Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning/Good Afternoon

We Parliamentarians (MPs) know for a certainty that conflict resolution and the achievement of durable peace are closely linked to a viable political framework. Parliamentarians from both side of the divide therefore play a vital role in the process of building and consolidating peace. It is Parliamentarians (MPs like us) who provide a legitimate channel for identifying and meeting popular demands; it is we who hold the government to account and mediate among conflicting interests in society through peaceful means.
The passion for inflicting harm, the cruel thirst for vengeance, an unspecific and relentless spirit, the fever of revolt, the lust of power, all these are the root causes of war and need to be condemned. Say what we may, there is no such thing as a just war.

Looking at the challenges facing countries emerging from conflict, we must admit that the times of slogan chanting are over. It is a time for us Commonwealth countries to come forward and volunteer ungrudgingly in the assistance of conflict resolution. First and foremost, there is an urgent need to develop a culture of shared responsibilities among us Parliamentarians.

Last year’s Arab Spring captured world attention as it toppled dictators from Tunis to Sanaa. How many people actually died or have been displaced in these conflicts has not been accurately ascertained. The outcomes have been confused and ambiguous with a continuing stalemate in Syria.

Essentially there needs to be an essence of peaceful co-existence. From the vantage point of an MP, I am convinced that in the process of peace building we must not cast aside respect for each other's political
sovereignty as territorial integrity is a precondition for peaceful living among nations. So long as there is mutual respect for each other's independence and sovereignty, I believe that the nations of the world of whatever ideological convictions can live together, not merely in passive co-existence but in active co-operation for the common pursuit of peace and economic and social well-being of the peoples of the world.

The Commonwealth group of nations and their MPs have always stood out as beacons of light guiding others as their have shared values and experiences. We MPs have now to work towards doubling our efforts and redirecting our resources in the field of peace building in an effort to give the people a fuller measure of happiness and prosperity. The frenzied increase and improvement in armaments, both nuclear and conventional involve the whole world. In this regard, MPs have a right and a duty to call a halt [by lobbying their respective governments] to this insane competition among the powers which seem determined to increase their potential power of destroying themselves and the entire human race.

The member countries of the Disarmament Committee have not been able to stem the aspirations of nations in their prestigious desire to enter what is known as the nuclear club.
One of the clear purposes of the United Nations is the suppression of acts of aggression as stipulated in the UN Charter, Article 1(1). The universality principle exists in order to furnish all States with the jurisdiction to try and punish certain crimes which are so serious that they pose a threat to the international order as a whole. A cardinal function of MPs has been to initiate peace. As they are seasoned in resolving problems in their home-ground and constituencies, they will be the best persons deployed to resolve conflicts at an international level. MPs can play an important role in dispute resolution for ensuring that relations among people do not degenerate into a state of general violence. In dispute resolution, what is required is the establishment and maintenance of mechanism and institutions. Dispute resolution is an essential foundation for preserving a society and Parliamentarians can provide behind-the-scenes negotiations.

The vast majority of disputes between States can be settled by means of negotiations, enquiry, good offices, mediation, conciliation or arbitration. We should perhaps move away from the complicated politics of ‘podium-pounding’ and ‘bully-pulpiting’.
MPs can also explore ways of strengthening the rule of law and democracy – like in the case of Electoral Commission of Namibia in a number of areas, including on implementation of forthcoming reform of the Electoral Act; training of judicial officers in the application of the electoral law; training of Parliamentarians, political parties, media practitioners and members of civil society on the electoral cycle and elections; strengthening the capacity of the Electoral Commission to monitor media performance during elections; and exploring ways of developing a more efficient and effective election dispute resolution mechanism.

This could be done in countries which require assistance and monitoring of Elections. There is nothing to fear of implications of interfering. New projects to strengthen the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Human Rights Commission of Commonwealth countries can be explored by MPs. The Commonwealth family can also help strengthen Parliaments and the Judiciary once requests are done by the relevant countries. Once this is done, the confidence of the general public would be easily garnered as they will be ensured that there is social and economic equality in their midst.

In some countries in Africa, stubbornly change-resistant cases like Somalia and the Congo is a stark reminder of the world to do much to alleviate the suffering. Persistent
global problems like the violence-ridden neighbourhood of South Asia and the disastrous war in Iraq could have roped in Parliamentarians to play a bigger role in conflict resolution. ‘Cowboy’ unilateralism is not the way MPs work. MPs are able to engage, negotiate and use the art of old-fashioned traditional diplomacy effectively in this twitter age. They employ the carefully calibrated language of diplomacy

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A recent study indicates that food aid not only does not work, it can prolong the violent conflicts it is meant to help resolve. Nancy Qian of Yale University and Nathan Nunn of Harvard University have found a direct correlation between food aid and civil conflicts. For every 10% increase in the amount of food aid delivered the likelihood of violent civil conflict rises by 1.4 percentage points. 80% of the food aid shipments to Somalia in the 1990s were looted or stolen. Politicians are pragmatists. We keep our eye on those long-term dangers and are apt at dealing with the here and the now too, every day. As politicians it is imperative that we watch the headlines and the trend lines.

There is an obligation on us Commonwealth nations to resolve disputes peacefully. Multilateral treaty obligations exists limiting a party’s right to
war and imposing obligations to settle disputes peacefully. Whilst we seek to accord to the principle of non-intervention there is a need to be realistic when countries do not abide by the United Nations Charter. For instance, in Serbia, by 1995, when the international community failed to intervene, Mladic became convinced of his own invincibility and that he could get away with anything. Nobody could challenge him and NATO had become a joke.

Hence I call for a more participatory role by MPs in conflict resolution and peace-building.

Thank You.