The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is an international community of Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures working together to deepen the Commonwealth's commitment to the highest standards of democratic governance and parliamentary practice.

Parliaments, their Members and officials learn from each other through a wide range of CPA activities including:

• Annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences, Regional Conferences and inter-parliamentary visits;
• Parliamentary Programmes, Seminars and Workshops;
• Masterclasses, Expert Lectures and Networking
• CPA Publications including *The Parliamentarian*
• Access to CPA outcomes and parliamentary research.

How is the CPA organised?

**CPA General Assembly:** Representing all CPA Branches at the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

**CPA Executive Committee:** CPA Officers and Regional Representatives from all nine regions

**Co-ordinating Committee:** CPA Officers - President; Chairperson; Vice-Chairperson; Treasurer; Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson

**CPA Secretary-General & CPA Secretariat**

- The **General Assembly** is the ultimate authority of the CPA.
- The **Executive Committee** usually meets twice a year and is made up of CPA Officers and Regional Representatives (three Parliamentarians serving three-year terms for eight regions and six representing the Africa Region due to its larger size).
- CPA Officers also meet as the **Co-ordinating Committee:** CPA President (representing the current year’s Annual Conference Host Branch); Chairperson of the Executive Committee (elected by the General Assembly for three years); the Vice-Chairperson (a Regional Representative elected by the Executive Committee for one year); and the Treasurer (elected by the General Assembly for three years).
- Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) at their Tri-Annual Conference elect the CWP Chairperson to serve on the Executive Committee for three years and chair the CWP Steering Committee (made up of one woman Parliamentarian from nine regions).
- The CPA Secretariat, headed by the **Secretary-General**, administers the CPA with support from Regional and Branch Secretaries, usually senior parliamentary staff who mobilize the resources of their Parliaments in pursuit of the aims and activities of the CPA.
THE BRANCHES

- The CPA represents more than 180 Parliaments and Legislatures in 53 Commonwealth countries.
- The CPA network extends to 17,000 Parliamentarians and Parliamentary staff.
- All CPA Members are democratic, law-making Parliaments and Legislatures in Commonwealth nations, states, provinces and territories.
- Speakers or Presiding Officers preside over CPA Branches with support from Government and Opposition Leaders and Parliamentary Clerks or Secretaries.
- All CPA Branches are autonomous and regarded as equal.
- Nine regions of the CPA: Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic; India; Pacific; South-East Asia.
- The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) in Branches and Regions promote gender participation in parliaments.

COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION SERVICES

- The CPA publishes The Parliamentarian, the Journal of Commonwealth Parliaments featuring articles written by and for Parliamentarians as well as parliamentary and legislative news.
- CPA Newsletters feature parliamentary and political news from across the Commonwealth.
- Good practice reports on parliamentary and political issues for Parliamentarians and their staff and background information on Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures.
- Directory online of Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures at www.cpahq.org
- Comparative parliamentary information: How do other Parliaments do this?

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Regular consultations among Parliamentarians on good parliamentary practice.
- Understanding of and respect for the institution of Parliament.
- Improved Commonwealth understanding.
- Raising standards of parliamentary governance through the evolution of Benchmarks for Democracy.
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences and regional conferences on political issues.
- Specialist conferences for Small Branches and Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians.
- Post-Election Seminars for new Members of Parliament.
- Expert studies into parliamentary roles in political issues.
- Technical assistance programmes for developing Parliaments.
- Practice and Procedure Seminars to promote parliamentary diversity and development.
- Workshops on global issues: trade, public finance, gender issues, media relations, corruption, parliamentary leadership, freedom of information, HIV/AIDS, parliamentary administration and finance, human rights, environmental change.
- Masterclasses and Expert Lectures.
- Parliamentary officials meetings.
- CPA activities financed by Branch membership fees and augmented by event-based funding from intergovernmental and national sources.

HISTORY

- Founded in 1911 as the Empire Parliamentary Association, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is one of the oldest parliamentary associations in the world.
- Original members were: Australia, Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom.
- Expanded around the globe at Commonwealth national and sub-national levels.
- Expansion continued with the growth of the Commonwealth.
- New and returning democracies can connect to the CPA parliamentary community.
- Commonwealth Heads of Government endorse the CPA and countries are bound together by CPA-inspired principles on working relations between the different branches of government.

CPA PARTNERS

The CPA works with many global organisations including:
- United Nations and its agencies including UNDP, UNEP, UNIFEM, UNAIDS
- Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) and Government Ministerial Meetings
- Commonwealth Secretariat
- World Bank and World Trade Organisation
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- International aid and development agencies

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