



38th CPA AUSTRALIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE

'The Challenge of Urbanisation – Parliament's Role'

Parliament House, Adelaide, South Australia



CPA CHAIRPERSON'S OPENING ADDRESS

Tuesday 19th November 2019

**Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP (Cameroon)
Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**

It is a great honour to have been invited to make an Opening Address at the 38th CPA Australia and Pacific Regional Conference on the topic of *'The Challenge of Urbanisation – Parliament's Role'*. I would firstly like to thank our hosts, the Parliament of South Australia, and particularly the Presiding Officers, Hon. Andrew McLachlan, CSC, MLC, President of the Legislative Council, and Hon. Vincent Tarzia, MP, Speaker of the House of Assembly, and the Clerk of the House of Assembly, Mr Rick Crump, for all of your hard work which ensured this regional conference could take place.

I was greatly looking forward to attending this Regional Conference; to seeing old friends and meeting new colleagues. I was also looking forward to visiting the Parliament of New South Wales after this Regional Conference, courtesy of the invitation of the CPA Vice-Chairperson, Hon. John Ajaka. However, due to unforeseen developments relating to pre-election

processes in my home country of Cameroon that I must participate in, I am unable to be with you this week.

Indeed, it is a reminder that many of us who are involved in the CPA do so whilst also being actively and directly involved in politics in our own jurisdictions. As Members and Parliamentary staff, your time, commitment and contribution to the CPA and our programmes is invaluable and much appreciated. I hope that you feel the rich benefits of being part of this diverse and ever evolving organisation. Please accept my sincere apologies that I cannot be with you this week and I send my very best wishes for the Regional Conference.

For those who are attending a CPA event for the very first time, may I briefly say that the CPA, which was founded in 1911, comprises some 180 national and sub-national Branches and seeks to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. The CPA connects, develops, promotes and supports Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth.

CPA activities focus on the Commonwealth's commitment to its fundamental political values, including - just and honest government, the alleviation of poverty, fundamental human rights, international peace and order, global economic development, the rule of law, equal rights and representation for all citizens of both genders, the separation of powers among the three branches of government and the right to participate in free and democratic political process.

Honourable Members, Regional Conferences, such as these, are an excellent opportunity for Members and staff alike to meet and discuss these values and how best to approach them in what is often a challenging and fast-moving global context. These meetings allow us to explore these issues both from a regional perspective and, with the valued involvement of Observer Members and Officers from other CPA Regions, from a broader, holistic Commonwealth angle as well.

This week we have the opportunity to share best practice, generate innovative ways of approaching regional challenges and create long lasting and mutually beneficial connections

between Parliaments within these two Regions and further afield – all key functions of the CPA's work.

Honourable Members, I would like to take a moment to praise a programme which encapsulates all of these principles: the innovative Twinning Partnerships Programme between the Parliaments of the CPA Australia and Pacific Regions. Established in 2007, the Twinning Programme provides the opportunity to enhance Parliamentary and cultural relations between the two Regions, to ease and increase the exchange information and learn from each other. It is an excellent example of productive collaboration within the Commonwealth and long may it continue.

Honourable Members, the theme of this year's Regional Conference, *'The Challenge of Urbanisation – Parliament's Role'*, is a critical subject and our gathering provides an opportunity to discuss such matters that have universal impacts on our citizens and our work as Parliamentarians.

The recently concluded 64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC), held in Kampala, Uganda, discussed wide ranging matters under the theme *'Adaptation, Engagement and Evolution of Parliaments in a Rapidly Changing Commonwealth'*. One of the CPC workshop sessions attended by many Members focused on combating rapid urbanisation and rural decline, thus the focus of this Regional Conference is very much in line with the CPC theme and discussions held in Uganda.

More than half of the world's population today live in cities, and another 2.5 billion people are expected to join them by 2050. Indeed, in my own Region of Africa, according to the World Economic Forum, our 1.1 billion citizens will likely double in number by 2050, and more than 80% of that increase will occur in cities. By 2025, there will be 100 African cities with more than one million inhabitants, and we need to ensure we have urban infrastructure which can support this unprecedented growth.

Honourable Members, as policy makers we need to ensure we are taking the necessary steps to combat the risks of rapid urbanisation, such as profound social instability, risks to critical infrastructure, potential water and climate crises and possible spread of diseases.

I have no doubt that the sessions and contributions this week will be thought-provoking and will allow for productive discussion as to how we as Parliamentarians can best approach the challenges, and opportunities, that urbanisation presents.

You have an exciting agenda ahead of you in coming days. I wish you great success in your deliberations throughout this Regional Conference and I look forward to hearing the outcomes of the Regional Conference.

In closing, I would like to again extend my thanks to the Parliament of South Australia and its Members and staff for their organisation and hospitality to conference delegates.

I wish to also thank all Branches within the CPA Australia and Pacific Regions for their support to the CPA family and especially the time given by Regional Representatives to attend CPA Executive Committee Meetings to strengthen our governance, which is critical to our credibility as a parliamentary organisation promoting such a value.

Finally, thank you to all Branches present for the support and collaboration that I have received since my election as CPA Chairperson in 2017. I look forward to our continued cooperation and I am sure that together we can continue to strengthen our diverse and united Commonwealth.

I thank you for your attention.

ENDS