OFFICIAL OPENING REMARKS AND KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE
PRESIDENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY
ASSOCIATION AND SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA, THE HON. KENNETH MARENDE, E.G.H.,
M.P. DURING THE 56TH CPA CONFERENCE IN NAIROBI ON 14TH
SEPTEMBER, 2010 AT THE KICC, NAIROBI, KENYA.

Your Excellency, The President and Commander in Chief of the
Armed Forces of the Republic of Kenya, Hon. Mwai Kibaki, C.G.H,
M.P
The Right Hon. Prime Minister, Hon. Raila Odinga, M.P
The Vice-President, Hon. Stephen Kalonzo, M.P.
Honourable Speakers from the Commonwealth, Ministers,
Hon. Parliamentarians, Delegates to the 56th CPA Conference,
Excellencies High Commissioners and Ambassadors,
Distinguished Delegates, Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,
It is my pleasure, honour and privilege to welcome you to Kenya more so at a momentous and historic time, when Kenyans are still in celebratory mood following the promulgation of a New Constitution which marked the birth of our Second Republic. It feels great for me to meet again with so many delegates and political friends and to have the pride of place to address this Conference.

Normally as the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Kenya, my role is explicit and fairly restricted to, inter alia, keeping order in the House, making a few pronouncements on do’s and don’ts and issuing scattered rulings on worrisome developments. This morning, however, I am permitted greater latitude to address a much larger House on all and everything in the Commonwealth. Before I savour the moment further, allow me the very rare honour to deliver Her Majesty the Queen’s message:-
The Hon. Kenneth Marende, E.G.H., M.P.
Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya and
President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

As Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I am pleased to send you, and all the delegates of the fifty-sixth Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, my best wishes for a successful and enjoyable meeting in Nairobi in September.

I note with interest that this year’s theme for discussion will be ‘Parliament and Development in the 21st Century: Thus Far and Beyond’. I was also pleased to learn that Government and Opposition Members from approximately 170 Parliaments and Legislatures will be attending on this occasion.

I much appreciate your kind message and hope that the Conference will give rise to stimulating and productive exchanges.

ELIZABETH R.

28th August, 2010
The CPA offers us the opportunity to get together and learn about each other’s experiences, our Parliaments and our processes. My hope is that this year we shall build on the Commonwealth’s commitment to further consultations, understanding, collaboration and cooperation among its Parliaments and Legislatures, and the promotion of parliamentary democracy. This conference should be the opportunity to meet, dialogue, talk over and discuss matters of common concern. This interchange of views under the CPA’s umbrella is something to treasure. As recent world events graphically illustrate, parliamentary democracy is a fragile concept. Those of us lucky to live and work in countries which, irrespective of gender, race, religion or culture, uphold the rule of law, individual and peoples’ rights and freedoms, must continue to pursue and promote the practice of democracy. Among the key objectives of the CPA are the preservation, sustenance and enhancement of democratic ideals.

The CPA family is constituted of national, provincial, state and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures of the countries of the Commonwealth. Members of the Association of all creed, colour and race share the common mission that in a nutshell entails good governance. In full fledge
the practice of democracy is competitive in true form therefore respecting and expressively permitting multipartism as a noble and necessary ingredient embracing all, if not as much, political diversity as is existent in any given jurisdiction.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

One of the most challenging tasks for Parliaments is to consistently develop and improve the capacity to cope with change and be responsive to the demands of the populace. Kenya is no exception to this challenge and significantly so now with the passage of a New Constitution that is in my opinion bold and most modern largely generated by the Kenyan people themselves as it is the product of a protracted process of consultations, confrontation and negotiations stretching over a period of two decades before precipitation on the 27th August, 2010. Yes it is a new dawn for Kenya, may be party time but the party must end and focus shifted to implementation because the New Constitution is no more than a means to the end which must be the holistic actualisation of the aspirations and expectations of Kenyans.
After two years of service on the EXCO and to the CPA as Vice President and President respectively and following careful reflection I feel compelled with the concurrence of a substantial portion of the CPA membership to suggest two prescriptions that may in my considered view go a long way in anchoring the vibrancy, dynamism, internationality and cohesion of the CPA:—

a) the Association may want to adopt the UN, AU style unwritten but respected structure and process of rotation between regions in its leadership.

b) find a modus of an advisory engagement with the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government (CHOGM) biannual assemblies so that one of its key officers has an official slot to address the gathering of Heads of State and Government to assist in configuring enduring policies that will help develop Commonwealth institutions adopted to be in step with the changing times.
One of the desired outputs of this conference is to emerge a stronger, cohesive and more solid organisation better equipped and determined to deliver on our core tripartite mandate of effective legislation, oversight and representation. Ever so aware that the work of Parliamentarians in our time transcends our National borders. That our work must be relevant to address the plight of mankind as it is bound to reckon with on mother earth at the local, national, regional and global levels. Parliamentary diplomacy is thus called for to address this imperative. This is to say therefore that parliamentarians must complement, if not provide leadership to the Executive, to productively articulate international affairs.

For Parliamentarians to ably play the foregoing role partnerships are encouraged. There is need to embrace and catalyse the bilateral formation of inter country parliamentary friendship groups which will provide a practical medium for exchange of experiences. By reason of our historical proximity I expect that a number of such groups will be consummated if not born out of this conference.
Hon. Members, Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme for this year’s Conference is most instructive and deservedly chosen “Parliament and Development in the 21st Century: Thus far and beyond”. As Parliamentarians under the auspices of the CPA we all subscribe to the practice of democracy if not Parliamentary democracy which in many respects has basic comparables with development. Democracy is about expanding opportunities, promoting liberty, strengthening human capabilities and safeguarding human rights. Development on the other hand, not away from democracy, is about harnessing opportunities, enhancing economic freedom, ensuring equity and fair distribution of resources wherever, wheresoever, and howsoever. Both must be implemented beginning from the local (or grassroots level) rising through to the global level to meet acceptance.

Let me give us an idea as to the burden we carry and are under compulsion to address, and nay do something about:-

- Over $\frac{1}{3}$ of the Commonwealth’s 2 billion citizens live on less than One US Dollar a day.
• Women constitute just about $\frac{3}{4}$ of all those living in poverty across the commonwealth.
• That almost $\frac{2}{3}$ of HIV and aids cases in the World are in Commonwealth Countries.
• $\frac{1}{2}$ of the World’s 115 million children without access to Primary School Education live in the commonwealth countries.

My authority for these damning factual statistics being the Commonwealth Year Book, 2006 by Richard Green, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UN Reports on MDG’s.

In conclusion therefore, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, without being anticipatory, or attempting to be prophetic, you Parliaments have little choice but to speak to development and make it happen, otherwise our aspirations and struggle for democratic governance will be hollow. Democracy must deliver, where democracy flourishes, development is, human and people’s rights are upheld and there is integrity.
Allow me your Excellencies, Hon. Members, Ladies and gentlemen to wrap up the postulate with a quote from an American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr:

“The perils of uncontrolled power are perennial reminders of the virtues of democratic society” and that “Man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary”.

I move to close by thanking you all for being here, commending the delegates, officers and staff of the CPA - for your tireless efforts to take forward our common belief in and commitment to parliamentary democracy, and the liberation and development opportunities it can bring. I sincerely express my appreciation to all Governments of the Commonwealth countries that have enabled the participants to attend.

Please do take some time after the conference to sample some of Kenya’s natural beauty, ecological, environmental and touristic attractions. Enjoy the spectacular mosaic that is Kenya.
Thank you all.

Now, I have the singular honour and privilege ladies and gentlemen to invite the man with the greatest accolade of our time this far, the man who has gone into the annals of history for providing leadership to deliver a new constitution in peace time.