Conference Issue:
63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh

PLUS

‘Continuing to enhance the high standards of performance of Parliamentarians’
PAGES 278-287

Commonwealth Parliamentarians: Rohingya statement at 63rd CPC
PAGE 290

63rd CPC: Conference Workshops & Reports
PAGES 292-335

CPA Conference for Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities
PAGES 342-352
Calendar of Forthcoming Events

Confirmed as of 30 November 2017

2018

January

20 to 27 January CPA Post-Election Seminar for the St Helena Legislative Council, Jamestown, St Helena

February

25 February to 1 March 9th Commonwealth Youth Parliament, Jersey, Channel Islands

26 February to 1 March Commonwealth Parliamentarians’ Forum, London, United Kingdom (CPA UK event)

March


19 to 23 March CPA Parliamentary Staff Development Programme with McGill University, Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training, Nairobi, Kenya

April

16 to 20 April 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) – ‘Commonwealth Summit’ 2018, London and Windsor, United Kingdom

The publication of a Calendar of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) events is a service intended to foster the exchange of events and activities between Regions and Branches and the encouragement of new ideas and participation. Further information may be obtained from the Branches concerned or the CPA Secretariat. Branch Secretaries are requested to send notice of the main CPA events and conferences to hq.sec@cpahq.org in advance of the publication deadline to ensure the Calendar is accurate.

Further information can also be found at www.cpahq.org or by emailing hq.sec@cpahq.org.
CONTENTS: THE PARLIAMENTARIAN
2017: ISSUE FOUR

PAGES 278-287

COMMENT & SPEECHES
Editor’s Note
Page 276

Opening address by the Bangladesh Prime Minister
The opening of the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
Page 278

Opening address by the CPA President and Chairperson
The opening of the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
Page 280

Keynote plenary by the CPA Secretary-General
continuing to enhance the high standards of performance of Parliamentarians’
Page 282

Video message from the Commonwealth Secretary-General
Page 285

CONFERENCE NEWS
63rd CPC Photo Gallery
Page 277

CPA Chairperson’s three year report
Page 286

New CPA Chairperson elected for three years
Page 289

Commonwealth Parliamentarians; Rohingya statement and report at 63rd CPC
Page 290

Parliament of Australia re-joins CPA membership
Page 291

First CPA Asia Region Lecture at 63rd CPC
Page 315

Conference Group Photo Pages 320-321

Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) meetings
Page 335

CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS
Youth Roundtable: The importance of participatory Governance to peaceful, democratic societies
Page 292

 Democracy must deliver: role of Parliament in addressing the challenges
Conference Workshop A
Page 295

The role of Parliamentarians in building stronger ties within the Commonwealth: Trade, Visas, Travel and Tariffs
Conference Workshop B
Page 298

The Climate Change Debate: A challenge for the Commonwealth?
Conference Workshop C
Page 301

What factors fuel the rise of different kinds of nationalisms?
Conference Workshop H
Page 313

Small jurisdictions and big problems: Logistics and infrastructure challenges to meet small jurisdiction expectations
Conference Workshop E
Small Branches Topic
Page 306

CPA benchmarks for democratic legislatures: Progress in the past 10 years
Conference Workshop F
Page 308

Giving voice to the youth: Mechanisms for ensuring effective participation of youth in the governance process
Conference Workshop G
Page 310

Small Branches Conference
Page 335

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)
- CWP at 63rd CPC news
- CWP Gender session: If we want genuine positive change in the world, we need more women leaders. How can we persuade the world that the future is dependent on gender equality?
- CWP Male Champions Session: The role of male Parliamentarians in championing gender equality
Pages 316-323

36th CPA Small Branches Conference
Page 335

Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities
- Conference news
- Feature articles on disabilities from CPA Members from Nova Scotia, Wales, Malaysia, Trinidad & Tobago, New South Wales and the United Kingdom.
Pages 342-352

Parliamentary Report
Featuring parliamentary and legislative reports from Canada, British Columbia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Australia and India
Pages 353-367

CPA Organisational Structure
CPA Executive Committee Members, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee Members and CPA Regional Secretaries
Page 368

PAGES 292-335

PAGES 320-335

PAGES 342-352

PAGES 353-367

PAGES 368

The Parliamentarian: Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth
Volume 98
2017: Issue Four
The Parliamentarian ISSN 0031-2282

Issued and published by the Secretariat of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Milkbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
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Images: CPA Headquarters Secretariat editorial team and Parliament of Bangladesh photography.

Thank you to all contributors and reviews published in The Parliamentarian.

Contributors
Thank you to all contributors for this issue.

Printed in: United Kingdom by Warners Midlands, PLC; New Delhi, India by Jainco Art India; and Singapore by Times Printers Private Limited.

Annual subscription (four issues)
UK: £52 inc. postage.
Worldwide: £46 surface post, £52 airmail

Price per issue
UK: £14
Worldwide: £15 surface post, £16 airmail

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Opinions and comments expressed in articles and reviews published in The Parliamentarian are those of the individual contributors and should not be attributed to the Secretariat of the Association.

The Parliamentarian | 2017: Issue Four | 274
The Parliamentarian | 2017: Issue Four | 275
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS URGED TO UPHOLD DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AT THE 63RD COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

The Editor’s Note

One of the largest annual gatherings of Commonwealth Parliamentarians, the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 1 to 8 November 2017 and addressed key global issues and solutions. Against a backdrop of greater scrutiny of Parliamentarians, the CPC’s annual conference offered the opportunity for Members to benefit from professional development, supportive learning and the sharing of best practice with colleagues from over 180 Commonwealth Parliaments together with the participation of leading international organisations. The overall main conference theme for the 63rd CPC was ‘Continuing to enhance the high standards of performance of Parliamentarians’. Delegates were welcomed by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, H.E. Sheikh Hasina, MP, Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association who urged Commonwealth Parliamentarians to uphold democratic principles as she opened the 63rd CPC on the south plaza of the Parliament of Bangladesh.

The CPA President and outgoing Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh read to delegates the goodwill message for the 63rd CPC from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Patron of the CPA and Head of the Commonwealth. The CPA President and outgoing Chairperson of the CPA also gave Members a reflection on her three years in office.

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr Akbar Khan welcomed Commonwealth Parliamentarians and delegates to the conference and a video message was played from the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland QC. The vote of thanks on behalf of Members of Parliament was given by Hon. Vicki Dunne, MLA, CPA Treasurer and Deputy Speaker of the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly. The 63rd CPC began with a briefing for Commonwealth Parliamentarians on the Rohingya refugee crisis from the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Hon. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP and this was followed by the CPA membership endorsing a statement on the refugee crisis at the 63rd CPA General Assembly. Workshops were held during the conference on a wide range of topics including the role of Parliament in addressing the challenges of democracy; the role of trade in building stronger ties within the Commonwealth; Climate Change in the Commonwealth context; and giving a voice to the youth of the Commonwealth. For the first time, a youth roundtable was held at the conference with Members and local students and youth groups. Equal representation for women in Parliaments and gender empowerment was the focus for Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and Hon. Dr Dato’ Noraini Ahmad, MP, Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) at their meeting at the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and a CWP session was held on male champions of gender equality for the first time with Parliamentarians of all genders participating.

Commonwealth Parliamentarians from the CPA Small Branches held their 38th annual conference prior to the 63rd CPC in Bangladesh and, led by Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP, Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches and Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Malta, focused on the unique challenges affecting small Parliaments and legislatures across the Commonwealth. The 63rd CPC Conference Concluding Statement containing all of the outcomes and recommendations from the conference is available online at: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpc2017concludingstatement.

To catch up on all of the news from the 63rd CPC – you can access copies of the 63rd CPC daily bulletins produced during the conference online at: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpc2017dailybulletin. 63rd CPC conference news is also available on the CPA website at: www.cpahq.org/ cpahq/cpc/2017news and Twitter at hashtag #63CPC.

The 63rd CPC took place ahead of the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the ‘Commonwealth Summit’ to be held in London, UK in April. The outcomes of the 63rd CPC, as well as a unique parliamentary perspective, will feed directly into the Summit, which is themed ‘Towards a Common Future’.

Commonwealth Parliamentarians Disabilities Conference

The unique challenges faced every day by disabled Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth have been highlighted at a unique gathering of Members of Parliament in Nova Scotia, Canada. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in partnership with the Nova Scotia House of Assembly held the first conference of this kind, bringing together over 30 Commonwealth Parliamentarians with disabilities, carers and parliamentary officials from eight of the nine regions of the CPA from 30 August to 2 September 2017. This issue features reports of the conference and contributions from many Members who attended the conference who share their views and experiences.

News and reports of many activities across the nine regions of the CPA are included in this issue. The Parliamentary Report and The Reading section in this issue includes parliamentary and legislative news from Canada, British Columbia, India, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia. We also take this opportunity to wish all of the CPA membership best wishes for 2018. We look forward to hearing your feedback and comments on this issue of The Parliamentarian and to receiving your future contributions to this publication.

Jeffrey Hyland
Editor, The Parliamentarian, editor@cpahq.org

Jeffrey Hyland, Editor
The Parliamentarian, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
OPENING CEREMONY - 5 NOVEMBER 2017

‘FRIENDSHIP TO ALL, MALICE TO NONE’ SAYS BANGLADESH PRIME MINISTER AT OPENING OF THE 63RD COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

The 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was officially opened by Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Awami League declared the independence in the first hour of the 26th March. We earned an independent Bangladesh sacrificing 3 million lives and the innocence of 200,000 women in the nine month bloody war with Pakistani forces. When Bangabandhu was engaged in reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war.


I deeply am honoured to be here to inaugurate the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in this historic city of Dhaka. I would like to welcome the distinguished guests on behalf of the people of Bangladesh, the government and myself. Conferences of this kind would, I am confident, give us a clearer insight into democratic practices and values.

We Parliamentarians, being the people’s representatives, have the first and foremost obligations to preserve and maintain the faith of the people in democracy and parliamentary institutions.

Due to the pragmatic and far-reaching thinking of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the decision to join the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association’s (CPA) membership was taken in 1973. Our Hon. Speaker Dr Shirin Shamin Chaudhury, MP made Bangladesh proud when she became the first woman to be elected as the Chairperson of CPA in 2014. This is a testimony by the Hon. Members of Parliament across the Commonwealth towards our commitment to democratic practices and values.

The cherished desire of the people of this land to establish a sovereign and an independent democratic country has been materialized through huge sacrifices. The Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had led the struggle from the forefront. As a consequence, he had to endure confinement in jail for half of Pakistan’s 24 year regime.

The Pakistani military junta conceded to arrange general elections in 1970 after a long and arduous struggle waged and headed by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The declared the independence in the first hour of the 26th March. We earned an independent Bangladesh sacrificing 3 million lives and the innocence of 200,000 women in the nine month bloody war with Pakistani forces. When Bangabandhu was engaged in reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war.

Below: The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, watched by the CPA President and Speaker of Parliament, inaugurates a set of commemorative stamps to celebrate the opening of the 63rd CPC.

The Parliamentarian: 2017: Issue Four

similarly, the maritime boundary problem with India and Myanmar was also resolved amicably. But the human persecution meted out on the Rohingyas population in the Rakhaine state of Myanmar and their forcible expulsion from their homeland have created instability in the region and beyond. Over 600,000 Myanmar nationals fled to Bangladesh to escape persecution. Since 1978, another 500,000 Rohingyas have come to Bangladesh at different times. We have given temporary shelter to this huge number of people on humanitarian grounds. I would like to request you all to discuss the Rohingyas issue with utmost importance and exert pressure on the Myanmar government to stop persecution on its citizens and take them back at the earliest.

A new campaign of militancy and terrorism has been added to our efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty. Thoughtless acts of a section of people are claiming innocent lives.

Militancy is not a problem of a particular country, rather it has become a global phenomenon. A few days back, eight precious lives were claimed on a New York road. Similarly, the maritime boundary problem with India and Myanmar was also resolved amicably. But the human persecution meted out on the Rohingyas population in the Rakhaine state of Myanmar and their forcible expulsion from their homeland have created instability in the region and beyond. Over 600,000 Myanmar nationals fled to Bangladesh to escape persecution. Since 1978, another 500,000 Rohingyas have come to Bangladesh at different times. We have given temporary shelter to this huge number of people on humanitarian grounds. I would like to request you all to discuss the Rohingyas issue with utmost importance and exert pressure on the Myanmar government to stop persecution on its citizens and take them back at the earliest.

A new campaign of militancy and terrorism has been added to our efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty. Thoughtless acts of a section of people are claiming innocent lives.

Militancy is not a problem of a particular country, rather it has become a global phenomenon. A few days back, eight precious lives were claimed on a New York road.

We have to be united to get rid of this menace.

Bangladesh is one of the worst victims of climate change. This year we have experienced excessive precipitation and recurrence of flooding that washed away our vast localities and damaged standing crops. We expect immediate implementation of the promises made at different times to offset the adverse impacts of climate change.

In Bangladesh, we have been striving hard to build a poverty and hunger-free democratic society. We have strengthened various democratic institutions, including our national parliament and local government bodies. Elected representatives have been heading the local bodies from the Union Council to Upazilas (Sub-districts), Municipalities, City Corporations and District Councils. Bangladesh now stands at the top among its South Asian neighbours in terms of women’s empowerment and achieving gender parity.

An independent and strong mass media are the vigilant watchdog of democracy. In the past few years, we have witnessed the huge expansion of mass media. The freedom of mass media and people’s right to information have been ensured.

We have been implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in continuation of the successes of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The subjects of the SDGs have been incorporated in our seventh 5-year plan.

Bangladesh has been on a journey through the roads of peace, democracy, development and prosperity. We have already been elevated to a lower middle income country. We expect that Bangladesh will emerge as a country of middle income on the Golden Jubilee of our Independence in 2021 and as a developed one by 2041.

Let us make this planet a peaceful, happy and prosperous abode for the entire humanity; I wish your stay in Bangladesh will be a joyful and memorable one. I also wish all the success of the conference.

With these few words, I declare the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference open. Thank you all again.

CONTINUING TO ENHANCE HIGH STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

63rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
Dhaka, Bangladesh
1 to 8 November 2017

Opening Ceremony - 5 November 2017

CPA PRESIDENT SAYS FOCUS IS ON ‘CONTINUING TO ENHANCE HIGH STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS’

The CPA President and Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh gave the opening address at the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

Her Excellency, Sheikh Hasina, Honourable Prime Minister of the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, and Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the chief guest of today’s inaugural ceremony, Honourable Speakers, Deputy Speakers, Members of Parliament of the CPA; Honourable Members of the Executive Committee of the CPA; Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr Akbar Khan; Honourable Ministers, advisors, distinguished delegates, respected guests, media representatives, ladies and gentleman – As Salam! Dhaka, Bangladesh, a very good morning to you.

I am deeply honoured and in a rare privilege for me, as the President and Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament, to extend a very warm welcome to you at the south plaza of our Parliament.

The Bangladesh Parliament – the cradle of our democracy – takes immense pride and joy in hosting this event of Commonwealth Parliamentarians. As a member of the CPA since 1973, the Bangladesh Parliament has been an active partner in promoting the enduring values of the Commonwealth – a family of nations – bonds together the rich experience of diversity, uniting over two billion people across continents, based on the principle of an equal say for all members.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) provides an exceptional forum for Parliamentarians and change-makers around the world to come together to discuss and deliberate on matters of success. Forums such as the CPA, facilitate conversations that allow us to take forward our shared vision and harness our resources to maximise the wellbeing of the people we serve across nations. The CPA has been a leading force in bringing together cultures and ideas for dialogue and exchange at the parliamentary level. This interactive forum allows us to share practices across regions and discuss best practices. We hold each other up as role models, and humbly critique policies that need to be improved. As we use consensus building models to come to decisions, we learn a great deal about international politics. At the centre of this trust, most importantly, if it helps build bridges of trust between nations and regions from all over the world, promoting parliamentary diplomacy.

I thank the CPA for giving us the opportunity to organise the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, I express my heartfelt gratitude to our Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, for her valuable guidance and support. I thank Honourable Parliamentarians from the CPA who have come to Dhaka to make this event possible. I thank the Secretary-General, Akbar Khan, for his support and the staff of the CPA Secretariat. I thank my colleagues, Honourable Members of the Bangladesh Parliament, officials and staff of the Parliament Secretariat for their cooperation. I also extend my thanks to all concerned ministries and law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh for their cooperation in organising this conference. I congratulate the people of Bangladesh for their support.

I express my sincere gratitude to all my colleagues and friends at the CPA, for their support for me during my term as Chairperson. My tenure at CPA was uniquely challenging yet deeply rewarding. CPA gave me an exposure to the dynamics of international politics; I have a greater insight into the importance of cooperation between Parliamentarians. I have gained a profound understanding of how much more we Parliamentarians can achieve by working together. We serve a greater purpose acting in unity.

Bangladesh – a nation of 1.65 million islands in the Bay of Bengal, its history and culture, folklore and sonatas, mangrove poets of the Sundarbans, the delta of six seasons – is laden in history and culture, folklore and the melodies of music. With the majestic beauty of the Royal Bengal Tiger, Bangladesh is a microcosm of a country where we Parliamentarians can achieve.

Bangladesh has made significant strides in poverty eradication, gender parity in education, women’s empowerment, reduction in maternal and infant mortality, disaster risk reduction, strengthening the rural economy and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Bangladesh has invested in access to power structures across the country, as well as information communication technology in building a digital Bangladesh. A consistent rise in GDP of seven percent remittance reserve as well as social and human development indicators, demonstrate that Bangladesh is marching forward and will become a middle-income country by 2021.

Bangladesh has been recognised as the first country to develop the river holistic approach, as the Bangladesh model and its future and beyond is why it is important to focus on reinforcing the performance of Parliamentarians. Performance can be measured in different ways. If it is my belief that as Parliamentarians, we must concentrate on inclusiveness. Progress for the sake of progress alone is hollow if we are not able to serve the most vulnerable segments of the population. We cannot rely on growth to benefit the dwindled, instead we need to shape policies and formulate legislation that ensures not growth only but welfare as well. We must push for inclusive growth, it is only through our collective efforts that we can eliminate all forms of violence and inequality – to give voice to the vulnerable who fear discrimination and oppression. We must measure the performance of democracy in its ability to achieve these goals.

The goals that we set for ourselves may seem ambitious; there may be mountains to climb, rivers to forge, but they are achievable. A lot has changed with the turn of the 21st century. Progress of technology has moved in several different ways. It is my humble hope that you revel in the performance of Parliamentarians.

What do we wish to accomplish? We Parliamentarians are entrusted with the duty of bringing about positive changes in the lives of the people we serve. Our influence over the governance structure gives us a unique ability to create a world where everyone has equal opportunity to attain their aspirations. We have the power to thwart terrorism, to counter climate change and to provide people’s safety in their livelihoods and ensure everyone is equal with human dignity. This unique role that we play and the potential we have have to impact every life within the Commonwealth and its future and beyond is why it is important to focus on reinforcing the performance of Parliamentarians.

Bangladesh is a unique country in the world, promoting parliamentary democracy in the Commonwealth crisis of immense and undeniable proportions. Our Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, mother of humanity, demonstrated unique courage, compassion and resolve to open up our doors to the Rohingyas. Our people responded in solidarity with them. We seek the support of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians in finding an urgent solution to this matter, in facilitating the return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar. We must work together to ensure that the basic human rights of these displaced peoples are actively preserved. As Parliamentarians in a globalised world, we must rely on each other to accomplish this.

Democracy is the way forward. Democracy must deliver if we are to achieve inclusive progress. In order for democracy to be sustainable, it needs to nurture the intrinsic values of equality, rule of law, freedom, respect for diversity and pluralism, transparency, accountability and tolerance.\

A trust is built in the efficacy of democracy to deliver, then Parliament’s function to uphold the rights of the people and thereby gain the confidence of the people to deliver long-term benefits. We need to fortify our Parliament as strong and responsive institutions better equipped to deliver. Democracy must prove to be an effective process of realisation of economic and social goals, deeply ingrained in people’s development aspirations.\n
I quote, ‘Democracy is always a work in progress, it is recommitting ourselves to the work that needs doing if we want democracy to survive and thrive.’ Let the voices of the people from around the globe resonate and dominate the discourse of democracy.

Let us translate our commitments into actions. How will we shape the language of our politics for us to decide. Let the language of our politics be to live an inclusive, equitable and peaceful world and with that I conclude and I welcome all of you.
63rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
Dhaka, Bangladesh
1 to 8 November 2017
Opening Ceremony - 5 November 2017

‘CONTINUING TO ENHANCE THE HIGH STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS’

Mr Akbar Khan, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association gave the keynote plenary at the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Honourable Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh and Vice Patron of the CPA; Madam Chairperson, Honourable Dr Shirin Shamin Chaudhury, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh; Distinguished Ministers, Parliamentarians, Presiding Officers and Members, CPA elected Officers, Clerks, and Ladies and Gentlemen – As-Salaam-Alaikum. A very warm welcome to the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference here in the vibrant city of Dhaka, in ‘Amir Sarar Bangali’, the Golden Bengal: Bangladesh.

I wish to start by expressing on behalf of us all our enormous gratitude to our host, the CPA President and Chairperson, Hon. Dr Shirin Shamin Chaudhury, MP, and to her teams for the excellent arrangements and very warm welcome since arriving in Dhaka. I also take this opportunity to recognise Her Majesty The Queen, the Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, for her best wishes for a successful Conference and for her message of support to us all. She has been the golden thread of unity through our diverse Commonwealth of Nations and an inspiring and devoted Patron to the CPA.

It gives me great pleasure to participate in the opening ceremony this morning, speaking alongside such distinguished female politicians, such as Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, MP, the Honorable Prime Minister and Her Excellency, Dr Chaudhury, the Honourable Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament who have contributed so much to their nations’ global leadership and its stability and prosperity.

In this context, Bangladesh is one of only eleven countries in the world to have a female Head of Government and one of only fifty-four national Parliaments globally to have a woman Speaker of Parliament.

Standing here, I cannot help but feel humbled amongst such outstanding female talent – maybe the former British Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Margaret Thatcher did have a point when she remarked, “In politics, if you want anything real, ask a man. If you want anything cheap, ask a woman.”

We gather here this week to reaffirm and celebrate our Commonwealth political values. Values of democracy, separation of powers, rule of law, and human rights. Values which unite us in our diversity and which are emblematic of our Commonwealth’s democracies.

As you all know very well, each Parliament is a unique institution reflecting its own special historical evolution. However, what all Parliaments have in common is a capacity to strengthen democracy by acting as powerful agents of change. But for Parliaments to act as powerful agents of change, their Members must have the capabilities and necessary support to execute their parliamentary and constitutional responsibilities.

This year’s conference theme ‘Continuing to enhance the high standards of performance of Parliamentarians’ is very appropriate, focusing as it does on the importance of development for Parliamentarians, and in turn, Parliament’s performance as an independent pillar within the separation of powers.

As Rt Hon. David Carter, the outgoing New Zealand Speaker observed in 2016: “If we want a true House of Representatives, with a diversity that is reflected in the backgrounds of our Members, we should not then be surprised if some of them arrive having had minimal exposure to reading and analysing legislation, public policy development or the myriad of other activities that a Member is required to perform on a day to day basis.”

The outgoing Speaker further observed that new Members need to equip themselves to become effective Parliamentarians, but they cannot do so in isolation and without support.

The Honorable Speaker’s observations go directly to the heart of our conference theme which also poses two important questions, namely:

• What are the ‘high standards’ that are expected from Parliamentarians?
• Why does this all matter?

‘Turning to the ‘high standards’ expected of Parliamentarians: As elected officials, Parliamentarians occupy a position of trust and authority. As public officials, Parliamentarians are obliged to act in the interests of others and practice high standards of behaviour.’

The greater complexity of the environments in which Parliamentarians function makes it increasingly necessary that, as professionals, they possess special knowledge and skills to enable them to discharge their parliamentary and constitutional functions.

In 2006, the CPA led the development of a seminal piece of work setting out the benchmarks or standards expected of a functioning democratic legislature. The CPA recommended ‘Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures’ as this body of work is known, made explicit reference to ‘Professional and Public Capacity-Building’ suggesting that Parliamentarians should be given access to professional development programmes to prepare them to participate more effectively in the democratic process.

In 2015, the CPA further developed its benchmarks work in the field of Codes of Conduct applying to Members of Parliament. Even though the professionalisation of Members of Parliament is clearly valuable to promoting a stronger trusting relationship between Parliamentarians and the public, there still remains a reluctance from some Parliamentarians to participate in upskilling opportunities.

Some Members explain this on the basis they are just too busy to participate in such opportunities, whereas others will say there is little if anything left for them to learn about. A further group are keen to know what the CPA will do to help capture their experience during their time in Parliament for use in their post-parliamentary careers.

The CPA has listened carefully, and through its new and diverse range of programmes, has responded positively to the challenges. By using technological innovations, our CPA President, Dr Chaudhury, is launching its new series of CPA Masterclasses at this conference.

These bite-sized briefings and analyses prepared by Parliamentarians and experts, capable of being accessed remotely, aim to be the ‘go to resource’ on a range of parliamentary practice and procedural matters.

Although ‘remote’ learning, is key to widening access to opportunities, it can never fully replace the value of ‘face-to-face’ learning and the relationships and networks that result from the coming together of Members. This is why earlier this year the CPA, in partnership with two distinguished Commonwealth universities launched the CPA-Parliamentary Fundamentals course.

Parliamentarians can now benefit from a week-long, face-to-face course, which on completion will lead to a postgraduate certificate. This qualification not only continues to enhance the high standards of performance of Parliamentarians but also confers a formal recognition of a Parliamentarian’s experience which may be useful in post-parliamentary life.

It is also very pleasing to see the development of parliamentary training opportunities being provided by CPA Branches not only for their own Members, but being made widely available to others across the CPA network, such as the CPA Canadian Parliamentary Seminar which has just concluded its 14th workshop to share Canadian good practice with other Commonwealth jurisdictions. Or CPA UK’s ‘Westminster Seminar’ which will conduct its 65th seminar later this month exploring differing approaches to parliamentary practice and procedure in the context of the Westminster System.

Likewise, the vitally important role of upskilling parliamentary staff to support Members and the institution of Parliament can be seen in the establishment of specialised training institutes to meet the growing developmental needs of parliamentary staff.

In this context, I am pleased to announce that the CPA will for the first time deliver its own accredited training course in partnership with McGill University, Canada for parliamentary staff in Kenya, hosted by the Kenyan Centre for Parliamentary Studies, to ensure the course is more easily accessible to CPA parliamentary staff.

Finally, on our conference theme let me say a few words about why all this matters today. We have more democratically elected Parliaments in the world,
'CONTINUING TO ENHANCE THE HIGH STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS'

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland QC sent a video message to delegates at the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

Distinguished Parliamentarians, Commonwealth friends and colleagues – greetings! I am delighted to be able to say a few words to you as you gather in Dhaka for this 2017 Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. It is a very important fixture in our Commonwealth calendar, and so I am extremely sorry not to be joining you in person.

Your work as representatives of the people, and as guardians of their rights and welfare, goes to the heart of all we do as representatives of our Parliaments and judiciaries, our Parliaments and judiciaries, our Parliaments and judiciaries. As one academic has put it, “Those elected to public office are expected to possess indescribable job.” Given the unique nature of parliamentary careers and the absence of any comprehensive training to prepare for the evolving demands of the job, it is essential for them to receive valuable training that is effective.

Continuing to enhance the high standards of performance of Commonwealth Parliamentarians has been the mission of the CPA since it was established some 106 years ago. During the past three years, the responsibility of leading this distinguished Association has been on the shoulders of our able President and Chairperson, Honourable Dr Shireen Chaudhury, MP. As Dr Chaudhury nears the end of her term of office, I hope you will allow me to share a few moments together to celebrate some of the significant achievements she has made during her tenure:

• Through various representational activities, our Chairperson has taken great care to build relationships across all CPA’s regions – in doing so, she has strengthened the unity of the Association through respect for diversity and good governance of the Association that will be her enduring legacy as she leaves behind a CPA truly fit for the 21st century. In closing, I wish to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to all CPA Branches who have hosted CPA programmes in the past year and for their warm welcome when I or my staff have visited their Branches.

The rich diversity, common values and other commonalities of our Parliaments and judiciaries, our Parliaments and judiciaries, our Parliaments and judiciaries will respect for political leadership be deserved and must suffice all that we do if we are truly to live up to our 2017 theme of being ‘A Peace-building Commonwealth’. This means constantly reviewing and reforming our systems to make them more open and responsive. It means encouraging dialogue between political groupings and nations which is animated by trust and by commitment to the common good.

Next April, our leaders will be gathering in London for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Under the theme ‘Towards a Common Future’ there will be four principal areas of focus: • A more sustainable future; • A fairer future; • A more secure future; • A more prosperous future. Within these, common approaches to matters of such pressing importance as trade and investment, ocean governance, regenerative development to better address climate change, countering violent extremism and modern slavery will be considered. The Commonwealth flourishes because of our conviction that all can contribute, and none should be left behind. Building on our comparable legal systems, close ties between our Parliaments and judiciaries, and shared language, there are immense opportunities for us to learn from each other and to provide mutual support. The rich diversity, common values and other commonalities of our inheritances combine to create ‘Commonwealth Advantage’. This immensely valuable asset means that in trade, and many other dealings, substantial benefits accrue when both partners are based in Commonwealth countries. To build on this advantage in new ways I have established the Commonwealth Office of Civil and Criminal Justice Reform. It will provide Commonwealth jurisdictions with templates for tackling violence against women and girls, gender discrimination, corruption and climate change, amongst many, many, other things. It will also assist with the delivery of access to justice and sustainable development through the creation of fair and effective laws, policy making and legislation.

Cross-fertilisation of ideas and experience is a distinctive characteristic of how we cooperate in the Commonwealth to accelerate positive change. Your conference and the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association are fine examples of how forums and mechanisms for exchange of ideas and expertise enable us to leverage the advantages our shared inheritances offer. I wish you every success as you work to mobilise closer collaboration. Our future is greater than our past!
As I turn back the pages of the last three years, a journey unfolds. One that began in the city of ‘Seven Hills’, Yaoundé, Cameroon in October 2014. I was deeply touched with the trust reposed in me by my colleagues, fellow Parliamentarians of the Commonwealth in electing me as their Chairperson.

My tenure of three years as Chairperson was uniquely challenging yet deeply rewarding. While many a time, we were confronted with complex problems that required solutions and immediate attention; yet even more numerous were my moments of contentment when I could collaborate with my colleagues to resolve an issue, or joy when I learnt something new.

The responsibility of Chairperson has pushed me out of my comfort zone and I have undoubtly grown from experience. I took the time to reflect on my role in leading this Association and had the opportunity to learn a great deal about myself. I can safely say that my colleagues and I have taken away from the experience, CPA gave me exposure to the dynamics of international politics.

I have greater insight into the importance of cooperation between Parliamentarians. I have gained a profound understanding of how much more we, Parliamentarians can achieve when we work together. We serve a greater purpose when we unite. Most importantly, I came away with invaluable friendships that I treasure most.

In this Report I present a two-fold account of my work. First, I give an account of the events that I attended in different CPA Regions. The second part illustrates the ongoing programmes that have been adopted by CPA and are being administered across the CPA Regions.

While I began my work to make CPA more visible and relevant to the Branches by adopting innovative strategies, there were pending issues requiring immediate attention. Two important matters needed urgent attention—the appointment of a new Secretary-General and the status of the CPA. We have initiated the procedure of appointing a new Secretary-General. This entailed a great deal of work. We formed a group with representatives of the nine CPA Regions that chaired this group. This group came together in London, UK for the interviewing of the candidates and then the final selection was made. We completed the process and appointed the present Secretary-General, Mr. Aikbar Khan to start this term in January 2016.

The status of the Association was a long pending issue, almost 30 years. It was a demand of the members of the Association to address this matter I had to delve into the matter to have an in-depth understanding as to what was required to be done.

We formed a Working Group with Parliamentarians from all nine Regions to examine this matter in great detail. The Working Group in a very short span of time presented a Report with a proposal to be taken forward. I thank the CPA Secretary-General for his support in the implementation of the decision of the General Assembly.

During my tenure as CPA Chairperson, I have visited many CPA Branches in different Regions attending important and interesting events.

I visited the Punjab Legislative Assembly in India, attending an agricultural seminar of members of the Standing Committee. It was a truly wonderful learning experience. Discussions took place on a whole range issues of relating to food security, agriculture policies, providing subsidies to farmers, taking about adverse effects of climate change, water for irrigation etc.

I visited the Parliament of Gibraltar to attend a women’s conference, organised by the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) British Islands and Mediterranean Regions.

I attended a Commonwealth conference to celebrate the 600th anniversary of Magna Carta and facilitated important deliberations on human rights in London, UK.

I was delighted to be invited to Nairobi, Kenya to attend the CPA Africa Regional Conference.

I had the opportunity to represent the CPA in Andhra Pradesh, India to take part in a Conference on the National Women’s Parliament.

I represented the CPA at the Women Legislators’ Conference in New Delhi, India.

I visited the Singapore Parliament and called upon the Hon. Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

It has been a great honour to meet Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, patron of the CPA and Head of the Commonwealth at the annual Commonwealth Day celebrations.

I attended three Commonwealth Day celebrations in London, UK and it was a rare honour to be invited to speak at the Westminster Abbey Commonwealth Observance at the Commonwealth Day celebrations in March 2015.

I attended the CPA Mid-Year Executive Committee Meetings in Sabah, Malaysia, Darwin, Australia and London, UK.

I represented the CPA at the UN General Assembly in 2015 when the SDGs were adopted and delivered a speech at an event on ‘Redressing Inequality’.

I represented the CPA in St. Petersburg, Russia at the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Annual Assembly.

I also visited the Scottish Parliament in celebration of Commonwealth Week and had a meeting with the Presiding Officer and Members of CPA Scotland Branch.

The Parliament of Bangladesh also hosted two CPA events during my tenure—the CPA 26th Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar and the CPA Workshop on Economic and Financial Challenges for Emerging Economies.

Many new and existing CPA Programmes have been adopted by the Association and are being implemented by the CPA Small Branches and Heads of the CPA Secretariat.

The CPA Presents Programme on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure, delivered in partnership with the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa and for CPA Small Branches, with McGill University, Canada is a new innovation.

In particular, the programme for CPA Small Branches with McGill University, Canada with its first group of twelve Parliamentarians who have gained the Certificate in this programme and will form the first cohort of graduates.

The CPA also delivers a successful Professional Development Programme for Parliamentary Staff in collaboration with McGill University, Canada. It is uniquely designed to meet the professional development needs of parliamentary staff in the 21st century and to this end, topics include the following: parliamentary democracy, accountability, legislative oversight, representation, public scrutiny, and efficiency. The topics of the Masterclasses cover three key areas: key policy issues, parliamentary practice and procedure and corporate skills.

These video briefings are available for CPA members only through the CPA website. I am delighted to announce that I have this week launched CPA Masterclasses via an online video message and I look forward to hearing your feedback on the benefits of this resource.

The CPA continues to deliver its Post-Election Seminars (PES) for Branches who have recently undergone a recent General Election. In 2017, the CPA has delivered PES to a number of Small Branches. This programme utilises one of the unique selling points (USPs) of the CPA as it owes its success to peer learning between Members and parliamentary staff from different jurisdictions around the CPA. It exposes Members to different parliamentary systems and methods of working. As such, I wish to encourage any Branch who may be undertaking a General Election in the near future to contact the CPA Headquarters Secretariat to discuss the delivery of a CPA PES. I would even go further to say that Members who are present today and who have elections in 2018, should start discussing a potential PES with the Secretariat General or his staff present here in Dhaka.

I would also like to take this opportunity to speak about the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) of which I am the Chairperson of CWP for her leadership. A working group of CWP members was convened in February 2017 and that meeting provided CPA Members with the opportunity to come together and identify key priorities for the network. They established a work programme for the period 2017-2019 and developed the CPA Strategic Plan 2017-2019 to guide and measure the impact of the CPA’s work.

I wish to draw attention to the Commonwealth Youth Parliament.
63rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
Dhaka, Bangladesh
1 to 8 November 2017

(CYP) which was due to be
delivered by the British Virgin
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Unfortunately, as we all know BVI
was devastated by Hurricanes
Irma and Maria, which resulted
sadly with the loss of life in BVI
as well as other Small Branches in
the CAA Region. Once again,
I wish to express my sympathies
to all those Branches affected by
these adverse weather systems.

Even in this time of sadness
however we are able to identify
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participation of the Branches in
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As I conclude my term as
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I pay tribute to the late Request
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I express my heartfelt thanks to the
Secretary-General, Mr
Akbar Khan for his continued
support and cooperation. He has
helped me at every step in the
adoption and implementation of
different CPA programmes and in
moving the Association forward.
I thank my esteemed
colleagues, members of the
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the Executive Committee who
have given me continued support
and guidance in implementing
the agendas and performing the
functions and discharging the
responsibilities as the Chairperson.
I must acknowledge the help
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In a group as large and diverse
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best interests of CPA at the centre.
This is truly the strength and
beauty of democracy and of CPA
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In my role as Chairperson, I
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Consensus was key during my
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Commonwealth Parliamentarians call for urgent action from the international community to resolve the ongoing humanitarian crisis facing the Rohingya refugees at 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

Commonwealth Parliamentarians attending the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh have called for urgent action from the international community to resolve the ongoing humanitarian crisis facing the Rohingya community in Bangladesh. The adoption of a statement on the crisis was proposed by the CPA Malta Branch and a CPA statement on the Rohingya crisis was adopted by consensus by the Commonwealth Parliamentarians attending the 63rd General Assembly of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Tuesday, 7 November 2017. The CPA statement on the Rohingya crisis "affirms the collective will of the membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to call for urgent action from the international community to resolve the ongoing humanitarian crisis facing the Rohingyas ethnic minority." The full CPA statement on the Rohingya is available at: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/rohingya.

Parliament of Australia re-joins Commonwealth Parliamentary Association membership at 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

It was formally announced that the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia will be rejoining the membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) from 1 January 2018. The 63rd CPA General Assembly, meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh at the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, approved the application from the Parliament of Australia to reconstitute the Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the CPA following their application to re-join the CPA.

We, the rest of the world, have turned our backs on them? And yet they are a resilient, intelligent and innovative people. I found even among the desolation and misery of their lives they were welcoming and I could raise a smile. What next? The immediate problem is malnutrition followed by poverty and malnutrition. They need food desperately and it is in short supply. We need the world to recognise this is a genocide and act accordingly. In 2017, we must learn from past genocides and ensure action is taken before it's too late and is too late.

As Parliamentarians we need to put pressure on our governments to do more. The CPA General Assembly passed a statement calling for urgent action. I would urge Commonwealth parliamentarians to not sit and watch this crisis unfold. We all have a duty as Parliamentarians to speak for those without a voice. We need to speak up for the wave of displaced Rohingyas and protect them from this genocide they face.

We, the Parliamentarians, are the conscience of the world. When we meet and consider issues, we are able to mould public opinion and defend the rights of people. We are the voice of the people. We must not turn a blind eye to the genocide that is continuing in Myanmar.

What next? The immediate problem is malnutrition followed by poverty and malnutrition. They need food desperately and it is in short supply. We need the world to recognise this is a genocide and act accordingly. In 2017, we must learn from past genocides and ensure action is taken before it’s too late. And yet they are a resilient, intelligent and innovative people. I found even among the desolation and misery of their lives they were welcoming and I could raise a smile. What next? The immediate problem is malnutrition followed by poverty and malnutrition. They need food desperately and it is in short supply. We need the world to recognise this is a genocide and act accordingly. In 2017, we must learn from past genocides and ensure action is taken before it’s too late and is too late.

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63rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
Dhaka, Bangladesh
1 to 8 November 2017

YOUTH ROUNDTABLE
6 November 2017

YOUTH ROUNDTABLE:
‘THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE TO PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES’

Moderator: Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Speaker of Parliament (Bangladesh) and Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee

8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament: Mr Danish Ali Bhutto (Pakistan) and Ms Elise Delpiano (New South Wales, Australia)

Discussion Leaders:
• Mr Chris Steel, MLA (Australian Capital Territory)
• Hon. Matt Jeneroux, MP (Canada)
• Ms Clare Bettison, MHK (Isle of Man)
• Hon. Ernest Hilaire, MP (St Lucia)
• Shri Subhash Patel, MP (India)

Rapporteur: Ms Lisa Hart (Jersey)

A youth roundtable event was hosted by the CPA Bangladesh Branch and CPA Headquarters Secretariat in the margins of the 63rd CPC with discussions between Commonwealth Parliamentarians and young people from a range of youth groups in Bangladesh. The inaugural youth roundtable was chaired by the CPA President and Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh and the topic for the discussions was ‘The importance of participatory governance to peaceful, democratic societies’.

Eighth Law Faculty students from Dhaka University and two of the young people who had attended the 8th CPA Commonwealth Youth Parliament in British Columbia, Canada exchanged views with Commonwealth Parliamentarians representing the CPA Regions. In welcoming delegates to the youth roundtable, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Speaker of Parliament (Bangladesh) noted that youth engagement had been a particular focus of her tenure as Chairperson of the CPA and that she had worked alongside the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Aklar Khan to ensure that youth voices were heard. She highlighted the CPA Youth Roadshows initiative and explained that the 18 Law students present at this youth roundtable had been amongst the participants at that event when it was first held in Bangladesh.

Mr Danish Ali Bhutto (Pakistan) outlined his experiences as a delegate at the 6th Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP) which had been held in British Columbia, Canada in 2016. Mr Bhutto had worked at the Federal Parliament in Pakistan since 2013 and expressed his gratitude for the opportunity of participating in the CYP in the guise of Minister for Culture and Indigenous Affairs. He considered that the experience had been very enriching and had emphasised the power of young people and the important role they could have in supporting the parliamentary decision making process. Given that 60% of the Commonwealth population was under 30, it seemed unfair that young people’s views were not routinely sought. Mr Bhutto opined that Parliament should be inclusive, seek young people’s views and establish youth initiatives such as parliamentary studies programmes in order to empower young people and engage them in decision making processes.

Miss Elise Delpiano (New South Wales, Australia) had also attended the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament. She explained that 66 youth delegates had spent a week learning about parliamentary procedures and processes at the CYP. She had been elected as the Leader of the Opposition and had experienced debates and question time. Miss Delpiano, who was currently studying Law and International Relations, had been very proud to participate in the first CYP at which all the major roles (Speaker, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition) had been occupied by women. She believed that, contrary to popular thought, young people were very interested in politics, but it was difficult to find a platform for their views to be heard. Events such as the CYP allowed young people a forum in which they could express their opinions. She advised that her own Youth Parliament in New South Wales presented a report to all MPs after the event, in order to highlight the decisions made by the young Parliamentarians. Young people were neither inexperienced nor disengaged.

The discussion at the youth roundtable turned to the question before delegates: What does a peaceful, democratic society look like? Many young people gave their views as part of the discussion.

Taliseen Lubaba considered that a peaceful, democratic society was a place where everyday life was able to live in harmony and achieve their full potential, a healthy sustainable way of life in a society which was tolerant and accepting of differences.

Md. Younus Ali was of the opinion that it was a politically stable environment where everyone was equal and had access to sufficient food, clean water and shelter.

Chyan Bala maintained that it was a stress free and calm environment where justice prevailed and people could live without fear or violence, where there was tolerance and conflicts were resolved amicably.

Amir Hamja echoed this view and emphasised that there needed to be good laws which protected the interests and rights of everyone equally.

A Member from India advised that he was proud to participate in this event and advised that India was an example of a multi-cultural peaceful society in which young people had the freedom to express their opinions.

Ms Nontembeko Nothemba Boyoza, MP (KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) agreed that tolerance, respect for human rights and being law abiding were important factors. She reminded the workshop that dialogue was a vital tool in resolving issues and achieving peace.

The discussion turned to another question regarding youth - what is participatory governance and how can youth participation be extended?

Mahera Binte Rahiq contended that people should be part of the parliamentary process and there should be interactive consultative sessions before a law came into force in order to fully explore it and appreciate its potential impact.

Shamina Tarjina Amin considered that it was important that any representation of youth was proportionate and sufficiently diverse in terms of gender, religion, ethnic and economic backgrounds and she urged the inclusion of youth from clubs and projects to ensure a diverse range of views were heard.

Ms Clare Bettison, MHK (Isle of Man) explained that Parliamentarians were very accessible in her jurisdiction and were held to account by the electorate. Only 12 signatures were needed in order to call a public meeting. Social media was an important tool which allowed speedy communication by Parliamentarians, but it also exposed Members to personal, virulent criticism at times and it was therefore vital that this engagement medium was used constructively. The Isle of Man scrutinised legislation before it was debated and lay people were included on these panels. However it was often the same people who volunteered to participate. She considered that any motions which were passed by youth Parliamentarians should automatically be tabled for discussion by Parliamentarians.

The final question considered was - why is participatory governance important and how can it bring peace? How can...
young people participate? Sabina Avtar Tuher from Bangladesh advised that her country had a population where 70% were under the age of 35. It was therefore vital that young people were part of driving the country forward. Great advances were being made in the world of IT and young people would play an important part in creating a digital future for the Bangladesh economy. V.G. Tripath (South Africa) agreed that it was essential that the Parliament went to the people and she informed the meeting that in South Africa they held public meetings to ensure youth engagement. Her parliament used social media to note issues which were of interest to young people and encouraged the youth to be part of public meetings.

Dr Pramod Sawant, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Goa, India) advised that his Parliament had an initiative at council level, in order that young people were able to actively participate in policy making.

Another Member from India agreed that youth participation sets an example. If people felt that their views were heard then violence was reduced. He advised that his Parliament was very diverse, with all key groups having a voice and their staff members.

Shahkawat Hossain opined that access to information was imperative. Involvement in student politics was important as a way of developing the skills of future leaders, but there had to be policy changes to allow people from different social backgrounds to have their views considered. It was also important for there to be younger Parliamentarians involved in the policy making process. Hon. Dr Shrin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Speaker of Parliament (Bangladesh) agreed that dialogue with young people was essential and she highlighted the CPA Parliamentary Roadshows as a very useful tool for such engagement. She recognised that young people needed access to sufficient information on key issues under discussion by Parliaments. She suggested that the implementation of a quota could be one way of ensuring sufficient youth representation in Parliaments.

Ms Nontemboko Nthemboka Boyce, MP (KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) expressed the view that it was important to build a sense of accountability by governments to young people – otherwise Parliamentarians were not representing their electorate fully and were disenfranchising a large proportion of the population as a consequence. She advised that in South Africa they used a slogan Wishing about us without us and she considered that engagement fostered a greater sense of patriotism whilst disengagement resulted in a disconnect from the country. It was important that young people had a sense of ownership of their country as they were the nation’s future. Following a lively session debating the democratic importance of parliaments engaging with young people to ensure that the views of the youth contributed to policy making decisions by governments, the workshop divided into two groups to agree on a series of recommendations to be presented to conference delegates attending the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPCW) Workshop G - Giving voice to the youth: mechanisms for ensuring effective participation of youth in the governance process.

Group one, led by Tahseen Lubaba, put forward the following recommendations:

- Introduce compulsory classes in schools to educate students about politics and the parliamentary process.
- Establish apprenticeship or internship schemes within parliamentary organisations in order to train for those with an interest in joining the world of politics.
- Invite youth representatives to participate on policy-making bodies/establish youth advisory boards to ensure inclusivity.
- Allow candidates to stand for election at the same age as they can vote.

Group two, led by Sharmila Tanjina Arri, suggested the following:

- Encourage greater use of social media by Parliamentarians, whilst ensuring traditional forms of communication are available for those without internet access.
- Introduce quotas for youth representatives within parliaments.
- Establish special training courses in parliamentary processes for graduates.
- Consult with youth representatives when drafting legislation, particularly when there is a direct impact on young people (for example in relation to education, sport and culture).
- Ensure that every CPA conference includes a proportionate number of young delegates, especially when youth issues are under discussion.
- Expand access to student politics by electing rather than selecting candidates.

Hon. Dipu Moni, MP (Bangladesh) thanked all of the participants for their input. She considered that the views of young people should continue to be a very important focus of the CPA and reiterated that making the youth more visible in democratic Parliaments had been at the core of her tenure as CPA Chairperson. She was certain that the abovementioned recommendations would be a valuable contribution to the discussions later that day.

Shahiduzzaman Sarker, MP (Bangladesh)

Moderator: Hon. Tanveer Imam, MP (Bangladesh)

Rapporteur: Ms Emma Terrible (Malta)

Hon. Tanveer Imam, MP (Bangladesh) opened the first workshop of the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference with the subject of the workshop chosen by the Host Branch. The Moderator introduced the session by stating that the majority of countries in the world have some form of Parliament. ‘Not necessarily all’ are a democracy but democracies must not exist without Parliaments. The first discussion leader, Hon. Dipu Moni, MP (Bangladesh), focused her presentation on the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as proposed by the United Nations. She stressed that if the goals’ aims are to be achieved, then Parliaments must play an informed role and that all issues that are presented before Parliaments are issues with concern to the day-to-day running of Parliaments. She also stated that a democracy must adopt law making oversight and must have correct representation. Through these functions, results are presented and implementation is successful. She stressed that Parliaments must act with media, civil society and that international standards must be applied. Parliamentarians must not forget that there is the potential to fight inequality and fight climate change.

Hon. Dipu Moni, MP stated that the SDGs must be achieved by 2030. The UN has asked world leaders to make these goals a priority for sustainable development and leave nobody behind. In essence, when one talks about democracy, the SDGs are essential in order to have democracy delivered. In order to implement, Parliaments should interact with the SDGs and Goal 16 directly deals with this. It is dedicated to ‘the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.’

Hon. Md. Ali Ashraf, MP (Bangladesh) put forward the following recommendations:

- Introduce compulsory classes in schools to educate students about politics and the parliamentary process.
- Establish apprenticeship or internship schemes within parliamentary organisations in order to train for those with an interest in joining the world of politics.
- Invite youth representatives to participate on policy-making bodies/establish youth advisory boards to ensure inclusivity.
- Allow candidates to stand for election at the same age as they can vote.

She further stated that for representation, public participation must be encouraged, together with public participation and parliaments and political parties have a significant role to establish different democracies.

Hon. Mr Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal, MP (Bangladesh) thanked all of the participants for their input. She considered that the views of young people should continue to be a very important focus of the CPA and reiterated that making the youth more visible in democratic Parliaments had been at the core of her tenure as CPA Chairperson. She was certain that the abovementioned recommendations would be a valuable contribution to the discussions later that day.

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Parliament is the most important of institutions. We can define democracy as a political system. “All people in society have an equal share.” Democratic governments are
He summarised his argument by saying that it is the truest form of government – equality, transparency and equality. Democracy has challenges such as corruption: is there a role model which has created watchdogs or an Auditor General with reports presented to Parliament? The Member also challenged the participants as to whether any Parliaments have come up with something to detect corruption or whether a fund to manage corruption exists. Hon. Mavrides Marios, MP (Cyprus) raised a comment that democracy is the best system although it is not perfect. Democracy is where everyone should benefit equally. Transparency is a very important principle, especially to government. It is also important that Parliamentarians are equipped and enabled to make informed decisions on law-making, budgeting, oversight and public outreach in effectively implementing the SDGs. Parliamentarians to proactively play a role in translating the 17 Sustainable Development Goals into legislation and policies for country-specific goals.

For Parliament to promote democracy and good governance, thereby enhancing people’s participation, it should be more transparent and have a separation of power, making it easily accessible to the public.

A democratic Parliament should reflect the social diversity of its population in terms of gender, geography, language, religion, race, ethnicity and any other politically-significant characteristics.
THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN BUILDING STRONGER TIES WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH: TRADE AND VISA ISSUES: WORKSHOP B

63rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
Dhaka, Bangladesh
1 to 8 November 2017

Conference Workshop B - 6 November 2017

THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN BUILDING STRONGER TIES WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH: INCLUDING NEW TRADE ISSUES, VISA ISSUES, TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND NON-TARIFF RESTRICTIONS

Moderator:
Hon. Alexandra Mendes, MP (Canada)

Discussion Leaders:
• Senator Eke Ekweremadu, MP (Nigeria)
• Lord Davies of Stamford (United Kingdom)
• Hon. Winston Gordon Felix, MP (Guyana)

Rapporteur:
Mr Neil Iddawala (Sri Lanka)

Role of the Commonwealth
In this context, Commonwealth members have to balance the potentially competing claims of national self-interest, their domestic constituencies and the concerns of civil society, while seeking to maximize the benefits of a more liberal world trading system. In this regard, the conference delegates at this workshop urged the Commonwealth to play a major role in the efforts to strengthen relations among the members by affirming the core values and principles of the Commonwealth Charter.

For instance, it encompasses vibrant regional networks such as the African Union (AU), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the European Union (EU). These networks provide collective regional efforts to accelerate economic and trade growth, social progress, cultural development and tourism. Moreover, it is possible to negotiate the trade and other social economic disputes among the members by ratifying trade agreements and implementing their provisions through domestic legislation and appropriate budgetary allocations.

By emphasizing the Commonwealth’s contribution to trade expansion, the first discussion leader, Senator Eke Ekweremadu, MP (Nigeria) stated that the use of a common language amongst Commonwealth nations has been identified as a major source of trade expansion and it also led to a reduction in overheads of up to 15% for intra-Commonwealth trade as opposed to trade with equivalent non-Commonwealth nations. He further stated that, the former Commonwealth Secretary-General Mr Kamalesh Sharma had pointed out in 2004, that the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the Commonwealth promised a boost to global trade of between US$ 400 billion and US$ 1 trillion, by cutting red tape, and streamlining and simplifying procedures through measures such as new standards for customs’ checks and border procedures.

Senator Ekweremadu elaborated that leaving the EU would allow Britain to rekindle and re-engage with independent Commonwealth countries, and strike fairer trade deals which would better reflect Britain’s role as a leading pioneer of free market enterprise. As stated by the IMF, it is forecasted that the Commonwealth will overtake the EU in 2019, contributing 17.7% to the world’s output compared with the EU’s 15.9%. Therefore, for him, this movement has a positive impact on Britain’s place in the Commonwealth.

Role of Parliamentarians
Senator Ekweremadu said that Commonwealth Parliamentarians had legislative power to ratify agreements and shape policies through resolutions. The concept of parliamentary diplomacy as key stakeholders and agents in the quest for stronger ties among the Commonwealth is becoming more popular. Moreover, he added that Parliamentarians will be at the centre of building the principles, modalities, legal framework, institutions and international partnerships for providing and promoting cooperation towards the mutual socio-economic and political development of member nations.

Hon. Winston Gordon Felix, MP (Guyana) described the significant points in relation to the capacity of Parliamentarians. Parliamentarians as lawmakers can influence governments to have better trade agreements between local and foreign companies by reducing the negative impact on tariffs and the volume of trade, he added. On the other hand, Parliamentarians as mediators are in a position to interact on trade regulations in order to get mutual benefits to each country, particularly by reducing barriers and various restrictions in areas of trade and travel.

However, to play a better role in regulating trade agreements, he stated that Parliamentarians must have adequate information on trade agreements. Especially, transparency and accountability are significant in implementing national trade policies. Further he said that discriminatory practices in trade agreements should be avoided and there should be no bias towards any one country. The WTO embodies the principles of non-discrimination in international trades.

He declared that in order to address the problem of tariffs in trade agreements, Members of Parliament in progressive societies have to ensure the principles of national treatment for equal tariffs for both foreign and locally produced goods. Especially, when foreign goods enter into the local market, there should be equivalent tax systems for every item without charging customs duty on any import items. He further stated that as Commonwealth members, they could monitor the implementation of rules-based ‘free-trade’ arrangements pertaining to low trade barriers including both tariff barriers and non-tariff barriers. It would create stability and inclusivity in the trading system, investment promotion, job creation...
and exposure to competition, choice and lower prices for the consumers. Moreover, he added that Parliamentarians need to be conscious of the regulatory types of pressure where certain environmental and other considerations have to be met as a precondition for foreign market access. According to him, there should be a protection plan including sheltering domestic industries that are weak. Measures must be taken against anti-dumping in order to protect local products.

He revealed that intra-Commonwealth trade, including in goods and services, is projected to exceed US$ 1 trillion by 2020 as stated by Commonwealth Trade Review in 2015. Guyana, as a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), maintains a common external tariff system from 5% to 20%. Therefore, Parliamentarians have a major role to play in eliminating non-tariff barriers and this policy should be reflected in a fair, uniform and neutral system for all.

In relation to the visa issue, he urged that Commonwealth members should re-examine restrictive visa rules by relaxing or totally eliminating those that impede the free movement of Commonwealth citizens. However, this should not be a threat to national security. He suggested some recommendations on non-tariff barriers which are as follows:

• Import licensing measures should be simple, transparent and predictable with very clear procedures.
• The rules for the valuation of goods should have uniformity systems which prohibit the use of arbitrary or fictitious customs valuation.
• The practice of pre-shipment inspections which is intended as a compensatory measure for inadequacies in administrative infrastructures and ensure non-discrimination, transparency, protection of confidential business information, avoidance of unreasonable delay by using specific guidelines.
• Rule of origin should be transparent and it should not be restrictive, distorting or disruptive. To implement these recommendations, he urged that Parliamentarians can play a meaningful role in regulating trade agreements by ensuring uniformity and impartially which are harmonized across the member states.
• Lord Davies of Stamford (United Kingdom) explained as to how the Second World War had influenced the economy of different continents of the world and the effect of the economic crisis in 1971 with the introduction of a new economic policy by the then President of the United States. He further stressed the importance of establishing the European Union (EU) for the growth of the economy especially in the European region which facilitated trade among EU countries with released customs duties. He commented on the difference in growth of the economy among countries in different regions and was of the view that certain countries have developed their own traditions. Various aspects of international trade were discussed and he highlighted the importance of maintaining good standards. However, Lord Davies was of the view that the restrictions on visa requirements should remain unchanged.

The first recommendation was noted and the second and third recommendations were endorsed at the end of the workshop:
• Free movement is key to building stronger ties within the Commonwealth. National Parliaments should therefore champion visa free regimes for Commonwealth citizens.
• To set up a committee charged with arranging a seminar with outside experts to examine the reasons for the decline in momentum in removing obstacles to international trade and to recommend appropriate remedies.
• In the Commonwealth, visa issues and travel restrictions operate against free movement of citizens to promote trade. Parliaments must ensure that immigration reform is enacted.

63rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
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Conference Workshop C - 6 November 2017

THE CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATE: A CHALLENGE FOR THE COMMONWEALTH?

Moderator:
Hon. Derek Thomas, MLC (St Helena)

Discussion Leaders:
• Hon. Dr Barton Scotland, MP, Speaker of the National Assembly (Guyana)
• Ms Maria Socorro Manguiat, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Rapporteur:
Ms Bame Letsatle (Botswana)

This workshop focused on discussions that Commonwealth countries who have signed the COP 21 Paris Agreement should address and deal with climate change. The Commonwealth as a body encourages jurisdictions to address climate change and to look at the implementation of climate change rules. However the financing of these measures result in ‘bottlenecks’ in terms of how much is to be paid and how the results are to be monitored. Ms Maria Socorro Manguiat, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) started the discussion by emphasising that the Commonwealth agrees that climate change is a challenge to all and that the question we should be asking is how we address these challenges of climate change. The Commonwealth has an opportunity to reinforce the Paris COP21 Agreement especially as climate change adversely affects vulnerable, smaller Commonwealth countries.

Most Commonwealth countries have not done much in terms of implementation and estimates suggest that one third of the action has been undertaken; clearly there is much to be done. Maria Socorro Manguiat further lamented that every country that has subscribed to the agreement is obliged to address and deal with climate change. How can the Commonwealth make an impact? The Commonwealth is a vehicle to deal with global issues like climate change, varying economic responsibilities, domestic leagues and the implementation of climate change rules.

The role of finance for developing countries is often where there are bottlenecks in the decision-making process in terms of how much is to be paid and how it is to be monitored. In 2020, all nations will revise their action plans on climate change and there was a call for new laws on climate change to provide predictability, legitimacy and autonomy. Various laws and policies impact with each other and it is imperative to see that they are working with each other effectively. The law is important for climate change, we cannot have a modern law that will restrict the developing countries while not addressing the impact of climate change. It is imperative in this regard that we should explore what other countries are doing in terms of priority assessment tools, what kind of laws they have and what they may need in terms of legislative law to tackle climate change.

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lives otherwise this will happen again. He also recommended that Parliaments within the Commonwealth should ensure that they develop and implement a framework for combatting climate change and that this is implemented within each Region and Members are updated at CPA Regional Conferences.

Hon. Fathul Imam, MP (Bangladesh) suggested that when looking at the problems of climate change, action needs to be taken by all countries. For example Bangladesh contributes less than 1% to the world’s climate change total but yet the United States is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. He asked why climate change action is not implemented globally and that many countries are talking about it but not implementing actions. Ms Maria Socorro Manuguia (UNEP) responded that this is a fairly difficult matter and action to address climate change is complicated in terms of who should take the responsibility for finance in other countries and from when. The middle income countries have rapidly developed and their contribution has come to the same level as the developed countries. There are rules that need be developed and there should be a consensus for action to take place. There are a lot of sub-regional and national actions that can be undertaken and they should not be held up by the ongoing discussions around international action.

Hon. G. H. Nqagwa, MP (Botswana) asked what are governments doing to address climate change? There should be compliance with the Paris Agreement and as a legislature, it is our responsibility to ensure that there is implementation and the passing of laws in line with this. It is us who can hold our government accountable.

Hon. Diederik Carter, MP (South Africa) asked how do the volcanic eruptions in the oceans affect climate change? There should be specific research on this as their impact is not widely known.

Hon. Machila Jamba, MP (Zambia) questioned the impact of talking about the problem and suggested that more action was required. He asked how legislators can have a global impact if the laws that they pass in their own jurisdictions are not implemented in other countries.

Hon. Dr Emmanuel Rahman, MP (Bangladesh) said that the use of petrol and coal products is discouraged and that his government emphasizes the use of solar power. Four million solar panels have been installed and he urged other jurisdictions in the Commonwealth to give more emphasis to the use of solar power. Hon. Tajul Islam Choudhury, MP (Bangladesh) questioned the impact of the United States of America’s withdrawal on the Paris Agreement. What effect would this have on the action plan? He also suggested that if the USA doesn’t believe in climate change then is their withdrawal vital or not. Ms Maria Socorro Manuguia (UNEP) responded that the withdrawal of the USA would take place in 2019 and they would no longer be bound by the agreement. There will be practical consequences as the USA are one of the major contributors and other ways of sourcing funding will need to be explored.

Hon. Paul Flynn, MP (United Kingdom) said that unless we act now our children will suffer. We understand the problems faced by developing countries that are created by other countries but it does not mean we cannot do anything we should unite and oppose what the US President is doing.

Hon. Francois Rodgers, MP (KwaZulu Natal, South Africa) said that if we are not united we are doomed to fail. We need to drive the political agenda on this issue.

In September 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which would inform the development agenda for states up to 2030. SDG No. 5 specifically relates to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Achieving SDG No. 5 would contribute to the achievement of the other SDGs, particularly SDG No. 1 pertaining to poverty alleviation.

Delegates at this workshop, in this regard, considered how Parliamentarians could work with their respective governments to ensure that the implementation of the SDGs had a proper gender lens. While most jurisdictions had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), effected policies and enacted legislation to enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women, the enforcement of these measures had remained a challenge for some Branches. This was largely due to factors such as lack of political will, traditional practices and the stereotyping of gender roles.

Parliamentarians, who were responsible for adopting the budget, enacting legislation and scrutinising public expenditure, were best placed to ensure a proper gender lens was used in implementing the SDGs.

Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP (Canada Federal) explained that in order to achieve economic growth and alleviate poverty, it was important for development programmes to involve both genders. She pointed out that using a gender lens entailed looking at how funds invested in government programmes benefitted both genders. She explained that in Canada, all policies were now examined with a gender lens.

Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni, Speaker of Parliament (Fiji) stated that the conversion of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) No. 3 to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 5 showed the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment to global development. She added that the empowerment of women directly impacted the well-being of their families and, therefore, helped in poverty reduction.

Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni pointed out that a government’s commitment to achieving the SDGs necessitated policy and legislative reform and Parliament was key to the process. As regards to how Parliaments should work with the government to ensure the SDGs had a proper gender lens, she advised that Parliaments should create initiatives to mainstream the SDGs into its processes. Thereafter, Parliaments should use a gender lens in carrying out its legislative, oversight and representative functions. She explained that in Fiji, the Standing Committee had to ensure that the data in the reports was disaggregated by gender and showed how many men and women had benefited from the various programmes implemented by the government. She said that this had resulted in an increase in the number of women benefitting from government programmes.

She further said that the Parliament of Fiji had a Gender Programme Group comprising all Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of Standing Committees. This ensured that the Committees carried out their work using a gender lens. In addition, the Parliament had a Gender Toolkit titled ‘Scrutinising Legislation from a Gender Perspective’, which is used to train Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons and Members of Parliament on how to scrutinise Bills using a gender lens.

Recognising that many women were reluctant to become Parliamentarians, the Fiji Parliament also organised a Mock Parliament for women of
Hon. Dr Nafisa Shah, MNA (Pakistan) said that the SDGs aimed at achieving equality and poverty reduction by putting women at their centre. She pointed out that women and girls still formed the largest group of people lagging behind in all the SDGs. She said that Parliamentarians were uniquely placed to promote and adopt policies and laws in the implementation of the SDGs. She added that, as framers of the law with power to allocate resources, Parliamentarians could facilitate the implementation of the SDGs. Further, using their oversight function, they could track the implementation of the SDGs by their respective governments.

As regards Pakistan, she stated that the country was lagging behind in the achievement of gender equality. She explained that Pakistan was ranked 143 out of 144 countries in the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index for 2017. Further, the country was ranked 121 out of 155 in the United Nations Development Programme Gender inequality index. In addition, only 15.9% of women in Pakistan reached secondary school education and 46.1% of men. Also, the employment rate for women was at 44.1% as opposed to that of men which was at 92.9%. She added that, contrary to popular belief, the parliament had adopted the SDG as its own development agenda and in this regard established an SDGs Secretariat. The Secretariat enabled legislators to access the Human Development Index. It also conducted evidence-based research which helped Parliament conduct its oversight function effectively. At a national level, through the legislative reforms, Pakistan established the National Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission examined government policies for women’s development and gender equality.

Parliament used and if this could already overburdened by their role. She also asked how women could more in politics when they were placed to ensure promotion of women’s empowerment policies.

Dr Sitasharan Sharma, MPA (Pakistan) stated that it was not easy to respond to retrogressive traditions, even since those traditions could re-emerge in a new context. She stated that it was at that level that women were considered with other activities such as childcare. She recommended that to resolve this problem, daycare facilities should be made available at places of work. She stated that women were overburdened with other activities such as childcare. She recommended that to resolve this problem, daycare facilities should be made available at places of work. She stated that women were overburdened with other activities such as childcare. She recommended that to resolve this problem, daycare facilities should be made available at places of work.
This conference workshop focused on the issues and challenges surounding logistics and infrastructure in the smaller jurisdictions of the CPA membership and was the topic proposed by the CPA Small Branches.

The delegates noted that there was a large variety between jurisdictions within the CPA, both in size and the level of development. There were problems in some jurisdictions in coping with a high demand for infrastructure but with a low national income. Mrs Robyn Lambley, MLA (Northern Territory, Australia) explained that the Northern Territory was a large area with a small population. The Northern Territory was about ten times larger than Bangladesh but with a small population. One of the biggest challenges was providing good roads especially in tropical areas. There was a high demand for infrastructure with a small population. The main point of her presentation was that there was a high demand for infrastructure with a low Government income. The gap was bridged by Australian Federal Government support.

This was done by way of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), which was pooled between the Australian States and then shared out on the basis of need, using horizontal fiscal equalization. The problem was how to generate more revenue and ease the burden on the Federal Government.

There were limited options to deal with these issues including: raising taxes; seeking private funding; seeking partnerships with private enterprise; selling off assets; using economic development; lowering expectations and spending less. These all had their problems, but the last one was probably the trickiest. The size of a jurisdiction was not an indicator of service level delivery. Some small jurisdictions had a very high level of development. On the other hand, there were some large jurisdictions with lower levels of service delivery. Charles Chauvel (UNDP) asked whether size was an indicator of service level delivery. Some small jurisdictions have a very high level of development and in some cases, a very high level of service delivery. On the other hand, there were some large jurisdictions with lower levels of service delivery. Four small jurisdictions had low service delivery: Swaziland, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Lesotho. The United Nations had a twelve year aim to eliminate poverty via development and the UNDP, Charles Chauvel (UNDP) noted that Parliamentarians had to consider ways of creating solutions to development challenges and the following possible actions were suggested:

• Recognizing that Overseas Development Assistance was very badly coordinated. Doubling up was common and the selection of aid recipient was often irrational. SDI programming was an issue; if interventions were limited in subject then results were less good, so for example general sexual health aid was better for outcomes than focusing on HIV or other single issues.

• Recognizing that the Commonwealth and similar organizations could better coordinate aid. They could act as knowledge clearing houses for donors.

• Promoting knowledge using IT to enable better collaboration.

• Encouraging better development jurisdictions to share benefits at the margins to people from less developed jurisdictions.

• Recognizing that Overseas Development Assistance was essential to help overcome development challenges.

Hon. Catherine Namugala, MP, Deputy Speaker (Zambia) said that Zambia shared in these infrastructure problems and that the use of PPP depended on the economic position of the people. A PPP created higher usage costs for the poor. There were practical difficulties in Assam because of the number of different languages and the size of the state. It relied on support from the central Government and it needed considerable external support.

Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, MP, Speaker of Parliament (Uganda) referred to the horizontal equalization programme in Australia and asked what progress had been made and what it was used for.

Mrs Robyn Lambley, MLA (Northern Territory, Australia) replied that the horizontal equalization programme was used for a wide purpose. It had been used since 1993 and it was aspirational. It was not perfect but it was an attempt to ensure that all Australians had a fair access to services.

Mr Mohammad Asghar (Oscar), AM (Wales) said that Wales was becoming more developed and that PPP had been tried. Wales was semi-independent from the United Kingdom and there was an aim to bring justice closer to the people. Welsh law was being consolidated to create a greater voice for Wales. He asked about the disparity between legal systems in the Commonwealth and asked whether the systems should be brought closer together.

Hons. Angela Famua, MP, Speaker of Parliament (Malta) pointed out that this had been dealt with in the CPA Small Branches Conference and that Small Branches have useful experience in infrastructure and this can be shared successfully. He said that Branches can learn from each other and he gave an example the modernization of the power station and building a new power station in Malta, which had maximized European Union funding mechanisms.

Dr Pramod Sawant, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Goa, India) described the initiative taken in various investment projects in his region which had reduced the logistic costs.

Shri Hitendra Nath Gowsami, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Assam, India) noted that the use of PPP depended on the economic position of the people. A PPP created higher usage costs for the poor. There were practical difficulties in Assam because of the number of different languages and the size of the state. It relied on support from the central Government and it needed considerable external support.

Mr Patrick Nsamba, MP (Uganda) agreed that recipients needed a better idea in what was done and what was needed whether to be done but the reality of the situation was that many recipients at present could not do this.

Sir sanitation Mohammad RaffiFF, MP (Mauritius) noted that there was give and take in aid. Sometimes there were stringent conditions which were to the advantage of donors. He noted that India had given a large loan to Mauritius without conditions.

Mr Mohammad Asghar (Oscar), AM (Wales) asked to what extent the CPA agreed that there was a need for legal coordination in many Commonwealth countries.

Moderator Hon. Lim Bow Chuan MP (Singapore) said that there was a wide variety of challenges because of the difference in conditions in various member countries. The discussion was aimed at helping to create awareness of the scope for exchanging ideas.

Mrs Robyn Lambley, MLA (Northern Territory, Australia) asked to what extent it was interesting to hear about donor funding. She asked whether Parliamentarians could find out where aid was coming from and what it was for? Was the UNDP able to identify problems which arose to enable Parliamentarians to scrutinize outcomes?

Charles Chauvel (UNDP) replied that it was essential for Members of Parliament to know how aid was being spent in their own countries. If that did not happen it was a problem with the national Parliament. Government should publish what it was for and that the budget should include all sources of finance.
Moderator: Senator Binta Masi Garba (Nigeria)

Discussion Leaders:
- Mr Chris Steel, MLA (Australian Capital Territory)
- Hon. Zairil Khir Johari, MP (Malaysia)
- Mr Anthony Smith (Westminster Foundation for Democracy)

Rapporteur: Mr Todd Butsworth (Tasmania)

Delegates in the conference workshop discussed the CPA’s ‘Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures’ (the Benchmarks) developed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in 2006. The benchmarks were developed and drafted by a Study Group of CPA Legislators representing the nine different Commonwealth Regions, with support provided by the World Bank Institute and the United Nations Development Programme. The benchmarks are intended to be a guide for Parliaments and Legislatures to undertake self-assessments based on a Commonwealth standard designed to specifically help institutions identify improved ways to function effectively and strengthen their democratic performance. Discussion leaders from Australia, Canada and Malaysia discussed their perspectives and experiences of using the CPA Benchmarks to conduct self-assessments of their institutions. The workshop also heard from an expert in international affairs and development discuss the value of the benchmarks for both individual jurisdictions and for achieving international goals.

Outside expert, Mr Anthony Smith of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) spoke to the development of the benchmarks. The CPA Benchmarks were developed to provide minimum standards of how Parliaments should act, behave and function to be met by all Commonwealth-Parliaments. The benchmarks cover a wide-range of areas including elections, parliamentary procedure, constituent representation, accessibility (by both the public and the press), diplomacy, ethical governance and parliamentary staff. He stressed the importance of ensuring that the benchmarks are regularly updated. The benchmarks had been recently updated to address some technical issues, language hindrances and requirements that are not working in some jurisdictions. Regular revisiting of the benchmarks will ensure that they work at their best and are relevant to all jurisdictions.

Mr Anthony Smith also spoke to how the use of the CPA Benchmarks can assist in progressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16): ‘Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions’. He argued that whilst the goal did not specifically state the word ‘Parliaments’, the institution was implied as the outcome sought is to “build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” and that this cannot be achieved without our Parliaments being strong, functioning and transparent institutions of democracy.

Discussion leader, Mr Chris Steel, MLA (Australian Capital Territory) discussed the use of CPA Benchmarks by Legislatures to conduct self-assessment. He promoted the use of self-assessments by Parliaments to demonstrate their performance and to highlight areas in which the organisation can improve.

Mr Steel discussed how his jurisdiction, the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly, had utilised the benchmarks to conduct a self-assessment of their institution. In doing so, the ACT Legislative Assembly managed to achieve some significant improvements in its formative stage and he outlined the experience of the Assembly managed to achieve some significant improvements in its formative stage and how it had managed to make some significant improvements in its formative stage.

Outcomes from their self-assessment have been:
- Shortened duration for the notice of submitted questions from 14 days to 10 days.
- Establishment of a Special Chamber for dealing with urgent public matters.
- Introducing the permission for questions to be submitted with a day’s notice for Ministerial Questions.
- Thomas Mulcair, MP (Canada) discussed how the CPA Benchmarks are a positive process for Parliaments. He argued that the benchmarks are not about shaming Parliaments as there is no grading system. The benchmarks allow Parliaments to take into account their own culture and history in development points to improve upon their processes.
- Hon. Zairil Khir Johari, MP (Malaysia) discussed how the benchmarks allow Parliaments to conduct and assist in self-assessments, however there was some disagreement as to what methods should be used.
- He argued that there is significant value in utilising external persons, including academic independent parties, to conduct and assist in assessments as an individual can never be truly objective in regards to themselves as is true for an organisation. The inclusion of the input of external groups also adds to the confidence in the assessment.
- He provided an overview of when the Canadian House of Commons and Senate undertook a self-assessment utilising the benchmarks and that where they achieved less than full compliance provided a checklist for reform. A number of delegates participated in the discussion that took place following the presentations by the discussion leaders. Participants discussed their experiences and challenges using the benchmarks in their own institutions.

The workshop delegates as a whole were strongly in favour of the use of the CPA Benchmarks to identify improvements and enhancements and to report on progress at future conferences.

Whilst the ACT Legislative Assembly managed to achieve a very good score of A minus, he noted that the use of the assessment had discovered areas in which the Legislature was lacking. The Legislature did fall in some areas, including the absence of a Code of Conduct for all staff.

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The discussions centred on the use of external persons and organisations to provide objective assistance and input as part of the assessment, as was suggested by one of the discussion leaders. A number of delegates expressed concern that the inclusion of third parties may infringe upon a Parliament’s sovereignty. However as Hon. Thomas Mulcair, MP stressed, such use is only to occur ‘where relevant’ and should not be taken as mandatory.

This discussion demonstrated the theme which was present throughout the presentations - the importance of ensuring that the benchmarks are flexible enough to be culturally relevant to each institution.

The four recommendations at the workshop were endorsed as follows:
- Branch President/Clerks to assess their legislatures against the CPA Benchmarks to identify improvements and enhancements and to report on progress at future conferences.
- Where relevant, citizens, civil society and academia should be consulted when Parliaments conduct self-assessments with the CPA Benchmarks to promote transparency and accountability.
- Parliaments should use the updated CPA Benchmarks on Democratic Legislatures as a tool to ensure their contribution to SDG 16 (an inclusive and accountable governance).
- To conduct a regular meeting to review and enhance the CPA Benchmarks to suit the current developments.

63rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
Dhaka, Bangladesh
1 to 8 November 2017

Conference Workshop F - 6 November 2017

CPA BENCHMARKS FOR DEMOCRATIC LEGISLAGES: PROGRESS IN THE PAST 10 YEARS
Delegates gathered for this workshop in which stimulating presentations and a vibrant discussion focused on the importance of giving a voice to the youth and the mechanisms for ensuring the effective participation of youth in the governance process. The discussion leaders began the session with formal presentations outlining the current situation in relation to engaging young people in the democratic process in their respective jurisdictions of Tanzania, India and Bangladesh. Hon. Dr Tullia Akson Mwassaru, MP (Tanzania) opened the workshop proceedings by posing, for consideration, the question as to what constituted ‘youth’ and that the definition of this demographic varied greatly, both internationally and across the Commonwealth. The UN, for instance, defined this for people within the 14-25 age range whilst in Africa alone the definition was as young as 12 (Botswana) and as old as 35 in several countries where the voting/majority age ranged from 18-91. It was stressed that the thinking about the youth being the leaders of tomorrow had to change and that the young had too much to offer not to be thought of, and to have the opportunities to be the leaders of today! Young people offered the societies they lived in innovation, creativity and new thinking. Their participation in decision-making promoted active citizenship, strengthened social responsibility and enhanced the strength and credibility of democratic processes and institutions.

The youth could learn much from the women’s movement. Women were now largely represented in decision-making and this was of course to be welcomed – now was the time to ensure that young people also were fully engaged and represented in decision-making positions in Parliament.

Much was made of the great importance of good governance, and that inequity could be a barrier to this; however the youth of today were more than capable of executing and considering the importance of effective governance. Hon. Dr Tullia Akson Mwassaru, MP argued that given that young people (particularly within the African continent) made up the majority of the population, it was imperative that their voices be heard so that they had a stake in their country’s future. She closed her presentation by congratulating Jacinda Ardern who had recently been elected as the Prime Minister of New Zealand. At the age of 37, she was one of the world’s youngest leaders, the youngest female head of government and was an inspirational role model for the young people of today.

Hon. Smt Sumitra Mahajan, Speaker of Lok Sabha (India Union) suggested that the effective participation of young people needed to happen in an organic manner by ensuring the facilitation of practices that would lead to the natural outcome of developing young people into capable Parliamentarians.

It was imperative that young people be aware of and fully familiarise themselves with the reality of life on the ground within the country and the communities they wished to represent. All citizens should explore their own culture and challenges before embarking on a parliamentary career.

Reference was made to the great Mahatma Gandhi who, having returned from South Africa as a young man, asked to tour India to enrich his understanding of his own people. Hon. Smt Sumitra Mahajan discussed how human life was considered in India in four main stages and that young people should be nurtured appropriately. It was noted that up to 65% of Indians were under 35 years old. The workshop delegates were given an insight into the numerous positive measures undertaken in India to encourage youth participation through grassroots development in order to promote and enrich young people’s lives which included a National Youth Day. Government endorsed youth programmes on both a local and national level to ensure young people were economically empowered. The recently launched ‘Speakers Fellowship Programme’ in the Parliament of India had led to over 100 interns in Parliament across India. Making the election process more attractive was important in order to encourage the active participation of young people and the CPA had a role to play in the sharing of best practice across the Commonwealth.

Hon. Kazi Nabil Ahmed, MP (Bangladesh) discussed how human life was considered in India in four main stages and that young people should be nurtured appropriately. It was noted that up to 65% of Indians were under 35 years old. The workshop delegates were given an insight into the numerous positive measures undertaken in India to encourage youth participation through grassroots development in order to promote and enrich young people’s lives which included a National Youth Day. Government endorsed youth programmes on both a local and national level to ensure young people were economically empowered. The recently launched ‘Speakers Fellowship Programme’ in the Parliament of India had led to over 100 interns in Parliament across India. Making the election process more attractive was important in order to encourage the active participation of young people and the CPA had a role to play in the sharing of best practice across the Commonwealth.

The USA was used as an example of a country which could be seen to have inconsistent values when it came to age – with very different restrictions in place for being able to purchase firearms, alcohol or vote in elections. It was considered important that young people be interested in, and allowed to develop participation in all aspects of governance; such as the judiciary and civil service etc, as well as in Parliament.

The election of a new 37 year old Prime Minister in New Zealand had been discussed; however this was not an isolated phenomenon – there were examples of new and dynamic young political leaders to be seen internationally in many countries, including in Austria, Canada and France.

Hon. Kazi Nabil Ahmed, MP quoted George Bernard Shaw by saying that “Youth is wasted on the young.” He also posed the question that perhaps, rather than the sole focus being on older people deciding what age it be appropriate for young people to vote – that maybe it was also timely for young people to have a say on what the maximum age of voting should be too?

Workshop delegates heard from two young people from Bangladesh – Shahnima Tanjin Areni and Tahseen Lubaba – who had participated in the Youth Roundtable at the 63rd CPC earlier in the day and spoke passionately about the need to engage and encourage young people’s participation through numerous measures including:

- quotas of young people both on a party basis and at a legislative level.
- encouraging the participation of young people not be restricted to ‘youth issues’ but to full engagement on all global issues.
- analysis of data to identify the best international practices of youth engagement throughout the Commonwealth to share with different jurisdictions.
- to consider and address barriers preventing political and parliamentary participation by young people, such as offering training to develop the necessary skills through apprenticeships and civic education in schools.
- ensuring youth representation on all statutory bodies.
- promoting youth participation through digital democracy and social media.

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promoting youth participation in (Mauritius) stated that political elections from 18 to 16 year old. voting age for EU and national also being taken for lowering the age at which people should be political parties. The voting age such as the youth wings of was not seen as surprising but elections. The voting age for young people in Parliament. Speaker Watterson, SHK (Isle of Man) wished to note for the record the very positive work that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association itself was doing to promote the participation of young people in the democratic process. Youth Parliament for example was an excellent programme to encourage youth participation across the Commonwealth and it was something that Speaker Watterson had himself benefited from attending in the past as a youth Parliamentarian. Speaker Watterson encouraged delegates to spread the word about the CPA’s Commonwealth Youth Parliament and other positive youth-focused programmes within their respective legislatures. The workshop discussion leaders offered a round of final comments in response to the workshop discussions. These included:

- That, where practical, young people should take advantage of the opportunity to talk with their peers to learn of different experiences, perspectives and best practice across the Commonwealth.
- Responsibility should also be shared by the young people themselves.
- It was good for those interested in a career as a Parliamentarian to be able to start early. However, young people should also consider the challenges that this might pose - such as having to sacrifice a university education - and also of having to consider that a career in politics could often be a short one "voted in today, out tomorrow" with no guarantees offered of a long-term position.

The last word of the workshop went to Hon. Kazi Nabil Ahmed, MP from the conference host Parliament of Bangladesh who reaffirmed that the "The only debt of gratitude is a debt of gratitude." The following five recommendations were endorsed by the workshop delegates. Recommendations four and five were presented by the two young people from Bangladesh as an outcome of the Youth Roundtable event at the conference:

- Parliaments must ensure that the youth Parliamentarians are given a voice in all parliamentary, national, regional and international representative bodies.
- Parliament needs to give a voice to the youth by making sure the policies close to their hearts are actually considered.
- Parliaments and Parliamentarians should ceaselessly endeavour to ensure the mainstreaming of the youth in governance and nation building so as to equip and empower them to shape the destinies of democracies the world over.
- Introduction of youth quotas in Parliament and youth quotas at the party level in the case of choosing candidates.
- Youth must be mentored through internships and apprenticeships in statutory bodies and parliamentary functions should be taught within mainstream education.

The Parliamentarian | 2017: Issue Four | 313

63rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
Dhaka, Bangladesh 1 to 8 November 2017

WHAT FACTORS FUEL THE RISE OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF NATIONALISM?

Moderator/Discussion Leader: Hon. James Dornan, MSP (Scotland)
Rapporteur: Mr Jeffrey Joswa (Zambia)

Hon. James Dornan, MSP (Scotland), acting as both Moderator and discussion leader (due to a Member’s, sudden illness) suggested to the workshop delegates that before they could start discussing factors that fuel the rise of different kinds of nationalism, there was need to talk about different types of nationalism. He informed the workshop that there could be both positive and negative nationalism. He went on further describing nationalism as something that stems from internal or external forces pressuring unity and cohesion among members of society. This in turn produces wide-ranging effects from a distinct but peaceful nationalism and national identity to mobilization from warfare and hostility towards a certain group. Furthermore, Hon. James Dornan, MSP was quick to inform the meeting that for the purpose of this discussion he would confine himself to two types of nationalism: civic and ethnic or patriotism. Hon. James Dornan, MSP was able to exemplify the concept of nationalism by an instance of Africa. He said nationalism with regards to Africa is the protection of African’s social, economic and political activities from foreign influences. This is where Africa seeks to control its own affairs and expresses its nationalism by protecting its resources. He gave examples where Africans were displaced in countries like Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and many African countries by Europeans. This caused the destruction of African culture, hunger and other forms of oppression and that brought about the need to seek political freedom and self-determination. He further contrasted civic and ethnic nationalism by underscoring the fact that civic nationalism emphasizes law, choice, unity of consent, democratic pluralism and liberty. On the other hand, ethnic nationalism emphasizes common roots, inheritance, emotional attachment, ethnic majority rule of which individuals create nationalism. Of the two, civic nationalism is a more realistic in terms of belonging. Hon. James Dornan, MSP then delved into reality of the rise of different kinds of nationalism. In the context of Africa, he pointed out some of the factors that created an environment such as education. The few educated Africans then became the leaders of a number of African countries. The leaders played a pivotal role in the mobilization of fellow Africans to seek independence. This move exhibited the spirit of nationalism both from a civic and ethnic perspective.

Hon. James Dornan, MSP also highlighted the rise in Scottish nationalism as another example. He concluded his presentation to the workshop delegates with three things that he felt undergraduates nationalism and these include among others: self-determination, religious and historic culture that brought about a feeling of being left out. Lord Davies of Stamford United Kingdom informed the workshop that from the discussion he was able to acquire a reasonable form of patriotism as a form of nationalism. He, however, contrasted patriotism with nationalism by indicating that nationalism by implying that people are protecting the common good of all the sake of the nation whilst patriotism may imply a person or a group of persons that protect the interest of an ethnic group.
HON. SANTOSH KALAN, MP (South Africa) questioned whether there is such a thing as good or bad nationalism. However, Hon. James Doman, MSP clarified that as long as you can differentiate between the two there is a possibility of nationalism being either good or bad.

Hon. Tenzir Norbu Thongdok, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Anaruchh Pradesh, India) questioned as to what can be done to solve the issue of Al-Shabaab (militant group), a Somalia-based militant Islamist group aligned with Al-Qaeda.

Hon. Fazlultan Naiz Bappy, MP (Bangladesh) raised a concern relating to the issue of the Rohingya people of Myanmar who has fled to Bangladesh. She particularly wanted to find out what could be done about them in light of their suffering from a terrible ethnic cleansing.

She noted that this matter was raised even during the 137th Assembly on ‘Ending the human crisis, persecution and violent attacks on the Rohingyas as a threat to internal peace and security and ensuring their unconditional and safe return to their homeland in Myanmar.’

Hon. Paul Teboho Lehloenya, MP (Lesotho) pointed out that good nationalism can be likened to what is currently happening in Myanmar State with the issue of the Rohingya people. He went on to seek clarification on the categorization of what is happening in Myanmar with the Rohingya people whether that is apartheid which was experienced in other parts of the world.

Hon. David Davies, MP (Victoria, Australia) drew the attention of the workshop into considering the economic effect that nationalism has on a given nation. He informed delegates of the negative effect that nationalism has when mishandled. Further, he informed the workshop that nationalism when used for selfish motives can have its negative repercussions on both the economy and the nation therein.

Senator Susan Lines attending the conference as an observer (Australia Federal) pointed out that the existence of inequalities in society also fuels various forms of nationalism. She observed that if we all embrace the values of democracy we can stand against the various negative effects of nationalism.

Hon. Vijay Kumar Chaudhury, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Bihar, India) on the other hand observed that there is neither bad nor good nationalism from the Indian perspective. He pointed out that nationalism is a concept that involves one’s development of integrity and patriotism. He likened the subject of discussion to discussing good or bad terrorism and therefore emphasized that there is no good terrorism but good nationalism.

Hon. Joseph Banadzem, MP (Cameroon) observed that having listened to the previous delegates in the workshop, he was quick to mention that nationalism affects several aspects of the economy and the general governance of a nation. He stated that the issue of nationalism culminates in poorer economies especially among developing nations. He further posed the question regarding what CPA can do in influencing the management of resources of the various member states in order that there is no rise of negative nationalism.

Hon. James Doman, MSP suggested that there is a lot that CPA needed to do in order to achieve the much-needed desire as expressed in the previous question. One way through which CPA can help member states is through engaging heads of states and governments in their policy formulation and implementation. This can be achieved through the creation of an enabling environment that will enable member states to interact and exchange views regarding issues of governance and accountability among others.

Hon. Roopa Ganguly, MP (India Union) informed the workshop that nationalism from India is a feeling. She further pointed out that people can define nationalism in different ways and expressions. She likened nationalism to a feeling that one has when he or she was away from their country and are now back. That feeling expresses both civic and ethnic elements of nationalism. Hon. Phoebe Nkoselwabo (Eastern Cape, South Africa) agreed with the delegate from Cameroon and emphasized that in this international space we need each other. The Member further informed the meeting that nationalism underpins freedom and in the absence of freedom there is no nationalism. The issue of nationalism concerns many issues such as gender and equality to mention but a few.

Hon. Margaret Quirk, MLA (Western Australia) shared with delegates the idea of identity. She was quick to point out that identity brings about a sense of belonging and oneness. She cited the case of the Rohingyas and observed that denying someone of their sense of identity is such a devastating thing.

Hon. Jennifer Rankine, MP (South Australia) observed that the term nationalism has different definitions depending on the background and history of individuals, ethnic groups and nations. This is clear even from a global perspective as highlighted by previous delegates in this workshop.

In summary, delegates at the workshop noted that nationalism could arise at personal, ethnic or national levels. Secondly, delegates stated that there were two types of nationalism; civic and ethnic. They also observed that nationalism could have the positive effect of igniting economic, political and social emancipation. To this end, the delegates noted that when unity is embraced, nationalism can be a tool that can be used to promote national growth and good neighbourliness, thereby strengthening the international community.

The workshop endorsed the following recommendation unanimously:

• The CPC workshop recognizes that different factors, history, political systems and geography can influence different types of nationalism across different countries of the world.
The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network meets every three years, most recently at the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to focus on the equal representation for women in Parliaments and gender empowerment. The network held a gender equality session during the conference which discussed how a society with greater equality of opportunity is a more economically dynamic society and how the focus should be on ‘preaching to the convertibles’. Some delegates referred to young males as those who might most benefit from engagement on this topic. It was highlighted that girls and young women most need mentors. Successful female legislators have a responsibility to be visible and to make themselves available to those who would benefit from their experiences.

In a first for the CWP, a discussion was held at the 63rd CPC on the role of male Parliamentarians in championing gender equality which was attended by both male and female Parliamentarians at the conference. The discussion covered a wide range of views and experiences from different jurisdictions.

The recommendations from the CWP gender workshop and the discussion on male champions were included in the overall Conference Concluding Statement for the 63rd CPC at www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpc2017/concludingstatement.

63rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
Dhaka, Bangladesh
1 to 8 November 2017

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians: Gender session - 6 November 2017

IF WE WANT GENUINE POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE WORLD, WE NEED MORE WOMEN LEADERS. HOW CAN WE PERSUADE THE WORLD THAT THE FUTURE IS DEPENDENT ON GENDER EQUALITY?

Moderator:
Hon. Dr. Noraini Ahmad, MP (Malaysia), Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Chairperson

Discussion Leaders:
• Hon. Sagufta Yasmin, MP (Bangladesh), Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians President
• Hon. Kezia Purick, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Northern Territory)
• Hon. Meenakashi Lekhi, MP (India)
• Ms Shoko Ishikawa (UN Women)

Rapporteur:
Mr Peter McGrath (Scotland)

This workshop for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network discussed how a society with greater equality of opportunity is a more economically dynamic society. It was noted that this needs to be more widely known, with more data collection and sharing. Societies benefit from equality of opportunity and the focus should be on ‘preaching to the convertibles’. Some delegates referred to young males as those who might most benefit from engagement on this topic. It was highlighted that girls and young women most need mentors. Successful female legislators have a responsibility to be visible and to make themselves available to those who would benefit from their experiences.

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Political parties too must be agents of change. Often political parties select women on the basis of winnable seats. Mentorship is also crucial. Sometimes it simply means opening women’s and girls’ eyes to what their options are. Where necessary, there would be nothing ‘ordinary’ about such an upbringing.

Closing the gender gap in politics requires an attitudinal shift. More women must be selected for winnable seats. Mentorship is also crucial. Sometimes it simply means opening women’s and girls’ eyes to what their options are. Where necessary, there would be nothing ‘ordinary’ about such an upbringing.

Hon. Kezia Purick, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Northern Territory) said it was her starting point that women and men are equal and must be viewed as equal. ‘Equality does not mean ‘same’. Coming from an ordinary stable, middle-class family, she and her siblings had enjoyed good healthcare and education and all of them (boys and girls) been encouraged to live up to their potential. However, for many girls growing up in Australia and around the world, there would be nothing ‘ordinary’ about such an upbringing.

Hon. Kezia Purick, MLA explained that in Australia, males and females share broadly similar outcomes in health and education. But in many other areas – pay, leadership, economic security and representation in Parliament – women continue to lag behind men. There is an economic and political gap. It is still assumed that it is women’s role to be carers, and the political gap stubbornly persists.
should be legislative interventions: for instance to stipulate minimum female membership of public boards. As for the media, it should be viewed as a partner, not as ‘the enemy’. But there is a need to take it on where, as it often does in Australia, it perpetuates negative stereotypes and focuses on the trivial (for instance an obsession with what they have done for their image. or what they have done for their appearance, not for their ideas, their work-rate, their performance). This media stereotypes about women. Many of these stereotypes are projected through the media and reinforced by the workplace. For instance, there is a 20% increase in the probability of peace agreements holding if women are in leadership roles.

How do we make progress? First, she said, work to combat gender stereotypes. Many of these stereotypes have been institutionalised, and written into laws. Here, MPs have an important role. There is also a need to address inequality practised in the news media. Only one in four people heard or read about in the media are women; around the same proportion of media managers are male. Measures are needed to bolster women’s confidence as leaders, which is sometimes lacking. Women need mentors and role models.

The workshop discussion opened to contributions from delegates. Hon. Poto Williams, MP (New Zealand) said it was important to get the language right, referring to gender ‘equality’ rather than ‘neutrality’ or ‘equity’ as the goal. This involves recognising that, all other things being equal, women will still not be truly equal. Equal representation for women in Parliament does not translate directly into equal outcomes for males and females.

Hon. Bundu Songowa Hannah (Sierra Leone) sought clarification from the CWP as to its response to a global report on countries holding elections in 2017-18 and its impact on gender representation.

Hon. Jenny Atkinson, MP (New South Wales, Australia) said that it was important for female Parliamentarians to seek out male colleagues in championing change. Male politicians are potential partners in fighting for gender equality but women should not be slow to call out disrespectful behaviour by their male colleagues.

Hon. Elizabeth Phiri, MP (Zambia) said that there were no affirmative action laws in Zambia. It is only strong women who can thrive in Zambian politics. Electoral rules requiring a minimum level of education for candidates to be able to finance their campaigns in effect amount to strong indirect discrimination against women in politics. She said it was crucial to move beyond just talking we need workable solutions to the problem of gender inequality.

Hon. Mary Muyabi Boya, MP (Camerone) referred to the unrealised potential in many countries of women encountering barriers to public and political life. She asked how the world could be convinced that everyone benefited from increased female participation.

Hon. Felikaua Rose Duffy-Stowers, MP (Samoa) clarified a point raised in the earlier discussion that it is now possible for women to become MPs in Samoa, provided their family bestow a title name on them.

The following three recommendations were endorsed by the workshop delegates:

• Using data driven strategies to increase women’s political participation, allow women Parliamentarians to serve as role models, and better support policies that promote gender equality.

• Women are born equal, and, to strive and achieve equality and equity, the playing field should be made even to enable and provide equal opportunities for all. Parliamentarians have a key role in how we make this happen.

• We ask world leaders to create a conducive environment in their countries for women to enter politics and positions of leadership to achieve the goal of gender equality.
63rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
Dhaka, Bangladesh - 1 to 8 November 2017

Continuing to enhance high standards of performance of Parliamentarians

Hosted by the CPA Bangladesh Branch and Parliament of Bangladesh - Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban
THE ROLE OF MALE PARLIAMENTARIES IN CHAMPIONING GENDER EQUALITY

In a first for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) at the CPA annual conference, a workshop session was held on the role of male Parliamentarians in championing gender equality. The discussion leaders noted that self-sustaining patriarchal power relations have held back women from making progress in parliamentary representation. The problem is not just getting women into Parliament, but ensuring that they stay there. Male Parliamentarians have often been part of the problem.

In different parts of the Commonwealth, there are encouraging signs of change. As the two workshop discussion leaders illustrated, for instance, male Parliamentarians adding their voice and political weight to what were seen as more traditionally ‘female’ campaigns, such as the eradication of male domestic abuse of women, or in taking concrete steps in male-dominated legislatures to change. For too long, Parliaments have been male-dominated. For real change, male Parliamentarians must work in equal partnership with women in championing gender equality.

For real change, male Parliamentarians must work in equal partnership with women in championing gender equality.

The following two recommendations were endorsed by the workshop delegates:

- For too long, Parliaments have been male-dominated. For real change, male Parliamentarians must work in equal partnership with women in championing gender equality.
- The male-dominated mind-set and personnel of the media must change and the reportage should promote changing gender equality attitudes and sensibilities.

Mr Peter McGrath (Scotland) outlined the Scottish Parliament's strong record in promoting gender equality. Qualities impact assessments are mainstreamed into most important aspects of the Parliament's scrutiny work. Strong female leadership in Scottish politics also serves as a strong example. Major challenges remain. Talented women must endure scorn and disapproval and in a way that men typically do not.

Hon. Mataiasi Akaula Niumatawali, MP (Fiji) remarked on the continuing gender gap in Fiji. For instance, 90% of domestic violence carried out by males. Only eight of 50 MPs are female in the Fiji Parliament. Overall, there is a lack of special measures in law to promote equality.

For real change, male Parliamentarians are increasingly coming to recognise their role in promoting gender equality. The following two recommendations were endorsed by the workshop delegates:

- For too long, Parliaments have been male-dominated. For real change, male Parliamentarians must work in equal partnership with women in championing gender equality.
- The male-dominated mind-set and personnel of the media must change and the reportage should promote changing gender equality attitudes and sensibilities.

For real change, male Parliamentarians must work in equal partnership with women in championing gender equality.

**Moderator:**

Hon. Mutimura Zeno MP (Rwanda)

**Discussion Leaders:**

- Hon. James Dornan, MSP (Scotland)
- Hon. Mataiasi Akaula Niumatawali, MP (Fiji)

**Rapporteur:**

Mr Peter McGrath (Scotland)
Parliamentarians from CPA Small Branches focus on the unique challenges affecting small parliaments and legislatures across the Commonwealth at 36th annual conference

With the increased logistical, financial and infrastructure demands facing small jurisdictions in the Commonwealth, Parliamentarians meet to examine the unique challenges they face. The 36th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Small Branches Conference has been held in Dhaka, Bangladesh with Members of Parliaments and Legislatures from CPA Small Branches attending the conference. The conference discussed a new CPA Small Branches Strategy which for the first time in the CPA’s 106 year history will seek to meet the unique developmental needs of its smallest legislatures through key thematic areas and development activities that will build parliamentary capacity for CPA Small Branches and create greater opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, parliamentary strengthening and cooperation across the network.

The CPA President and Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shrinim Chaudhury MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh said at the opening of the Small Branches Conference: “I am honored to be here today. The CPA works with the Small Branches in all the regions and we extend full cooperation in strengthening parliamentary democracy. The CPA’s priorities include supporting all of our Small Branches in meeting their challenges.” The CPA President also sent her thoughts to the CPA Small Branches in the Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Region affected by recent hurricanes who were not able to attend the conference.

The CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Malta said: “The CPA Small Branches Conference will help to build capacities for the small parliaments and legislatures of the Commonwealth and legislatures within the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference will help to build capacities for the CPA Small Branches and create greater opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, parliamentary strengthening and cooperation across the network.”

The CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Malta gave the opening address at the 36th CPA Small Branches Conference. 

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Good morning to you all and welcome to the 36th CPA Small Branches Conference. As you may be aware, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was the first organisation to give Parliaments of Small Branches adequate recognition and space in an international forum, notably through its annual Small Branches Conference which commenced in 1981 for Commonwealth members with populations of then less than 250,000 persons. The CPA Small Branches Conference is held in the margins of the CPA annual conference to enable small jurisdictions to discuss matters of relevance to them with larger branches, giving Small Branches a voice and rights equivalent to those of larger Branches. A country which inspires confidence through robust democratic institutions and processes is more likely to reach sustainable development. Yet democratic institutions are costly to develop and maintain in small countries because of their size and resources.

For the first time in its 106 year history, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association started to meet the unique developmental needs of its smallest legislatures through a newly devised ‘CPA Small Branches Strategy’. The smallest of the CPA’s legislatures seek to meet the same expectations of service delivery as larger legislatures and in doing so, they recognise the importance of constantly innovating in the face of fiscal and human resource constraints; they recognise the central role of parliament in meeting the challenges of combating corruption; and the threats in the face of climate change to some of the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable.

The new strategy, as I will outline in detail later in this address, will focus on key thematic areas and development activities with measurable outcomes; this will build parliamentary capacity for CPA Small Branches and create greater opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, parliamentary strengthening and cooperation across the network.

Thus, this marks the opening of the 36th Small Branches Conference. I am hereby launching the new CPA Small Branches Strategic Plan for the 36th CPA Small Branches Conference and ahead of the wider 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC).

63rd CPA Small Branches Conference
2 to 3 November 2017

Small Branches opening ceremony - 2 November 2017

CPA SMALL BRANCHES CHAIRPERSON SAYS ‘CPA SMALL BRANCHES CONFERENCE WILL HELP TO BUILD CAPACITIES FOR THE SMALL PARLIAMENTS AND LEGISLATURES OF THE COMMONWEALTH’

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CRITICAL MASS: SMALL JURISDICTIONS AND BIG PROBLEMS - LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES TO MEET SMALL JURISDICTIONS EXPECTATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE SAME LEVELS AS LARGER PARLIAMENTS

Moderator: Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives and CPA Small Branches Chairperson (Malta)

Discussion Leaders:
- Hon. Byron Camilleri, MP (Malta)
- Hon. Edmund Hinkson, MP (Barbados)
- Mrs Robyn Lambley, MLA (Northern Territory)
- Mr Dyfan Jones (United Nations Development Programme Pacific)

Rapporteur: CPA Headquarters Secretariat

Discussion leaders briefed delegates on the challenges of becoming self-sufficient for the Small Branches in terms of funding and legislating for infrastructure growth. The discussion leaders also spoke about the necessity to identify and focus on niche areas for engaging others in development regardless of the size of the jurisdiction.

The session heard a diverse range of views on how individual jurisdictions could engage citizens and partners in infrastructure development as well as creating a legislative framework for good governance and transparency. It was commonly accepted by the majority of delegates that although each Branch has differing challenges, there were common areas of focus and opportunities to maximize on their own localities. There are unique issues in the Small Branches in terms of infrastructure and many innovations in the manner in which they could meet the challenges of big problems in small jurisdictions were discussed.

Hon. Byron Camilleri, MP (Malta) explained that Malta was a small, densely populated country but highly recognized for its economy and it also faced a lot of environmental challenges and climate change problems. He explained that Malta had undertaken many initiatives to address climate change issues however a lack of monitoring was one of the reasons why they are unable to better record improvements in their efforts. Smaller jurisdictions were far more vulnerable to the impact of climatic events affecting their economies, more than four times of their GDP than larger populations, with the average cost to a smaller branch nearly 2% of their overall GDP.

Hon. Edmund Hinkson, MP (Barbados) felt that although the topic under consideration was broad, he had to address it from the point of best governance practices and accountability, and transparency in terms of the governance of small island jurisdictions. He was clear that these practices ought to be in place in terms of the legislation that the parliament passes and the size of the nation had nothing to do with the ability or capacity of Parliament to pass rules, regulations and laws which lead to best government practices and accountability and transparency. He also explained that was an absolute necessity that, Parliaments in all the states in Australia. In 2000, the Australian Federal Government introduced the redistribution of taxes through Horizontal Fiscal Equalization. The objective of Horizontal Fiscal Equalization is that existing states would have the capacity to provide service and associated infrastructure at the same standard and calculated upon a range of factors, including population growth. Future Federal funding for the Northern Territory is uncertain and there is a need to be more competitive and for the territory to pull its weight in its approach to funding infrastructure projects.

Hon. Edmund Hinkson, MP also expressed that Small Branches need a range of approaches, from administrative support to risk reduction, in dealing with climatic events. Infrastructure remained an important area as Small Branches also faced a negative impact on their economy due to the high cost of infrastructure projects. He explained that Malta had found a way to focus on how it wishes to build human expertise and manage its resources better.

Malta will continue to look creatively as to how infrastructure projects can be developed, such as public-private (funding) partnerships (PPP). Being a small jurisdiction, the Northern Territory has to be creative, to be mindful and has to ensure that they have enough resources. They also have to generate their own source of additional revenue and, whilst they also need funding not to be fully dependent on the Federal government for all requirements.

Mr Dyfan Jones (United Nations Development Programme Pacific) wished to focus on two aspects relating to the topic - service delivery expectations and the role of Parliament in meeting those expectations. Often in the categorization and measure of human development, the UN looks at the wealth of a country and its GDP. He suggested that rather than looking at just the wealth of country, the UNDP also looks at a range of factors such as the education system, mortality and many other indicators to measure how a country is developing. The size of a country is not necessarily the issue. The issue is the level of human development and then its impact on service delivery. The UNDP is an organization that has been working with small islands facing disasters and they recognize the possible challenges that Small Branches may face, such as building and space, equipment and connectivity, knowledge and time to innovate, absorption capacity, budget, staffing and resources.

Mr Dyfan Jones pointed out that small jurisdictions/Parliaments could actually reach out to people more easily than the larger ones, with smaller jurisdictions really holding an advantage over larger jurisdictions. Small Parliaments could also respond to the needs of its citizens more personally than the larger ones. He cited the example of Turkey’s Parliament which had ten thousand staff and over twelve thousand registered NGOs many of whom wanted to be a part of their Committees, something that remains practically impossible. In comparison, there are parts of the Cook Islands in the Pacific Ocean that have less than a hundred voters so it’s very easy for them to reach citizens.

Mr Dyfan Jones concluded by expressing that whilst Small Branches may not necessarily always face disproportionately different service delivery challenges to larger branches, cooperation between jurisdictions can assist in improving service delivery.

The Small Branches delegates endorsed the following recommendations:
- Small Branches should collaborate in sharing best practices, expertise and success stories in order to learn and assist one another. This forum should unite us in becoming more effective.
- Small jurisdictions, while not having the resources available to developed countries, must enact and enforce legislation establishing accountability and transparency in their governance systems.
- Small jurisdictions with limited funding and resources must be strategic, creative and competitive in addressing their unique logistic and infrastructure challenges.

Mr Dyfan Jones concluded by expressing that whilst Small Branches may not necessarily always face disproportionately different service delivery challenges to larger branches, cooperation between jurisdictions can assist in improving service delivery.
PARLIAMENTARY INNOVATIONS IN SMALL JURISDICTIONS IN THE FACE OF FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE CHALLENGES

Moderator:
Mr Chris Steel, MLA
(Australian Capital Territory)

Discussion Leaders:
- Hon. Juan Watterson, SHK, Speaker of the House of Keys (Isle of Man)
- Hon. Taka Hagai, MP (Cook Islands)
- Hon. Malukee Tafua, MP (Samoan)
- Mr Dyan Jones, UNDP Pacific

Rapporteur:
Mr Michael Tatham (Northern Territory)

CPA Small Branches consistently face the challenge of financial and human resource limitations. The participants at this session benefited from recent experiences in Small Branches which have focused on innovations and sharing and yielded significant results for those Branches.

The work of the UNDP in the Pacific Region was also a focus of the session as the UN works to assist in parliamentary capacity building and democratic strengthening for small jurisdictions with very limited resources.

The discussion leaders covered aspects of their own Branch experiences and how these have evolved over time to include more collaboration and partnerships, some of which have moved outside of their regions.

Hon. Juan Watterson, SHK (Isle of Man) described the innovative engagement the Isle of Man has entered into with overseas jurisdictions to deliver shared services such as parliamentary recording and transcription services (Hansard) with other jurisdictions. The opportunity exists to engage in enhanced cooperation through the CPA Small Branches network which allows for meaningful exchange between geographically large jurisdictions like the Northern Territory and small island Branches like, Jersey and Guernsey. There is more scope for sharing between Branches outside of and not limited to those just in the same region. Small Branches should look to each other for help and advice.

Hon. Juan Watterson, SHK (Isle of Man) briefed delegates on the Clerk’s engagement derived from a recent visit to Sierra Leone about how to provide Hansard editing expertise training and skills to assist Sierra Leone. While this is not a near neighbour, it is an example of looking beyond those closest and meeting the needs of other Parliaments other than your own through agencies and networks. As a consequence of these arrangements the Parliament of Sierra Leone has sent staff to the Tynwald (Isle of Man Parliament) and then in turn Sierra Leone’s parliamentary staff were uplifted and could then provide assistance to another Parliament in The Gambia, and so a cycle continues where Parliaments benefit themselves and continue to assist each other.

The Isle of Man also has a memorandum of understanding and joint programme with another CPA Branch, the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in northern Pakistan, which has 124 members and all of them are visiting the Tynwald as part of the programme. This demonstrates that even numerically large jurisdictions can benefit and learn from the expertise of another jurisdiction which is smaller but has expertise and capacity in a specific area.

Hon. Taka Hagai, MP (Cook Islands) emphasized that the lack of resources and a small pool of human resources continues to be a challenge to smaller jurisdictions, however he believes that sharing will lead to assistance and enhance the high standards in line with the overall conference theme.

The access that the Cook Islands has had to parliamentary strengthening programmes through the New Zealand Government and Parliament and from the UNDP Pacific has enabled capacity building and empowerment programmes for Cook Island Members. This has also been supported by the participation of former Members and Clerks from New Zealand and Australia through the Pacific Partnerships programme administered through Fiji to share their expertise.

The long-term twinning relationship between the Western Australia and Cook Islands Parliaments has greatly benefitted and assisted the Cook Islands Parliament through significant financial and technical assistance.

Women Parliamentarians in the Pacific Region have also benefited from the Pacific Women’s Project arranged through the CPA Headquarters and Pacific Regional Secretariats to provide a forum for all women MPs and speakers to interact and be empowered to improve their capability.

The subject of empowering and building capacity for women in Parliament in the Pacific Region was also presented by the next discussion leader.

Hon. Malukee Tafua, MP (Samoan) defined innovation as a process which provides added value and a degree of freshness to develop new procedure solutions, products and services. Innovation must develop new ways to enhance the work of Parliament. Innovations in Samoa include the Samoa Parliamentary Support Programme delivered through UNDP Pacific with AusAID funding (Australian Government) to work with Members to strengthen capacity and to more effectively engage with development matters and the Millennium Development Goals.

A helpful manual for new MPs has been published to assist understanding of the procedures and programmes available for Members. Some twenty-nine parliamentary staff in Samoa have graduated with a certificate in parliamentary law and seventeen Members will graduate with a certificate in law early next year.

Twinning arrangements between the Parliaments of Samoa and Australia/Pacific have been beneficial to deliver capacity building, democratic strengthening, sharing and transferring skills and in the identification of best practices.

Many Pacific countries don’t have many women in their Parliaments and Samoa has developed an innovative solution to ensure a minimum level of women Members. The introduction of legislation in 2013 resulted in a significant increase in the participation of women candidates at the 2016 election. The Samoan Parliament has a minimum of forty-nine seats which can now expand up to fifty-four seats with five reserved for women. If there are no other women Members and the first forty-nine seats are all occupied by male Members. As a consequence of this innovation, there were twenty-four women candidates compared to only seven at the previous election, and only one quota seat had to be activated, resulting in a Parliament with 50 seats.

Mr Dyan Jones (UNDP Pacific) advised that the UNDP is trying to be more innovative to provide assistance with limited resources and build on experiences in the Pacific Region. The high cost of outreach with remote islands and the number of parliamentary sitting days are significant challenges. Mr. Jones expressed some concern that sharing knowledge does not happen enough and at consecutive conferences and meetings the discussion keeps returning to the need to share more.

However, the sharing of resources is more controversial, in some cases there is a situation where receiving is expected but it can be a challenge to encourage and facilitate sharing.

To overcome this, the UNDP is focusing on what they call ‘South – South Collaborations’ so that the small island jurisdictions are sharing more and finding commonalities to learn more from each other.

Examples of this include the regional twinning programmes where the Clerks of Tonga and Fiji have come together to share knowledge and experience. The Floating Budget Office has worked in assisting Fiji on nine sectoral issues and is planned to be available for the Solomon Islands in mid to late November 2017.

The challenges of this type of project include the logistics, the different times of the year for when Parliaments consider their Governments’ budgets; and language can be a barrier if the debate is not in English so the budget experts are English speakers.

The twinning arrangements can also yield significant results such as when the Parliament of Tonga was willing to send an officer to Fiji to assist once Fiji had agreed to send one back when they had their budget process taking place.
The session was opened to questions from delegates. Hon. Kerry Finch, MLC (Tasmania) asked if it was a fairly simple process using the internet. Hon. Asterio Appi, MP (Nauru) advised that it was a fairly straightforward strategy with young people using social media as a medium instead of traditional media such as radio and television. Hon. Edmund Hickson, MP (Barbados) asked if parliamentary meetings and the jurisdictions and there aren’t any down times. The staff are engaged and have an accumulated expertise and can potentially share the output with anyone in the world who can send the material to be processed and reused.

Hon. Chris Steel, MLA (Australian Capital Territory) advised that the Samoan model of 49 taking the total number of Members to 72 was being looked at by a number of countries in similar jurisdictions rather than similar jurisdictions. It is not seen as a threat and is being praised by many. It is not seen as a threat and is being praised as being a good model for many countries. It is not seen as a threat and is being praised as being a good model for many countries.

Hon. Michael Carrington, MP, Speaker of Parliament (Barbados) raised the matter of regularity of parliamentary meetings and the tension between a Parliament and the Government’s agenda. Hon. Edmund Hickson, MP (Barbados) asked the session to consider whether private sector sponsorship makes the session more effective.

Hon. Juan Watterson, SHK, Speaker of the Parliament of the Isle of Man advised that it was a fairly straightforward matter for women MPs like Hon. Emile Yerby to comment or critique it— that is the role of the budget office is to explain the technical aspects about budget policy and expenditure but not to comment or critique it—is for the people who receive the information. However, it will make Members better informed.

Mr. Dyfan Jones (UNDP) advised that the role of the budget office is to explain the technical aspects about budget policy and expenditure but not to comment or critique it. It is for the people who receive the information. However, it will make Members better informed. Examples of the tasks of the budget office were an attempted gender analysis which took place in a one day session and a session for civil society organisations so people can understand their budget.

Mr. Dyfan Jones (UNDP) advised that in his jurisdiction there has been the ability of Members to scrutinise content for two weeks but for the public to only have one day before it is debated.

Mr. Roslyn Lambley, MLA (Northern Territory) indicated that in her jurisdiction the Committee system is ineffective and not suitable for a unicameral parliament and described a study visit by the Committee to look at another Australian unicameral jurisdiction and questioned the process of routinely looking at familiar and similar jurisdictions rather than being more innovative and looking beyond familiar experiences.

Hon. Juan Watterson, SHK (Isle of Man) advised that this is the practice most Branches follow to list members of their Branch and not refer to the branch within their Region and for the Isle of Man they routinely look to Jersey and Guernsey as similar jurisdictions but he acknowledged that the CPA Small Branches network is the place where more exchange and sharing across the CPA Regions can occur. Deputy Emile Yerby (Guernsey) suggested that archaic practices can prevail in many jurisdictions and the advantage of looking further afield is to let in more light on processes and procedure.

The Small Branches delegates endorsed the following recommendations:

- CPA should encourage greater cooperation between Small Branches within and outside their Regions by way of internships and exchanges of technical assistance.
- To overcome capacity and resource challenges, Commonwealth Parliaments should take to the forefront in role-modeling the high standards of integrity and personal conduct that engender transparency and accountability across Government and usher in an architectural culture that was anti-corruption driven.
- Continued support of the CPA to all Small Branches and larger jurisdictions to collaborate with aid agencies and foreign affairs ministers in assisting small jurisdictions.
- Strongly encourage other small parliaments to follow South Africa’s example of considering twinings arrangements as an initiative to create benefits for both.

There was broad agreement that for Parliament to effectively target corruption there was need for:

1. a legal framework for the establishment and functioning of an adequately resourced anti-corruption institution; 2. provision of legislative resources and institutional tools to strike at the heart of corruption; and 3. that Parliamentarians should take to the forefront in role-modeling the high standards of integrity and personal conduct that engender transparency and accountability across Government and usher in an architectural culture that was anti-corruption driven.

Hon. Kerry Finch, MLC (Tasmania) led off on the discussions on this topic by reiterating that Parliament must provide the legislation, resources and institutional tools to strike at the heart of corruption. She argued the need for a code of conduct for Parliamentarians and the establishment of standards. This approach was embraced by the Integrity Commission Act. This Commission established by the Integrity Commission Act, 2010 and instituted a five year review to ensure that it remained relevant.

The Commission adopted a four pronged approach:

1. compulsory participation in misconduct workshops
2. mandatory reporting of corruption
3. authority to monitor the progress of all reports and to bring inaction to Parliament’s attention
4. the reporting of any suspected criminality to the Director of Public Prosecution or the police.

The session moved on to consider the progress of all reports and to bring inaction to Parliament’s attention.

It was clear that most reports were not progressing as required as well as effective training for the civil service. There was, in her view, a clear role for law and policy making and that the effective role of law was a sine qua non to ensure transparency and accountability.

Mr. Anthony Staddon (University of Westminster) asserted in his contribution that corruption finders development and that Parliament oversight was an important determinant of corruption. To that
and, resources needed to be made available to Parliament to efficiently carry out this role and to avail themselves of the oversight tools. He sought by juxtaposing internal factors against external. With regard to the external factors the setting up of Committees was fundamental but equally important was the concept of administrative and financial autonomy. Externally the gain of public trust was key, achieved through effective communication, declaration of assets and the adoption of a code of conduct.

By way of comparative analysis, he examined the jurisdictions of Trinidad and Tobago and Grenada. In Trinidad and Tobago’s case, a higher level of public trust was evidenced from 2010-2014; this was achieved in part by an effective communication system of the Parliament, a declaration of assets, a code of conduct and greater transparency. Mr Anthony Staddon suggested that both Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago had the full suite of oversight tools, but the issue, however, was in making these tools effective. There was, he believed, an increased importance of the Senate in oversight and the political will and institutional effectiveness was limited by the lack of the political will of MPs to hold the government to account. Hon. Ryan Callis, MP (Malta) emphasized the importance of the topic to his country. He drew the session’s attention to an investigative journalist who had recently been assassinated for trying to expose corruption. He stated that corruption tarnishes the reputation of a country and increased the vulnerability of small states. He was student in his call to bring the perpetration of corruption to justice and implored delegates to work harder to root out corruption. He added that the recommendation should be amended to allow for the protection of investigative journalism.

Deputy Monfort Tadier (Jersey) stressed the importance of journalists shining light on the protection of investigative journalism and articulated the call to bring the perpetration of corruption to justice and implored delegates to work harder to root out corruption. He added that the recommendation should be amended to allow for the protection of investigative journalism.

Deputy Emilie Yerby (Malta) suggested that both Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago. In Trinidad and Tobago and Grenada. In Grenada, it is normal for up to international law mechanisms which cover and define a jurisdiction’s border in order to ensure fair, maximum economic benefit and protection from drug dealing, abuses and the like. These were the opening remarks of Hon. Michael Carrington (Barbados), Moderator for the fourth plenary session of the 36th Small Branches Conference. The discussion took a marine environment approach. Such as the first discussion leader, Hon. Kylie Hercules, MLC (St Helena) gave a background information brief on St Helena, explaining that territorial waters in St Helena triggered the enactment of environment marine protection plan and fisheries management sectors by the St Helena Government, which although still in its development stages, monitors foreign activity within protected waters. However, the proposals put forward by St Helena disagree with their UK Overseas Territories neighbours in the south-west Atlantic Ocean, the Falkland Islands, who sell their fishing rights to foreign waters. Hon. Kylie Hercules, MLC (St Helena) answered that the fishing licences offered to St Helena’s have a licence for St Helena territorial waters as well as for fishing overseas, explaining that there is a revenue stream but there is no visible presence of vessels since they do not register themselves automatically. Although St Helena is able to offer a fishing licences, there is no monitoring mechanism where the government would know which fish the vessels are catching.

Hon. Juan Watterson, SHK (Isle of Man) also asked a question to the Member from Guernsey regarding wind turbine and tidal energy and their advantages. Deputy Barry Brehatu (Guernsey) answered that the small islands of Alderney, situated next to Guernsey, is a good example of lost potential, due to the untapped
Parliamentary Clerks from across the Commonwealth gather for SOCCAT meetings at 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

Nearly sixty Commonwealth clerks and senior parliamentary staff came together for the 53rd annual meeting of the Society-of-Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCCAT), as usual held alongside the main Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC), this year held in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Delegations were very well looked after by the Senior Secretary to the Bangladesh Parliament and CPA Branch Secretary, Dr Md Abub Robi Howlader, and his efficient and friendly team from the Bangladesh Parliament. The SOCCAT meetings started with a presentation from Dr Howlader on the structure and the work of the Bangladesh Parliament, which was complemented the next day by a guided tour of the magnificent Parliament building, which greatly impressed delegates.

SOCCAT then held their presentations on four interesting and varied topics:

- ‘The changing role of the Speaker’ by Sherlock Isaacs, National Assembly, Guyana.
- ‘Legislators and their representation role’ by Pradeep Kumar Dubey, Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh, India.
- ‘Reduction of new Members after a general election’ by Sarah Davies, House of Commons, Parliament of the United Kingdom.
- ‘The potential impact of cloud computing on parliamentary privilege’ by David Blunt, Parliament of New South Wales, Australia.

Some lively break-out groups followed, when delegates had the chance to discuss these issues in more detail and take the chance of exchanging experiences from many different Parliaments around the Commonwealth — one of the key benefits of these gatherings.

After feedback from the groups, the first day of meetings drew to a close with a detailed and expert paper from Eric Modibedi Phindela (Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, Australia) on how he had managed to deal with some very unfair and inaccurate criticism from a local journalist earlier this year. The discussion that followed brought out a range of approaches across different legislatures to handling the media and the media relations of Parliaments.

The session finished with a summing-up from the floor. Andrew Simons (Legislative Assembly, Meghalaya) told the meeting about a privilege case in which a civil servant had been summoned to the bar of the House, admonished and made to bow to government and opposition benches, and the Chair; and BA Armitage (Senate, Canada Federal Parliament) spoke about how proposals to expel a Senator on the grounds of misconduct had led to a debate about whether the Senate actually had the power to expel its Members, an issue on which opinion was divided.

In conclusion, SOCCAT would like to thank Mr Adbar Khan, the Secretary-General of the CPA, for hosting a reception for SOCCAT members on the eve of the meeting at which he spoke about the importance of Clerks in their support of the CPA’s work on parliamentary capacity-building. Events like the annual SOCCAT meeting certainly help Commonwealth Clerks to keep in touch, share advice and ideas and generally provide mutual moral support in dealing with the many challenges - and opportunities - that face us on a daily basis.

For more information about the Society-of-Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCCAT) please visit www.societyofclerks.org.
The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

CPA Photo Gallery

Far left and left: The CPA has brought its youth engagement programme to Jersey for the second time with the CPA Roadshows for young people visiting two schools in the Channel Islands. The CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan held engaging CPA Roadshow sessions at Jersey College for Girls and at Hautlieu School. The CPA Secretariat also visited the States Assembly of Jersey to meet with Members and held bilateral meetings with the Deputy Bailiff, Tim Le Cocq QC.

Right: The President of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, Hon. Demetris Syllouris and his delegation visited the CPA to meet with the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan and the CPA team to discuss the CPA’s work in the Commonwealth.

Below right: The CPA Secretary-General Mr Akbar Khan and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Mr Erik Solheim signed a Memorandum on Climate Change at the CPA Headquarters Secretariat to strengthen mutual cooperation between the two organisations in the area of Climate Change and the role of Parliamentarians. The CPA is looking forward to delivering further policy and parliamentary training for Commonwealth Parliamentarians in this important policy area in cooperation with UNEP.

Out of Poverty explores how trade can be a means to reduce poverty and researches ways of enabling developing countries to achieve inclusive growth and prosperity through trade and investment.

Below: The CPA Chairperson, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Mr. Speaker of Bangladesh and the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson, Hon. Dr Noraini Ahmad, MP (Malaysia) attended the 2017 Annual Meetings of the World Bank Group (WBG), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and IMF in Washington DC, USA. The Annual Meetings bring together Parliamentarians from over 100 countries, leaders from civil society and partner organisations.

Above: The CPA Chairperson, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Mr. Speaker of Bangladesh and the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson, Hon. Dr Noraini Ahmad, MP (Malaysia) attended the 2017 Annual Meetings of the World Bank Group (WBG), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and IMF in Washington DC, USA. The Annual Meetings bring together Parliamentarians from over 100 countries, leaders from civil society and partner organisations.

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Above and below left: Hon. Arthur Donahoe, QC, former CPA Secretary-General (1993-2001) and former Speaker of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly in Canada visited the CPA Headquarters Secretariat in London, United Kingdom where he met with CPA staff and discussed the CPA’s ongoing work in strengthening parliamentary democracy across the Commonwealth.

Below: The CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Malta hosts a consultation meeting with representatives of each CPA Region where there are Small Branches (seven of the nine CPA Regions) to facilitate discussion for a new strategic plan to build capacity for CPA Small Branches and create greater opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, parliamentary strengthening and cooperation across the network.

Below: Members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly in Pakistan visited the CPA Headquarters Secretariat during a visit to the United Kingdom to meet with the CPA staff to discuss the CPA’s parliamentary strengthening opportunities in the CPA Asia Region.
The 48th CPA Africa Regional Conference has been held in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria from 23 to 25 October 2017, hosted by the 18 national Branches and 44 sub-national Branches. The conference was addressed by Hon. Lindwe Maseko, MP, Chairperson of the CPA Africa Regional Executive Committee and Dr Hon. Acho Ihim, the Speaker of the Imo State House of Assembly and member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association African Region. The CPA Africa Regional Conference was held under the theme of ‘Africa’s Agenda 2063: Vision and Master Plan’ and other topics of concern such as Parliamentary Agenda for peace and conflict resolution and the development agenda of new security architecture by the year 2020. At the same time, the CPA Africa Regional Conference hosted the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Africa Regional Steering Committee and the Regional Society-of-Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) meetings.

Images: Parliament of South Africa.

Commonwealth Parliamentarians in Africa Region focus on Agenda 2063 at the 48th CPA Africa Regional Conference

Former Ghana Minister urges Commonwealth Parliamentarians to uphold fundamental human rights at first CPA Lecture for the Africa Region

During the first Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture for the CPA Africa Region, Dr Benjamin Bewa-Nyog Kunbuor, former Minister for Defence, Justice, Interior, Health and Attorney-General of Ghana has stressed the importance of action by Parliamentarians in the fight to protect citizens’ human rights and how Speakers and Members in the Africa Region can take the lead. Dr Benjamin Bewa-Nyog Kunbuor spoke on the topic of ‘Parliamentarians’ role in Human Rights Thought and Action’.

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First CPA Australia and Pacific Regional ‘Hot Topic’ Forum deliberates climate change at 36th CPA Australia and Pacific Regional Conference

The first CPA Australia and Pacific Regional ‘Hot Topic’ Forum opened a dedicated parents’ room, providing a quiet haven for parents, carers and children amidst the bustle of the Parliament. The room provides much-needed facilities for the care of babies and young children and is a welcome addition for both Members and staff.

The parents’ room is not the first measure taken by the Parliament to accommodate the needs of working parents. Members are able to keep an eye on the proceedings of both chambers, which is broadcast internally. A workstation has also been set up in the room, with a phone and computer with the intention of allowing parents to work whilst their young ones sleep.

As the first female Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, I am determined to remove the barriers to female participation that exist within the parliamentary precinct. I thank the former President, Hon. Don Harwin, MLC, the current President and Member of the CPA Executive Committee, Hon. Shelley Hancock, MLC, and the fourth President and parliamentary staff who have supported me in this endeavour.” For further information on the Parliament’s parents’ room please contact speaker.parliament@nsw.gov.au.

Earlier this year the Parliament of New South Wales opened a dedicated parents’ room, providing a quiet haven for parents, carers and children amidst the bustle of the Parliament. The room provides much-needed facilities for the care of babies and young children and is a welcome addition for both Members and staff. The Parliamentarians’ role in Human Rights Thought and Action’.

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Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar held in Ottawa, Canada from 15 to 21 October 2017. The annual seminar, organised by the CPA Canada Federal Branch with funding support from the CPA Headquarters Secretariat, saw the participation of over twenty-five delegates from eight of the nine regions of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).

Delegates were welcomed by Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP, Chair of the CPA Canada Federal Branch and Canada Federal Member of Parliament who said: “Many of you have travelled great distances to be here and we are grateful for your participation. It is a privilege to gather with our friends from across the Commonwealth in order to promote democratic governance and to support greater understanding of parliamentary systems. For 14 years, the annual CPA Canadian Parliamentary Seminar has proven to be a forum that encourages collaboration. In working together to build an informed parliamentary community, we are, at the same time, building goodwill among our countries.”

The 14th CPA Canadian Parliamentary Seminar is an opportunity to share good practice with Members on key issues such as the importance of the CPA Codes of Conduct as a tool to help address the trust deficit in Parliaments; the importance of gender equality in parliament; and the essential role that an effective Committee can play. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Headquarters Secretariat assisted in the funding of the seminar.

The CPA Branches attending the 14th CPA Canadian Parliamentary Seminar were: Zambia; Northern Territory; South Australia; New South Wales; Scotland; Wales; Newfoundland and Labrador; New Brunswick; Canada Federated; Tamil Nadu; India Union (Lok Sabha); Gujarat; Guyana; Jamaica; Saint-Lucia; Trinidad and Tobago; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Pakistan; Maldives.


Increasing young people’s political participation is highlighted at the first CPA Roadshow in Canada Region

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) has brought its youth engagement programme, the CPA Roadshow, to Canada for the first time at an event for university students in the Canadian capital city of Ottawa. The CPA Roadshow highlights the importance of encouraging youth engagement in the political process and the sharing of Commonwealth political values, especially with the 60% of the 2.4 billion population of the Commonwealth who are aged under 30.

The CPA Roadshow also provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the 150th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation in 2017 and the Commonwealth Summit due to be held in the UK in April 2018 on the theme of ‘Towards a Common Future’.

The Chair of the CPA Canada Federal Branch and Canada Federal Member of Parliament, Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP held an engaging CPA Roadshow session at Carleton University for students and alumni from the National Student Commonwealth Forum (NSCF), Carleton University and the University of Ottawa. The CPA Canada Chair was accompanied by Ms Lucy Pickles from the CPA Headquarters Secretariat who spoke about the work of the CPA and of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) in promoting gender equality.

The Chair of the CPA Canada Federal Branch, Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, MP said: “I am delighted to launch the first CPA Roadshow in the Canada Region during our 14th CPA Canadian Parliamentary Seminar. The purpose of the CPA Roadshow for young people is to engage with Canadian university students on the values that unite the Commonwealth. The CPA’s public engagement work across the Commonwealth in engaging young people in the democratic process by discussing the importance of the Commonwealth is a key objective and this first CPA Roadshow in Canada has emphasised these values.”

The CPA Roadshow was organised by the CPA Canada Federal Branch in partnership with the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) Ottawa Branch. Mr Gregory to Ottawa said: “This CPA and RCS Ottawa event reaffirmed our joint commitment to developing youth in order to ensure an enlightened and prosperous future for both the Commonwealth and Canada. This commitment to youth has been a long-standing priority in Canada. RCS Ottawa with the CPA have run annually a major youth development programme for high school and university students since the second CHOGM held in Ottawa, Canada, in 1972. The CPA Canadian Branch, is the central partner with RCS Ottawa in developing leaders for the future of the Commonwealth within Canada. This model for partnership for youth is one which RCS Ottawa would be delighted to share with other Commonwealth countries and their CPA Branches in a spirit of collaboration and sustainability of our Commonwealth values.”

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) from Australia and Pacific Regions focus on eliminating political violence against women at regional conference in Melbourne, Australia

The 2nd Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Australian Region Conference was hosted by the Victorian Parliament from 28-30 August 2017, and was attended by 60 delegates from the Parliaments of Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory Parliament and the Federal Parliament. Members from the Parliaments of Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Cook Island and Nauru also attended, with support from the Australian Federal Government’s Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnerships programme.

Hosting the 2nd CPA Australian Region Conference was identified as one of the key activities the region would undertake during the year in order to fulfil its aims outlined in the CPA Australian Region Action Plan for 2017. The key themes for the conference were:

- Eliminating political violence against women;
- Empowering women in leadership and political participation; and
- The need for balancing work and life through the implementation of family friendly policies and practices in Parliaments.

The themes were developed by the CPA Australian Region Steering Committee, during its Annual Planning Meeting, held in Tasmania in November 2016. As a result, the conference provided an opportunity to explore, discuss and analyse these themes via a series of presentations, panel discussions, professional development courses, and networking opportunities.

Presentations were given by guest speakers including Natasha Stott Despoja, Chair of Our Watch; former Senator, former Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls and the youngest woman ever to enter the Australian Federal Parliament, at 26; Jacqui True, Professor of International Relations and Director of Monash University’s Centre for Gender, Peace and Security spoke about Political violence against women; and Hon. Mary Delahunty, former Member of Parliament and award winning journalist spoke about transitioning to life post-politics and potential opportunities for former female MPs.

Panel sessions were held on: Empowering women in Leadership and Political Participation and Family friendly practices in Parliaments and achieving a work/life balance. Two professional development courses were delivered by Melbourne based university RMIT and focused on the topics of Social Media and Public Speaking, Speech Writing and Media Performance.

The Public Speaking, Speech Writing and Media Performance session’s emphasis was on encouraging the participants to see that speeches are more than words on a page and participants will also explore the elements of their ‘total communication’ package and the difference between writing to be read and writing to be heard. The Social Media session encouraged participants to evaluate their own social media use, and consider what they could or should be doing in the future. It focused on areas such as defining the demographics of their audiences, producing a content strategy which is both engaging and informative, and the importance of the tone of voice for Members of Parliament.

The 2017 Conference was jointly organised by the CPA Australian Region Secretariat based at the Parliament of Tasmania, and staff from the Parliament of Victoria. The CPA Australian Region Conference was supported with funding by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters Secretariat through the CPA Regional Strengthening Funds.

Michelle O’Byrne, MP, Chair, CWP Australia Region said: “I extend my sincere thanks to the Parliament of Victoria for hosting the event, in particular Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Maree Edwards MP for hosting the Welcome Reception and to all the staff of the Victorian Parliament for all their hard work putting in place all the arrangements for the Conference. Overall, the conference provided a valuable opportunity for women Members of Parliament to get together and undertake professional development and networking opportunities, and I thank all those who attend and participated.”

Evanik, President, the Royal Commonwealth Society of Ottawa said: “This CPA and RCS Ottawa event reaffirmed our joint commitment to developing youth in order to ensure an enlightened and prosperous future for both the Commonwealth and Canada. This commitment to youth has been a long-standing priority in Canada. RCS Ottawa with the CPA have run annually a major youth development programme for high school and university students since the second CHOGM held in Ottawa, Canada, in 1972. The CPA Canadian Branch, is the central partner with RCS Ottawa in developing leaders for the future of the Commonwealth within Canada. This model for partnership for youth is one which RCS Ottawa would be delighted to share with other Commonwealth countries and their CPA Branches in a spirit of collaboration and sustainability of our Commonwealth values.”
Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities call for more inclusive and fully accessible Legislatures

The unique challenges faced every day by disabled Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth have been highlighted at a gathering of Members of Parliament in Nova Scotia, Canada. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in partnership with the Nova Scotia House of Assembly has held the first conference of its kind, bringing together over 30 Commonwealth Parliamentarians with disabilities, carers and parliamentary officials from eight of the nine regions of the CPA from 30 August to 2 September 2017.

The conference enabled Members of Parliament to network and share experiences, good practice and innovations from Commonwealth jurisdictions that are designed to support their full participation in political and public life. Ensuring a disability perspective in all aspects of policy and legislation formulation, effective implementation and enforcement of existing accessibility and disability laws and policies, as well as providing for equal employment opportunities and training, are among the measures that contribute to the greater inclusion of people with disabilities.

Members pledged to continue to advocate for more people with disabilities to stand for public office and improved access in legislatures across the Commonwealth. Recognizing their individual responsibilities as role models, Members discussed how they could use their positions to promote and work towards more representative and inclusive legislatures across the Commonwealth. The important role of political parties in candidate selection was recognized as critical to increasing the numbers of people with disabilities to stand for public office.

At the opening of the conference, Hon. Kevin S. Murphy, MLA, Speaker of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly said: “It is a privilege to welcome my fellow Parliamentarians with disabilities to Halifax, Nova Scotia for this unique Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities Conference. Nova Scotia became the 3rd province in Canada to pass accessibility legislation that ensures fair and equal access for all citizens. It is my hope that we will collaborate to develop and make recommendations to the CPA to create a formal network of Parliamentarians with disabilities within the Association.”

Hon. Jackson Lafferty, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories and CPA Executive Committee Representative for the Canada Region, said: “The World Health Organisation reports that around 15% of the world’s population, or an estimated 1 billion people live with some form of disability or different ability. Persons with disabilities have a great deal to contribute to our society and democracies and must be given equal opportunities and the right support. The CPA recognizes the importance of creating inclusive Parliaments and has supported the inclusion of special interest groups recognizing their importance in strengthening parliamentary democracy across the Commonwealth. To be reflective of the societies we serve it is important that persons with disabilities are given opportunities to be represented in Parliament. However, despite constituting 15% of the world’s population, Parliamentarians with disabilities are in the minority or non-existent in most Commonwealth Legislatures, and significantly underrepresented in governance and other levels of decision-making.”

For a democracy to adequately represent and serve its people, it stands to reason that the elected officials within that democracy would need to be as diverse in background as the people they serve. When done correctly, this allows for the wide range of experiences and expertise found within a community to have a place at the table where policy is made, leading to the development of policy that better reflects the needs of the community.

Through my experiences as a person with a disability, both as a private citizen and as an elected official, I have witnessed firsthand how a diverse government can have a significant impact not only on what policy is put forward, but on the procedures and practises of government itself, leading it to become more inclusive. This has led me and many others to the conclusion that the path forward for improving the representation and services for persons with disabilities is through their greater participation in our parliaments. It was with this goal in mind that I sought to organize the first conference for Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD), which was held from 30 August to 2 September 2017, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

The conference served as an opportunity to share our experiences from across the different Parliaments of the Commonwealth, establishing what our common challenges are and sharing what practises our Members have found to be successful. Additionally, we discussed a proposal submitted by the Nova Scotia Branch to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) governing bodies to establish a network of Commonwealth Parliamentarians with disabilities within the CPA organization. This proposal was submitted with the goal of creating a framework with which discussions that took place at this conference could continue, furthering the goal of greater participation of persons with disabilities.

As a Member of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, Canada asked the delegates three questions to contemplate over the course of the conference. The questions are:

• What can you do as an individual Member of Parliament to advance the understanding and involvement of persons with disabilities in democratic institutions?
• What Parliament should be doing to encourage persons with disabilities to take part in parliamentary democracy?
• What international organizations such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association can do to encourage Parliaments to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities?

To Mr. Lafferty’s first question posed, the most valuable asset we have to offer as individuals is our own experience in becoming elected or appointed to positions within public office. Through the course of the conference there were many different perspectives expressed as to what the challenges were for getting persons with disabilities to run for elected office, and though not a uniform experience, a common issue shared amongst delegates was whether or not political parties were willing to run them as candidates. Every country’s political parties have their own traditions and culture when it comes to seeking political office, but in many cases, there is an expectation of grunt work that is required by the party brass. In my own experience, being a person who uses a wheelchair, I spent many years volunteering my time to propose and help draft policy resolutions through my riding association, as opposed to the more traditional task of canvassing and door-knocking. In this way I was both able to demonstrate my strengths as an individual and meet
those sometimes-unspoken requirements that might have been held by the party or jurisdiction. However, such opportunities do not always exist within the structure of a party and it falls to us Members who have succeeded to seek out, mentor and support the young, capable, driven persons with disabilities living in our communities. It also falls on us to do our part to change the thinking of ‘party elders’ who may still hold outdated views, depriving our political organizations of talented individuals without even necessarily realizing it.

The second point raised speaks to the need for our institutions, and the very buildings that they occupy to be made inclusive and accommodating for persons with disabilities. From our discussions, it would be fair to say that this is a challenge across the board for the member Branches of the CPA. Many of our parliamentary buildings are old, in some cases by hundreds of years, filled with history and traditions that began at a time when accessibility was not in the forefront of the architect’s mind. As I can attest, my own jurisdictions legislative is nearly 200 years old and in no way, was there any form of accessible entrance ways or lifts included in its original design. It was the election of a former Member of our house, Jerry Lawrance, in 1978, that led to the installation of an elevator in our building, an important first step to making the legislative inclusive. Upon my own election in 2013, and my subsequent election as the Speaker of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, renovations were made within the chamber to allow me to serve just as ably as anyone else in my position, and was done so in a way that was respectful to the design of the legislative floor, despite some initial concerns. Though it may initially seem costly, such renovations demonstrate to the public leadership when it comes to enabling persons with disabilities. This leads to not only the creation of more inclusive public facilities, but goes further by highlighting the significant contributions that persons with disabilities make in our society when given an equal opportunity to participate.

The final question for our consideration put forward by Hon. Lafferty was perhaps the most important question of the conference. What can organizations, such as the CPA, do to encourage Parliamentarians to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities? The answer would appear to be in the great work that has previously been undertaken by the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP). Since 1989, the CWP has been a force for positive change in improving the representation of women in Parliaments across the Commonwealth. With the support of the CPA’s governing bodies, the CWP’s organizational framework could serve as a template for the proposed Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network. It could operate in a similar fashion, providing better outreach, promotion and research for increasing the representation of persons with disabilities in our Parliaments. To conclude the conference, our delegation put forward a formal list of recommendations for the CPA Branch membership to consider at the 65th annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh. I was pleased to learn that upon review of these recommendations, the Executive Committee agreed that the CPA should move forward in establishing the proposed CPwD. The recommendations will be circulated to the CPA’s membership, and a report will be completed by the CPA Headquarters Secretariat on the associated costs required to implement the proposals. The report and further discussion are expected to be presented at the CPA Executive Committee’s mid-year meeting being held in Mauritius in March 2018.

As one delegate at the conference, Stephanie Cadeaux, of British Colombia stated: “When we’re in public service and when we’re in positions of leadership, I think we have an obligation to do better. If we’re going to insist that employers make their workplaces accessible and follow inclusive hiring practices then we need to be leading by example.”

I would like to thank all those who took part in developing and bringing forward this proposal thus far, and for their ongoing support and contributions as we develop this vision for a more inclusive Commonwealth.

As a long life campaigner for disability rights, I was delighted to receive an invitation to attend the inaugural CPA conference for Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities, led by the Speaker from the Nova Scotia Assembly, Hon. Kevin Murphy. The conference provided an opportunity for participants to share best practice and personal experiences. Attendees from across twelve Commonwealth countries were present at the conference and discussed how Parliamentarians with disabilities can play a full and equal role within the parliamentary environment, and how physical and mental barriers may be overcome to ensure greater numbers of people with a disability into politics. Many examples were shared in relation to discrimination, stigma and unfair treatment due to a disability. Delegates were unanimous in agreeing that breaking through these barriers is an essential focal point in moving forward.

At the Senedd – Wales’ Parliament building I was pleased to learn through our discussions how forwarding thinking the National Assembly for Wales is in regard to accessibility and inclusiveness. It became clear that many Commonwealth countries have struggled with adapting their Parliament buildings to ensure that they are fully accessible. This is mostly due to the nature of the building and the fact that they have been steeped in history. Wales however, unlike many other Commonwealth countries, has had the luxury of designing a brand new Senedd, with the design brief clearly stating that it should be a building exemplar in terms of accessibility for all. This was achieved in consultation with representatives of disability interest groups from across Wales, and has resulted in a completely accessible building. Some of the access features include external access ramps, internal and external lifts, a range of toilet facilities including a changing and a hoist for high and accessible signage.

In addition to the Equality Act 2010, an Equalities and Access fund has been made available to Members and support staff. This supports Members and their staff to engage and a diverse range of constituencies, provides reasonable physical adjustments to improve access to offices, and support for Members and their staff with, or associated with any of the protected characteristics to ensure that they are not disadvantaged. Accessible information may also be provided, such as the use of different formats, British Sign Language Interpretation and the availability of a suite of information for visitors with autism. All staff members at the National Assembly for Wales have received training on diversity and inclusion in the workplace, with the Front of House and Security teams receiving additional Disability Confidence training to support positive interactions with disabled visitors. A wide range of training is also available to all staff. As part of our continuous commitment to involving all of the people in Wales in the Assembly’s work, the Outreach team engage with disabled people and interest groups across Wales. Further to this, the National Assembly for Wales promotes Disabled Access Day and International day of Disabled People.

Official recognition has been given to the National Assembly for Wales’ commitment to accessibility initiatives. The Action on Hearing Loss charter mark, and Excellence Wales Awards for provision of services to people who are deaf or have a hearing loss. Further to this we have been named an Autism Friendly organisation by the National Autistic Society and have been named as the National Assembly for Wales Disability Confident Employer by the UK Government. As Deputy Presiding Officer, and Vice-President of the CPA Wales Branch, I am very supportive of the creation of a network for Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities. This will provide a much-needed platform to learn from legislatures from all over the Commonwealth and to create meaningful and lasting working relationships. It will also provide support to ensure that everybody has access to parliament and to respect their democracies.

I would like to extend my great thanks to Hon. Kevin Murphy from Nova Scotia for taking the initiative to create this network, and also to the CPA Headquarters Secretariat. I hope that Parliamentarians across the CPA, disabled or not, the participants who were present in Nova Scotia, to support the formal creation of Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD).
In most parts of the world, the number of women with disabilities is likely to be higher than the number of men with disabilities. This is in large part a result of the longer life expectancy of women compared to their male counterparts. The 2011 World Report on Disability highlights that the percentage of women experiencing a disability which causes significant difficulties to their everyday lives is 19.2%, whereas it is 12% for men. Additionally, amongst those experiencing severe difficulties in their everyday lives, the prevalence rates between men and women are 1.4% and 2.7% respectively, a ratio of nearly 1:2.

In terms of employment, the World Bank (2011) has further revealed that in 51 countries, only 20% of women with disabilities are employed compared with 55% of men with disabilities. These figures indicate that persons with disabilities, and especially women and girls with disabilities, are amongst the most vulnerable and most disadvantaged minorities in our societies.

Disability, gender inequality, and discrimination are closely intertwined; however, women and girls around the world with disabilities have been invisible both in advocacy for gender equality and disability rights. This has only served to further increase their vulnerability and caused them to be left with multiple impediments to fully realizing their rights. Women and girls with disabilities notably have the potential to face ‘double discrimination’, which may involve social, economic and political marginalization, gender-based violence and exploitation. Consequently, in many parts of the world they often have little to no hope of going to school, getting a job, purchasing and owning their own home and property, raising a family, or exercising their political rights.

To empower women and girls with disabilities, effective legal mechanisms to end inequality, discrimination and the violation of rights that threaten them must be strengthened, and their needs must be not only considered but mainstreamed and incorporated into development of policies, plans and strategies for effective implementation in all levels across the Commonwealth. This is in line with the principles of non-discrimination and equality and opportunity as enshrined in articles 3 (b), 3 (e) and 5 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (CRPD), as well as paragraph 8 of the Commonwealth Charter, which reaffirms the commitment to ‘equality and respect for the protection and promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. ’It must be noted, however, that the Commonwealth Charter does not directly mention those with disabilities, instead opposing ‘all forms of discrimination, whether rooted in gender, race, colour, creed, political belief or other grounds,’” Instead it must be assumed that the other grounds cover disability.

Similarly, while the term ‘disability’ is only briefly mentioned directly in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), all seventeen goals are pertinent to ensuring the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. In line with the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’, various goals in the SDGs are related to disability, particularly with regard to: poverty and hunger (Goal 1), health and well-being (Goal 3), quality education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5), economic growth and employment (Goal 8), accessibility of human settlements (Goal 11) and on data collection and monitoring of the SDGs (Goal 17). Hence, it is critical to include the rights of women and girls with disabilities in development policies, programmes and monitoring and evaluation frameworks with gender-based budgeting at all levels, including the highest level of international cooperation.

**The role of Parliamentarians**

The participation of women and girls with disabilities and their empowerment are significant factors in political, economic, social, and cultural development. Parliamentarians can play significant roles to empower women and girls with disabilities, which will in turn serve to create a stable society which generates a fully developed nation. Parliamentarians should be more sensitive and continue to champion the rights of persons with disabilities, including women and girls. It is fundamental for Parliamentarians to ensure that all policies and legal reforms, financing, programmes and other resources are inclusive of their needs and aspirations. Parliaments should also push the government to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in the national and local strategies, budgets, plans and strengthen their data system. In looking to my own Parliament in Malaysia, I can proudly say that the rights of persons with disabilities had been recognized by the introduction of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, which came into effect on 7 July 2008, during the five-year National Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities (2007-2012). This act recognizes the rights-based approach to persons with disabilities and looks to promote the quality of life and wellbeing of disabled people in Malaysia, notably through providing a number of ‘access rights’ including rights of access to employment, education, public facilities, information, and recreation leisure and sport.

In order for persons with disabilities, including women and girls, to be properly integrated as full and equal citizens in the country’s development, it requires a consistent approach to integrate equality and non-discrimination as normative standards across the government’s agenda through legal mechanisms, policies and programmes. In undertaking this approach, women and girls with disabilities must be positioned at the heart of the development policy, and no one should be left behind. In addition, Parliamentarians should encourage the participation of their colleagues and fellow Parliamentarians in national, regional and inter-regional conferences, which can serve to foster the exchange of information and expertise on the rights of women and girls with disabilities, and to share instances of best practice.

In conclusion, the CWP calls for the strong commitment and cooperation of all Parliamentarians and all political parties to bridge the gap of inequality and ultimately empower women and girls with disabilities. Additionally, in my position as Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians (CWP), it gives me great pleasure to congratulate Hon. Kevin Murphy, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia for the successful hosting of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities Conference in Nova Scotia, Canada earlier this year.
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES: BE VIGILANT, BE PERSISTENT: VIEW FROM TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Raising awareness of the challenges that Parliamentarians with disabilities face is timely on the heels of the recently-concluded inaugural CPA Conference for Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. It is truly commendable that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia took the initiative to host such a conference, it being a momentous step in securing a rightful place in democracy for disabled Parliamentarians. It is my hope that it will spur on a sense of urgency in all Commonwealth Parliamentarians to ensure more participation of persons with disabilities living with disabilities. For my part, I hope to incite the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago to be a model of progressive action, in order for disabled members of society to feel eager and able to fully participate.

Over the past few decades in Trinidad and Tobago, there have been significant allocations in successive budgets to education and skills training. The country has a large pool of highly-educated people. Yet I remain a solitary presence as a disabled Member of Parliament. This situation raises the obvious question of: “How come?”

Firstly, like many other countries, people living with disabilities face hurdles of accessibility which restrict their movement and therefore participation in public life. These challenges can also result in insufficient visibility and public awareness of the good work done across a range of fields by persons living with disabilities such that they do not come to the notice of those who are responsible for nominating persons to be Parliamentarians-via the Senate. Greater engagement in political processes would require affirmative and enabling actions by political parties including in their outreach to persons living with disabilities as candidates. And with where participation is secured, it has not been a priority for the able-bodied majority of our successive Parliamentarians to provide adequate physical infrastructure and amenities to accommodate the participation of disabled members of society, who have all paid lip service but yet remain lethargic action-wise.

Although not the same as institutional responses, individual conduct does matter. With diminished resources in an oil and gas economy beset by sustained internationally low prices, the Government is under fiscal constraints, with reduced allocations to Parliament. Notwithstanding this, the parliamentary staff remains highly efficient and attentive, making arrangements time and again to facilitate my presence in the chambers. But this is not enough.

The ability of Parliamentarians living with disabilities to participate equally should not depend on the kindness and attention of individuals. The apathy of successive administrations of government must end with actions to outfit the Parliament precincts to be differently-abled friendly. To begin, parking spots should be provided. There should also be designated places within Parliament Chambers for disabled ones to be easily accommodating. The chambers’ floor plan should be so laid out to facilitate our free movement to all areas, including ramps to access the podiums of the Speaker and President of the Houses. Wherever possible, the use of carpet should be avoided, as it makes for the easier maneuvering of wheelchairs.

Attention should also be placed on the presence of adequate numbers of tables, desk tops and other counter surfaces, as they are often too low to sit behind or use comfortably.

More importantly, as it is a well-known fire services advice that stairs and not elevators are to be used in the case of fire and other emergencies, there should be a clearly articulated and well-known evacuation plan for the emergency extraction of disabled ones. Our Parliament and a number of its offices are located on the second to seventh floors, making this an item for immediate attention and implementation.

I was the first wheelchair-bound MP in 2013. Most of the MPs sitting today are the same MPs that have been put up on my invitation. I imagine it would be too much of an inconvenience for the other Honourable Members. I was a bit of a surprise, to learn recently that the present administration in Trinidad and Tobago and its departments are reviewing the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities. In my capacity as an advocate for the disabled community and a sitting Member of Parliament in the Senate, I was approached by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to assist in the finalization of same, as it is the Government’s expressed desire to consider extensively present for the multifaceted needs of disabled based on national consultations and the consensus derived from.

The recommendations herebefore proposed regarding changes that can be made to the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament and its precincts may just help in its transformation in the short term to be disabled-friendly while a more comprehensive policy is being reviewed for presentation to the Parliament for debate and later adoption.

As the highest institution of the State, it is entirely reasonable to expect that adequate provisions are made for the disabled, an obligation that ought not to be sidelined on the basis of reduced Government income.

For far too long, the disabled community has been marginalized in the process of parliamentary democracy and treated as an inconceivable sector of our society. Parliamentarians must honour their critical leadership role in charting the course for positive actions towards a necessary user-friendly space in and out of Parliament and for members of the public wishing to witness and participate in our parliamentary democracy. There ought not to be any further delay of this imperative role by any member of the CPA to provide adequate facilities for the differently-abled of our democracies.

Talk is cheap and actions speak louder than words. Consideration could be given to placing an obligation on all CPA member Branches to put in motion a clearly-identified code of conduct for adoption and implementation, which will ensure that appropriate measures are taken to remedy the neglect attending the plight of the differently-abled in our parliamentary democracy. This can be monitored by a CPA peer review on an annual basis, which may name and shame accordingly or even impose sanctions on its members and suspend after a set number of warnings to remedy have been ignored.

What is to happen, when it should happen and who should make it happen for the differently-abled ones in all of our Parliaments will depend on the priority placed on same by our various governments. The Parliamentarian’s role is to be vigilant and persistent in demanding appropriate policy changes and implementation of a new order to make Parliament accountable for disabled members a standard requirement in our parliamentary democracy.

Since my appointment to the Senate in Trinidad and Tobago, I have used my annual occasion of the budget presentation and the debate thereon to highlight the concerns and neglect that continue to be a blot on the democratic aspirations of disabled members of our society, which effort I have repeated at every opportunity during the course of other debates in the Senate to make a plea for positive action in this regard. Many Members express their sincere desire to assist in moving the necessary legislation forward. My strategy is to keep trying to get same to the forefront of the Government’s legislative agenda whilst continuing to sensitize my fellow MPs so that they can lend not only their verbal support but also their vote when it becomes necessary.

Hopefully, the aforementioned revised National Policy on Persons with Disabilities would be completed soon and would be presented for debate and passage during the current parliamentary session.

Senator Hugh Russell Ian Roach is currently an independent Senator in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, having first entered Parliament in 2013. He is an attorney at law with over 28 years of experience and has practiced internationally with emphasis on negotiation, mediation and lobbying on behalf of international firms and governments. He has presided over several courts-martial as a Judge Advocate in the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force and was also the Honorary Consul of Trinidad and Tobago to South Africa during the presidency of Nelson Mandela and later that of Thabo Mbeki.
Commonwealth Parliamentsarians with Disabilities: View from New South Wales

Liesl Tesch, AM, MP is a seven-time Paralympian recently elected to the New South Wales Parliament for the seat of Gosford. Liesl has recently been induced into both the Australia Sailing and the Basketball Halls of Fame for her ongoing commitment to excellence and social inclusion within both sports. She is the Co-Founder of Sport Matters, an international aid and development organisation that uses sport as a toll for social change, and uses a wheelchair as a result of a bicycle accident when she was 19.

It’s time for more Commonwealth Parliamentsarians with Disabilities! We are a small group of self-identified people with disabilities (PWD) who are current provincial, state or federally elected representatives in the Commonwealth, the group identified the need to establish a new section within the CPA to further increase the representation of PWD within Commonwealth Parliaments.

The outcome proposal was sent to the 2010 Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh to create a “Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities” (CPwD) network to achieve the goal. The CPA Executive Committee agreed to three recommendations, with the cost of the establishment of the recommended network for Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities to be the subject of a report back to the next Executive Committee meeting in March 2018.

We understand that an official CPwD network will foster relationships between Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities, allowing discussion and the development of strategies to action issues relating to PWD internationally.

The inaugural meeting established a network of Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities, identifying the need to empower and promote economic and social inclusion for all, especially people with disabilities, at all levels of government.

At the two-day workshop generously hosted by the Parliament of Nova Scotia, Canada, Parliamentarians with Disabilities identified many commonalities and objectives to be shared across our diverse regions of the Commonwealth to encourage our Parliaments to be more inclusive of PWD.

We discussed a number of factors that Parliaments need to add to encourage PWD to participate in our democracies. We shared an inherent belief that we need to work to change the perceptions of our parties, identify barriers and work to create opportunities to allow more people with disabilities to be nominated to represent political parties across the Commonwealth.

A CPwD network aims to develop outreach programmes, encouraging PWD to seek elected office. Perhaps we all need to consider the Scottish model, whereby financial assistance is provided to support candidates with disabilities – to fund translators, drivers, and assistance with pamphlet delivery – during the course of their campaigns. Or adopt the model of the UK Parliament’s House of Commons, where an equality and access fund is made available for Members and their offices.

CPwD identified that physical accessibility, stigma and attitudinal barriers must be addressed to achieve full inclusion. United and supported, CPwD seek to develop strategies to overcome barriers that compromise the ability of persons with disabilities from seeking elected office.

The Parliament of Manitoba in Canada, for example, has undergone significant structural modifications including lifts, ramps, automatic doors, stair lighting, improved speaker systems, and has raised the floor of the Parliament to accommodate persons with diverse disabilities as visitors and members. If you make a building accessible for the person who needs the most accommodations, you make it friendly for most.

I am committed to the process of working with our parliamentary staff to undertake the necessary changes to make the New South Wales Parliament in Sydney, inclusive and accessible to accommodate my needs. It has been an ongoing, disruptive process that I believe should have been in place before my election to Parliament. I continue to emphasise that government, as the leaders in New South Wales society, should be modelling inclusive excellence, rather than disparate, post-arrival modifications to accommodate the needs of a new politician who is also a wheelchair user.

The good news is that as more people with disabilities sit on the other side of the desk, we will raise awareness and ensure that disability awareness is included within all levels of legislation, and legislate to eliminate all forms of discrimination. And as more PWD continue to occupy elected seats, more PWD see that the UK is one of the better ones but still at an appallingly low level. There are, I understand, 45 UK Members of Parliament who identify as LGBT and only 5 who are disabled, despite disabled people making up 15% of the population.

If the UK House of Commons were to be representative of the population as a whole, then almost 100 MPs would have some form of disability. We know the difficulties some disabled people have in getting elected in the UK but in some Commonwealth countries there is positive hostility to disabled people becoming Members of Parliament. We see the creation of this Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities group as part of the solution to get more disabled people into their Parliaments.

When I was preparing for the conference, I thought that I would update myself on what assistance the UK Parliament gives to colleagues with disabilities. It is seven years since I was last an elected Member of Parliament and whilst I know the assistance available for one’s own disability (in a wheelchair) I was vague on the changes to assistance since 2010 and what was available for colleagues with other disabilities.

This article deals with the assistance available for elected UK Parliamentarians or MPs. Members of the House of Lords do not have any constituents nor get thousands of letters and we do not have constituency offices to run. Therefore whilst there is some assistance available to disabled peers it is, rightly, much less than for elected Members of the House of Commons. It is principally an attendance allowance for an assistant for each day the disabled peer and the assistant attend the House of Lords.

Three aspects of assistance available

That sounds an odd way to describe it but it best way I can explain what is available. First there is no single portal for disabled Parliamentarians to access all the assistance available but they have to go to different sources.

Like all other Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities who attended the CPA conference in Halifax, I want to thank the Speaker of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, Hon. Kevin Murphy, MLA for this excellent initiative.

In our discussions it became clear that disabled people are grossly under-represented in all Parliaments and assemblies. The UK is one of the better ones but still at an appallingly low level.

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For financial help with extra office staff to assist with the disability or renting suitable offices in their constituency they have to ask the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) which has the complete discretion to make any amount of additional allowances available to cope with the disability. Until the ‘expenses scandal’ of 2009 this and all allowances were dealt with in-house but IPSA is now in charge and whilst most MPs complain about some aspects of IPSA’s bureaucracy there are no complaints about how they handle disability allowances. IPSA publishes every penny an MP receives in salary and allowances but does not publish disability assistance. Generally IPSA will fund any special requirements for disabled MPs. That may range from equipment to extra staff trained in Braille to the extra cost of accessible constituency offices. Whilst MPs have been, rightly in my view, critical of some IPSA penny pinching and bureaucracy there has been no criticism of the way they fund disabled MPs.

Second, all new MPs receive a 120 page handbook which covers every aspect of their life and work as an MP including a section on disability. The Induction Course for new MPs also gives personal guidance to disabled MPs and points them in the right direction for assistance. The House of Commons will provide and adapt offices for disabled MPs. There are no special offices set aside for disabled MPs and that is the way Members want it.

It is important to note that the House authorities do not allocate offices to MPs. That responsibility and right is firmly controlled by the Government and Opposition Whips. Whilst there is always some ‘manoeuvring’ after an election, the Accommodation Whips, as they are called have an understanding through the usual channels (the name given to the formal and informal contacts between the party whips) as to what political party is entitled to which offices and the understanding seldom breaks down.

Within their party allocations, the whips will allocate offices based subjectively on seniority, need, deserving of reward, consolidation prize for lost ministerial office or other reason. Those perceived to be less deserving for whatever reason will not get the best offices. However all colleagues with disabilities will be given offices which best suit their disabilities and these may be close to the Chamber in the 1850 building or further away in the modern office block, depending on what the disabled Member wants.

The third aspect is a network of support which has the blessing of Parliament but is not controlled by it. The United Kingdom Parliament supports a range of internships and a network for some disabled people standing for election and working as staff. These include:

**House of Commons Diversity and Inclusion Scheme**
Access and inclusion is a priority area under the Commons Diversity and Inclusion Scheme, which aims to make Parliament accessible to disabled Members of Parliament, staff and visitors. The scheme was launched in March 2012.

**Speaker’s Parliamentary Placement Scheme**
This Scheme offers paid internships in a range of Parliamentary roles to individuals from diverse backgrounds and helps make access to Parliament representative of the UK population. After a successful first year, the Scheme has been expanded following funding from the Government Equalities Office for up to three disabled interns.

**Workplace equality networks**
All this work is supported by ParlAble®, the workplace equality network in Parliament for disability. This network is open to all parliamentary pass holders, and falls under the support, talent management and career progression area of the diversity and inclusion scheme. ParlAble’s mission statement is ‘to increase awareness and appreciation of disability issues on the Parliamentary estate, and to provide a platform where disabled people can find support, where disability equally objectives can be progressed.’

The former more encompassing collection of buildings housing Parliament and dating from the 11th century were almost totally destroyed by a fire in 1834. The current Palace of Westminster was opened for business from 1852 and finally completed in 1870. Then disabled access was not high on the agenda and the Palace has too many steps and not nearly enough lifts. Despite the best efforts of Parliamentary authorities some parts are inaccessible and since the building is Grade 1 listed the authorities feel constrained in making adaptations which would make it accessible for wheelchair users. For example, in both Houses wheelchair users have to sit in the middle of the floor in the Lords and nearly the middle in the Commons. Authorities will not convert any of the green or red leather front benches to flip up seats which would permit a wheelchair user to park there without taking up too much space.

However a major decision will be made soon on a £5 billion repair and refurbishment of the Palace which will necessitate a full decant for 5 to 6 years. That will allow us to add all the modern disabled facilities we need, for every type of disability, without fundamentally wrecking the precious Bayry and Pugin Gothic architecture. However although there are 650 MPs, the House of Commons Chamber holds only 467 and for certain key debates almost 200 cannot get seats but have to stand and sit on the steps, packing every aisle. The House of Commons Chamber was destroyed by a bomb during the Second World War and Winston Churchill insisted that it should not be increased nor turned into a hemicycle. He said that keeping it adversarial and intimate was the essence of the UK party system and democracy. ‘We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us.’ However attitudes, more than buildings are responsible for the low number of disabled Parliamentarians. The aim of the group is not to make life easier for those of us with disabilities but to encourage people who have the drive, enthusiasm and ability to be good representatives of the electorate but are being kept back because of some physical disability. In most cases it is our political parties who are reluctant to select disabled people.

As we rightly seek to have more women elected to be representative of the general population, we are all failing to encourage disabled people to stand for Parliament and assemblies and the UK is no better than any others. Having only 1½% disabled Parliamentarians out of a disabled population of 15% is letting down a huge number of constituents. We have to change that.

**References**
1 http://www.parliament.uk/aboutworking/workplace-equality-networks/parlable/
The legislative, political and Parliamentary landscape dominated by the arrangements for the UK’s departure from the European Union. It has three main purposes, first to repeal the European Communities Act 1973 which provides the legal authority for EU law to have effect in the UK. Second to bring 40 years’ worth of EU law on to the statute book final to give Ministers the power to make changes to UK law that are necessary due to EU withdrawal.

The Bill is complex and contained over 378 amendments by 31 July, it covers 66 closely typed pages. By the first day of the Committee stage a total of 378 amendments had been put forward running to 200 pages. Ten Committees in Westminster, Holyrood and Cardiff were involved in preparing fourteen detailed reports on different aspects of the legislation in the House of Commons chambers eight days of Committee stage were scheduled.

Brexit Day

On the first day of the debate the Government proposed its own change to the Bill to insert the day and time of Brexit. Under this amendment the UK would exit the EU at 11pm on 29 March 2019. Hon. Steve Baker, MP, the responsible Minister said the Government “recognise the importance of being crystal clear on the setting of exit day and are keen to provide the certainty.” This proved as controversial as much of the existing clauses. Leading the opposition was the (Conservative) former Attorney General, Rt Hon. Dominic Greive, MP. He pointed out that if no deal is reached, the UK would reach a cliff edge ballot, “into the void”. He continued that in his view specifying the date of Brexit is: “quite simply unacceptable because it fetters the Executive’s ability to carry out this negotiation, which makes me seriously question their competence, and it disenfranchises the House from properly exercising its scrutiny role, with the potential that, in fact, is almost an invitation to running into the buffers.”

The pro-European former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon. Kenneth Clarke, MP received a round of applause for his speech. He thought the issue a distraction: “there are some very, very serious issues to be settled in this Bill” and suggested the Government reconsider silly amendments that were thrown out because they got a good article in The Daily Telegraph but would potentially do harm.”

The debate on the Bill continues until Christmas. It is expected to begin its passage through the House of Lords in mid to late January 2018.

More Brexit legislation

The day before the debate on the EU (Withdrawal) Bill commenced, the Government announced another Brexit-related Bill. This Bill would allow MPs (and Peers) to vote on the final agreement reached between the UK and EU. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Rt Hon. David Davies, MP, told the House of Commons that “Parliament will be given time to debate, scrutinise and vote on the final agreement we strike with the European Union. The agreement will hold if Parliament approves it.

Concern was expressed as to how meaningful the vote would be, and what would be the effect of Parliament voting against or part of a deal reached between the UK and EU. Responding to a question on this point the Secretary of State by: “If the House does that [votes to change the Bill], that will be taken I guess by the government as an instruction to go back and speak for them [Brussels]. Whether that will deliver any outcome, I don’t know.”

57 Varieties of Brexit analysis

Also on ‘Brexit’, the questioning by a House of Commons and House of Lords Committee combined with an opposition motion to force the Government to publish its work on the impact of Brexit.

Rt Hon. David Davies, MP told a Committee on MPs in December in Theresa May’s Government was “in the midst of working out 57 sets of analysis” on different sectors to inform its negotiating position. In a later appearance he described this work as being “excruciating detail”. A list of the sectors covered was duly requested by Committees, under Freedom of Information legislations, by letter and by Parliamentary question. A list of 58 sectors covered eventually emerged on 30 October 2017 but in the Government’s response to a House of Lords EU Sub-committee report on Brexit and Trade in Goods. The Shadow Brexit Secretaries, Sir Keir Starmer, MP tabled a motion calling for the analyses themselves to be released to the relevant Committee, the motion – framed as a call for papers – is one that is rarely used and is usually unopposed.

Responding to the motion, the Minister told the House that disclosing the documents could be against the public and national interest. However, the motion was not put to a vote and was passed unanimously.

Despite acknowledging the motion was binding on them, the Government has yet to produce the impact assessments, it states that “it is not the case that 58 impact assessments exist.” The Government has stated that it will need time to collate what does exist and redact sensitive information before passing the documents to the relevant Committee.

And finally, not “Brexit”

The House of Lords has announced the appointment of Sarah Clarke (pictured below) as the Lady Usher of the Black Rod. Ms Clarke is the first woman to hold the post in its 650 year history. Her responsibilities will include organising the major ceremonial events in the Palace of Westminster including the State Opening of Parliament. During the ceremony, Black Rod is sent from the Lords Chambers to the Commons to summon MPs to hear the Queen’s Speech. The door of the Commons is slammed in her face to symbolise the independence of the Commons from the Crown.

The Constitution Amendment Act, 2017 introduced on 4 October 2017, the Constitution Amendment Act, 2017 made significant changes to British Columbia’s provincial Constitution Act.

British Columbia’s 9 May provincial general election resulted in a minority Parliament. Forty-four seats are needed for a majority in British Columbia’s eighty-seven Member Legislative Assembly, the BC Liberal Party, which had formed government in the last Parliament, secured forty-three, the BC New Democratic Party (NDP) forty-one and the BC Green Party three.

After post-election negotiations with both parties, the BC Green Party caucus signed a Confidence and Supply Agreement with the Official Opposition, the BC NDP. The two parties voted against the BC Liberal minority government in a confidence vote on 29 June, leading to its defeat and the formation of a BC NDP government in mid-July. The two parties voted against the BC Liberal minority government in a confidence vote on 29 June, leading to its defeat and the formation of a BC NDP government in mid-July. The two parties voted against the BC Liberal minority government in a confidence vote on 29 June, leading to its defeat and the formation of a BC NDP government in mid-July. The two parties voted against the BC Liberal minority government in a confidence vote on 29 June, leading to its defeat and the formation of a BC NDP government in mid-July.

The bill also includes a commitment that a BC NDP government will hold only if Parliament voting against all or most of its amendments, the motion was binding on them, the Government has yet to produce the impact assessments, which states that “it is not the case that 58 impact assessments exist.” The Government has stated that it will need time to collate what does exist and redact sensitive information before passing the documents to the relevant Committee.

In front of the Speaker, Rt Hon. David Davies, MP, stood to two Members. The Legislative Assembly from four Members.

The Opposition critic, Andrew Wilkinson, argued that changing the threshold for recognition as an official party to only two Members puts British Columbia out of step with a number of other Canadian provinces which have minimums of four, eight or twelve Members. He also criticized the change in election dates because it would allow the minority government an additional six months in office – a four and a half year term, with an election in October 2021 – arguing that government should have allowed itself a three and a half year term.

The Constitution Amendment Act, 2017 received Third Reading on division on 25 October 2017. However, the commencement provision provided for the Act to come into effect retroactively, in five years after the date this Act receives First Reading” – in effect, on 5 October 2017.
New Leader of the New Democratic Party

On 1 October, the New Democratic Party (NDP) elected Jagmeet Singh as its new leader. Mr. Singh, a lawyer, was a Member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, a position he subsequently resigned. He won the leadership election on the first round, taking 53% of the vote. In doing so, he defeated Charlie Angus, MP, Niki Ashton, MP, and Guy Caron, MP. On 4 October, Mr. Singh appointed Mr. Caron as parliamentary leader for the NDP.

Legislation

Two Senate public Bills received Royal Assent in October. Bill S-226, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law), allows the government to impose sanctions on foreign nationals responsible for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights. The Russian embassy in Canada called the passage of the Bill an “irrational act.”

The other Bill, S-231, the Journalistic Sources Protection Act, amends the Canada Evidence Act to protect the confidentiality of journalistic sources. In November, a Private Member’s Bill, C-305, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischiefs), was awaiting Royal Assent. It amends the Criminal Code to make it an offense to commit mischief against property that is used for educational purposes, for administrative, social, cultural or sports activities, or as a residence for seniors.

Also in November, the government introduced Bill C-65, which would amend the Canada Labour Code to strengthen the framework for the protection of workers against harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in the workplace. The Bill would also extend Part II of the Canada Labour Code, which deals with occupational health and safety, to parliamentary employers and employees while respecting parliamentary powers, privileges and immunities.

On 8 November, House of Commons Speaker, Hon. Geoff Regan, MP, ruled that Bill C-63, Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 2, was an omnibus Bill that could be split up. As a result, at Second Reading separate votes were held on four elements of the Bill before the Bill was referred to Committee. This was the first use of the new rule regarding omnibus legislation.

Committee Hearings and Reports

Prior to the return of the House in September, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health held a week of hearings on Bill C-45, the Cannabis Act. On 5 October, the Committee presented the Bill to the House with amendments. Among other things, these amendments removed the height limit on home-grown plants and allowed for the introduction of edible cannabis products a year after the law comes into force.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport was also active prior to the return of the House. It met to study Bill C-49, the Transportation Modernization Act, which deals with air travel and railway safety. During October and early November, thirty reports were tabled by House Committees, including:

- a report on immigration to Atlantic Canada (Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration);
- a report on non-tariff trade barriers (Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food);
- and a report on Air Canada’s Implementation of the Official Languages Act (Standing Committee on Official Languages).

Changes to the Ministry

In August, Hon. Judy Foote announced her resignation as Minister of Public Services and Procurement and as MP. She was first elected for a riding in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2008.

Ms. Foote’s resignation was followed by a major cabinet shuffle on 28 August. She was succeeded by Hon. Carla Qualtrough, MP, formerly Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, who in turn was replaced by Hon. Kent Hehr, MP, formerly Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence. His role was assumed by Hon. Seamus O’Regan, MP.

At the same time, the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs was split in two, with Hon. Carolyn Bennett, MP, who had been Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, becoming Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and the House Affairs and former Minister of Health, Hon. Jane Philpott, becoming Minister of Indigenous Services. Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor, MP, formerly a parliamentary secretary, was appointed Minister of Health.

Other Changes to the House of Commons

On 14 September, Arnold Chan, MP, a Liberal member from Ontario, died after a three-year battle with cancer. He was first elected in a by-election in 2014. In early October, Saskatchewan Conservative, Hon. Gerry Ritz, MP, resigned. He was first elected in 1997 and served as Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food in the government of Prime Minister Harper from 2007 to 2015. In by-elections held on 23 October, Liberal Richard Hébert, MP, won the Quebec riding of Lac-Saint-Jean, defeating Conservative Hon. Denis Lebel, who had been an MP since 2007. Conservative Dane Lloyd won the Alberta riding of Sturgeon River-Parkland. He succeeded Hon. Rona Ambrose, the former Conservative interim leader who resigned in July.

On 8 November, Quebec Liberal MP Denis Lemieux resigned for family reasons. He was first elected in October 2015.

The Senate

On 4 September, Liberal Senator Hon. George Baker of Newfoundland and Labrador retired upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of 75 years. Appointed by Prime Minister Harper in 2002, he had been a Member of the House of Commons...
New Zealand voters went to the polls on 23 September 2017 to elect Members to the nation’s 52nd Parliament. Of those enrolled to vote, 79% chose to exercise this civil right. This represented an overall increase from the previous two general elections, in 2014 (77.9%) and 2011 (74.2%).

The 2017 general election occurred at a particularly eventful time for New Zealand’s political parties, with the leader of the New Zealand Labour Party, Mr Andrew Little, MP; the leader of the United Future Party, Hon. Peter Dunne, MP; and the co-leader of the Green Party, Ms Metiria Turei, MP; resigning their respective leadership positions a matter of weeks before polling day. In total, sixteen parties fielded candidates in the election; of these, however, only five were successful in securing seats in the House of Representatives. New Zealand’s Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) voting system requires a party, if it is to gain any seats, to reach a threshold of either 5% of the party vote or one electorate seat.

When the New Zealand Electoral Commission announced the final result, on 7 October 2017, thirty-two new MPs found themselves elected to office. The voting public appeared to favour the two largest parties - the New Zealand National Party, which won fifty-six seats, and the New Zealand Labour Party, which secured forty-six seats - with the smaller parties faring less well. New Zealand First’s share of the seats was reduced from eleven to nine seats, whilst the Green Party’s share fell from fourteen to eight seats. The Mori Party and the United Future Party, meeting neither of the thresholds, were not returned to Parliament. The ACT Party leader, Mr David Seymour, MP, successfully held the electorate of Epsom. Addressing his supporters on election night, New Zealand First Leader, Rt Hon. Winston Peters, MP spoke of a difficult environment for smaller parties: “We have had MMP for 21 years, but we had a first-post-the-post campaign being conducted as though the system had never changed.” However, he added that “despite all the provocations of this election ... we survived, and that means that the party that is the third longest surviving party since 1893 will go on.”

This sentiment was echoed by Green Party co-leader Mr James Shaw, MP: “This has been the fight of our lives and we are still here - we are still standing. Nature still has a voice in Parliament, the voiceless still have someone to fight in their corner in our House of Representatives. The Green Party have been written off so many times in our history, and every time we have come back - and we have come back tonight as well.”

Finishing below the required 5% threshold, the Conservative Party secured 0.2% of the vote - compared with 4% in the previous election. The Opportunities Party, founded in November 2016, obtained 2.4% of the vote. The decision as to who would govern the country was not made on the night of the election, nor upon the return of the Wiwi. As Labour Leader Ms Jacinda Ardern, MP said, “sometimes MMP leaves us with an outcome that requires a little bit of extra work.”

No single party had enough MPs to govern alone, which continued the pattern that has reoccurred since the first MMP election was held in 1996. Parties intended to take time and consideration in negotiations, with National Leader, Rt Hon. Bill English, MP saying, “We do not need to rush this process, but, equally, it is important that we are able to move quickly to form a stable Government.” On 19 October 2017, after eleven days of negotiation, an announcement was made that New Zealand’s Government would be a Labour - New Zealand First coalition with further support from the Green Party under a confidence and supply agreement. Between the three parties, they hold sixty-three of the 120 seats in Parliament. Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern was sworn in as Prime Minister on 26 October, with Rt Hon. Winston Peters appointed as Deputy Prime Minister. The new Parliament opened on 7 November 2017, slightly more than six weeks after polling day.

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING AND COUNTERING FINANCING OF TERRORISM AMENDMENT BILL

Ms Rusdy Donovan, MP (Labour) noted that “This Bill seems to have been before the House for a lengthy period of time, and I do not know why it has always dropped down the priority list.”

Mr Jonathan Young, MP (National) clarified, “... why has this taken this length of time to bring through and into law?...”

“The reason we do not have this law is because we want to do it in an efficient and a practical and an effective way, but we do not want to load down our businesses with huge compliance costs. We want to find efficient ways in which they can continue to make our society safe from money-laundering.”

The Bill became law on 10 August after receiving the Royal assent.

LAND TRANSPORT AMENDMENT BILL (No 2)

The Land Transport Amendment Bill (No 2) was designed to strengthen regulations relating to alcohol interlocks, change the regulatory framework for small passenger services such as Uber, strengthen the framework for managing public transport fare evasion, create more effective determents to reduce the incidence of fleeing drivers, make changes to heavy vehicle regulation, and make other minor amendments to ensure that the Land Transport Act 1998 is operating as intended. The Bill was first introduced to the House on 12 September 2016.

At the Bill’s Third Reading, Hon. Paul Goldsmith, MP (National) explained on behalf of the Minister of Transport: “The first part of the Bill addresses alcohol interlocks, which are a very effective tool for reducing the incidence of repeat drink-driving.”

The second part of the Bill addresses the Government’s commitment to supporting a well-functioning public transport system.

Mr Barry Coates, MP (Green) said: “This Bill seems to have been before the Ministry of Transport for some time.”

Mr Jonathan Young, MP (National) said: “We have seen the House, once again, debating the issue of repeat drink-driving.”

Mr Barry Coates, MP (Green) said: “This Bill seems to have been before the Ministry of Transport for some time.”

Mr Ernest Preece, MP (Labour) said: “The second part of the Bill addresses the Government’s commitment to supporting a well-functioning public transport system.”

Mr Barry Coates, MP (Green) said: “This Bill seems to have been before the Ministry of Transport for some time.”

Mr Ernest Preece, MP (Labour) said: “The second part of the Bill addresses the Government’s commitment to supporting a well-functioning public transport system.”

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Dual Citizenship Crisis in Australia Federal Parliament

High Court disqualifies 4 Senators, former MP and Senate President resigns

The dual citizenship crisis confronting the Australian Parliament has gone from bad to worse in recent months.

Section 44 of the Australian Constitution states that “any person who is under any acknowledged obligation of allegiance, obedience, or adherence to a foreign power, or is a subject or a citizen entitled to the rights or privileges of a subject or a citizen of a foreign power shall be incapable of being chosen of or sitting as a Senator or a member of the House of Representatives.”

On 14 July, the Deputy Greens Co-Leader Senator Scott Ludlam announced that he was resigning as a Senator because he was in breach of the dual nationality provisions in section 44 of the Australian Constitution. Little did Senator Ludlam know that his action would set in train a series of events that would lead to the disqualification of the Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP, the previous President, Senator Scott Ryan, the disqualification of Senators Ludlam, Larissa Waters, Malcolm Roberts and Fiona Nash. The Member for Bennelong, John Alexander, MP, resigned on 11 November after he confirmed that he had British dual citizenship. A by-election is scheduled for 11 December.

Senator Jacqui Lambie (Jacqui Lambie Network) resigned on 14 November citing her British citizenship. In the months ahead there are expected to be more resignations.

The loss of Mr Joyce and Mr Alexander will mean the Turnbull Government will lose its majority and will need to govern with the support of the cross bench, although regaining enough support to be temporary as Mr Joyce is expected to be re-elected at his by election on 2 December. Mr Alexander is in a tough battle in his by election as he goes head-to-head with former New South Wales Premier Kristina Keneally. The loss of the Deputy Prime Minister has hurt the government and the opposition is questioning the legality of certain decisions made by him as his election was not compliant with the constitution.

The commentary of the Prime Minister, Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP, during the saga is notable. Senator Ludlam announced that he would be resigning the Prime Minister criticised the Greens for their sloppiness. Mr Turnbull commented that “it’s pretty amazing, isn’t it, that you have had two out of nine Greens Senators didn’t realise that they were citizens of another country. It shows incredible sloppiness on their part. You know, when you nominate for Parliament, there is actually a question - you have got to address that Section 44 question and you’ve got to tick the box and confirm that you are not a citizen of another country. It is extraordinary negligence on their part.”

But Mr Turnbull did not hold this position for long. Shortly afterwards four members of the coalition were subject to review under section 44 with three being disqualified. On 14 August, the Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Barnaby Joyce, MP, advised the House that he may be in contravention of section 44. The Prime Minister refused to stand him down from his ministerial functions while the High Court reviewed his case. The Prime Minister, with much confidence, advised the House that “the Leader of the National Party, the Deputy Prime Minister, is qualified to sit in this House, and the High Court will so hold.”

But the High Court did not.

The timing of the resignation of the Senate President, Senator Stephen Parry, has raised questions about his judgement. On 27 October, the High Court handed down its findings on the citizenship status of seven Parliamentarians. A few days after the judgement, Senator Parry announced that he may be a British citizen and he was asking the British Home Office to check. On 1 November, Senator Parry admitted that he did indeed have British citizenship and as a result he would be resigning.

But this raised questions about how long Mr Parry had these doubts and why he did not reveal them earlier. The Prime Minister commented that “I’m disappointed that Senator Parry didn’t make public this issue, this issue some time ago, quite some time ago.”

When a Parliamentarian is disqualified they receive advice from the Department of Finance that they repay their salary debts or seek a waiver from the Special Minister or State. So far all disqualified Parliamentarians have received a waiver although it is not clear that their salary debts waived for Mr Joyce and the four Senators disqualified is estimated to be $8.8 million.

Mr Parry’s situation has raised wider questions about the citizenship status of other Parliamentarians which has led to calls for a citizenship audit of all Parliamentarians. The Prime Minister has dismissed the proposal noting that each Senator and Member had a personal responsibility and obligation to comply with the Constitution. Mr Turnbull in explaining the problems with the audit commented that “does that mean that somebody is going to undertake extensive genealogical research on every member of Parliament and Senator? Undertake extensive research into foreign laws?”

If a Parliamentarian made a false declaration it would be amount to a breach of privilege but the political consequences could be more severe.

On 13 November, the Senate established a resolution for a citizenship register. The House is expected to pass a similar resolution when it sits on 4 December.

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But the High Court did not.

Under the Prime Minister’s proposal, each House would pass a resolution requiring each Senator and Member, within 21 days, to provide information on their citizenship status including birth details of their parents. This information would then be published on the Parliament House Website. If there were questions about the citizenship status of a Member then the respective Houses could refer the matter to the High Court. The opposition agreed to the proposal subject to the reporting period being reduced so that Senators and Members would need to provide their declarations by 1 December.

The Prime Minister stated that “I just want you to say this is not an audit, there is no auditor. The obligation is on each Member and each Senator to make a full disclosure of how they obtained citizenship and how long Mr Parry had these doubts and why he did not reveal them earlier. The Prime Minister commented that “I’m disappointed that Senator Parry didn’t make public this issue, this issue some time ago, quite some time ago.”

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At the outset, I note that the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament conducted an intellectually honest and open debate. The Australian people should be informed about the important issues before the government, which is supported by Conservative Members opposed to marriage equality. This option was available, the government used the survey. Conservative Members have the President and the party has a majority, we think the amendment passed by a majority. However, as the poll was not an available place to discuss, the opposition conducted a voluntary survey on marriage equality. The opposition was supported by Conservative Members opposed to marriage equality. The Prime Minister, Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP, commented to passing legislation before Christmas. The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Bill Shorten, MP, stated before a roaring crowd that “today we celebrate, tomorrow we legislate.” The Senate immediately commenced consideration of Liberal Senator Dean Smith’s Private Bill on same sex marriage. Senators and Members will have a conscience vote. Some Senators and Members remain opposed to same sex marriage and believe the Bill does not contain sufficient protections for religious freedom, parents and people who voted no.

Senator Smith commented that “the no advocates spoke much about religious freedom but couldn’t point to exactly what freedom was being lost.” That’s because what some people fear has little to do with laws but everything to do with culture.” Senator Smith further commented that they were addressing fears because they are reflections of the fears LGBTI citizens have felt throughout our country’s history: fears about acceptance, fears about jobs, fears about being a part of you and, yes, fears about violence. This vote is not about replacing one persecuted minority with another or giving one hope to one group while inflicting fear on another group; it must be about advancing the hopes and dreams of all citizens, no matter their sexuality, ethnicity or religion.

The legislation strengthens the prohibition on corporations with substantial market power from engaging in conduct that has the purpose, effect or likely effect of substantially lessening competition in markets in which they directly or indirectly participate. The Minister for Small Business and Financial Services, Senator Kelly O’Dwyer, commented that the Bill “seeks to implement the so-called effects test, and it certainly will have an effect — an overwhelmingly negative one.” Senator Gallagher stated that the purpose of the act is to implement is bad law. It has not been thought through, nor has it been thought out at all, and it will have a deleterious impact. Senator Gallagher noted that a range of reputable academics, including the former Attorney-General, Senator George Brandis, National Party, was highly supportive of the change to section 46 which is to protect competition and not individual competitors, who voted no.

The Minister advised that the amendments to section 46 will address these concerns by providing clarity with the effect of market power from engaging in conduct that has the purpose, effect or likely effect of substantially lessening competition in markets in which they directly or indirectly participate.

Ms O’Dwyer concluded that “the amendment is specifically designed to minimise any uncertainty involved with changing the law, by using existing competition law concepts such as ‘substantially lessening competition’ and by providing ‘anti-competitive and a pro-competitive factors to guide consideration of the purpose, effect or likely effect of conduct.” Ms O’Dwyer noted that “this reform is an important step to ensure Australia has the best possible competition framework to support innovation, enhance competition and boost economic growth and jobs. It is a key part of the government’s response to the Harper review, which makes 12 recommendations to implement this competition and delivering better services for consumers.”

During debate in the Senate the Shadow Minister for Small Business and Financial Services, Senator John Williams, commented that the Bill “seeks to implement the so-called effects test in the way, if this legislation passes, we would have an increased number of small businesses that could find it difficult if not impossible to compete with some of our competitors; some of them might be big multinationals. It is sending me broke.” Senator Gallagher explained the advantages of the ‘effects test’ commenting that “I were part of a big multinational company, say we had 300, and we started up a branch in a country town that had a successfully small business just poking along, employing seven, eight or 10 people, we could sell at cost — we could sell at a ridiculously low price. Under the provisions of this law, if we were to try this]) to implement is bad law. It has not been thought through, nor has it been thought out at all, and it will have a deleterious impact. Senator Gallagher stated that the purpose of the act is to implement is bad law. It has not been thought through, nor has it been thought out at all, and it will have a deleterious impact. Senator Gallagher noted that a range of reputable academics, including the former Attorney-General, Senator George Brandis, National Party, was highly supportive of the change to section 46 which is to protect competition and not individual competitors, who voted no.

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On 9 August 1942, both the Houses of the Parliament in India commemorated the 75th Anniversary of the ‘Quit India Movement’. Both the Houses had discussions and passed Resolutions on this special occasion. Making a reference to the Movement in the Lok Sabha, the Speaker of Lok Sabha, Shri Om Birla noted: “...today is a momentous day when we are observing the 75th anniversary of the ‘Quit India Movement’. It was on 9 August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation through his clarion call of ‘Do or Die’, galvanized the entire Nation to rise in unison to free the country from the shackles of imperialistic subjugation. On this occasion, we pay our homage to the Father of the Nation and to all the martyrs who laid down their lives in the freedom struggle.”

Addressing the Lok Sabha, the Speaker, Shri Om Birla said 9 August is an important occasion for India as on this day, India completed 75 years since the ‘Quit India Movement’ call was given. Shri Om Birla noted, the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi in 1942 demanding complete withdrawal of Britishers from India. The Quit India resolution moved on 8 August was passed unanimously the same night. In his address, Mahatma Gandhi gave a call of ‘Do or Die’. The ‘Quit India Movement’ of 1942 did not shock the foundations of the foreign rule and the Britshers realized that it was not possible to continue their rule over India. The greatest success of the ‘Quit India Movement’ was that it shook the consciousness of the intellectuals of the country as well as that of the millions of farmers, workers and youths in the villages and connected directly with the freedom struggle.

The Speaker said the enthusiasm, courage, resolution, faith and determination, which Indians attained freedom must be nurtured in order to build a great, prosperous, strong and powerful nation. There is a need to work hard to achieve inclusive development which was the dream of freedom fighters. Quoting Father of the Nation Shri Deendayal Upadhyay, Shri Om Birla said the fruits of development must reach each person and if it was not achieved, the country was going to reach new heights, which is capable of, it could provide leadership to the world. The motto should be ‘we will do it and have to do it, come what may’ said the Prime Minister.

Shri Narendra Modi said the Quit India Movement was a leading example of revolutionary change in the freedom struggle and people made several sacrifices for this. It was a memorable moment which gave inspiration to fight against all types of oppressive forces and save freedom. The freedom fighters waged a war for an inclusive, pluralistic, democratic and secular India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and this vision was enshrined in the Constitution.

The Speaker of Lok Sabha, Shri M. Thambidurai (AIADMK) said many leaders had sacrificed their lives for liberating the country from the clutches of the British and the people of Tamil Nadu also contributed a lot while participating in the Quit India Movement. The Quit India Movement was unsuccessful in achieving its main objective in the short run, in the long run it gave the momentum to freedom struggle.

Prof. Sugata Bose (AICTE) described the 9th August 1942 as a red-letter day in Indian history. The Quit India Movement turned out to be the biggest civilian uprising in India since the great rebellion of 1857 in which women played a crucial role. He said there was a need to rekindle the spirit of great freedom struggle and ensure that poverty, illiteracy and disease were banished from India. Shri Anandrao Adsul (Shiv Sena) said the country belongs to all citizens and its uniqueness lies in its unity in diversity. Good time has come to connect the people of India with the Quit India Movement. Shri Thota Narsingh (TDP) believed the five years from 1942 to 1947 were decisive for country’s Independence and the five years from 1972 to 1977 could prove to be decisive for India’s future.

Shri A. P. J. Jithender Reddy (TRS) said the spirit showcased during the Quit India Movement is relevant even today when it comes to social evils which have plagued society. India must show the same spirit of 1942 to expel the evils of communalism, casteism, corruption, terrorism, poverty and other dirt from the country by 2022. Shri R. K. Dhawan (BJP) said the martyrs who laid down their lives for the country have immense impact on the youth. Shri Prem Das Rai (SDF) saluted the freedom fighters, especially those from the Gorkha Community, promised party’s support for a new India by 2022.

Shri Rashid Ansari (SDP) congratulated Shri Sharad Yadav for his contributions in the Quit India Movement as the second watershed event in the freedom struggle and wanted India to be liquor free.

Shri Nikhil K. Modi (UNI) said unity among diversity was the beauty of Indian freedom struggle and Hindus, Muslims and people from other religions and beliefs were united to achieve freedom. Shri Bhaichan Prasad Mandal (CPM) highlighted the contribution of the Bundelkhand region in the freedom struggle.

Shri Jose K. Mani (Kerala Congress-M) bowed before the freedom fighters for their sacrifices. Shri P. Karunakaran (CPM) pointed out that the most important feature of the Quit India Movement was the absence of religious and communal division and national unity can be achieved through the spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding among various communities.

Shri Tathagat Satpathy (BJD) felt that tolerance is built into the very foundation of India and there should not be any kind of division on the basis of dress, food or language. Kuruvil Haridasan Singh (Apan Dal) said the freedom fighters strived hard to secure equal rights for all individuals, equal opportunities in development and liberation from hunger and poverty.

Shri H.D. Devegowda (JD-S) extended his support to the government for building a new India by 2022. Shri Jay Prakash Narayan Yadav (RJD) reminded that it was the dream of Gandhi that there should be prohibition on alcohol across the country.

Shri Prem Singh Chandramurji (SAD) said the Quit India Movement was the first uprising against the British rule and could be known to the people of India. Shri Ajay Misra Teni (BJP), paying tributes to all the freedom fighters, said the Quit India Movement was the most important moment which created India according to the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi.

The RSP member, Shri N.K. Premachandran said unity among diversity was the beauty of Indian freedom struggle and Hindus, Muslims and people from other religions and beliefs were united to achieve freedom. Shri E. T. Mohammad Basheer (IUML) emphasized the pledge to keep up the glorious tradition of India as the largest secular democratic country of the world.

Shri Bhathendra Majhi (BJP) highlighted the contributions and sacrifices of tribal population of the then Kunapal District of Orissa in the freedom fight. Shri M. Raja Mohan Reddy (YSR Congress) said time has come to make Indian democracy strong and a country model which can be replicated through addressing the shortcomings.

Prof. Mamta Sanghvi (AICTE) said unity of India is our strength and we must not fall easy to any challenge to freedom. For the leader of INC in Lok Sabha, Shri Mallikarjun Kharge, the biggest achievement of Mahatma Gandhi was that he was able to spread the freedom movement to every nook and corner of the country. While paying homage to all those martyrs who made supreme sacrifices and suffered for freedom, he said the Parliamentarian of India, one must not forget that the freedom fighters also wanted to enhance the honor and prestige of India and everything which is Indian.

Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey (BJP) said even after a century of the division of the country, and the rich legacy that is being shared from now by the year 2022 i.e. 75th year of our Independence. The Vice-President of India and a member of AIADMK, Prof. Shri S.K. Basu, Shri Harish Anant also made a reference in that House to the Quit India Movement. Several Members spoke on the occasion. Thereafter, a Resolution proposed by the Chairman of the House was unanimously adopted which is as follows:

“This House--
• Recalls that seventy five years ago, 1942, Mahatma Gandhi called for the British to Quit India and it was an occasion for the British to end the British Rule.
• Recalls on the 75th Anniversary of the ‘Quit India Movement’ to be an important moment to reiterate the heroic struggle of the Indian people; students, peasants, workers, women and government officials who defied the brutal repression of the British Raj to launch mass Satyagraha movement and shone the very foundation of the British rule;
• Acknowledges that this is also an occasion to cerebrate with gratitude the sacrifices of millions of our people and salute the memory of thousands of Indians, who gave their lives for the freedom of India; and
• On this day solemnly takes a pledge to uphold and safeguard the values, traditions and ideals of the freedom movement and re-educate ourselves to build an India that is strong, self-reliant, inclusive, secular and democratic.”
The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Bill, 2017

The present legal framework for admiralty jurisdiction in India flows from laws enacted by the British which confer admiralty jurisdiction only to the Colonial Courts of Admiralty established under the Letters Patent, 1865. Subsequent to the judgment of the Supreme Court of India in its judgement in M.V. Elizabeth And Others v. Jozef Treska and Madras Port Trust Ltd to clarify and clarify the admiralty laws in the country, the Law Commission of India also issued its 15th Report recommending for extending the admiralty laws in India. The Government accordingly brought forward The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Bill, 2016. The existing British era laws on civil matters of admiralty jurisdiction of courts, admiralty proceedings on maritime claims, arrest of vessels and related issues in modern trends in the maritime sector and in uniformity with prevalent international practices.

Salient features of the Bill

- It had been proposed in the Bill to confer admiralty jurisdiction on High Courts of Coastal States. This jurisdiction had been extended to High Courts of Union Territories.
- The Central Government had been empowered to further extend, by notification, to such economic zones or any other maritime zone of India or islands constituting part of the territory of India.
- The Bill also covered every vessel irrespective of place of residence or domicile, within the territorial waters of India and its exclusive economic zone, and naval auxiliary or other vessels used for non-commercial purposes had been kept beyond its purview.
- While extending jurisdiction under construction had been excluded from its application, the Central Government had been empowered to provide for the arrest of vessels also, by a notification, if necessary.
- Provisions had also been made for adjudication of maritime claims and to ensure security against maritime claims, arrest of vessels in certain circumstances.
- Provisions had also been made for inter se priority on maritime liens. It had been provided that in case of concurrent arrest of selected maritime claims on a vessel passed on to its new owners by way of maritime lien subject to a stipulated time limit.
- The Civil Procedure Code, 1908 had been made applicable in respect of aspects on which provisions had not been provided for in the Bill.
- The Bill also dealt with admiralty jurisdiction in personam and the order of priority of maritime claimant.
- It further repealed four archaic admiralty laws on civil matters, namely, (a) the Admiralty Court Act, 1867, (b) the Bombay Courts of Admiralty Act, 1869, (c) the Colonial Courts of Admiralty (India) Act, 1897, and (d) the provisions of the Letters Patent, 1865 so far as it applies to admiralty jurisdiction of the Bombay, Calcutta and Madras High Courts, as those provisions would become redundant with the enactment of this Legislation.

Debate

During the debate on the Bill in Parliament, the Minister-in-charge while piloting the Bill inter alia stated that the Bill was brought forward to amend the old laws and substitute them with the domestic laws. The laws enacted by the British were enacted at a time when India had only three major ports, namely, Mumbai, Madras and Kolkatta ports. As the coastal and maritime trade had expanded a lot in India by the construction of new ports recourse has to be taken to the judicial channels of the respective three High Courts in order to settle disputes falling under the administrative control of the other states as well. Hence, the present Bill was brought to expand the scope and jurisdiction of the High Courts and also with a view to correcting the dilution of admiralty. Members welcomed the Bill as there was an imperative need to have a comprehensive legislation. It was also acknowledged as an important step in improving India’s maritime trade.

The Bill was passed as The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Bill, 2017 (Bill No. 5 of 2017) by the Rajya Sabha on 26 March 2017 and the Lok Sabha on 24 July 2017. The Bill as passed by both Houses of Parliament was assented to by the President of India on 19 July 2017.

The Collection of Statistics (Amendment) Bill, 2017

The Collection of Statistics Act, 2008 was enacted to facilitate the collection of social, economic, demographic, and environment information. Further, it is the responsibility of the Central Government to compile the Central Annual Statement of Official Statistics of United Nations need for accurate statistics. With accurate statistics, schemes could be benefited to a great extent.

As far as unemployment statistics are concerned, there is a need to collect those every year. Similarly, for agriculture too, the frequency needs to be increased to every year so that welfare sector is well facilitated.

The Minister-in-charge of the Bill while replying to the debate addressing points raised by Members, inter alia stated that in regard to right to privacy vis-à-vis data collection, the Government had been guided by the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000. The Bill inserted a new provision accordingly.

The Bill was passed as The Collection of Statistics (Amendment) Bill, 2017 (Bill No. 8 of 2017) by the Rajya Sabha on 27 March 2017 and the Lok Sabha on 14 April 2017.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2017

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2017 is an attempt to amend the existing Act to address the need to bring in several changes to the existing Act.


The Bill was brought forward to give a last opportunity to qualify trained. The Amending Bill had been brought forward to ensure that the teachers are trained and qualified. The Parliamentarian 2017: Issue Four
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