REPORT OF THE MEETING OF
32ND SMALL BRANCHES CONFERENCE

3rd Plenary Session
“Strategies to Increase Women’s Representation in Parliaments in Small States.”

&

4th Plenary Session
“Measuring Progress and Well-being beyond GDP in Small States”

10TH SEPTEMBER 2012

Venue: GALADARI

Prepared by
HANSARD DEPARTMENT
Parliament of Sri Lanka
Chairperson – Ms. Paula Biggar (Prince Edward Island)
Discussion Leader – Hon. Maria Payet-Marie (Seychelles)
Discussion Leader – Councillor Anthony Arthur Green (St Helena)
Discussion Leader – Hon. Ms. Lovitta Foggo (Bermuda)
Discussion Leader – Ms. Kemi Ogunsanya (Commonwealth Secretariat)

At the outset, the Chairperson, Ms. Paula Biggar warmly and cordially welcomed all the Delegates present and she called upon the Hon. Maria Payet-Marie (Seychelles) to make her presentation.

**Hon. Maria Payet-Marie** started her presentation on Strategies to Increase Women’s Representation in Parliaments in Small States. She elaborated some achievements and experiences in terms of women’s role in Seychelles in general.

She stated that the economy of Seychelles with a population of 90,000 people mainly depends on tourism and fisheries and those two sectors are the main pillars of its economy.

In the meantime she stated that their Constitution recognizes equal access to free primary healthcare and education to all its citizens, irrespective of gender and it recognizes equal protection of women and men under the law and their right to participate freely in Government and to be paid equally for equal work.

She further stated that subsequent elections have increased the number of women candidates from 12 in 1993 to 19 in 2012, representing an increase of 24 per cent and they rank fifth in the world in terms of percentage of women representation in Parliament and the second in Africa.

According to her, the four pillars of the gender policy are to encourage the participation of women in politics and decision-making, economic empowerment of women, fight against the gender based violence and ensure sustainable development.

**Councillor Anthony Arthur Green (St. Helena)** making his presentation on Strategies to Increase Women’s Representation in Parliaments in Small States stated that over the past 40 years, the make-up of their parliament was dominated mostly by men. According to him, there are no obvious barriers for women to enter into politics and it is entirely a choice of theirs. They do not have political parties in St. Helena nor do they have preliminary hurdles to enter into Parliament. Shortly after the 2009 Election, it was decided to pay a salary to politicians and it attracted more candidates to Parliament but only three women were able to be elected.
He further stated that their past culture had led women in his country to stay at home, look after children and elderly people in their families, but that pattern is now changing.

Politics not being a very popular choice of career is another deterrent, according to him. Expectations of the public are huge. They expect politicians to come up with solutions to their individual problems.

He stated that it is important to give some confidence to women so that they can make a difference by being elected to Parliament. He also pointed out that the people and politicians must be made aware of the success of these Committees and too much emphasis should not be placed on the failures. People should be educated as to what politics is all about.

He raised the importance of giving some sort of explicit quota for women representation as already existing in other countries. Also, he pointed out the importance of making women aware of rewards and ground situations in the political arena and asking them to get together in order to actively participate in group sessions. As another important suggestion, he pointed out that having capacity-building workshops together with present and past politicians would create better awareness and remove reluctance to engage in politics. He was of the view that apart from paying a salary for women MPs, they should be given other incentives as well.

**The Hon. Ms. Lovitta Foggo (Bermuda)** making her presentation stated that in most of the regimes throughout the Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic region, women’s representation in Parliaments is less than 30 per cent. She further stated that it remains unattainable in most of the Caribbean regimes.

She highlighted the fact that by the year 2004 there were only 15 countries in the world that had reached the target level of 30 per cent.

She was of the view that under-representation of specific groups in political institutions is considered to be a democratic problem of justice, legitimacy, responsiveness and effectiveness.

She stated that Proportional Representation, culture, social standards, institutional affiliations, education and experience, all have positive influence regarding female representation in politics and most of the countries have used the quota system to increase women representation. She said that through the quota system, women can have greater representation. In Latin America, Africa, Asia and Middle-East, this quota system has dropped.

She insisted the fact that the PR system is the best system which paves the way to increase women representation.
Ms. Kemi Ogunsanya (Commonwealth Secretariat) making her presentation stated that she has come to realize in her research that women need the assistance of men. She added that the Commonwealth is doing very well in this regard and happy to note that there are seven women leaders in the Commonwealth. She further stated that democracy is an important part of work in terms of the Commonwealth Gender Equality Plan which started in 2005 and expires in 2015 in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

She pointed out that one of their major roles is to ensure that the Member States are able to meet the global target of 30 per cent representation of women. According to her, Tanzania was the first African country to include a quota system into its Constitution and thereafter other African countries followed the same by allowing 20 per cent women representation in the 1998 Constitution. She added that this move paved the way for them to have very high level women representatives even in the United Nations Organization.

She revealed that South Africa has included 30 per cent women representation at all levels. This aspect has gone to all levels, right from the national to the provincial and local levels.

She stated that Namibia lobbied for 50 per cent representation despite their electoral model.

She also pointed out that getting financial support for women in their political campaigns is very critical and it is a challenge. She further stated that in Nigeria, there is an institution that extends financial support for women in their political campaigns.

Further, she stressed the importance of governments extending support in this regard since 50 per cent of the world population is women.

At the conclusion of the presentations of the Discussion Leaders, the Chairperson called upon the Senator Sarah Craig Ferguson, of Jersey to make a briefing.

Ms. Lovitta Foggo said that in Bermuda, female suffrage was granted in 1944. She argued that there has to be certain practices put in place to change people’s mindset to accept that women can lead positions in any arena and definitely, in the political stage, not just in their households or small businesses. She was of the opinion that until enough is done to counter that, it is important that a special effort is made to promote women, to get them to unite, using the resources available to them and by looking at other professional women’s organizations and making their voices heard. She further stated that women representation is essential to properly exercise true democracy.

On the question of men getting preference, Mr. Anthony Arthur Green said that it is not so and that every man and women has equal opportunity. Further, he said that the majority of women are better educated than the male population.

Ms. Kemi Ogunsanya said it is not a question of education, but a challenge of their getting into the political space. She said that the environment in Parliaments has to be
gender-sensitive. To make that happen, the number of women engaged in decision-making has to be increased. There are challenges being faced particularly by small States. In her country Nigeria, they are very many educated women, but when it comes to politics, it is male dominant, she said. Women have to work three times harder than men because they themselves are not convinced they can do it. It is due to psychological and social factors and the patriarchal society.

The Hon. (Mrs.) Maria Payet-Marie said that education is not only for getting into politics, but also for being successful in everything.

The Hon. (Ms.) Elizabeth Hanson from Yukon, Canada said that women’s representation in her State has increased from two to six from 2008 to 2011. The challenge faced by them is recruiting women into politics. The key is to ensure that qualified women and those who have the confidence to do it are being put forward. Women are muti-taskers and they must win the confidence of the community as community leaders, she said.

Ms. Lovitta Foggo said that through her work with the community, she was able to expose young women to professional working class women who had success stories. Through that practical experience, those young women had realized their capabilities within themselves to take up lead positions. Reaching out to professional women in other organizations helps to get the message across about their capabilities. Increasing female participation to 50 per cent in Parliament helps to take female issues on to the table, where their male counterparts will treat them equally.

Citing her experiences in South Africa on practical strategies, Ms. Kemi Ogunsanya said that they have regular sessions of bringing together a pool of experienced women, who shared their experiences and expertise with a variety of women leaders. Then, they do a survey, evaluate the impact and contribution of those women and encourage them to go forward. Those women who had done badly in their professional career are left out and those who had done well are promoted and put on the list.

The Hon. Steve Roden of the Isle of Man said that his country’s National Legislature is the very first legislature in the world that granted women to those who were unmarried or widows over the age of 21 and who owned property-the vote in 1881. He further said that they are not so proud of the reality that out of the 24 elected Members, only two are women. There is no reason, institutionally or historically, for women’s participation not to be as high as 50 per cent. His State does not have political parties or a party selection procedure. Women are entirely free to engage in politics and there are no impediments. There is an anti-discrimination legislation in place and the Government policy and practice do not condone discrimination against women. The basic problem is they would not offer them as candidates. He further said that the reasons why it has not been easy for women to stand have not been talked about. He said that he does not accept that there are psychological and cultural reasons for men not to vote for women. For the last 40 to 50 years, we have had women leaders like Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher and Ms. Hellen Clark leading their countries. So,
there is no reason to stop women coming into politics and proving them better leaders than men, he said. He wanted the Panel to identify the reasons than the remedies.

Ms. Lovitta Foggo stated that those women leaders the Hon. Roden spoke of came from a background of affluence and family connections, providing them a stage to take up leadership. She said culture, status and history do impact on the psyche of an individual. Even though her country has had three female leaders, the natural tendency of the males and the females is to go for male leadership.

The Hon. Anthony Arthur Green said that in the past, traditionally, women had no political ambition, but they liked jobs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to carry out the responsibilities of the family. That has to change. Politicians are expected to work 24 hours a day when there are problems. It is nice to engage in politics and the pattern that has been prevalent needs to be changed, he said.

Ms. Kemi Ogunsanya said that what the Hon. Green said is the reality. She further said that women’s representation in Belize and Samoa has considerably decreased. So, what Samoa has done is, they have put in a 10 per cent quota. She said there are different variations in different Commonwealth countries. The Trinidad and Tobago does not have a quota system, but they have a 40 per cent women’s representation in local government bodies due to civil society engagement. There, the civil society took it upon itself to train women, to encourage them and to change their mindset to let them know the importance of being in politics. You have to find a way to ease off the fear that is attached to politics and develop a pool of women who have already been there to share their experiences. Women need that support when they are in the positions of government. So, what you are experiencing is the reality, she said.

The Hon. John Hargreaves of the Australian Capital Territory said that they have a 41 per cent of female representation in their Parliament. He said that you need to get an unnatural counter balance to bring it into equilibrium. Unless you have is a counter balance, this cannot be done was his view.

(On Resumption)

The Delegate from Burma stated that problem lies with the reluctance of women to be elected as people’s representatives. She was of the view that women leaders are not elected to Parliament due to their reluctance into entering into the war of politics.

In some countries, women cannot possess even property. They lack empowerment in the political arena. Even though politics has been very rigid towards women, they have reached the highest positions in many countries. Each political organization should work towards the advancement of women and should give priority to gender in politics.
She further stated that there should be a higher number of female Parliamentarians so that then they can have female party leaders. It should be ensured that women adequately intervene in the political process. Constitution of the political party itself should address the issues on gender very sensitively.

The policies of each political party should be put in place in principle to ensure that women are equally invited into the political process to empower them in moving towards the highest echelons of the political organizations. She was happy to work with the commonwealth women parliamentarians to see how they can develop strategies to identify the problems and challenges. They have found that all the strategies are brilliant but when it comes to implementation they need to work with key stakeholders.

All women Parliamentarians should get together as a caucus, nationally and internationally, on a general agenda towards the advancement of women in the political process. As the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, she was of the opinion that they should have an agenda to ensure that women are integrated into the political process to be represented in Parliament.

**The Hon. Mrs. Lovitta Fogg** stressed on the importance of having a female leader for her party with a higher number of female representatives in order to try and meet the recommendations of the United Nations.

The delegate from **British Virgin Islands, Hon. Marlan Penn** stated that there was no question that women have the leadership ability. He also confirmed that they run many private sector businesses. They are heads of Government Departments. He stated that there was no issue of discrimination but women have problems in getting into politics. They are also a good support for the family.

**The Hon. (Ms.) Lovitta Fogg** basically pointed out that Hon, Marlan Penn mentioned about the major impacts of women and certain types of barriers faced by them. Women have to fulfil the role of mothers also the head of the household.

**The Hon. Ms. Kemi Ogunsanya from the Commonwealth Secretariat** stated that Trinidad and Tobago inspired her a lot because young women are inspired from schools to join the political space. The challenge is to change the mindset.

Women have critical roles to play. There is a challenge of lack of women leaders. You find wonderful women holding very important positions. So it has to be started from that age.

It was also stated that the package has to be more attractive to get women to come into politics.

**The Hon. Kate White (Canada)** was of the view that the media is more favourable towards men in power than towards women in power when reporting and her message was that they ought to judge both men and women in a fair manner and hence a change in their perception is anticipated.
Discussion Leader – Kemi Ogunsaya’s response was that the media is a challenge and that women in power have to be taught to hug, love and sway the media in a positive way because women in power need the media to serve them positively and that the Media (print and electronic) should be trained at all levels; locally, communitywise, regionally, provincially, nationally and internationally to serve positively and how to present issues on a consistent basis.

Discussion Leader – Hon. Maria Payet-Marie (Seychelles) suggested that strategies should be developed on how to identify these problems and address them.

Discussion Leader – Hon. Lovitta Foggo’s (Bermuda) message to women in power was that they have to build a relationship with the media to get their support positively in order to get their message across to the constituents. Her suggestion was to use the attention of the media as an avenue to create the type of scenario that you want for yourself. She said that she has been successful in doing that.

Discussion Leader – Councillor Anthony Arthur Green (St. Helena) stated that media perhaps was an area of concern. His advice was that one should be able to take criticism from media.

The Hon. Laauli Leuatea Polataivao Fosi (Samoa) took pride in saying that in Samoa, women are everything from being leaders, warriors, soldiers to philosophers and are well-respected.

He said that Samoa has recognized women by implementing a Ministry for Women. He said, when commemorating their fifty years of Independence, they will present a Bill to Parliament to increase the percentage of women in Parliament to fifty per cent but will start with ten percent which will be activated at the next election in 2016.

The representative from the Solomon Islands said that there is difficulty in enacting legislation for women representation in Parliaments because sometimes male members are too defensive.

He requested the assistance of the CPA in the implementation of the requests made in these deliberations.

Discussion Leader – Kemi Ogunsaya said that the Parliament of Solomon Islands was one of the few Parliaments that did not have a woman in Parliament. But, the good news that has now been received is that there is a woman in the Solomon Islands Parliament. She said what matters is that there is an opportunity for political space for women to raise their voice.

She cited examples of Bangladesh, Caribbean and Latin America as being success stories when it came to social mobilization, women’s participation and achieving Millennium Development Goals.
Hon Gatoloifaana Ama Gidlow Gildo (Samoa) commended this topic of “Strategies to increase Women’s Representation in Parliament in Small States” being taken up for discussion in a mixed forum where both men and women are present. She stated that generally issues related to women are taken up in women’s forums only. She pointed out that in Samoa they have the legislation in place to have more women representation. She was of the view that women participation in decision-making at national and international levels is important. She suggested to have more workshops and promotional programmes for women in national and international forums. She proposed more leadership workshops/awareness programmes to support women to come to Parliament.

The Representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat stressed the importance of having strategies to implement what is put on paper. He further added that capacity-building is yet another aspect through which one could bring in new aspirants in politics and make them understand the advantages and opportunities in it. He further said that it would help build specialized skills of women in the field and strengthen their positions.

The Delegate from Tasmania stated that media is the biggest barrier for women politicians. He said that media focuses more on the outward appearances of women politicians rather than their intelligence and their abilities, and expect them to be super women. He said that women have to be recognized on their intelligence and abilities, not on looks.

The Delegate from Bermuda while agreeing with his points suggested the setting up of a Media Commission which would address the problems faced by women.

The Representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat stated how media portraits female politicians in the limelight and how they intrude into their lives. She stated that one has to find ways to work with the media. She further that even in Ghana where media freedom is ensured, the lives of women are intruded into. She finally stated that media has to act in a positive way to ensure a level playing field.

The Delegate from Maldives said that he has dealt with a lot of issues with regard to women and development. He stated that the problem is not with the media alone but with the users of the media. The Representative stated how the rights of women in the Maldives are enshrined in their Constitution. He said that out of 50 Members, 8 members are appointed by the Executive, and representatives are elected based on demography and geography, not on the basis of gender. He further said that the women in Maldives are reluctant to come up for an election. He finally suggested that the Commonwealth should encourage the National Assemblies to bring in legislations in order to increase the number of women representatives. He was of the view that if all the seats are derived from constituent elections, then those elections would not bring in a large number of women.

The Representative of the Maldives stressed on the importance of having additional seats for women according to demographic and geographic conditions which are not linked to
the representative seats, so that a vast number of women will get an opportunity to enter Parliament and air their voice. Further, he highlighted that there should not be any discrimination on candidacy, and if done, it is an infringement on women. He further detailed the hindrances faced by women in entering national politics, such as financial constraints and insisted that parties should come up with their own formula where a greater number of women representation is ensured.

The Representative of the Caribbean maintained that there should be a change in the mindset of society in regard to the question of increased female participation in politics. She said that impediments, such age barriers should be abolished in order to increase female participation in legislatures and added that the society has a role to play to increase female representation. She referred to a number of other legislatures and cited how women are given accommodation in them. She said that in the Indian legislature women are accommodated through the National List and further said how Tony Blair took steps to increase female representations to 28 per cent in his Labour Party. The Caribbean representative was of the firm view that women are able to discharge any duty entrusted to them successfully and diligently.

The Representative of the Falkland Islands mentioned about the equal rights enjoyed by women in her country and described at length how her legislature accommodates women. She stressed that gender is of no concern in her country when it comes to politics and women engaged in politics in her country are strong enough to carry out any job entrusted to them.

The Representative of Kiribati said that the theme chosen for discussion is very interesting and informative and commended the CPA Secretariat for the same. She mentioned about the gradual increase of women representation in her Legislature and said that it has risen from 4 per cent in 2005 to 6.5 per cent in 2007. She further added that out of 44 MPs, there are 4 women MPs in her Legislature and their contribution as the Vice-President and as Ministers is very vital to Parliamentary democracy.

The Representative of the Republic of Kiribati further said that women are supported in her country. She said they are going to adopt two strategies to increase women’s participation before the next election in 2015.

The Delegate from Seychelles said that his country has representative democracy that gives equal rights to every citizen to participate in politics regardless of gender. Increased women’s representation is a matter of equity and justice for them. He further stated that women are given equal opportunities and equal access to education. He also emphasized the fact that women have to fight for equal access to education and for equal opportunities. He was of the view that there should be an equal balance of 50:50 when it comes to women’s representation.

The Delegate of the Cook Islands said that her country has 24 Members in Parliament including two females. She believes that women have to stand up, but not fight. They
have done everything they think should be done to bring women forward. The Government and the Opposition are promoting women’s participation in Parliament. Though women take leadership in their households, when it comes to Parliament, it is totally different. Then, they are no longer qualified to have decision-making qualities.

Ms. Kemi Ogunsanya said that in politics of meritocracy, some are given positions of authority and power for their contribution. It is an opportunity to serve, share and to groom future leaders. Some get to those positions by merit or popularity. There are different strata that countries evaluate in bringing women into positions of authority. Women have to encourage and strengthen each other. She said that she supports the Seychelles idea that there must be political will. It is needed to support change.

The Delegate from Bermuda said that we have women who are strong, intelligent and powerful. He expects them to go out to a world where equality is the case. There is a male dominant society. Bermuda has progressed exceptionally with regard to women’s representation and there is still progress to be made. The question he posed was, how fast is progress being made? He said that we must be careful not to create a reverse in equality.

The Hon. (Ms.) Lovitta Foggo said that women who have the ability are needed in the right positions. You have to bring about a change in society by using whatever mechanisms that bring in positive results.

Ms. Kemi Ogunsanya said that the people’s mindset is very important and that since the Beijing Meeting in 1995, women’s participation has been about 10 per cent.

The Delegate from Barbados stated that there is less woman participation in politics, it has to be encouraged and for that, the attitude and the mindset of women have to be changed. Due to social and racial disparities, women stick to homes and rarely come out to join social activities such as politics. He proposed to have a system of attracting women to social activities. He was of the view that by inspiring them, women can come to central positions. More women participation in every field is very much needed and for that, women need to be encouraged without criticizing. He stated that women should have equal rights and an affirmative action has to be taken for 50 per cent participation.

The Hon. (Ms.) Lovitta Foggo from Bermuda mentioned that some suggestions of him should be very well adopted. She also said that the attitude and the mindsets of our communities has to be changed towards women and an affirmative action taken to give equal rights to females. Males believe that if a woman is going to be successful in the political arena, she has to adopt male-centric qualities to perform successfully. She requested Members to join hands to encourage women in their own countries to move forward in the right direction.

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their participation and great contribution at the session.
Ms. Kemi Ogunsanya from Commonwealth Secretariat thanked the host country Sri Lanka for giving her an opportunity.

The Hon. (Ms.) Maria Payet-Marie from Seychelles thanked Sri Lanka, for hosting the conference. She further stated that everybody’s idea was to have more women participation in decision-making. More strategies have to be adopted to encourage and direct them correctly.

The Hon. (Ms.) Lovitta Foggo from Bermuda stated that the decision-making process in the political arena is a challenge for women. More strategies have to be implemented to sustain women in politics and also suggested 50 per cent women participation.

The Chairperson mentioned that there is an immediate contingency for females coming up in politics. We should continue educating the public about women’s participation.

Councillor Anthony Arthur Green from St Helena stated that the subject matter has been extensively taken up. He further said that the discussion was very stimulating and thanked everyone for their participation.

[The Session Adjourned.]
Fourth Plenary Session

“MEASURING PROGRESS AND WELL-BEING BEYOND GDP IN SMALL STATES”

Hon. David De Lisle, Guernsey – Chairperson
Hon. Claudius James Francis, St. Lucia
Hon. Barbara Webster-Bourne, Anguilla

Ms. Arlene Bussette - Rapporteur

At the outset, Hon. David De Lisle of Guernsey, the Chairperson of the Panel, introduced the rest of the Members of the Panel.

He said that the global trend now is to measure performance of nations more by economic growth and that the OECD produces performance tables beyond GDP and the new “Better Life Index - BLI” measures eleven criteria including housing, income, job, community, environmental health, life satisfaction, governance, safety and work life balance and provide comparison across 34 countries.

He referred to remarks made the previous evening by the Hon. (Prof.) G.L. Peiris, Minister of External Affairs, on the importance of quality of life over GDP and also the differences in the distribution of income and its meaning to the progress in society. According to his views, measuring the quality of life in this society as well as societies across the globe in future would not be restricted to one economic indicator, GDP - Gross Domestic Product, but to a number of factors.

Prior to the proceedings of the day, Hon. Steve Charles Rodan of the Isle of Man raised a point of Order and stressed the importance of opening the discussion forum to the majority of delegates enabling them to make comments by asking questions. He further pointed out the fact that he made this suggestion even yesterday.

The Chairperson and the other Members of the Panel too agreed to his suggestion stating that the intention of this Session is to have a discussion. He said that the Discussion Leaders may speak for ten minutes and thereafter other delegates too can ask questions and make suggestions. He requested them to limit this to a maximum of three minutes. He further requested the Organizers to consider this suggestion and take it forward as it would be a good format for the remaining sessions for the rest of the week.

The Hon. (Ms.) Barbara Webster-Bourne of Anguilla addressed the Conference on the subject “Measuring Progress and Well-being Beyond GDP in Small States” and said that GDP was first adopted as a measure of economic performance in the 1930s. She was of the view that despite being an invaluable tool for economic policy, GDP reflects many of the challenges especially for small States. She stressed that it is only a measure of the economic value of what is produced and paid for but unfortunately does not take into
account the environmental and social cost, how the wealth is distributed, who spends it and what it is spent for. In short, she stated that GDP measures the progress of the economy, but not the society, which is very important. She further commented about the GDP calculations which does not indicate and reflect social and environmental priorities. She stated that in any case, measures of well-being must necessarily take into account the level of literacy, life expectancy, access to healthcare, employment opportunities, safety and security, poverty, income distribution etc. of a nation.

She pointed out the negative side of the GDP measurements that does not take into consideration such societal or environmental impacts.

She also referred to what Robert F. Kennedy has said about GDP and stated that most of those definitions give an incomplete picture on what GDP really means.

She stated that there are several other indicators that can be used in addition to the GDP such as the Human Development Index, Ecological Footprint and the Physical Quality of Life Index. She was of the view that if we were to take literacy, mobility and life expectancy into account, it will give a more accurate picture. The GDP should not be replaced, but indices that reflect the well-being and progress of the people better should be brought in.

Hon. Claudius James Francis from St. Lucia stated that he will deviate his speech radically from that index. He pointed out that in economics, GDP maybe a good measurement, but it is not adequate. He said, for example, in the United States, 2 per cent of the population controls 98 per cent of the wealth. Therefore, the GDP cannot be utilized as a measure of progress and well-being. He pointed out that though St. Lucia has a small GDP, it has produced world class citizens in many fields such as economics, literature, sports et cetera. He said that within the Caribbean, they have formed regional groups which benefit the countries individually and the group as a whole. He also added that they have one judicial system and a single currency and they are going to make it wider. He said that countries with small GDP have contributed a lot in many fields in the world.

Mr. John Hargreaves from Australian Capital Territory asked whether the GDP is a convenient qualitative and quantitative form of measure and whether there is any conflict in quantitative indicators and qualitative indicators because one is an objective indicator and the other is a subjective indicator. Mr. Claudius replied stating that the GDP is more quantitative than qualitative. He explained this by citing some examples. He further stated that there is no conflict between those two.

The Delegate from Cook Islands stated that GDP is an accepted tool of measurement when you are running a government. He pointed out that it is the economists who advise the government to run the economy, not the sociologists, but that you cannot overlook cultural, spiritual and social aspects. He emphasized that one will fail if you look at those aspects. He was of the view that though the GDP does not give us a realistic perception, it is a necessary perception to have projections for the future.
The Delegate from the Isle of Man agreed with what the Hon. Claudius James Francis stated. He cited a survey according to which, 60 percent are very happy and 35 percent are satisfied. He pointed out that according to a research done by the ACT, people in the Isle of Man ranked top of the 31 countries with regard to happiness as an indicator. In addition to the GDP, health, financial security, owning a home, a happy marriage, interesting job, personal security and low crime rate are also important factors. He stated that Britain and Canada have introduced indicators of measuring happiness which is called the “Gross National Happiness”. According to a survey carried out, people in the low economic countries like Nigeria and India are quite happy, but people in countries which have nice features like France, Italy and Spain have very low scores.

The Chairperson sought the opinion of the Hon. Claudius James Francis as to how he would measure sports of leisure attributes. Is that something that could be measured quantitatively or qualitatively across the globe? The Hon. Claudius James Francis while citing the recent Olympic Games replied that the level of satisfaction is achieved as a result of the qualitative measure.

The Delegate from Jersey stated that governments use different kinds of measurements to identify progress. Clearly, GDP is one of the factors, but it cannot be the only one. There have got to be other factors. Governments have got to look at what those measurements are and how they are going to provide substantial evidence with regard to progress. Thus, focus should be made on social well-being. More time should be spent identifying reliable measurements that we can use to determine the progress.

The delegate from Dominica mentioned about the sporting activities of the two top athletes who have captivated the rest of the world and stated that being a parcel that sells a particular country’s name is quantitative.

The Delegate from Maldives stated that GDP measures the productivity of the nation. Another factor where the progress of a country is measured is the increase in revenue rate. In Maldives, the literacy rate is 99 per cent. Although all schools are financed by the Government, it spends only 5 per cent of the total revenue on education. It also has started a universal health scheme. The GDP in Maldives has gone beyond the amount that it spends for healthcare. Therefore, if the rate of revenue is increased, then the problems with regard to social, health, economy and education can be solved.

The Delegate from Prince Edward Island stated that, when considering economic statistics on GDP, there had not been a better financial position in the 1970s, but we were content. By the 1980s, they received much money that they never dreamt of. The financial position became considerably happy, but it did not work and people became miserable after a few years. The reasons probably were greed and anger. The GDP has started to level off and the contentment of people has been increasing. In a couple of years’ time, we are going to experience another boost and I am interested to see whether it is going to have an impact on the levels of happiness of our society, he said.
Hon. (Ms.) Barbara Webster posed a question to the Representative of the Cook Islands as to what can be done by the Parliamentarians to ensure the progress and well-being for our own countries. He said, for instance, when I personally talked to an economist, his first comment on GDP was that it is the cent of the poor. The second fact he wanted to recommend was that there was a tax system that should be put in place in order to minimize the exploitation and the abuse of poor. It should be a bridge linking the “Have” and the “Have not”. So, it is important to identify as to what measures should be taken by the Parliamentarians to fasten the goal of measuring the progress in our own countries.

The Hon. Claudius James Francis commented that it is an important criteria to consider as to what can be done by Parliamentarians to improve the economic levels of the country. Certain political bodies are elected by money. If the financial authorities are allowed to use money imprudently, the economic levels would become worse in a country. In St. Lucia, there was a situation where a politician went into an area known for drugs and he wanted to be elected as the Minister for National Security. If it is so, his message should be to eradicate drug abuse there. So, politicians should be socially conscious.

The Delegate from Dominica, elaborating further said that every time the Opposition criticized the Government for not providing enough funding for the requirements of the country. So, in order to win the confidence of people, we have got to convince people that if you become the Government, you propose to do better than the previous Government to address the issues of the nation, he said.

In certain countries where the scrutiny process was quite rigid, the Opposition parties have to a lot of homework if they are to criticize the Government. Otherwise they would be dismissed for misleading the people and the country as a whole. The aspect of accountability has been quite strong. Certain political candidates provide the people with assurances of fulfilling all the requirement of the people, which are unachievable. It is a dilemma confronted in politics.

The Delegate from Australian Capital Territory, further elaborated the terms of “Parliamentarianism” and the “politician”. His view was that politicians should end up in Parliament. He said that a politician was a delegate of a certain political organization and not a representative of people. A Parliamentarian is a representative of the views, not necessarily connected with a given cause. The difference between a parliamentarian and a politician is that one is a representative where as the other is a delegate. We, as Parliamentarians, have to carry out our responsibilities assigned in order to change the world.

The Delegate from Jersey stated that it is important that all politicians and parliamentarians have social consciousness. Though the GDP is an important economic statistic, it is not the only thing to measure as to how the people are served. Still, it is an important economic indicator. The well-being index is also an important index in helping Governments around the world to serve their own communities.

[The Session was suspended for tea]
(On Resumption)

The Hon. Claudius James Francis said that the GDP is not the sole factor that determines progress and well-being, and requested the Committee to focus on finding out what else could be identified as factors to determine progress and well-being of a State.

The Delegate from the Norfolk Islands said that, at the moment, the Norfolk Islands is going through difficult times due to the downturn in tourism, which is their main industry, as a result of the financial crisis in Europe and the high Australian Dollar. The GDP of the Norfolk Islands has taken a battering and they find it difficult to meet the expectations of their community. For them, the measurement of GDP is miniscule. They greatly encourage the participation of women in Parliament. The possibility of the Norfolk Islands returning to a good financial position relies very heavily on financial assistance from Australia, he said.

The Chairperson then invited the Delegates to comment on the list of other indicators that could be added, not replacing the GDP, but adding to it.

The Delegate from Barbados said that the GDP should not even be used as one of the indicators. The GDP is basically a measurement of the amount of money that is available to be spent in a given country. In his view, what we ought to look at is to what extent the economy of a given country is able to provide for the needs and the well-being of its populace. Barbados is more than an economy; it is a society where there is free healthcare, free education from nursery to tertiary, social programmes and employment benefits. With a small GDP, they provide free healthcare. So, if such social programmes are examined, one will get a correct picture, he said.

The lady Delegate also from Barbados was of the view that, as her Colleague said, the GDP is largely about the amount of money in an economy, how much money is being generated in economy and how much is available for spending and is being spent. She said that the time has come to review a lot of the policies they adopt for provision of free education and so on as it is quite clear that they can no longer afford to do what they were doing in the past. Her view is that in addition to the GDP, other major indices on human development such as education, health, literacy, child welfare would give a very comprehensive picture of how a country is doing.

The Delegate from Kiribati said that he supports the topic. Kiribati has a very low GDP and is rated as one of the least developed countries with a vast ocean of 3.5 million square kilometres. He was of the view that the GDP, as a measurement, is better for smaller States. They have resources lying in the ocean, but they do not have the technology. With the technological advances happening in the world, we need to be measured in that way, he said. He also said that we have to go beyond the GDP as a measurement and explore the resources that are lying in the smaller States.

The Delegate from the Solomon Islands said that Parliamentarians, the law makers and the policy makers, make policies on the resources of a country, whether it is big or small,
rich or poor. They decide in Parliament in terms of fairness and maximum benefits to all citizens in economic and political activities, ensuring that everybody participates in it. We have to make sure that it is done fairly, he said his view.

The Delegate from Bermuda stated that the GDP, as a measuring stick of progress and well-being, has its merit, but it has to be taken in the context of how it relates to the human element. The GDP is a good measuring stick, but it cannot be the only measuring stick on how we rate the progress and well-being. Bermuda has one of the richest per capita incomes in the world, but there are people who are struggling to meet their needs. The policymakers, either as politicians or Parliamentarians, when making decisions, have to decide whether they evaluate the numbers such as the GDP or the human element involved. So, you cannot purely go on the numbers, but also have to measure the human element of it and the impact it has on the people.

The Delegate for the Australian Capital Territory asked for the opinion of the Panel as to whether this is a more important issue for the smaller States than it is for much larger countries like the United States, Canada or Australia.

The Chairperson was of the view that it is more of an issue for the smaller States than to the larger States. He said that even if America is one of the more progressive countries, they also have pockets of poverty, which are worse off than those in some of the smaller States. They have their own issue like the smaller States. So, the right measuring stick that works for the individual countries and addresses the internal issues of those countries has to be found, he further said.

The Delegate from the Solomon Islands said that one of the problems of the smaller States is the competition with the bigger dealers in the market. The world prices of products are determined by the bigger dealers who have a big volume of exports. Due to that, the smaller producers suffer. So, that is one problem affecting the smaller States.

The Chairperson then said that there are a number of performance indicators that fit into the social, environmental and economic sectors - housing, income, jobs, community, environmental health, life satisfaction, governance, safety and work life balance – which are worthy of looking at. He said that leisure could also be added to that. Those can be used as additional criteria to the GDP.

The Hon. Barbara Webster-Bourne said that this discussion has been long ongoing and the GDP has been recognized by all as playing a necessary and important role. The GDP must be complemented by other alternative measures and indicators such as Human Development Index, ecological footprints and Physical Quality of Life Index, which addresses the areas that GDP ignores. They also present a more accurate picture of the real state of living standards and the quality of life. Parliamentarians must ensure that everyone’s well-being is not only limited to growth, but it includes health, environment, spirit and culture.
The Hon. Claudius James Francis also agreed that we must consider measurements other than the GDP. But, as it stands now, in the world’s eye, GDP is the measurement for a country’s viability. With regard to the smaller States, the GDP is not seen as the sole or even the main criteria for determining success and well-being, he said.

The Chairperson stated that that will be a more sustainable approach in the future and he further stated that a strategic vision is really necessary to ensure that. He then said that the policies that the governments will implement are most appropriate from an economic efficiency, environmental integrity and social equity point of view and well-being and progress are vitally important in this regard. He went on to say that now they really got the opportunity to address this issue even further.

Then, he reminded everyone about the Fourth OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy which will be held in New Delhi, India from 16th October-19th October 2012. He then talked about the importance of having that Forum.

He first thanked the two Discussion Leaders, the Hon. (Ms.) Barbara Webster-Bourne from Anguilla and then the Hon. Claudius James Francis from St. Lucia. Secondly, he thanked Ms. Arlene Bussette, the rapporteur for her work in recording the deliberations.

Thirdly, he thanked the Session Secretary for providing her assistance to their discussions.

He then reminded the name of Tony Green from St. Helena and wished him for his birthday.

Finally, he thanked everybody for their participation and Sri Lanka for organizing this CPA Conference.

[The Session Adjourned]