



CPA Executive Committee

Mid-Year Meeting

Mauritius

20 – 24 March 2018

Opening Remarks

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

Chairperson of the Executive Committee

Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP

**Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of
Cameroon**

Thursday 22 March 2018

- **Hon. Mrs Santi Bai Hanoomanjee, Speaker of the National Assembly of Mauritius and President of the CPA Mauritius Branch**
- **Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, Vice President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**
- **Hon. Alexandra Mendes, Vice Chairperson of the Executive Committee**
- **Mrs Vicky Dunne, Treasurer of the Association**
- **Honourable Angelo Farrugia, Small Branches Chairperson**
- **Members of the CPA Executive Committee**
- **Mr Akbar Khan, Secretary-General of the Association**
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is a great pleasure for me to deliver my first speech in my capacity as Chairperson of the International Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association on this auspicious occasion at the opening of the CPA Mid-Year Executive Meeting here in Mauritius.

Indeed, this is my very first time to preside over the Mid-Year Executive Committee meeting of the CPA as Chairperson. At the outset, I would like on behalf of colleagues of the International Executive Committee to take this opportunity to thank the Hon. Madam Speaker Hanoomanjee and CPA Mauritius Branch for hosting the meeting and for their unwavering support to the CPA.

This gathering of the International Executive Committee comes at an important time for the CPA as we build on the recent successful restructuring of the Secretariat Headquarters and continue to strengthen our Association to become a model of good governance to our membership. Only by reinforcing and modelling the importance of good governance, transparency and accountability within our own organisation can we demonstrate visibly the principles on which we were founded.

Hon Madam Speaker, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, you will recall that just last week, on 12 March, we commemorated the Commonwealth Day. We also celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the independence of Mauritius. Both events offered opportunities to reflect on what the values of the Commonwealth mean to us individually and to our communities and to reaffirm our commitment to our core values of the Commonwealth Charter, namely, democracy and development.

Yesterday, as part of our very successful CPA Roadshows which form part of the CPA Youth Programme working with Branches, we had an excellent exchange here at the University of Mauritius with young students to discuss the value and meaning of the Commonwealth in the 21st century and issues of importance to

them. It was inspiring to see the level of engagement from these students and reinforces the need for all of us to strengthen our engagement with the 60% of Commonwealth youth under the age of 30 years old across our jurisdictions.

Honourable Speaker, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Mauritius is one of the leading lights within our CPA family and has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to CPA values of cooperation and inter-parliamentary dialogue. The CPA Mauritius Branch has always been active and outward looking in its approach. Only last year, in line with the CPA overarching ambition to increase women's participation in political processes, under the initiative of the Hon. Speaker, a gender caucus was formed in the National Assembly comprising men and women recognising that only when we walk side by side will change happen and that men must also shoulder their responsibility towards securing gender equality.

Therefore, we are delighted that Mauritius has allowed us to meet and deliberate on what we can do better, and how we can respond better to the needs of our membership throughout the Commonwealth. This is especially generous gesture as Mauritius is currently not an African Regional member of the International Executive Committee.

Hon. Madam Speaker, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know the CPA is an Association of Commonwealth Parliamentarians who, irrespective of gender, race, religion or culture, are united by a community of interest, respect for the rule of law, individual rights and freedoms, and by pursuit of the positive ideals of parliamentary democracy.

Parliamentary Democracy is a powerful tool for change, and a pivotal institution in achieving a common future. The institution of Parliament is key to the socio-economic development of our nations; it is at the centre of all policy, legislation and political participation in a modern democracy. Therefore, the stronger the parliament, the healthier the democracy.

Hon. Madam Speaker, distinguished ladies and gentlemen

The next three years, I will as Chairperson of the CPA focus first on working to strengthen our collaboration between our parliaments across our nine regions.

I would also like to thank the Members present for giving up their time to be here, despite the pressures of parliamentary work. I wish to stress the importance for such cooperation, which is vital so we continue to work together and support each other as a Commonwealth family.

So, in closing, we are very pleased to be here in your beautiful Island Madam Speaker. In the next three days the CPA Executive Committee will be reviewing the work of the CPA in strengthening parliamentary democracy and supporting our members in the Commonwealth. We therefore look forward to a very productive week on how we can shape and strengthen the strategic direction of our Association and I urge you all to make use of this time together and, also to take the opportunity to renew our bonds of affinity and kinship across our membership.

Hon Speaker, thanks you your hosting this meeting. I am sure that all delegates here will join me applauding the Mauritian welcome and your kind hospitality. On behalf of the International Executive Committee I thank all those who have worked so hard and tirelessly to make this meeting happen.

Thank you

ENDS