

# **THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIAN IN NETURAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

## **WORKSHOP B time 11 Am**

### **56<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference**

***Nairobi, Kenya***

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**“Parliament and Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Thus Far and Beyond”**

**Workshop B: The Role of Parliamentarians in National Disaster Management**

#### **Full Report of the Workshop**

Disaster has no boundaries and can strike at anytime, anywhere. It is not restricted to borders and therefore countries must seek cooperation in addressing the catastrophic effects of most natural disasters. Recent history in disaster management and international assistance indicated that, unlike the Tsunami, countries took long to respond to the flooding in Pakistan. Notably, parliaments have a strong democratic platform to come together and rise above sovereign suspicions to address natural disasters.

While countries have disaster management plans and policies in place, the session noted that they remain just policies and preparedness levels are very low. It was agreed that countries need to move from policies to implementation and action in order to address disaster effectively. In addition to mainstreaming disaster management in development planning, it is prudent that countries should emulate best practice and draw lessons from those States that have suffered catastrophic disasters in recent history.

Parliaments were singled out as the best avenue to engage in high level advocacy to achieve mileage when it comes to government actions. At the same time, parliaments need to sustain linkages and networks, and participate in the Global Platform which brings together parliamentarians to address global agenda. Noting that climate change and human activity have played a significant role in disasters, the session recommended that, as a standard practice, CPA should have an on-going programme on climate change and disaster management.

Workshop B as one of the eight work shops was conducted in the specified room at the conference venue. Madam Janet Ryder, was the Moderator of the workshop topic as one of the most broadly discussed issue that has taken the world on storm.

The theme of the workshop was:

THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIAN IN NATURAL DISASTER  
MANAGEMENT

Moderator

Ms Janet Ryder, AM, Wales, United Kingdom

Lead Speakers

Hon. Dr Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MHR, Grenada

Mr. Khushdil Khan, MPA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

(Deputy Speaker of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)

Dr Pedro Basabe, Head, United Nations Smt Harsimat Kaur Badal, MP, India

Rapporteurs

Mr. Attaullah Khan, Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,

Peshawar, Pakistan, Bonnie Mathooko, Host Branch

The Moderator at the outset, dictated the rules of the procedures. The discussion leaders: Hon. Dr. Pedro Basabe, Head, United National International Strategy for disaster Reduction, Hon. Tolofuaivalelei Leiataua, MP, Samoa Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and Mr. Khush Dil Khan, Deputy Speaker, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Peshawar, Pakistan took part in the proceedings.

The Moderator called upon the first of the discussion leader Mr. Khush Dil Khan to start his deliberation. Mr. Khan started the discussion with thanks to the chair MS Janet Ryder, AM, Wales, United Kingdom, fellow discussion leaders, Secretariat staff and all other colleagues from the commonwealth representing

more than 17000 parliamentarians from about 174 Parliaments in some 55 countries; good morning and you all are welcomed to this very important topic of the role of parliamentarians in the management of disasters and natural calamities in the world.

Dear friends, the disasters what we see and hear of today are nothing new or out of the blue, rather, we have been having them in our past, recent and far before in the form of cholera, fevers, tuberculosis, whooping coughs and many other diseases which were once untreatable. But, alas, we never learn from the past and each time we relax once the trauma and turbulence is over.

Such a behavior only adds to the fiasco further complicating the issue related to the disasters. We Parliamentarians now can not be mere on lookers what happens around us when it comes to disasters like earthquakes, floods, epidemics and even droughts leading to famine and endless diseases that sweep away lives particularly those of the children and old age people.

It is an SOS call; Now or never, we the parliamentarians must act and light-up our way to carry a two fold efforts in educating the people as well as bring useful legislation in place to check the possible increase in unlawful damage people do to themselves and the environment that not only change the climate but also cause disorders to the otherwise set pattern of nature and its course. We in Pakistan have recently constituted a Special Committee on Disaster Management and a sub committee is being formulated to frame the by-laws for the committee not only to fix responsibilities but to suggest genuine actions needed to reduce the effects of disasters by curtailing the turnaround time and increase throughput.

A you all know, we in Pakistan have recently seen the worst kind of flood in history, Baluchistan, Sindh, Punjab and particularly in the in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which is totally up

rooted undone . If I am not wrong, there could be no such example in the whole world. Millions of people are uprooted, thousands died, farms and crops destroyed, infrastructure went back to dark ages and the progress we had very dearly made in almost 70 years has been turned in rubbles with in 48 hours between 28 and 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2010.

Dear friends, let us spread the message to bring awareness to the people to stop encroachment in the water pavements, protect embankments, combat the ill effects of green houses, stop deforestation and reduce the difference between the peri-urban structure as well as bring about legislation that will discourage the people from damaging the environment and lay down the strategy what can be done in the shortest possible time during or when a disaster knocks on the door. Steps and activities like relief, evacuation, immediate support, medication and rehabilitation all needs to be put in place so that the relief work go by statistics and plan rather than hap-hazardly carried out as a futile exercise with no or little effect.

Dear colleagues, let us put hand in hand to think and work very serious towards finding a solution to reduce the effect of the disasters at least if that can not be eliminated right away.

The moderator called upon the second of the discussion leader Dr. Clarice who in her speech passed her condolence on to the people of Pakistan and emphasized on the world community to realize that it was not the first and will never be the last time, one or another country like Pakistan is being hit hard by the flood and related disasters. She stressed that we must learn from our very bad experience in the past and recent famines due to natural calamities.

She put forward her viewpoint and suggested that deforestation and other related social negligence must be stopped to help save the environment and check the disasters. She actually held people equally responsible for not

understanding the grave situation due to their own mistakes and carelessness. She stressed that we have made our own selves vulnerable to such calamities. She also gave the example of Haiti disaster but on the other hand she praised the Cuba model of disaster management. She informed and appreciated that Cuba did manage to come good to manage their wings well for keeping the hopes of the nation up over the ground resulting in minimized damages. She said that Haiti was repeatedly hit by Hurricanes of different levels but there was not any listen learnt.

Third and the last Discussion Leader Dr. Pedro Basabe gave a very comprehensive account of his organization's endeavor towards the addressal of disaster management. He distributed a plan of his success story in the delegates supported by personal explanation.

He stated that we have seen the floods and earthquake with in the span of 5 years inside Pakistan which devastated that beautiful country. It is a clear eye opener for us all to learn from such examples and get our selves prepared at least for the future.

We have seen, Haiti, Pakistan, Tsunami and all that virtual reality in the recent past. Let us see what we have learnt and can do in the future. Albeit a wee late, never the less, we need to gather our strengths to combat the disasters more organizingly.

He put forward an invitation to the delegates and officials of this workshop to keep in touch with his organization for orientations and workshops on this topic related to human and the poor people who suffered the most.

He offered that there are a series of workshops and conferences under the auspices of United Nation. In the near future, there will be meetings in Geneva on the same topic. I

appreciate you all to attend and share your findings and learning with the CPA member nations.

There were some useful contributions from the delegates who added volume to the subject matter. Taking the discussion further, the Speaker of Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha questioned the role of the Parliamentarian towards the preparation for managing disasters.

He said that although we can not totally eliminate disasters totally, still we can reduce their devastation to a greater extent. He iterated that a Parliamentarian's first and foremost duty is to look after the well being of his constituency in and out side the parliament. He went on to say that the policies and programs of the Parliamentarians shall always focus on the legislation related to place an embankment between the potential disasters and precautions.

Taking part in the discussion, Mr. Dharamlal Kaushik, Speaker Chattisgarh Branch India informed the group that India has always been vulnerable to natural disasters like floods, droughts, cyclones, earthquakes and land slides. The latter earthquake 1993, Orisa Super Cyclone in 1999, Gujrat Bhuj earthquake, the Tsunami in Southern part of India all resulted in hundreds of deaths, injuries and loss of property, infrastructure and assets causing substantial economic losses.

He informed that the United nation declared the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as the International Decade for Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) and initiated several strategies to strengthen preparedness among the disaster prone nationals. He informed that in 1999, the government of India set up a High powered committee to develop disaster management plan at the national, state and district level and the bill on Disaster management was unanimously adapted by both the houses of Parliament.

At the end, the moderator invited the delegates for questions to the Discussion Leaders. Delegates from Indian Branches, State of Jersey Branch of CPA, South Africa and the United Kingdom regions/branches asked questions related to the subject matter. All of the three Discussion Leaders explained and replied each question to the satisfaction of the delegates and observers for their information.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks by the chairs

Attaullah Khan  
Bonnie Mathooko  
Rapporteur  
Workshop B