COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

PARLIAMENTARY STAFF DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

ASIA/SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGIONS

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

4 – 6 MAY 2016

OPENING REMARKS

MS MEENAKSHI DHAR
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES
Participants,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning!

I am delighted to welcome you to Staff Development Workshop hosted by the CPA Pakistan Branch for the Asia and South-East Asia Regions.

Distinguished participants, I am pleased to convey the greetings of the Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Dr the Hon. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh, the Members of the CPA Executive Committee, the new CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan and the entire CPA family. Unfortunately, due to prior commitments in London, Mr Khan is unable be here in person with us this morning but will be joining us later today.

Pakistan is an important part of the Commonwealth Family and I am delighted to be here today in Islamabad at the opening of this very important workshop.

I know the Secretary-General is extremely excited about what we can achieve together during his term in office. In the next few weeks the CPA will be sharing with all Branches a Revised Programme Strategy for the future of CPA work. This vision, which has been incorporated into a revised work programme strategy seeks to build on the good work already undertaken by the Association.

Last week in London the amended Programme Strategy received the approval of our Executive Committee and it is now with your help, that we can begin work to take our Association into the 21st Century.

The CPA, for those of you who are not familiar, was established in 1911. It is an Association that aims to advance parliamentary democracy by enhancing
knowledge and understanding of democratic governance and to build an informed parliamentary community that is able to deepen the Commonwealth’s democratic commitment and further co-operation among Parliaments and legislatures.

The **CPA network provides opportunities** for the Parliamentary community to come together, on an equal footing, to share good practices in parliamentary matters with colleagues from across the Commonwealth. With membership currently standing at approximately 175 branches, both National and Sub-National, we are uniquely placed to share expertise to strengthen good parliamentary governance; contributing to the development of all Commonwealth people.

From Samoa to Sri Lanka, from Nigeria to Newfoundland & Labrador and from Malaysia to Malta, the CPA recognizes that effective policies and practices can come from the small, the inexperienced and the underdeveloped, as well as from the large, the sophisticated and the rich.

Our work doesn’t end at supporting the capacity of Parliamentarians; we seek to go further than that. **The CPA is wholeheartedly committed to the development of well-resourced Parliaments as institutions.** With a firm belief in Parliaments having sufficient and expert staff members that are able to provide impartial support to members across a vast array of parliamentary matters, the CPA is keen to continue to support the development of Parliamentary Staff to reach their full potential.

The CPA recognises that a deficit in support staff with the necessary skills will inevitably result in a limitation to the effectiveness of Parliament. **The better resourcing of Parliaments with expert staff supported through their professional careers is absolutely crucial to a successful parliament and consequently a healthier democracy.**

Over the coming days, you will be hearing about current practices in accountability, legislative oversight, representation and parliamentary procedure, to name but a few.
I am sure you will all appreciate that the success of the programme is dependent upon your input, commitment and dedication. I urge you to participate as actively as you can; share your experiences with others; encourage your peers to share their knowledge with you; be proactive in your engagement; take as much as you can from this programme and most importantly, put your newly acquired knowledge into practice in your own parliaments.

This programme is constantly evolving and we look towards you to provide us with feedback so that we can continue to ensure that we have maximum impact. Therefore please ensure that you complete the evaluation forms which will be circulated and return to the Secretariat staff who are here today.

I would also like to take this opportunity to share some of the other programmes that the CPA undertakes for the benefit of Parliamentary Staff. Similar Staff Development Workshops are also delivered to the other CPA regions – specifically, the Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic, The Pacific and Africa regions. We also run a Seminar in partnership with the World Bank Group and McGill University which involves a week of intensive training at the McGill University Campus in Montreal, followed by a period of distance learning for participants. We have supported representatives from both Pakistan and Sri Lanka on this programme in the past.

The CPA also prides itself in providing resources to Parliamentary Staff through the ‘Commonwealth Parliamentary Research Service’ which conducts and commissions research to compile comparative information about parliamentary, practices, topical issues, as well as information about the CPA.
I would like to finish by saying that the CPA highly values your cooperation, the CPA’s relationship and communication with Parliament is of absolutely paramount importance, so thank you for your continued support and cooperation.

I wish to thank most sincerely the following persons who have agreed to spare their time to assist us at this Seminar as our Resource Persons: Dr Godfrey Haantobolo, Deputy Clerk, Parliament of Zambia, Mr Peter McHugh, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Western Australia and Mr Simon Ross, Deputy Griefter Guernsey. In addition we are grateful to the local Resource Team including Mr Mohammad Anwar, Additional Secretary, Legislation.

Thank you for taking the time out of your incredibly busy parliamentary responsibilities and pressures to be here today and to benefit from this training. Again I wish to invite you to join the CPA on its mission to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, with these remarks on behalf of the Executive Committee, the CPA Secretariat and myself, I wish you the very best of your deliberations.

Thank you.