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

The CWP, as an integral part of the CPA, works for the better representation of women in legislatures and for the furtherance of gender equality across the Commonwealth.

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.
MESSAGE FROM THE CWP CHAIRPERSON

The wellbeing of women and girls is vital to the wellbeing of any country. Societies must invest in gender equality and gender equity to realise women’s rights, and to allow women to be agents of change in their communities. The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) is committed to being an active and dedicated partner in all efforts to implement best practices, encourage shifts in political culture and promote success stories that provide greater equality and opportunity.

When women and men are treated equally, economies grow faster, fewer people live in poverty, and the overall wellbeing of people increases.

For these reasons, CWP formulated a three-year Strategic Plan from 2017 to 2019 in February 2017. This renewed global commitment to gender equality is the product of a strategic consultation process, which involved valuable contributions from the CWP Steering Committee and broader CWP membership from all Regions across the Commonwealth. The plan focuses on creating real and substantial change for women, enabling them to become equal partners in the parliamentary sphere and global development.

As a representative of the people, a Parliamentarian plays an important function in ensuring decisive and measurable actions are taken to provide equal opportunities for girls and boys, women and men. I hope the work of the CWP will inspire people to take action in their community and work systematically to eliminate discrimination and disadvantage by gender.

The CWP envisions a world where women and men have equal access to opportunities – a world where women’s voices are recognised and respected. I urge all Parliamentarians, with the support of the CWP network, to pursue this vision with continued dynamism and enthusiasm. Together we can and will build the future we want, working towards a future of equal rights, equal opportunities and progress for all.

I am delighted to congratulate Commonwealth Women Parliamentarian, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP from Cameroon, who has been elected as Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee following the recent election held at the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

As CWP Chairperson, I am pleased to present the CWP newsletter, and I look forward to working with the Network to build on the successes highlighted in these pages.
Over 20 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians from 16 countries met to discuss the gender priorities for 2017 and beyond at a working group and strategy session held at Wilton Park in the United Kingdom.

The two-day retreat provided the CWP participants with an opportunity to take stock of gender representation in Commonwealth legislatures and re-commit to energising the CWP to take action to better support women in Parliament.

As well as looking at formal and informal quota systems, the women Parliamentarians talked through strategies to engage men in the gender agenda. Agreeing on the importance of gender budgeting, leveraging social media as a tool to engage and educate society about the importance of gender equality, and seeking out partnerships to strengthen the work of the network, the two-day retreat offered an opportunity for CWP to focus on its mission and define its ambitions moving forward. The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians will also focus on three gender policy areas: women in leadership; economic empowerment; and violence against women.

The CWP Working Group was led by the newly elected Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Dr Dato' Noraini Ahmad, MP (Malaysia) who pledged to renew the effort to increase women’s political participation across the Commonwealth during her three year term. Hon. Noraini Ahmad MP said: “I am determined that my tenure should be marked by promoting an active, dynamic and vibrant network of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) that better assists us to meet our aspirations to increase the number of women Parliamentarians; supports us in championing issues that are important to women; and reinforces the important Commonwealth values, including gender equality, that we hold dear. As a result of the CWP Working Group and the valuable contributions from Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians from across our regions, we can now identify our future aspirations, goals and priorities for a responsive, supportive and impactful CWP during my term as Chairperson.”

The CWP Working Group included participants from...
all nine regions of the CPA: Africa Region (South Africa and Mauritius); Asia Region (Sri Lanka and Pakistan); Australia Region (Tasmania and New South Wales); British Islands and Mediterranean Region (Wales and Scotland); Caribbean, Atlantic and Americas Region (Montserrat and Guyana); Canada Region (Saskatchewan and Canada Federal); India Region (Lok Sabha); Pacific Region (New Zealand and Samoa); South-East Asia Region (Malaysia).

The CWP Working Group also heard from a number of leading experts in the field of gender equality including: Hon. Lechesa Tsenoli, MP, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of South Africa and male champion of gender equality; Hon. Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir, Chair of the Women in Parliament Global Forum Executive Board and former Member of Parliament in Iceland; Ms Begoña Lasagabaster, Chief of Leadership and Governance at UN Women and former MP from Spain; Ms Amelia Kinahoi Siamomua, Head of the Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat; and Dr David Donat-Cattin, Secretary-General of Parliamentarians for Global Action.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians contribute to global toolkits to support more women into politics

Representatives of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), the network of the CPA, joined Parliamentarians, civil society bodies, election management organisations, UN representatives and even former Prime Ministers who took part in two day workshops in London and Bridgetown organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat Gender Section. The events in the UK and Barbados saw attendees discuss the findings of the Commonwealth Secretariat’s studies on Women’s Political Participation in the Commonwealth, as well as a checklist for election observers.

A number of key themes emerged in the presentations and discussions during the course of the day, raising some of the main reasons why women are less likely to enter into politics. The feedback received from various organisations during the course of each workshop will now enable the Commonwealth to finalise the practitioner’s checklist, which will aide election observers.
Equal representation for women in Parliaments and gender empowerment is the focus for Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians at 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network met at the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh in November 2017 to focus on the equal representation of women in Parliaments and gender empowerment.

The annual CPA Conference hosted the meeting of the 21st CWP Steering Committee chaired by the CWP Chairperson, Hon. Dr Dato’ Noraini Ahmad, MP (Malaysia) and attended by the CWP President, Hon. Sagufta Yasmin, MP (Bangladesh) and CWP representatives from the CPA Regions: CWP Africa Region – Hon. Thoko Didiza, MP (South Africa); CWP Australia Region - Ms Jennifer Aitchison, MP (New South Wales); CWP British Islands and Mediterranean Region – Hon. Samantha Sacramento, MP (Gibraltar); CWP Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Region – Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA (Montserrat); CWP Canada Region – Ms Yasmin Ratansi, MP (Canada); CWP South-East Asia Region – Hon. Datuk Hajah Normala binti Abdul Samad, MP (Malaysia); and CWP Pacific Region and CWP Vice-Chairperson – Hon. Poto Williams, MP (New Zealand).

Apologies were received from the Steering Committee Member for the CWP India Region.

The meeting allowed the CWP Steering Committee to discuss the progress that had been made in the implementation of the CWP Strategic Plan 2017-2019, and forthcoming priorities for the network in 2018. At the conclusion of the meeting, Ms Joyce Watson, AM, CWP Steering Committee Member for the British Islands and Mediterranean Region, was elected as CWP Vice-Chairperson for the coming year taking over the position from Hon. Poto Williams.

At the 26th CWP Business Meeting, attended by nearly 100 women Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth, the CWP Chairperson presented the CWP Strategic Plan 2017-2019, outlined the work of CWP aimed towards achieving the goals, and took questions and comments from delegates on how the CWP network could contribute towards the success of the strategy.

Following the CWP Business Meeting, the Conference hosted a CWP gender workshop session on the topic of: ‘If we want genuine positive change in the world, we need more women leaders. How can we persuade the world that the future is dependent on gender equality?’ The session discussed how a society with a greater equality of opportunity is a more economically dynamic society. It was noted that this needs to be more widely known, with more data collection and sharing support for this assertion.
Delegates attending the session referred to young men as those who might benefit most from engagement on this topic. It was also highlighted that women and girls would benefit greatly from the support of effective mentors. Finally, the session discussed how successful female legislators usually have a responsibility to be visible and make themselves available to those who would benefit from their experience.

The workshop session was moderated by the CWP Chairperson and the discussion leaders were: Hon. Sagufta Yasmin, MP (CWP President), Hon. Kezia Purick, MLA (Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly), Hon. Meenakashi Lekhi, MP (CWP Steering Committee Member for the CPA India Region) and Ms Shoko Ishikawa (UN Women).

In a first for the CWP at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, a further workshop session was held on the role of male Parliamentarians in championing gender equality which was attended by both male and female Parliamentarians attending the Conference. The discussions covered a wide range of views and perspectives from the contributors.

The male champions of gender session was moderated by Hon. Mutimura Zeno, MP (Rwanda) and the discussion leaders were Mr James Dornan, MSP (Scotland) and Hon. Mataisi Akauola Niumataiwalu, MP (Fiji).

In addition, a gender-related workshop was held as part of the main conference on the subject of: ‘Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): How can CPA Members work with their own governments in ensuring that the SDG goals have a proper gender lens to ensure success in the areas of alleviating poverty and women’s empowerment? Delegates at this workshop considered how all Parliamentarians could work with their respective governments to ensure that the implementation of the SDGs had a proper gender lens. The workshop was moderated by Hon. Sagufta Yasmin, MP, CWP President (Bangladesh) and the discussion leaders were: Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP (Canada Federal); Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni, Speaker of Parliament (Fiji); Hon. Dr Nafisa Shah, MNA (Pakistan); and Ms Shoko Ishikawa (UN Women).

The recommendations from the CWP gender workshop sessions and the discussion on male champions of gender equality were included in the overall Conference Concluding Statement for the 63rd CPC and full reports of all of the conference workshops appear in The Parliamentarian 2017: Issue Four.
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians celebrate International Women’s Day

With the theme for International Women’s Day 2017, calling for both women and men to ‘Be Bold for Change’, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians marked the occasion by highlighting gender equality and increasing women’s representation in Parliaments.

The CWP Chairperson, Hon. Dr Dato’ Noraini Ahmad, MP (Malaysia), spoke on behalf of the CWP by releasing a video message which was shared on the CPA website and social media channels. In her message, the CWP Chairperson stressed the importance of reaching the Commonwealth target of 30% female representation in Commonwealth legislatures and the vital role of networks such as the CWP in achieving change.

Specifically, the CWP Chairperson emphasised that “the under representation or marginalisation of women, or indeed other social groups, including minorities, is not only unjust and unequal but it also undermines the legitimacy of our democratic institutions.”

The CWP International Steering Committee was represented by United Kingdom Parliamentarian, Baroness Elizabeth Berridge at a high-level panel discussion hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat at Marlborough House in London, United Kingdom.

Baroness Berridge reaffirmed the CPA’s and CWP’s commitment to gender equality and inclusiveness in political processes, whilst also highlighting political violence against women and the direct impact of political violence on democracy.

Baroness Berridge also spoke about how the CWP network has raised awareness of these issues, setting out the recommendations made by CWP as to how Parliamentarians, the Commonwealth and wider society can tackle these problems. Recommendations included the domestication of internal obligations and UN Declarations on preventing political violence against women into national legislation.

Peace in the Home: Ending domestic violence together, an initiative aimed at reducing rates of domestic violence in the Commonwealth.

Established together with public agencies, human rights institutions and civil society, the initiative represents part of the ‘Peace-building Commonwealth’ – the 2017 theme for the Commonwealth, and includes special measures and toolkits to help Commonwealth members build capacity for a multi-sectoral approach to domestic violence.

“This stubborn stain on our communities is no respecter of gender, location or social or economic status. When we understand that 38% of women murdered globally were killed by an intimate partner, this should shock us all into action. This is why I will remain steadfast in my commitment to address this issue,” said Commonwealth Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland at the launch.

Further reports of regional activities on International Women’s Day can be found in the Regional Activities section of this newsletter.
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians networking event held in the margins of the CPA Executive Committee meeting in Darwin, Australia

In April 2017, a Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) networking event on gender equality and sharing best practice from across the Regions of the Commonwealth was hosted by the CWP Chairperson, Hon. Dr Dato’ Noraini Ahmad, MP and Hon. Kezia Purick, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, in the margins of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Executive Committee Mid-Year Meeting in Darwin, Australia.

CWP Chairperson visits CPA Headquarters Secretariat ahead of 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Bangladesh

The Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Dr Dato’ Noraini Ahmad, MP (Malaysia) visited the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters Secretariat in London, United Kingdom in October 2017 to discuss the forthcoming meetings of the CWP to be held at the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh and also to meet with the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan and CPA Headquarters Secretariat staff.

Gender equality discussed at Parliamentarians for Global Action Annual Forum

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee member for the Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Region, Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Montserrat represented the CWP and spoke about gender equality and women’s representation at the 39th Annual Forum for Parliamentarians for Global Action in Italy.
COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP)

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians - Regional Strengthening Activities in 2017

CWP AFRICA REGION

8th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Africa Regional Conference hosted by the House of Assembly of Imo State, Nigeria

Held from 23 to 25 October 2017, the 48th CPA Africa Regional Conference also hosted the CWP Africa Regional Conference in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria during which the CWP Regional Business Meeting was held. All delegations attending the Regional Conference maintained a gender balance amongst their participating Members.

The Regional CWP Conference had also decided that an inclusive gender mapping exercise be carried out to monitor the implementation of agreed instruments and commitments contained in the SDGs across the region. Discussion at the regional conference also centred on gender-based violence and the impact of traditional and religious norms on the attitudes to gender equality, as well as the positive influence of traditional leaders on increasing the number of women in Parliament in some jurisdictions in the region.

The CWP Africa Region also decided to target countries with upcoming elections in 2018 and 2019 to receive a small team of Members to meet with political leaders, women candidates and presiding officers in the run up to elections to discuss retention strategies to maintain the levels of women’s representation in Parliaments.

CWP Africa Region celebrates International Women's Day

The majority of chapters in the CWP Africa Region celebrated International Women’s Day in 2017. As part of the celebrations, the CWP South Africa Branch partnered with the Presiding Executive Authority and the Speakers Forum to reflect on the theme of the 2017 International Women’s Day ‘Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50:50 by 2030’.

CWP AUSTRALIA REGION

2nd Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Australia Regional Conference hosted by the Parliament of Victoria

The 2nd CWP Australia Regional Conference was hosted by the Victorian Parliament in Melbourne, Australia from 28 to 30 August 2017, and was attended by 60 delegates from the Parliaments of Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and, as observers, the Federal Parliament of Australia.

Members from the Parliaments of Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Cook Islands and Nauru also attended with support from the Australian Federal Government’s Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnerships programme.

The themes for the CWP regional conference were: eliminating political violence against women; empowering
women in leadership and political participation; and the need for balancing work and life through the implementation of family friendly policies and practices in Parliament.

The CWP regional conference provided an opportunity to explore, discuss and analyse these themes via a series of presentations, panel discussions, professional development courses, and networking opportunities.

Two professional development courses were delivered by Melbourne-based university RMIT and focused on the topics of social media and public speaking, speech writing and media performance. These topics were selected based on a survey of potential attendees conducted earlier in the year. Hon. Michelle O’Byrne, MP, Chair, CWP Australia Region said: “Overall, the conference provided a valuable opportunity for women Members of Parliament to get together and undertake professional development and networking opportunities, and I thank all those who attended and participated.”

CWP Australia Region celebrates International Women’s Day

In the Australia Region, the CWP New South Wales Branch Chair, Hon. Jenny Aitchison, MP, opened a new exhibition titled ‘Our women in Parliament - a fit place for women’ at Parliament House in New South Wales, Australia on International Women’s Day 2017. Hon. Aitchison highlighted that “despite all the things that can divide us in this profession that we’ve chosen, and as countries and cultures, when we work together we can achieve great things and great change.”

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians from the Australia Region also participated in a morning session organised and hosted by the YWCA Canberra at the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Legislative Assembly, during which leaders from various sectors discussed women in leadership to mark International Women’s Day. As part of the session the Australian Capital Territory Representative to CWP, Nicole Lawder, MLA took part in a panel discussion together with the Deputy Chief Minister, Yvette Berry, MLA and Caroline Le Couteur, MLA to discuss their personal leadership journeys and how they could lead the fight for change in the ACT. Attendees at the event totalled over 90 women leaders, including MLAs, YWCA board members, and community and business leaders.
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference held at the Welsh Assembly to discuss ‘Women and Economic Empowerment’

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) British Islands and Mediterranean (BIM) Regional Conference took place with women Members of Parliament from across the region at the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff, Wales from 6 to 8 April 2017.

Joyce Watson AM, CWP International Steering Committee Member for the BIM Region, hosted the event on the theme of Women and the Economy, specifically looking at how economic empowerment can help to promote gender equality. Through their involvement, Members were asked to collaborate in identifying those barriers which serve to prevent women from fulfilling their potential, identifying gaps in policy and sharing instances of good practice from their home jurisdictions.

Proceedings began with a visit to GE Aviation’s factory site, where women Members of Parliament met young women apprentices and heard about the work being done to address the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) gender gap by 2020 and to encourage more women to join the sector.

Delegates took part in three plenary sessions looking at Women in the Welsh Economy, The Role of Government in Promoting Women in the Economy and The Diversity of Women in the Economy.

The CPA Wales Branch also arranged two workshop sessions on Supporting Business to Help Women Achieve and Prosper and Women in Construction.

All of the sessions highlighted a number of priorities for increasing the participation of women in the economy, including: the promotion of female role models within the economy, the provision of flexible and diverse workplaces, and the implementation of support mechanisms for women entrepreneurs.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Steering Committee meet at United Kingdom Parliament

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) British Islands and Mediterranean (BIM) Regional Steering Committee met at the Parliament of the United Kingdom with representatives from Parliament and Legislatures across the region.
CWP CANADA REGION

CWP Canada Region mark International Women’s Day with ‘Daughters of the Vote’ initiative

As part of the International Women’s Day celebrations in 2017, the CWP Canadian Region continued their commitment to the ‘Daughters of the Vote’ initiative, where young women from every federal riding in Canada are invited to the Canadian Federal Parliament and provincial legislatures to discuss their visions for the future of Canada.

CWP representatives from across Canada also met to discuss the role of mentoring and collaboration in encouraging more female candidates to stand for political office. Among those present at the discussions were; Monique Leblanc, MLA (New Brunswick); Patricia Arab, MLA (Nova Scotia); Caroline Simard, MNA (Quebec); Kathleen Casey, MLA (Prince Edward Island); Lisa Dempster, MHA (Newfoundland and Labrador); Debbie Jabbour, MLA (Alberta); Lisa Thompson, MPP (Ontario); Colleen Mayer, MLA (Manitoba); and Laura Ross, MLA (Saskatchewan).

CWP Canada Regional Meeting takes place during 55th CPA Canada Regional Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba

The CWP Canada Regional Steering Committee Meeting took place on 17 July 2017 during the 55th CPA Canada Regional Conference, hosted by Hon. Myrna Driedger, MLA, Speaker of the Manitoba Legislature and former CWP Canada Regional Chair. The meeting provided Members with the opportunity hear about activities over the previous year, and to think about priorities for the upcoming year.

Hon. Linda Reid, MLA (British Columbia) gave her report in her then-position as the CWP Canada Chair, emphasising the importance of the Steering Committee continuing their efforts to create a CWP regional website and to promote CWP in Canada on a variety
of platforms, including social media. The importance of continuing to build ties with other groups who promote the role of women in legislative assemblies was also emphasised. Parliamentarians who participated in conferences, such as the CWP Working Group and Outreach in Saskatchewan, also gave their reports.

The CWP Canada Steering Committee proceeded with the election of a new Alternate CWP Canada Chair. Hon Lisa Thompson, MPP (Ontario) was elected by acclamation for a three-year mandate as Alternate CWP Canada Chair, to commence when Laura Ross, MLA (Saskatchewan) begins her mandate as CWP Canada Chair.

Those in attendance had the opportunity to hear Hon. Amna Ally, MP (Guyana) and Hon. Karen E. Malcolm, MLA (Turks and Caicos). Both women spoke about the situation of women Parliamentarians in their respective countries and were able to participate in the meeting as a result of the regional strengthening funds provided by the CPA Headquarters Secretariat.

Thereafter, presentations were given on three themes: the ‘Daughters of the Vote’ initiative; interacting with the media; and the Dancing Backwards project, which provides a free school programme celebrating Canadian women in political leadership and promoting gender parity in governance.
The 11th Conference of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) of the Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic (CAA) Region was scheduled in three sessions from 16 to 18 June 2017 in St Kitts and Nevis in the margins of the main CPA regional conference.

The CWP Conference was hosted on the theme of finding ‘Next steps in Strategising for Women’s Leadership in the Caribbean Political Space’, and was chaired by Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Montserrat and Chair of the Regional CWP.

Delegates attended from Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Nevis Island, St Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos.

The CWP regional meeting included significant discussion on the need for closer communication and more frequent meeting of members, raising the profile of CWP in the CPA, seeking formal and informal partnerships with both regional and international organisations, online meetings and training, and the inclusion of young people and the support of youth Parliamentarians.

Attending Members also reported on the activities within their Branches over the past year, as well as the difficulties faced in carrying out these undertakings. Furthermore, Members highlighted several thematic priorities for CWP in the Region which require immediate attention. These priorities included: good governance; sexism and sexist norms in the region and within Parliaments; people trafficking and the exploitation of young girls; the separation of church and state; and women’s health in the Caribbean.

Sub-Regional Women and Girls Forum on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals held in Nevis Island
The first ever Sub-Regional Women and Girls Forum on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was held at the Mount Nevis Hotel, from 22 to 23 March 2017. The event was held under the theme, ‘I am woman’, with the sub-theme of ‘Agenda 2030 - Prioritising investment in women and girls’, with proceedings chaired by the Caribbean Community Youth Ambassador, Ms Joy Napier.

The Forum provided participants with the opportunity to network and informally share experiences with fellow women in political
life from across St Kitts and Nevis, as well as the wider CAA Region. The meeting also served to underscore the Nevis Island Assembly’s continued commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women within the framework of the United Nations’ SDGs.

**CPA Regional ‘Hot Topic’ Forum for Caribbean focuses on increasing women’s political participation**

During the CWP regional conference in St Kitts, the CPA Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Regional ‘Hot Topic’ Forum Part Two took place which 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 Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Regional ‘Hot Topic’ Forum was moderated by Professor Verene Shepherd, Gender and Development, University of West Indies (Mona) and the discussion was led by: Senator Akila Byron-Nisbett, St. Kitts and Nevis Parliament; Dr Yvonne Weekes, Education and Theatre Arts, University of West Indies (Cave Hill); and Dr Wendy Grenade, Political Science, University of West Indies (Cave Hill).

This was the second part of the forum following part one which took place in the margins of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in December 2016 in London, United Kingdom, hosted by the CPA Headquarters Secretariat and led by Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA, Speaker of the Montserrat Legislative Assembly. The CPA Regional ‘Hot Topic’ Forums bring together not only Commonwealth Parliamentarians, but also academics, students, civil society organisations and the wider Commonwealth family.

To view video highlights of the CPA Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Regional ‘Hot Topic’ Forum Part One on ‘Seeking to Increase Women’s Political Participation’ please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube.
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Pacific Regional Mentoring Programme held in New Zealand

The New Zealand Parliament hosted members from the CWP Pacific Region at a mentoring programme for women Parliamentarians, involving Members from Fiji, Niue and Tonga which took place from 5 to 6 December 2017.

The mentoring programme was designed to build technical capacity and social capital in the Pacific Region by establishing long-term meaningful relationships between participants and New Zealand’s women Parliamentarians, while giving the participants practical strategies and skills they can take back to their own Parliaments.

Participants were given an opportunity to connect with others in the same position, establish a mentor relationship, and undertake workshops aimed at strengthening their confidence and abilities in their new representative roles.

The overarching goal for the programme was to provide the attending women Parliamentarians with a safe space to ask questions, share concerns, and build up the confidence and skills to effectively advocate for women in an often male-dominated environment.

The programme schedule included the opportunity for conference delegates to meet with the newly elected Prime Minister of New Zealand, Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern, MP, and the Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives, Rt Hon. Trevor Mallard, MP. A series of workshops were also held on a number of topics, including how to manage an office budget, how to use the media in a strategic manner, and how to handle abuse, criticism and setbacks.

Gender equality programmes for Parliaments held across the CWP Pacific Region

A number of programmes aimed at highlighting gender equality in Parliaments were held across the CWP Pacific Region in 2017.

In July 2017, the Fiji Parliament convened a one-day seminar on the ‘Analysis of Legislation from a Gender Perspective for Committee Chairs, their Deputies and Whips’ in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Region. The CPA Pacific Regional Secretariat had been working with the Fiji Parliament to assist their inter-parliamentary team, including tracking resolutions to enhance gender equality.

The Seminar coincided with the first gender-based analysis of the national budget of Fiji, as part of the Fiji Parliament’s wider gender-mainstreaming initiative, which also saw the launch of a toolkit for MPs titled Scrutinising Legislation from a Gender Perspective: A Practical Toolkit.
Also in July 2017, the Solomon Islands Parliament held a two-day workshop on gender equality on the theme of ‘The Outrigger Navigating Gender Equality through Pacific Parliaments’, in association with the Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnerships.

In June 2017, women MPs from the Cook Islands met with New Zealand women MPs and women who aspire to be candidates for the next Cook Islands general election in 2018, with the opportunity to discuss matters and issues around encouraging more women to stand for future elections.

In the same month, a women in leadership breakfast was convened in Tonga with visiting women MPs from New Zealand, including the Vice-Chairperson of CWP and CWP Pacific Chairperson, Hon. Poto Williams, MP.

Additionally, the CWP New Zealand Branch submitted their work on ending underaged and forced marriage to the Justice and Electoral Committee focussing on the Family and Whānau Violence Bill.

CWP SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION
Closer the gender gap and promoting equality in social, economic and political issues is the renewed focus for Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians in South East Asia
During the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians South-East Asia Regional Seminar held on 7 April 2017 at the Parliament of Malaysia, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) from the South-East Asia Region highlighted a number of key issues on the theme of ‘Women and Development: Bridging the Gap’.

The CWP regional seminar provided a platform of engagement to identify strategies to close the gender gap and promote gender equality across social, economic and political forums in the South-East Asia Region of the CPA.

Members of Parliament from across the region emphasised the crucial role that the CWP plays in supporting women Parliamentarians to raise the profile of these key issues in their work.

The CWP regional seminar was hosted by the CWP Chairperson, Hon. Dr Dato’ Noraini Ahmad MP and the CWP South-East Asia Steering Committee Member, Hon. YB Datuk Hajah Norah binti Ahmad, MP, and covered a number of topics including promoting sustainable economic growth through the digital economy; encouraging gender equality in politics; and addressing sexism, harassment and domestic violence against women and children.

The seminar was opened by Hon. Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Pandikar Amin bin Haji Mulia, Speaker of the Parliament of Malaysia who also gave the keynote address to Members of Parliament from across the South-East Asia Region and representatives of international organisations.
who were in attendance at the seminar.

Former Commonwealth Parliamentary Association International Executive Committee Members, Hon. Dr Ronald Kiandee MP, Deputy Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat Parliament of Malaysia and Hon. S.K Devamany MP, Deputy Minister in the Malaysian Prime Minister’s Department, together with Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Singapore and the current CPA International Executive Committee Member for the South-East Asia Region, Hon. Lim Biow Chuan, MP (Singapore) also attended the seminar.

In giving the opening remarks at the seminar, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Mr Akbar Khan said: “It is only through respect, understanding and by working together that we can defend the dignity of each individual and create fairer societies for all. It is through networks like the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), and the CWP regional seminar here in Malaysia, that we can make great strides in improving gender equality in Parliaments across the Commonwealth.”
The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) publishes a number of booklets, leaflets and guides on behalf of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) which are available from the CPA Headquarters Secretariat direct or online.

There are also downloads, information, links and research about the activities of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and gender issues published on the CPA website www.cpahq.org with a specific section for the CWP at www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwp.

In 2017, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat published the new Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Strategic Plan 2017-2019, both in print and online versions.

In 2017, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat has worked to mainstream gender across all its programmatic work. As part of this mainstreaming exercise, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat has produced several CPA Masterclasses with a specific focus for CWP including: a Masterclass on gender budgeting; a Masterclass on establishing and operating gender caucuses within Parliaments; a masterclass on the role of male Parliamentarians in championing gender equality and representation; and a Masterclass on the key role that mentoring can play in supporting women in Parliament. These new resources are available to CPA Members and parliamentary staff through www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpamasterclasses.

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat has also introduced a gender component into the CPA Teachers Resource Pack for Commonwealth schools, which forms part of the CPA Roadshows for Schools and Universities programme. This includes the encouragement of teachers to ask students about Article XII of the Commonwealth Charter on Gender Equality. To view the resource please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cparoadshows.
The Parliamentarian, the Journal of Commonwealth Parliaments from the CPA, published a special issue in 2017 focused on ‘Women and Parliament’ which featured articles by women Parliamentarians on a wide range of gender topics including trade, economic empowerment, voting rights, increasing representation and protecting women from political violence. To view the latest issue and archived issues of The Parliamentarian please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/parliamentarian.

In 2017, the CPA Headquarters also established an Editorial Advisory Board for The Parliamentarian and the CWP will be represented on this board by the CWP Vice Chairperson to ensure that the publication regularly features gender issues and women contributors.

Please contact the CPA Headquarters Secretariat hq.sec@cpahq.org for more information or to receive any copies of CWP publications and resources.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) on social media

In 2017, the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) launched a new Facebook page to share information about the work of the CWP and to encourage Members to share information and good practice. All Commonwealth Parliamentarians are encouraged to ‘Like’ and share the page which can be found under ‘Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians’ on Facebook.com or by visiting www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwpfacebook.

Many CWP Regions also have a Facebook page showcasing regional activities.

In addition, regular posts on CWP news and activities are featured on the CPA Headquarters Secretariat social media channels – Twitter @CPA_Secretariat | Facebook.com/CPAHQ | CPA YouTube channel www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube | Flickr www.cpahq.org/cpahq/flickr.
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians
Steering Committee 2017-2018

**PRESIDENT**
*Vacant*
(2017-2018)

**CHAIRPERSON**
*Hon. Dr Dato’ Noraini Ahmad, MP*
Malaysia
(2016-2019)

**AFRICA**
*Hon. Angela Thoko Didiza, MP*
South Africa
(2016-2019)

**ASIA**
*Hon. Vijayakala Maheshwaran, MP*
Sri Lanka
(2015-2018)

**AUSTRALIA**
*Ms Michelle O’Byrne, MP*
Tasmania
(2016-2019)

**BRITISH ISLANDS AND MEDITERRANEAN**
*Ms Joyce Watson, AM*
Wales
(2015-2018)
*Also: Vice-Chairperson, CWP Steering Committee*
(2017-2018)

**CANADA**
*Ms Laura Ross, MLA*
Saskatchewan
(2017 - 2020)

**CARIBBEAN, AMERICAS AND THE ATLANTIC**
*Hon. Shirley Osborne, MLA*
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Montserrat
(2015-2018)

**INDIA**
*Smt. Kirron Anupam Kher, MP*
Lok Sabha, India
(2017-2020)

**PACIFIC**
*Ms Anahila Kanongata’a-Suisuiki, MP*
New Zealand Parliament
(2017-2020)

**SOUTH-EAST ASIA**
*Hon. YB Datuk Hajah Norah binti Ahmad, MP*
Malaysia
(2016-2019)
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)

CWP website: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwp
CWP Facebook page: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwpfacebook

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