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A.I.

**REMARKS BY THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION, HON
MNINWA JOHANNES MAHLANGU, ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 58th CPA CONFERENCE IN COLOMBO, SRI LANKA, 11
SEPTEMBER 2012**

His Excellency, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of
Sri Lanka

President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Members of the CPA executive committee

Secretary-General of the association

Distinguished delegates and guests

I welcome the opportunity to address delegates on the occasion of
the 58th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, here in
Colombo, Sri Lanka. I hope that the conference will give us an
opportunity to reflect on issues that impact on global and country
matters.

Traditionally, the CPA brings together countries with diverse social,
political, and economic backgrounds which are regarded as equal
in status, and co-operate within a framework of common values
and goals.

It has long been an Association of Commonwealth
Parliamentarians who, irrespective of gender, race, religion or
culture, are united by community of interest, respect for the rule of

law and individual rights and freedoms, and by pursuit of the positive ideals of parliamentary democracy.

Its mission is to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. It seeks to build an informed parliamentary community able to deepen the Commonwealth's democratic commitment and to further co-operation among its Parliaments and Legislatures. This mission is achieved through a Strategic Plan which ensures CPA activities continue to meet the changing needs of today's parliamentarians.

South Africa is honoured at the opportunity to host the 59th CPA conference next year.

The theme of the 58th summit, ***Ensuring a Relevant Commonwealth for the Future***, is in line with attempts at transforming the association so that it remains relevant for our sister countries.

All the global community must be committed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which are:

- a) to eradicate poverty and hunger;
- b) to achieve universal primary education;
- c) to promote gender equality and empower women;
- d) to reduce child mortality;
- e) to improve maternal health;
- f) to combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- g) to ensure environmental sustainability; and,
- h) to develop a global partnership for development.

It is important therefore that as we inaugurate this year's conference, that we understand the nature of the many challenges that are facing us. Importantly, we need to know what is being done to address them.

I am saying this because as public representatives from parliaments and state legislatures, we have the responsibility to represent the interests of the people. It is our duty to ascertain that the resources that our nations have, individually and collectively, are being used effectively and efficiently in order to advance development.

As public representatives, we should not be afraid to be unpopular with members of the executive if they are not acting in the interest of the electorate. It is exactly for these checks and balances that we have the roles of the implementers and those who oversee implementation in a democracy.

Bodies such as the CPA have a significant role to play towards ensuring that we actively promote development informed by the values that we all stand for such as:

- a) pursuing the ideals of democracy;
- b) promoting good governance; and
- c) respecting human rights and freedoms.

Through the CPA we remain committed to keeping these foundational principles alive.

A relevant Commonwealth for the future is one that invests in young people. It is therefore opportune that during this summit we will, among other things, tackle the challenge of youth unemployment.

The Association is keenly aware of its responsibility to reach out to the people in the process of advancing parliamentary democracy, especially the younger generation and to educate them about the work and values of the Commonwealth and the CPA, particularly in regard to the need to support democracy and the growth and sustenance of democratic institutions.

It is often said that widespread apathy exists among the younger generation towards political participation and parliamentary democracy. Whether this fear is exaggerated or not, without doubt young people need to understand the principles which underpin democracy and civil society, develop the skills to use that knowledge effectively and be able to participate in the appropriate fora.

Young people today are no longer seen as leaders of tomorrow - they are leading today. Through their involvement in business, development, policy, as well as secular and religious communities, one can see what a diverse and active young Commonwealth community offers the future of the Commonwealth.

It is therefore critical that we use this platform to intervene on behalf of the youth who are outside the margins of economy.

What we do or fail to do today will define their future and that of our democracies. No future will be served by angry youth who feel ostracised and are not able to participate in economic activities.

With these words, I would like to thank you for honouring the 58th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference with a view to sharing knowledge about matters that impact on our democracies and to strengthen the CPA.

I wish you well in the engagements and hope that we will emerge ready to further enrich international politics and the agenda for development.

Thank you