Remarks by the Hon. Dr. Barton Scotland, M.P., C.C.H., Speaker of the National Assembly of the Co-operative Republic of the Parliament of Guyana

Opening Ceremony of the Post-Election Seminar
31st March, 2016, Marriot Hotel, Georgetown, Guyana

Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers of the Government, Honourable Members of the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana, Honourable Member of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, Honourable Members of the Parliament of Canada, Members of the Diplomatic Corps., Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Clerk of the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana, Clerk of the Parliament of Canada, Clerk of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, staff of the Parliament Office of the Parliament of Guyana, other distinguished guests, good morning.

Today I am pleased to be a part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association family that has gathered to benefit from each other’s experience. Post-Election Seminars, one of the CPA’s core programmes, have been conducted by the Association for over twenty years. These Seminars perform a dual function: they build the capacity of newly elected Members of Parliament so that they function efficiently and effectively in the discharge of their Constitutional duties and serve also as a refresher course for returning Members. The Eleventh Parliament was convened on 10th June, 2015, and has seen the entry of twenty newly elected Members of Parliament. This accounts for almost 1/3 of the sixty-five elected Members of the
National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana. Though some time has elapsed for the usual holding of such a Seminar, the potency of the content of such a Seminar remains and I am sure that all Members of Parliament will have an appreciation for the programme over the next two days. In this regard, the theme of the Seminar “Negotiation and Nation Building” is, it seems to me, most appropriate.

I have had the opportunity to examine the programme and have noted that the sessions were carefully planned to enable Members to improve their performance in the discharge of their democratic duties which in turn will aid in the realisation of the core functions of the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana: Legislative, Financial, Scrutiny and Appointive. I have also observed that the sessions also address Members’ conduct beyond Sittings of the National Assembly and Meetings of Parliamentary Committees. I am sure that the discussions emanating from this session will give us much food for thought while our Members finalise the code of conduct for Members of Parliament and public officials. This document, as you may know, has been in the making for some time now. Equal importance has been ascribed to the Parliamentary Committees which function as a microcosm of the National Assembly and provides the opportunity for matters to be discussed in great detail as is not possible in the National Assembly. The entire programme will complement my role as Speaker of the National Assembly: to administer the business of Parliament and offer guidance to all Members of Parliament. I am sure that Members will return to the National Assembly with deeper insights and with increased knowledge.

Guyana’s hybrid system: a combination of the Westminster and the Presidential System, with a Unicameral Assembly, presents unique challenges but offers many opportunities. There are, however, many useful lessons to be learnt from the procedures and practices of the Houses of Parliament of the United Kingdom, Parliament of Canada and from our dear neighbour, the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I encourage all participants to, over the next few days, use this golden opportunity to interact with one another and benefit from each other’s experience.

In closing, I wish to invite you to enjoy our beautiful country. By a most fortunate conjunction of events, this Seminar is taking place in our Golden Jubilee Year. We will be celebrating 50 years of Independence. Many activities have been planned in all ten Administrative Regions of our country and I invite you to enjoy those which will be taking place in the capital city during your stay.

I thank you.