bill - that we should go from 80 to 100% compensation because there are hidden costs. There are huge stresses and there is huge courage involved with people who donate organs."

MPs were generally highly supportive of the Bill, with Hon. Annette King MP (Deputy Leader, Labour) stating that "it is not often that a Member gets to have a Bill supported by all Members in the House and for it to go through all stages and become the law of the land."

Ms Ria Bond MP (New Zealand First) noted that "It is good to see that this Bill has also been futureproofed for further live donated transplants carried out in other countries but not yet here in New Zealand."

However, several members pointed out that more work still needed to be done in regard to deceased organ donations, with Ms Poto Williams MP (Labour) explaining that "on the driver's licence that you get, there is an indication of your availability to be an organ donor. Many of us have indicated that that is what we want, but it does not guarantee that when you do pass away your family will actually live up to those wishes and do that."





The Winter Session of the India Parliament that commenced on 16 November 2016 concluded on 16 December 2016. In this session, Parliament could not transact much of its business because of frequent interruptions and adjournments on the issue of demonetization of certain high value currency notes. Expressing her concern over the wastage of precious House time, **Speaker Sumitra Mahajan**, in her remarks on 16 December 2016, *inter alia* observed: "...In this session, we lost over 91 hours 59 minutes of time due to interruptions followed by forced adjournments, which does not augur well for all of us and also dents our image before the public as well. It is my fond hope that in the coming sessions, there would be no disruptions and we would all work better resulting in fruitful discussions and constructive deliberations..."

Showing his anguish over disruption of proceedings, Chairman, Rajya Sabha, **Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari**, in his valedictory remarks said: "...Regular and continuous disruptions characterized this Session. The symbolism of dignified protest so essential for orderly conduct of parliamentary proceedings was abandoned. This deprived Members of the opportunity to seek accountability of the Executive through questions and discussions on matters of public interest. The prohibition in the rules about shouting slogans, displaying posters and obstructing proceedings by leaving their assigned places was consistently ignored by all sections of the House."

The Indian government cancelled the legal tender character of the high denomination bank notes of Rs.500 and Rs.1000 issued by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) with effect from midnight on 8

November 2016. The government took this step with a view to curbing financing of terrorism through the proceeds of fake Indian currency notes and use of such funds for subversive activities such as espionage, smuggling of arms, drugs and other contrabands into India, and for eliminating 'black money' which cast a long shadow of parallel economy on Indian real economy. A new series of bank notes of Rs.500 and Rs.2,000 denominations were introduced for circulation from 10 November 2016. People were allowed to deposit old high denomination bank notes into their bank accounts and/or exchange in bank branches or issue offices of RBI till the close of business hours on 30 December 2016. Individuals were also allowed to exchange old high denomination bank notes of certain value in Post Offices.

When Parliament was convened in its winter session, opposition Members wanted a discussion on demonetization to highlight the inconveniences caused to general public. Opposition Members in Lok Sabha pressed for a discussion under the adjournment motion which provided for a vote. However, the demand for a discussion under the rule that allowed a vote was not accepted and the Lok Sabha remained in disagreement over the issue. The opposition Members wanted the Prime Minister to explain in Parliament his decision and its impact on the poor. A short discussion in Lok Sabha was started but was hardly discussed. A debate in Rajya Sabha also remained inconclusive.

The Council of States (Rajya Sabha), on 16 November 2016, the first day of the session, raised a discussion on the issue. Many MPs had given notices for suspension of the day's List of Business to start a discussion. As there was a

general consensus in this regard and the Government was ready for a discussion, the Chairman of Rajya Sabha, **Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari** suspended the day's List of Business to take up the discussion immediately. The opposition Members insisted on the presence of the Prime Minister in the House during the discussion. The discussion remained inconclusive due to the disruptions of the proceedings.

Initiating the discussion, **Shri Anand Sharma** (INC) said withdrawal of legal tender status of the high denomination notes with effect from midnight on 8 November 2016 created a situation of undeclared emergency in the country. He wanted the government to explain what led it to think that most of the 86% money in Indian market was counterfeit. People could not withdraw money from their own bank accounts because of ceiling restrictions and the new Rs. 2,000 denomination currency note was of no use due to non-availability of small denomination currency notes.

The Minister of State (Independent Charge), **Shri Piyus Goyal** (BJP) submitted that despite sufferings, a major section of population welcomed the step. **Prof. Ram Gopal Yadav** (SP) said the farmers had suffered a lot and an undeclared emergency prevailed in the country. The government should have ensured sufficient printing and supply of the new currency notes to minimize the sufferings of common people.

Shri A. Navaneethakrishnan (AIADMK) thought demonetization created a lot of inconveniences for the poor as they did not keep their money in bank accounts. **Shri Sharad Yadav** (JD-U) believed the measure could strike a blow to 'black money' within the country but would not be able to address black money deposited in foreign countries.

DISRUPTION OVER DEMONETIZATION

He demanded constitution of a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to look into the entire issue. **Shri Sitaram Yechury** (CPI-M) said demonetizing 86% of currency in circulation had created a complete mayhem in the country. A cashless economy was not possible as Indian economy was mostly based on cash transactions and the entire country was yet to have internet facilities. He also demanded a JPC to investigate the matter.

Kumari Mayawati (BSP) alleged the decision was taken without any proper preparation and a JPC should investigate the matter. **Shri Praful Patel** (NCP) said while the intention was good the difficulties being faced by the public were not taken care of. There was lack of appropriate planning to ease out the resultant hardships.

Welcoming the decision, **Shri Naresh Gujral** (SAD) said the money coming back in to the banking system could be used to provide funds to the farmers, small businessmen, startups, and all those in need of bank finance. While not objecting to the step taken to check terrorism and black money, **Shri Prem Chand Gupta** (RJD) said there should have been proper planning. **Shri Pramod Tiwari** (INC) considered demonetization as the biggest scam and demanded a JPC. The Minister of Urban Development; Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation; and Information and Broadcasting, **Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu** argued that instead of having a meaningful debate several parties were opposing the basic principle behind the move. The step taken by the government enhanced people's confidence in the political system

Participating in the resumed debate on 24 November 2016, **Dr. Manmohan Singh** (INC), the former Prime Minister,

while not disagreeing with the Prime Minister's argument that this was the way to curb 'black money', prevent growth of forfeited currency notes and help in control of terrorist finance activities, said monumental mismanagement had been undertaken in the process of demonetization. Not allowing people to withdraw their money from the bank, he felt, was enough to condemn what was done in the name of greater good of the people. It was important to take note of the grievances of the people who suffered as a result of demonetization. The GDP of the country could decline by about two percentage point as a result of what had been done.

Shri Naresh Agrawal (SP) was of the view that no elected government should be allowed to take such a decision without the consent of both Houses of Parliament. He demanded a JPC to inquire into the matter of leakage, if any, with regard to the decision of demonetization of currency. **Shri Derek O'Brien** (AITC) said his party was against 'black money' and corruption but was deeply concerned about the hardships being faced by common people and small traders. He argued that anyone who opposed government's policy was not for 'black money' or was anti-national. Participating in the discussion on 1 December 2016, **Shri A.U. Singh Deo** (BJD) said the step had caused some difficulties but people largely welcomed it. Because of the interruptions, the debate could not be completed.

On 28 November 2016, many opposition MPs made submissions in Lok Sabha on demonetization. The Leader of the Congress Party in Lok Sabha, **Shri Mallikarjun Kharge** tried to highlight the difficulties faced

by the common people and requested the Speaker of Lok Sabha, **Smt. Sumitra Mahajan** to allow discussion under a rule that entails voting. He demanded the presence of the Prime Minister during the discussion.

Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyay (AITC) wanted the issue to be discussed through an adjournment motion. **Shri Mulayam Singh Yadav** (SP) said there was wrong in asking the Prime Minister to inform the House the circumstances that led to such a major decision. **Shri P. Karunakaran** (CPI-M) said the Prime Minister should inform Parliament about his decision, instead of speaking outside. **Shri Jay Prakash Narayan Yadav** (RJD) also wanted the issue to be discussed under an adjournment motion. **Shri P. Kumar** (AIADMK) asked the government to take all necessary steps on war footing to improve the situation. **Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab** (BJD) requested the government and the Speaker to find a way to break the deadlock. **Shri Anandrao Adsul** (Shiv Sena) said people in rural areas were facing a lot of hardships.

In his intervention, the Home Minister, **Shri Rajnath Singh** asserted that no one doubted the intention of the government as the decision was taken in the interest of the nation. He said the Speaker of the House enjoyed the power to decide the rule under which the issue could be discussed and the government was prepared for a discussion under any rule. He assured the House that the Prime Minister would be available during the discussion, and if necessary, would make interventions. The Speaker, **Smt. Sumitra Mahajan** disallowed the notices given for the adjournment of the House to discuss the issue.

On 30 November 2016, many Members of Lok Sabha expressed concern about the stalemate. **Shri Kharge** requested the Speaker to allow discussion under any rule that entailed voting. **Shri Mohammad Salim** (CPI-M) said Lok Sabha proceedings should not be controlled by the government and the Speaker should allow the adjournment motion. Intervening, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister said the government was always ready for a discussion. When the government, the opposition and the entire country were against corruption, there was no need to divide the House. **Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab** (BJD) said the opposition was not demanding a vote on corruption; what they wanted was a discussion on demonetization to highlight the difficulties faced by the people.

On 1 December 2016, proceedings in Parliament were interrupted despite the presence of the Prime Minister. It had been the demand of the opposition that the Prime Minister should be present during the debate to listen to their views. The Rajya Sabha was disrupted though the Prime Minister was present in the House.

On 5 December 2016, several Members requested the Speaker to allow discussion under rule 184 that also provided for a vote. The Home Minister, **Shri Rajnath Singh** urged the Speaker to allow discussion under any rule or even without rule and the government was prepared to take further steps to improve the implementation aspect of demonetization. The House, however, was adjourned amidst continuous uproar.

Both the Houses were adjourned *sine die* on 16 December 2016.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2016

The *Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995* was enacted to give effect to the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of the People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region. The Act defined Persons with Disabilities as those having not less than 40% disability and identified seven categories of disabilities, namely, blindness, low vision, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, mental retardation, mental illness and leprosy-cured.

Over a period of time, the conceptual understanding of the rights of persons with disabilities had become clearer and there had been worldwide change in approach to handling the issues concerning persons with disabilities. The United Nations adopted its *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* laying down the principles to be followed by the States Parties for empowerment of persons with disabilities. India signed the Convention and subsequently ratified it on 1 October 2007, coming into effect on 3 May 2008. This gave India an international obligation to comply with the provisions of the said Convention which required an entirely new legislation.

An Expert Committee constituted under the chairmanship of the then Vice-Chairperson, Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy, Kolkata submitted its report in 2011, suggesting a Draft Bill relating to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The draft Bill was extensively debated upon at various levels involving State Governments and Union territories and various stakeholders.

The new Bill contained extensive definitions of the types of disabilities to be included in the legislation. Chapter Two of the Act lays down '*Rights and Entitlements*' which included:

- Section 3 pertains to equality and discrimination which vests upon the appropriate authority to ensure that the persons with disability enjoy the right to equality, life with dignity and respect for his or her integrity equally with others. It further stipulates that no person with disability be discriminated on the ground of disability, unless it is shown that the impugned act or omission is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Further no person shall be deprived of his or her personal liberty only on the ground of disability.
- Section 4 requires appropriate Government and authorities to take measures to ensure that women and children with disabilities enjoy their rights equally with others. Further, all children with disabilities have a right on an equal basis to freely express their views on all matters affecting them and provide them appropriate support keeping in view their age and disability.
- Section 5 provides for the appropriate Government to endeavour that the persons with disabilities enjoy the right to live in community.
- Section 6 details measures to protect persons with disabilities from being subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
- Section 7 provides that the appropriate Government is required to take measures to protect persons with disabilities from all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation and to prevent this they will take steps for avoiding such incidents and prescribe the procedure for its reporting.
- Section 8 contain provisions that the National Disaster Management Authority, State Disaster Management Authority and District Management Authority will take appropriate measures for the safety and protection of persons with disabilities in situations of risks.

- Section 9 stipulates that no child with a disability be separated from his or her parents on the ground of disability and only in exceptional cases the competent court may place the child in shelter homes, in cases where it is genuinely needed.

Other protections contained in the Bill included:

- Protecting the reproductive rights of persons with disabilities.
- Ensuring that the Election Commission of India and State Election Commissions have been vested with the responsibility to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to voting.
- It has also been provided that the appropriate Government has to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to Courts Of Law, Tribunal, Authority, Commission or any other judicial or quasi-judicial body, where the need arises.
- Provisions have been made requiring the appropriate Government to ensure that the persons with disabilities have right, equally with others, to own or inherit property, movable or immovable, control their financial affairs and have access to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit.
- Provision has also been made for grant of limited guardianship and plenary guardianship by the District Court for mentally ill persons who can take all legal binding decisions on his or her behalf.
- Further it has been required of the appropriate Government to designate authorities to mobilize community support for persons with disabilities.

Debate

During the discussion in both Houses of Parliament the legislation found phenomenal support. Members from all sections of the House viewed this as a landmark legislation in the history of the parliamentary legislative mechanism in India. Members welcomed this as the most important legislation which needs special consideration and acknowledgement that for the first time a comprehensive legislation has been brought forward for the aid of those who are disadvantaged – some from birth, some through accidents or diseases acquired later.

Members appreciated the fact that a wide range of disabilities have been included in the legislation and duly addressed. Members also felt that the Bill would prove a major milestone in enhancing the self-respect of disabled persons in the coming time.

Some of the important suggestions made by members were:-

1. It has to be ensured in the Bill that the rights of such persons are not violated by any person or any institute;
2. The quotas of reservations for disabled be increased to 5%;
3. The country has to be made disabled friendly. There is a need for the introduction of accessible buses and even in some government buildings, as in western countries;
4. It was also felt that the existing rudimentary level as far as prosthetics has to be upgraded. In the West, they are developing limbs which can be connected to the nerves which eventually get connected to the brain. The people who should be benefitted by the Bill shall actually become a part of society and are truly and honestly accepted by their peers as normal human beings;
5. Besides, locomotory problems, rheumatoid arthritis and

osteoarthritis, neurological problems, brain tumors, etc; diseases which are not included in the Bill also need to be addressed.

The Minister-in-charge of the Bill while replying to the debate assured Members that concerns expressed and suggestions made by Members would be addressed. The Bill was passed by Rajya Sabha on 14 December 2016 and by Lok Sabha on 16 December 2016. The Bill as passed by both Houses of Parliament was assented to by the President of India on 27 December 2016.

The Taxation Laws (Second Amendment) Bill, 2016

Evasion of taxes deprives the nation of critical resources which could enable the Government to undertake anti-poverty and development programmes. It also puts a disproportionate burden on the honest taxpayers who have to bear the brunt of higher taxes to make up for the revenue leakage. As a step forward to curb 'black money', bank notes of existing series of denomination of the value of five hundred rupees and one thousand rupees (hereinafter referred to as 'specified bank notes') issued by the Reserve Bank of India had been ceased to be legal tender with effect from the 9 November 2016.

Concerns had been raised that some of the existing provisions of the Income-Tax Act, 1961 could possibly be used for concealing 'black money'. It was, therefore, felt imperative that the Government amends the Act to plug these loopholes as early as possible so as to prevent misuse of the provisions. The Government, therefore, proposed to bring forward the *Taxation Laws (Second Amendment) Bill, 2016*, to make some changes in the Act to ensure that defaulting assesseees are subjected to tax at a higher rate and stringent penalty provision.

In the wake of declaring specified bank notes as not legal tender, there had been representations and suggestions from experts that instead of allowing people to find illegal ways of converting their 'black money' into black again, the Government should give them an opportunity

THIRD READING: INDIA

to pay taxes with heavy penalty and allow them to come clean so that not only the Government gets additional revenue for undertaking activities for the welfare of the poor, but also the remaining part of the declared income legitimately comes into the formal economy. Thus, money coming from additional revenue as a result of the decision to ban Rs. 1000 and Rs. 500 notes could be utilised for welfare schemes for the poor.

In this amending legislation, an alternative scheme namely, the '*Taxation and Investment Regime for Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, 2016*' (PMGKY) had been provided in the Bill. As per this scheme, any declarant under this regime shall be required to pay tax at 30% of the undisclosed income and penalty at 10% of the undisclosed income. Further, a surcharge to be called '*Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Cess*' at 33% of tax had also been proposed to be levied. In addition to tax surcharge and penalty, the declarant would be required to deposit 25% of the undisclosed income in a Deposit Scheme to be notified by the Central Government in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India under the '*Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Deposit Scheme, 2016*'. This amount has been proposed to be utilised for the programmes of irrigation, housing, toilets, infrastructure, primary education, primary health, livelihood, etc.; so that there is justice and equality.

The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on 29 November 2016. This Bill, which was a money Bill, after its passage in Lok Sabha was transmitted to Rajya Sabha for its recommendation. The Bill, so transmitted to Rajya Sabha, was not returned to Lok Sabha within the period of fourteen days from the date of its receipt in Rajya Sabha Secretariat. The Bill was accordingly deemed to have been passed by both Houses of Parliament at the expiration of the said period (14 days) in the form in which it was passed by Lok Sabha under clause (5) of article 109 of the Constitution of India. The Bill received Presidential assent on 15 December 2016.



CPA Patron, Officers, Executive Committee, Regional Representatives, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee and CPA Secretariat

Patrons

PATRON:
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
Head of the Commonwealth

VICE-PATRON:
Vacant



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CPA Executive Committee

Executive Committee Members' dates of membership are indicated below each name. Correct at time of printing.

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VICE-PRESIDENT:
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Speaker of Parliament, Swaziland
(2014-2017)

Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP
Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Cameroon
(2015-2018)
Also Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Committee (2016-2017)

Rt Hon. Umar Buba Jibril, MP
Deputy House Leader, Nigeria
(2015-2018)

Hon. Bernard Songa Sibalatani, MP
Namibia
(2016-2019)

Hon. Lazarous C. Chungu, MP
Zambia
(2016-2019)

ASIA

Hon. Mian Tariq Mehmood, MPA
Punjab, Pakistan
(2014-2017)

Hon. Imran Ahmad, MP
Bangladesh
(2015-2018)

Hon. Dr Fehmida Mirza, MP
Pakistan
(2016-2019)

AUSTRALIA

Hon. Kezia Purick, MLA
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Northern Territory
(2014-2017)

Hon. Russell Paul Wortley, MLC
President of the Legislative Council, South Australia
(2015-2018)

Hon. Don Harwin, MLC
New South Wales
(2016-2019)

BRITISH ISLANDS AND MEDITERRANEAN

Hon. Derek Thomas, MLC
St Helena
(2014-2017)

Rt Hon. Sir Alan Haselhurst, MP
United Kingdom
(2015-2018)

CANADA

Awaiting replacement nomination (2013-2016)

Hon. Alexandra Mendes, MP
Canada
(2015-2018)

Hon. Jackson Lafferty, MLA
Speaker of Legislative Assembly, Northwest Territories
(2016-2019)

CARIBBEAN, AMERICAS AND THE ATLANTIC

Hon. Laura Tucker-Longsworth, MP
Speaker of Parliament, Belize
Acting Regional Representative (2014-2017)

Hon. Anthony Michael Perkins, MP
Speaker of the National Assembly, Saint Kitts and Nevis
(2015-2018)

Hon. Leroy C. Rogers, MLA
Speaker of the House of Assembly, Anguilla
(2016-2019)

INDIA

Hon. Dr Sitasharan Sharma, MLA
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Madhya Pradesh
(2014-2017)

Shri Feroze Varun Gandhi, MP
Lok Sabha, India
(2015-2018)

Shri Kavinder Gupta, MLA
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Jammu and Kashmir
(2016-2019)

PACIFIC

Hon. Niki Rattle
Speaker of Parliament, Cook Islands
(2014-2017)

Hon. Nafoitua Talaimanu Ketu, MP
Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Samoa
(2015-2018)

Hon. Paul Foster-Bell, MP
New Zealand
Acting Regional Representative (2016-2019)

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Dr Lim Biow Chuan, MP
Deputy Speaker, Singapore
(2014-2017)

Hon. Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Kiandee, MP
Deputy Speaker, Malaysia
Acting Regional Representative (2015-2018)

Hon. Datuk Wira Haji Othman Muhamad, MP
Speaker, Malacca
(2016-2019)

CPA Regional Secretaries

AFRICA
Dr Thomas Kashililah
Parliament of Tanzania

ASIA
Mr Syed Shamooun Hashmi
Parliament of Pakistan

AUSTRALIA
Mr Tom Duncan
Australia Capital Territory Legislative Assembly

BRITISH ISLANDS & MEDITERRANEAN
Mr Andrew Tuggey
Parliament of the United Kingdom

CANADA
Mr Blair Armitage
Parliament of Canada

CARIBBEAN, AMERICAS & ATLANTIC
Ms Heather Cooke
Parliament of Jamaica

INDIA
Shri Anoop Mishra
Parliament of India

PACIFIC
Mr Steve Cutting
Parliament of New Zealand

SOUTH-EAST ASIA
Mrs Roosme Hamzah
Parliament of Malaysia

CPA Secretariat

Mr Akbar Khan
7th Secretary-General

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A full listing of the CPA Branch Directory can be found at: www.cpahq.org

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee

PRESIDENT:
Hon. Sagufta Yasmin MP
Bangladesh
(2016-2017)

CHAIRPERSON
Hon. Dato' Noraini Ahmad, MP
Malaysia
(2016-2019)

AFRICA
Hon. Angela Thoko Didiza, MP
South Africa
(2016-2019)

ASIA
Hon. Vijayakala Maheswaran MP
Sri Lanka
(2015-2018)

AUSTRALIA
Hon. Michelle O'Byrne, MP
Tasmania
(2016-2019)

BRITISH ISLANDS AND MEDITERRANEAN
Ms Joyce Watson AM
Wales
(2015-2018)

CANADA
Hon. Linda Reid, MLA
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, British Columbia, Canada
(2014-2017)

CARIBBEAN, AMERICAS AND THE ATLANTIC
Hon. Shirley M. Osborne, MLA
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Montserrat
(2015-2018)

INDIA
Hon. Meenakshi Lekhi, MP
India (2014-2017)

PACIFIC
Hon. Munokoa Poto Williams, MP
New Zealand (2014-2017)
Also Vice-Chairperson of the CWP (2016-2017)

SOUTH-EAST ASIA
Hon. YB Datuk Hajah Norah binti Ahmad, MP
Sarawak, Malaysia
(2016-2019)

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