Chairperson’s Africa Speech

View from the Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee

Chairperson’s Speech at the 46th CPA Africa Regional Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, August 2015

KARIBU! It is a great honor to be here, on the occasion of the 46th African Regional Conference. It is also a great honor to be in this beautiful city, Nairobi in Kenya.

I have a vision for the CPA. A unique platform of Parliamentarians of Commonwealth countries, it has great potential to effect innovative changes in addressing the common concern for ensuring the welfare of the people, building stronger democratic institutions, advocating for good governance and accountability and sharing good practice.

Supporting Youth
Promoting ‘Young Commonwealth’ is the theme of the Commonwealth. CPA is working to facilitate young parliamentarians and also the youth to give young people a platform to raise a range of issues that impact their lives. Only last year, the CPA in collaboration with the North-West Provincial Legislature in South Africa, held the 6th Commonwealth Youth Parliament in November 2014. This year, in November 2015, the 7th Youth Parliament will be held in the Northern Territories of Australia. I know that already, there has been enormous interest by our young people to be involved in this endeavor. We also look forward to welcoming two young participants who took part in the 6th Commonwealth Youth Parliament to the next Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. I am sure they will gain a lot from the experience, and we will also gain from them.

Supporting Women
I was delighted to be a part of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) meetings that took place over the last few days. I would like to take this opportunity to pay homage to the CWP Chairperson, Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda. Your work supporting the CWP is excellent and I commend you for your initiative in creating the CWP Strategic Plan. Here in the Africa Region, CWP Steering Committee Member, Hon. Lucia Witbooi MP, from the Namibia Branch – thank you for your work in furthering the cause for women in Parliaments.

Here in Kenya, the CWP convenor, Senator Beatrice Elachi – thank you for hosting us – your deliberations on the topic of ‘Women and Leadership in Africa 20 years post Beijing platform for action; challenges, prospects of achieving gender parity’ were excellently received. Here in Africa, there are true beacons for gender parity in Parliaments – Rwanda, Cameroon, South Africa, Mozambique, Seychelles, Tanzania and Uganda. Having reached the CHOGM target of 30% representation in Parliaments – you are an example to us all.

Supporting Parliaments
I hope you agree that it goes without saying that a well-resourced Parliament is essential of effective governance. The CPA is committed to providing training opportunities for Parliamentary Staff to enable them to provide the support needed to strengthen the intuition of Parliament. In 2013, the CPA provided a Parliamentary Staff Development Seminar in collaboration with Kwazulu Natal, in South Africa. This year, we need a host to come forward, to ensure that the Region can benefit from the training available to better resource Parliament. I know that there have been Parliamentary staffs who have participated in a joint CPA-McGill University course earlier this year – good luck with your further work and I am proud that the CPA has offered this opportunity to professionally develop staff.

Thank you to the Mauritian Parliament for working with the CPA and the World Trade Organization to support hosting a crucial workshop on Trade which covered issues including trade facilitation, the multilateral trading system and future challenges.

I, for one, attended a Global Economic Challenges conference held in my own region, and I know that the CPA and the IMF are working towards holding a similar workshop for the Africa Region. I urge you to take full advantage of this opportunity to share your experiences, challenges and to make parliament work towards achieving a better budget that will do more for your people.

From making a budget work to scrutinizing government spending, Parliament’s role is central. That’s why the CPA will be supporting, for the 6th year, the West African Association of Public Accounts Committees – a network of PACs and a platform to share information and knowledge. WAAPAC has a lot of potential and will make a very significant contribution to the quest for value for money in public spending, effective scrutiny and oversight and enhancing the assertiveness and power of parliaments in holding government spending to account. We are proud to support this network.

The CPA is also excited to support Parliaments to undertake their key scrutiny functions – we hope that a Branch in the Region will
agree to host the next phase of work on the Extractive Industries and ensuring money trickles down from the extractive industry to the most needy in society.

The CPA will support Agriculture Committees in their quest for ensuring food security. The CPA will support work around Constituency Development Funds, to ensure that the most effective model is in place that brings real benefit to your electorate.

We will support parliamentarians to make use of new information communication technologies to better enhance their work in Parliament, to reach out to constituents and to legislate ICTs, is crucial in a globalized world where the immediacy of information is essential to much of our work.

We will support efforts around Climate Change, where we can ensure policies are in place to tackle the devastating effects, and put in place measures to minimize and mitigate the impact. I am delighted that the Africa Region will be represented at all of these important CPA symposiums.

More generally, I hope the Region has benefited from work the CPA has undertaken around *Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures* and the *Benchmarks for Codes of Conduct for Parliamentarians*. These tools will undoubtedly help guide your Parliaments in building public trust in the institution and enhancing good practice in your parliaments.

Following elections, the CPA has been proud to deliver Post-Election Seminars in 2014 in Malawi and Swaziland. Building capacity of newly elected members is essential to their performance of their democratic duties.

As Parliamentarians, we are in a phase of transition. Moving away from the *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)* to the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, effectuating a shift in the global development agenda framework. It is time for Parliamentarians of the Commonwealth to voice the needs and aspirations of the people they represent in this process.

I would therefore, like to propose to the Executive Committee to consider the idea of putting forward a proposal, highlighting the position of the Commonwealth on development issues like food security, climate change, gender equality, eradication of poverty, access to health care, water and sanitation, energy crisis, peace and security etc. before the CHOGM in November, 2015 in Malta. These are all areas in which the CPA has demonstrated a commitment. It is important that the governments making commitment at global level take account of the concerns of the Parliamentarians and our Association is an excellent platform in which to do so.

I would therefore, request all Members to consider the thoughts that I have shared with you. Your valuable suggestions and inputs will further fortify our efforts in promoting democratic governance, rule of law, sustainable, inclusive and equitable development, through proactive parliaments and vigilant Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth.

Let us work together in making CPA proactive, relevant, dynamic and visible in its effort to make a positive difference in the lives of the people of the Commonwealth by materializing their common aspirations.