



**Statement by the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
Executive Committee on International Day of Parliamentarism 2020**

The International Day of Parliamentarism is celebrated every year on 30 June. The Day was established in 2018 through a United Nations General Assembly Resolution.

Celebrating an international day for Parliamentarians and Parliaments is a unique opportunity for organisations like the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). With our membership of over 17,000 Parliamentarians spread across 180 Legislatures, we must use this opportunity to take stock of the importance of parliamentary democracy and its value to our societies and our global community.

I would like to use this important day to focus on adaption and diversity. Adaption was a key theme for our recent Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held in Uganda in September last year. At that time, over 500 Parliamentarians were able to come together to share ideas, build networks and learn from one another. But now the Commonwealth is facing one of its greatest challenges in tackling the COVID-19 global pandemic. Parliamentarians are now focusing their minds on creating safe and secure environments for their countries and constituencies. To succeed in this endeavour, Parliamentarians and our Parliaments have had to embrace rapid and uncertain change in the form of technical, social and cultural adaptations; from how we communicate and travel to the ways in which we legislate, represent and scrutinise governments. As such, adapting to new ways of working is essential.

If we are to be adaptive, innovative and have all the tools needed to overcome the challenges we face today and in the future. We must have a diversity of voices and people sharing ideas, building networks and learning from one another. When one voice is stifled, we are all weakened.

Recently, I have been struck by the Black Lives Matter movement that was started in the United States and has now spread across the globe, a movement that at its heart is about tackling racism and division. What this has reinforced in me, is that nobody should be left behind, nobody should be silenced because of the colour of their skin, their gender, age, ethnicity, religion, language, culture, sexuality or abilities. These values are at heart of what the Commonwealth stands for. This was reflected in this year's Commonwealth Day theme '*Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming*'. **The message is clear, together we are stronger, and together we can**



overcome our greatest challenges. Within the CPA, we champion these principles in enabling women and disabled parliamentarians to work collaborative through the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) networks as well as those from small jurisdictions via the CPA Small Branches network.

As Parliamentarians, we are the representatives of our communities, and as such, we must speak for all those who might be at a potential disadvantage because of their perceived differences and the negative prejudices of others. Even if, we as representatives are not reflective of the diversity of our people, we must as Parliamentarians still speak for all and ensure their views, ideas and knowledge can be voiced in the Chambers of our Parliaments, in the meeting rooms of government departments or on the streets of our constituencies. In my view, that is what being a Parliamentarian is for and why we should use this day, not to celebrate ourselves, but to remind us what our duties are as Parliamentarians and to those we serve.

Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP

Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon

30 June 2020

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