CPA Update e-newsletter: Commonwealth Day focuses on ‘A Connected Commonwealth’ and marking the 70th anniversary of the ‘modern’ Commonwealth

The start of 2019 has seen the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association continue to mark significant anniversaries and milestones for the parliamentary community including the 70th anniversary of the ‘modern’ Commonwealth and the 30th anniversary of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP).

CPA Branches and the CPA Headquarters Secretariat celebrated Commonwealth Day 2019 both in London and across the CPA’s nine Regions on the theme of ‘A Connected Commonwealth’ which offers opportunities for the people, Parliaments, governments and institutions of the Commonwealth to connect and work together at many levels through far-reaching and deep-rooted networks of friendship and goodwill.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians marked International Women’s Day 2019 by highlighting the importance of gender equality and the urgent need to increase women’s representation in Parliaments.

Other activities in the first few months of 2019 focused on the CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures, climate change and the impact of ‘Brexit’ on the Commonwealth.

This edition of the CPA’s quarterly e-newsletter highlights CPA events and activities since January 2019. Images of these events can be accessed at the CPA’s Flickr website - click here.

If you have any CPA news or events to feature in future e-newsletters, please email communications@cpahq.org.

Please note: the CPA Headquarters Secretariat has a new address:

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)  
CPA Headquarters Secretariat  
Richmond House, Houses of Parliament  
London SW1A 0AA, United Kingdom
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association promotes a ‘Connected Commonwealth’ on Commonwealth Day 2019 and vital role of youth in combatting climate change through political participation

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) celebrated Commonwealth Day 2019 both in London at the CPA Headquarters Secretariat and across the CPA’s nine Regions and over 180 Branches. The 2019 Commonwealth Day theme focused on ‘A Connected Commonwealth’ which offers opportunities for the people, Parliaments, governments and institutions of the Commonwealth to connect and work together at many levels through far-reaching and deep-rooted networks of friendship and goodwill. Commonwealth Day 2019 also celebrated the 70th anniversary of the ‘modern’ Commonwealth which was established by the London Declaration on 28 April 1949.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth and Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, with members of the Royal Family, attended celebrations in London to mark Commonwealth Day 2019 and attended one of the largest multi-faith celebration services in Westminster Abbey.

Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon, together with the CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Malta and the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan represented the CPA at the Abbey service. The service was also attended by Commonwealth High Commissioners, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC and dignitaries from around the Commonwealth as well as senior politicians and 1,000 school children. Please click here to read Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II’s Commonwealth Day 2019 message.

Also attending the Commonwealth Day service were young people from across the Commonwealth who earlier in the day participated in the CPA Commonwealth Day Youth Programme on the theme of ‘The role of youth in combatting climate change through political participation’. The young participants represented the following CPA Branches: Falkland Islands; Gibraltar; Isle of Man; Jersey; Malta; Scotland; St Helena; Wales; United Kingdom; Ontario; Cayman Islands; Trinidad and Tobago; Turks and Caicos; Pakistan; New Zealand; Singapore; Malaysia.

On Commonwealth Day 2019, the Secretary-General of the CPA, Mr Akbar Khan said: “Commonwealth Day provides us with the opportunity to reflect on what the Commonwealth means to us and our communities. The Commonwealth can play a vital role in ensuring a better future for us all, today and for future generations. The 2019 Commonwealth theme of ‘A Connected Commonwealth’ reminds us that only by working together can we secure a more sustainable, prosperous, fairer and secure Commonwealth for everyone.”

In addition, CPA Branches and Regions across the network of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association marked Commonwealth Day 2019 in many different ways. Reports of these activities will feature in the next issue of The Parliamentarian. Commonwealth Day has been celebrated on the second Monday in March every year since the 1970s.

*The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association emerged from the Empire Parliamentary Association, founded in 1911, at a conference in London in October 1948, several months ahead of the London Declaration on 28 April 1949.

To read the full CPA news story please click here.
Preparations begin ahead of the 64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference hosted by the Parliament of Uganda and CPA Uganda Branch

Preparations have begun for one of the largest annual gatherings of Commonwealth Parliamentarians at the 64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) hosted by the CPA Uganda Branch and the Parliament of Uganda in September 2019. The annual flagship event will bring together over 500 Parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and decision makers from across the Commonwealth for this unique conference and networking opportunity. The CPC offers the prospect of the coming together of the CPA’s global membership to address the critical issues facing today’s Parliaments.

Ahead of the 64th CPC due to be held in September this year, the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon has visited Uganda to invite His Excellency Yoweri K. Museveni, the President of the Republic of Uganda to become the Vice-Patron of the CPA for this year. Since 1989, the Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has traditionally been the Head of State or Government of the CPA Branch hosting the coming annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

The CPA Chairperson also met with the CPA President Designate (2018-2019), Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of the Uganda Parliament who will host the 64th CPC conference from 22 to 29 September 2019 in Kampala on the conference theme of: ‘Adaptation, engagement, and evolution of Parliaments in a rapidly changing Commonwealth’.

During a separate 64th CPC planning visit, the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan and CPA Director of Operations, Mr Jarvis Matiya also visited the Parliament of Uganda for a series of pre-conference meetings with the CPA President Designate, Members of the Parliament of Uganda and parliamentary staff.

During the 64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, there will also be a number of additional conferences and meetings including: 37th CPA Small Branches Conference; 6th triennial Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference; 64th CPA General Assembly; meetings of the CPA Executive Committee; and the Society of Clerks at the Table (SOCATT) meetings.

Further announcements and invitations for the 64th CPC will be sent to CPA Branches in due course.

For further information about the 64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Uganda please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/annualconference2019.
New Zealand Speaker hosts CPA Pacific Region launch of updated CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures

Rt Hon. Trevor Mallard, Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives and CPA New Zealand Branch President has led the CPA Pacific Region launch of the updated CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures at a meeting held at the New Zealand Parliament. Speaker Trevor Mallard noted that the CPA Benchmarks are an important tool for Parliaments to continuously challenge themselves and identify areas for improvement.

The CPA’s Recommended Benchmarks are a set of guidelines for good governance for Parliaments and Legislatures and these Benchmarks were revised to reflect the changed landscape in which democracies now operate. The updated CPA Benchmarks include measurements for Parliaments to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the recommendations contained in the Commonwealth Charter.

The CPA Benchmarks were revised and updated in 2018, with input from representatives from around the Commonwealth, including the Parliament of New Zealand, to better reflect the needs of modern democratic institutions. This is the first update to the Benchmarks since they were originally published in 2006. Covering a comprehensive range of recommendations, the CPA Benchmarks propose guidelines in areas such as elections and candidate eligibility; political parties; parliamentary staff; legislative procedures; financial and budget oversight; transparency and integrity; diversity and gender sensitivity; and freedom of information.

Other speakers at the CPA Benchmarks event included Lord Fakafanua, Speaker of the Tongan Legislative Assembly; former New Zealand Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon. David Carter, MP; and the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Pacific Chair, Anahila Kanongata’a-Suisuiki, MP, who all called on Pacific Parliaments to keep striving for improvement and to champion the use of the CPA Benchmarks.

Speakers from Commonwealth Parliaments around the CPA Pacific Region including the Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji, Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, MP, were in Wellington to attend the regional launch. As a reflection of the tragic events that occurred in Christchurch the previous week, there was a sombre tone to the occasion, with CPA Pacific Region representatives expressing their condolences on behalf of their Parliaments.

To access the updated CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/benchmarks.
Interparliamentary relations in the Commonwealth will endure, despite Brexit' says CPA Secretary-General at ‘Brexit’ seminar in Gibraltar

The CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan has stressed that the CPA will continue to deliver on its mandate of promoting parliamentary democracy, strengthening the institution of Parliament and upskilling Parliamentarians in the Commonwealth, despite ‘Brexit’ in the United Kingdom. The CPA Secretary-General emphasised in a speech in Gibraltar that the CPA’s activities focus on, and are informed by, the Commonwealth’s commitments to its fundamental political values, including: good parliamentary practice, regulated governments, protection of human rights and the rule of law, equal rights and representation for all citizens of all genders, the separation of powers among the three branches of government and the right to participate in free and democratic political processes.

The CPA has a unique position in working with Parliaments and Legislatures at the national, state, provincial and territorial level such as the Parliament of Gibraltar. In such challenging circumstances as Brexit, the CPA offers its membership the opportunity to share best practices through its peer-to-peer learning network to find common solutions to global problems. The CPA Secretary-General was speaking at a seminar in Gibraltar titled 'Changing times: Brexit, the Commonwealth and opportunities for Gibraltar'. The seminar was hosted by the Government of Gibraltar and the Royal Commonwealth Society and was led by Hon. Dr Joseph Garcia, MP, Deputy Chief Minister of Gibraltar.

Commenting on the seminar, Hon. Dr Joseph Garcia said: “Gibraltar is proud of its association with the different organisations of the Commonwealth. We share the same values, we share the same traditions and the same outlook across a number of areas. The principles of democracy, of self-determination, and the defence of human rights are important to us all. The policy of the Government is to increase our level of engagement with the Commonwealth and this seminar is part of that approach.”

Gibraltar is a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation, participates in the Commonwealth Games, the Commonwealth Youth Parliament, the Commonwealth Local Government Association, the Commonwealth Youth Forum, Women’s Forum and People’s Forum and has also joined the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council.

The CPA Secretary-General was paying his first official visit to Gibraltar which included a tour of the Parliament of Gibraltar and meetings with Members of the CPA Gibraltar Branch. The CPA Secretary-General met the Speaker of Gibraltar’s Parliament, Hon. Adolfo J. Canepa, CMG, GMH, OBE, MP and the Honorary Secretary of the Branch, Mr Paul Martinez.

To read the full CPA news story please click here.
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) news

International Women’s Day 2019: Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians highlight gender equality and women’s representation in Parliaments

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians marked International Women’s Day 2019 by highlighting the importance of gender equality and the urgent need to increase women’s representation in Parliaments. International Women’s Day (8th March) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity, with the theme of International Women’s Day 2019 calling for a more gender-balanced world - ‘Better the balance, better the world’.

To mark International Women’s Day 2019, the CWP published a video to launch its new CWP Alumni Initiative for former women Parliamentarians to deliver mentoring, coaching and advice to benefit sitting women Parliamentarians and to act as a resource for the CWP. To view the CWP Alumni Initiative video please click here or visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/iwd.

The CWP Alumni Initiative Champion, Dr Lesley Clark, a former Member of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland in Australia, will act as an Ambassador for the CWP initiative and will share her experience and expertise across the CPA and CWP’s membership. The video highlights the importance of reaching the Commonwealth target of 30% female representation in Commonwealth legislatures and the vital role networks such as the CWP play in achieving change.

The CWP Chairperson, Hon. Dr Noraini Ahmad, MP (Malaysia) said: “I am delighted that the CWP Alumni Initiative has been launched and I hope that CWP Members will support the new initiative which will benefit women Parliamentarians. In 2019, the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) will mark its 30th anniversary and reflect on the many successes of the past three decades. The CWP envisions a world where women and men have equal access to opportunities - a world where women’s voices are recognised and respected. I urge all Parliamentarians, with the support of the CWP network, to pursue this vision with continued dynamism and enthusiasm. Together we can and will build the future we want, working towards a future of equal rights, equal opportunities and progress for all.”

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians celebrated International Women’s Day 2019 with a wide range of events and activities, for example by attending a high-level panel discussion hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat at Marlborough House in London, UK at which the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC spoke about gender equality in the Commonwealth. The panel discussion on ‘Levelling the Law for Women’s Equality in the Commonwealth’ focused on proposals to eradicate discriminatory laws that hinder women’s full participation in leadership at decision-making levels. The CWP was represented at the event by Joyce Watson, AM, a Member of the Welsh Assembly.

A special issue of The Parliamentarian, the CPA’s flagship publication and Journal of Commonwealth Parliaments, has also just been published to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the CWP featuring articles by current and former CWP Members reflecting on women’s empowerment and gender equality in Commonwealth Legislatures. To read this special issue of The Parliamentarian please visit: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/parliamentariancurrentissue.

To read the full CPA news story please click here.
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians in South East Asia Region renew their commitment to women’s rights at the Parliament of Malaysia

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians from the CPA South East Asia Region have renewed their commitment to women’s rights at a conference on Women’s Political Leadership at the Parliament of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, held on 18 and 19 February 2019. The #WomenWhoLead conference brought together delegates from across the region and the wider Commonwealth to share inspiration and insights around the myths that prevent positive change for women’s rights. Leading voices from Malaysia attended the conference to discuss the barriers to women’s participation in politics.

Malaysia Women’s Minister, Hon. Hannah Yeoh, MP said that government offices and the Parliament building itself would be supplied with childcare facilities as a direct action to assist women in leadership and she pledged to: “fight for supporting infrastructure to keep women in politics and in the workforce.” The two-day conference was held under the Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy (CP4D), an initiative to advance inclusive and accountable democracy across 18 Commonwealth countries that brings together the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF).

For more information about the Commonwealth #CP4D project please visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cp4d.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians from Fiji and New Zealand share valuable lessons

A delegation of eight women Members of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji spent a useful week in New Zealand, learning and sharing knowledge with counterparts from the Parliament of New Zealand from 18 to 22 February 2019. The delegation from Fiji, including three Ministers, an Assistant Minister, and four MPs, were in New Zealand as part of an ongoing Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians programme of parliamentary capacity and relationship-building between women Parliamentarians in the CPA Pacific Region. The delegation enjoyed a busy schedule, engaging in a series of workshops and building connections with New Zealand Parliamentarians. Highlights of the week included meetings with the New Zealand Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern, MP and a wide range of Ministers, former and current MPs.

Reflecting on the week, Rt Hon Trevor Mallard, Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives, said: “This was a really special opportunity and I am so pleased we could host almost all the women in Fiji’s Parliament. There are now record numbers of women in both our Parliaments, with 20% in Fiji and 40.8% in New Zealand, and the week solidified relationships between them. I know that these connections will endure and be an important platform for sharing experiences and supporting one another. Representation of women in the Pacific region is low and therefore
Workshops were shaped around important and current parliamentary issues which included engagement and communication, dealing with social media, effective chairing, managing office budgets, advocacy, and effectively representing constituencies. While most of the programme was in Wellington at the Parliament of New Zealand, the Fijian delegates also had the chance to go to Auckland and Christchurch for an electorate programme, visiting electorate offices and shadowing members and Ministers for a day.

**Working with partners**

**Commonwealth Parliamentary Association supports the Commonwealth Youth Orchestra and Choir in launching a new song to inspire aspiration to mark the 70th anniversary of the ‘modern’ Commonwealth**

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has supported the Commonwealth Youth Orchestra and Choir at the launch of ‘Believe’ - a new song to inspire aspiration. The new song was launched during the week of Commonwealth Day 2019 in London, UK at a special event held at St John’s Church Smith Square.

The new song ‘Believe’ was composed by Major Simon Haw to mark the 70th anniversary of the ‘modern’ Commonwealth which came into existence with the London Declaration in 1949. The new song has been dedicated to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth and Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).

The CPA Chairperson, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon and the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan spoke about the work of the CPA at the launch event for the new song which was followed by music and choir performances.

**Visitors to the CPA Headquarters Secretariat and CPA meetings, January to March 2019**

**Rwanda meeting ahead of CHOGM 2020**

The CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan met with the High Commissioner of Rwanda in London, Her Excellency Yamina Karitanyi to discuss the involvement of Commonwealth Parliamentarians at CHOGM 2020 to further the Commonwealth goals of sustainable development and democracy.
Ontario Speaker visits CPA Headquarters

The CPA Chairperson, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP (Cameroon) together with the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan received Hon. Ted Arnott, MPP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in Canada and Mr Trevor Day, Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario at the CPA Headquarters Secretariat in London, UK to discuss the CPA’s work in the Canada Region in parliamentary strengthening. The Speaker and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario were visiting the Parliament of the United Kingdom for a programme of exchange meetings.

McGill University Dean visits CPA Headquarters

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat in London, UK welcomed Carola Weil, Dean of McGill University’s School of Continuing Education in Canada to meet with CPA Director of Operations, Mr Jarvis Matiya and CPA Consultant, Ms Meenakshi Dhar to discuss the progress of the CPA Fundamentals Programme for Parliamentarians from CPA Small Branches delivered in partnership with the university.

CPA Secretary-General records online podcast with Global Policy Insights

The CPA Secretary-General spoke about the work of the CPA in promoting parliamentary strengthening and inclusive democracy in Commonwealth Parliaments to Mr Uday Nagaraju, Executive President and the team from Global Policy Insights for a special online podcast.

The Parliamentarian is the quarterly Journal of Commonwealth Parliaments published by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and features articles and news written by Members of Parliament, parliamentary staff and global experts across the Commonwealth about international issues.

WOMEN AND PARLIAMENT: 30th ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

In 2019, the CPA recognises the many achievements of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), established in 1989 as a network of women Members of Parliament spanning the nine CPA Regions who work tirelessly for greater representation of women in Parliaments, and for gender equality in and across Commonwealth Legislatures. The network also seeks to build the capacity of women elected to Parliament to be more effective in their roles and to increase the awareness of all Parliamentarians of issues affecting women and girls across the Commonwealth.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the CWP, this issue of The Parliamentarian features many articles by Commonwealth Parliamentarians and academic experts – women and men – that identify the many achievements of the CWP and women in Parliaments over the years and look at the significant challenges that many women are still facing in the campaign for gender equality across the world. Across the Commonwealth today, only 18% of all Commonwealth Parliamentarians are women, far below the target set by the Commonwealth Heads of Government of 30% female representation in Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures.

This issue of The Parliamentarian features many contributions from across the Commonwealth on women and Parliament that give different perspectives from the nine CPA Regions. Contributors are from South Africa, the United Kingdom, Uganda, Montserrat, Tasmania, New Zealand, New South Wales, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Queensland, Scotland, Jersey and Alderney.

Other events featured include Commonwealth Parliamentarians at the 67th Westminster Seminar and a Member from the Isle of Man providing an insider’s guide to the CPA Fundamentals Programme for Commonwealth Parliamentarians from CPA Small Branches after participating on the CPA course in Canada.

In 2019, The Parliamentarian is celebrating its 100th year of publishing and we will be publishing our centenary issue of the publication in early 2020 to mark 100 years since the first issue. If readers have any memories of the publication that they would like to share for an upcoming feature on the publication’s centenary, then please contact the Editor. We look forward to hearing your feedback and comments on this issue of The Parliamentarian, on the issues affecting Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth and to receiving your future contributions to this publication.

The latest issue of The Parliamentarian is available through CPA Branch Secretaries or by subscription. Email editor@cpahq.org if you have not received your copy or wish to purchase a print copy. Digital issues and archived editions are available via the CPA website - please click here for previous issues.

Further information can also be found at www.cpahq.org/cpahq/parliamentariancurrentissue

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