CPA Masterclasses

Online video Masterclasses build an informed parliamentary community across the Commonwealth and promote peer-to-peer learning

CPA Masterclasses are ‘bite sized’ video briefings and analyses of critical policy areas and parliamentary procedural matters by renowned experts that can be accessed by the CPA’s membership of Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff across the Commonwealth ‘on demand’ to support their work.

The CPA Masterclasses are available online to the CPA membership via the CPA website and log-in details for the members area are available from your CPA Branch Secretary or the CPA Headquarters Secretariat.

www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpamasterclasses

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) exists to connect, develop, promote and support Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance, and implement the enduring values of the Commonwealth.

Calendar of Forthcoming Events

Confirmed as of 1 March 2018

2018

March

4 to 8 March CPA Post-Election Seminar for the Parliament of Kenya, Mombasa, Kenya


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

June

15 to 23 June 2018 43rd CPA Regional Conference of the Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Region, Georgetown, Cayman Islands

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.
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Thank you to all contributors for this issue.
The Commonwealth is a diverse community of 53 nations who work together to promote prosperity, democracy and peace. In April, the UK will host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) when leaders from member countries come together in London and Windsor to reaffirm our shared common values and address the global challenges that we all face.

The Commonwealth theme for 2018 is ‘Towards a Common Future’ and the CHOGM this year will focus on delivering a peaceful, prosperous, secure, sustainable and fairer future for all its citizens, particularly its young people. The future of the Commonwealth depends on its one billion young people and the CHOGM’s priorities will have a strong youth focus.

Across the Commonwealth, we all face common challenges: global trade and investment; cross-border security threats; the effects of climate change on vulnerable countries; pressures on the shared Commonwealth values of democracy, good governance and inclusivity.

Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association’s membership will come together with heads of government, global leaders, business executives, civil society groups, international and women’s organisations and youth people for a Commonwealth Summit that also includes four Forums. The Forums – Business, People’s, Women’s and Youth – offer an opportunity for Commonwealth dialogue and provide a platform for a wider debate of the key issues and challenges, in advance of and alongside the discussions by leaders at CHOGM. For the first time, all of the Commonwealth Forums will come together in the same venue on a single day to discuss shared agendas, forge important new partnerships and celebrate common interests.

The Commonwealth’s wide network of organisations – from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians through to the Commonwealth Youth Council and the Royal Commonwealth Society – give the Commonwealth a unique role in responding to the world’s global challenges.

This issue of The Parliamentarian looks ahead to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2018 and Commonwealth Summit in the United Kingdom with a wide range of articles from Parliamentarians and Commonwealth organisations.

We are delighted to feature a message from the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC, ahead of CHOGM 2018. Rt Hon. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, the UK Minister for the Commonwealth looks ahead to the United Kingdom’s hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2018 and the Commonwealth Summit.

Ahead of the CHOGM 2018, the first Commonwealth Parliamentarians’ Forum took place over four days in February in London with 90 delegates from 30 Commonwealth countries. The Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Executive Committee, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Litaka, MP (Cameroun) addressed the Commonwealth Parliamentarians’ Forum and her speech is included in this issue for her first view article in which she speaks about the role that Parliamentarians can play in the Commonwealth. Hon. James Duddridge, MP (United Kingdom), the CPA UK Chairperson also writes about the successful Commonwealth Parliamentarians’ Forum which was hosted by the CPA UK Branch.

Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP, Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches (Malta) asks what the CHOGM 2018 events will hold for CPA Small Branches and that all Branches need to work together to achieve these goals. The CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan in his View article writes about putting democracy at the heart of our common future.

Hon. Njume Peter Ambang, MP (Cameroun) gives us the view of a Parliamentarian looking ahead to CHOGM 2018 while Baroness Elizabeth Berridge (United Kingdom) discusses how the Commonwealth can be a beacon for Freedom of Religion and Belief.

Vijay Krishnarayan (Commonwealth Foundation) looks at the role of civil society groups and their interaction with Parliamentarians as he looks forward to the Commonwealth People’s Forum. Ahead of the Commonwealth Business Forum, Rt Hon. Lord Jonathan Marland of Odstock (Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council) examines how the Commonwealth is becoming one of the world’s leading global business networks. The power and potential of Commonwealth scholarships is explored by Dr Joanna Newman (Association of Commonwealth Universities) which is of increasing importance especially as one of the key focuses of this year’s events is youth.

Mahendra Ved (Commonwealth Journalists Association) gives us a journalist’s view of the Commonwealth and academic Dr Eva Namusoke (Institute of Commonwealth Studies) looks at the challenges of securing a fairer future.

Finally, as the Commonwealth Games 2018 takes place on the Gold Coast, Australia ahead of the CHOGM 2018, David Greervemberg (Commonwealth Games Federation) looks at the developmental role that sport can play in the modern Commonwealth. We also feature a number of different topics in this issue of The Parliamentarian. Joyce Watson, AM (Wales) provides a contribution as the Vice-Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and also as a new member of the Editorial Advisory Board for The Parliamentarian. Her article examines the difficult problems of modern slavery and how the authorities in Wales have been tackling this global issue.

Hon. Dr Jiko Luwum, Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji writes about the CPA Technical Assistance Programme that has benefitted the Members and parliamentary staff in Fiji and has increased parliamentary capacity and awareness.

Climate change expert, Kishan Kumarsingh writes about the Talanoa Dialogue and the next steps for the global community following the Paris COP21 and regular contributor, Ravindra Gari mellia (Lok Sabha Secretariat, India) gives an interesting insight into the whips system in the India Parliament.

This issue features news reports from the 24th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth in Seychelles; the launch of the CPA Roadshows for young people in Cameroon; the 6th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association India Regional Conference in Bihar, and the CPA’s Post-Election Seminar in St Helena, one of the remotest legislatures in the Commonwealth. It also features a report of The Gambia re-joining the Commonwealth.

This issue of The Parliamentarian also features reports of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) recent activities including the launch of a new exhibition in the United Kingdom Parliament celebrating a century of women’s voices; the CWP Africa Region hosting a workshop in Kiwituza/Natali; and the CWP Pacific Regional Monitoring Programme held in New Zealand.

The Parliamentary Report and Third Reading section in this issue includes parliamentary and legislative news from Canada Federal, Quebec, British Columbia, India, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Sri Lanka and Australia Federals.

We look forward to hearing your feedback and comments on this issue of The Parliamentarian, on the issues of concern to Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth and to receive your future contributions to this publication.

Jeffrey Hyland
Editor, The Parliamentarian
editor@cpaphq.org
It is with great honour and privilege that I participate in the Commonwealth Parliamentarians’ Forum in my capacity as Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association ahead of preparations for the meeting of the Heads of Governments of the Commonwealth, scheduled to take place in April this year.

Prior to the formation of the Commonwealth, there have always been shared values; some of which stem from the fabric of our societies and cultures and others which were learned from our various and continuous interactions across cultures. Today, those values - Fairness, Prosperity, Unity, Democracy, Freedom of speech, the Rule of Law and Good Governance amongst others - are embodied by the Commonwealth and remain the driving force in its aim to create a better world. Not just in one state but across nations where human existence strive.

As we evolve as an organisation, so do the different challenges we face. So, while we celebrate our achievements, we should recognise the challenges that we face today as an Association, such as the security threat all over the world, inequality, poverty, hunger, etc. I am confident that, the Commonwealth is a veritable platform for us to unite in order to efficiently and effectively tackle the issues. Today and during the next three days, our resolve will be address some of these issues and map out a path to an attainable future.

The reminiscence of the journey which began officially in 1949 still holds great memories of our accomplishments, as we navigate the present, there is bright hope for the future.

Fairness, prosperity, security and sustainable development

Fairness to me is the key to prosperity, security and sustainable development. Fairness can be considered an impartial and just treatment or behaviour without favouritism or discrimination. Simply put, it’s just being reasonable and doing the right thing. There can be no peace without fairness, there can be no meaningful development without peace, there can be no security without peace, and therefore, no nation can prosper without fairness, peace and security. Therefore, our nations can only attain their Sustainable Development Goals when all the above are in place. A just society gives a more secure environment and a well-planned future. All of these begin with the Legislators that we are.

Every nation must work to maintain a sustainable development that meets our needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Sustainability therefore, requires capacity building. It is for this reason and many more that the United Nations and many of our member states agreed to design a framework of Sustainable Development Goals which addresses a range of developmental issues that still persist.

All over the globe, security has been a constant plagueing factor. From financial security with the economic meltdown in most African countries and other nations across the globe to terrorism, which have both caused a massive wave of migration and, hence, the refugee crisis. Violent conflicts in some parts of Africa and elsewhere, which include terrorism and the spread of extremist organisations that operate like loose networks and pose a threat to nations around the world. From another perspective, domestic violence against women and children still persist.

While all these principles of socio-economic theory may seem to have different definitions, the success of one depends largely on the interdependence on the outcome of each goes to demonstrate the urgent need for us to use this organisation to stir the world in the right direction.

Why the Commonwealth? What is its relevance today?

The Commonwealth to some may seem to mean all member states have the same bank account or should have similar living standards. The name Commonwealth however, goes beyond the ordinary. Our diversity is our strength and our shared values our propeller to the future.

Educator and keynote speaker Stephen Covey said: “Strength lies in differences, not similarities.” As an organisation, we are 53 nations, 2.4 billion inhabitants and over 2,000 cultures strong. That to me is what continues to make the Commonwealth relevant. It’s why we are gathered here today and it’s why, if a definite solution to global warming, peace and security, fairness and prosperity is ever to be found, it should be discussed extensively during this forum and beyond.

In an ever-changing, growing and challenging world, it is imperative not to forget the relevance of this prestigious organisation in general and the role of each and every nation in building and shaping a better world and future leaders. From finding new and improved techniques to promoting sustainable development to network governance and the role of the big society.

Sharing what works, scaling ideas and initiatives and promoting Sustainable Development

Over the next three years, my focus as CPA Chairperson will be: on: first working to increase the collaboration (at the CPA level) within member states through constant communication and networking geared towards sharing our various experiences to help improve policy learning and transferability and improve Parliamentarians’ insight about ‘what works’ across the CPA through the use of the CPA Masterclasses to address issues that are common to member states.

Secondly, scaling existing ideas and initiatives through capacity building methods such as more training conferences and a follow-up on awarded scholarships, encouraging my fellow Parliamentarians to work closely with their communities so we can tackle these issues from the ground up and investing in our youths through diverse workshops and scholarship programmes.

Third, collaborating in promoting sustainable development by increasing our efforts in making more practical policy decisions, sharing the stories of our triumphs and failures but most importantly to never stop performing what our duties are, which is dedicating ourselves to our shared vision and purpose. For us to have come this far is definitely indicative that we have been doing a lot of things right. Allow me to quote Andrew Carnegie, the renowned Scottish-American industrialist: “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organisational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.”

We are all fingers of the same hand, the Commonwealth. I urge each and every one of us to work to strengthen our collective vision and never cease in our relentless efforts to keep growing and impacting positive change. The road might be rough and the journey long. But I can guarantee you, as long as we walk that road together, we would push and even surpass our limits.

Strengthening the role of Parliamentarians in addressing these challenges

Heads of State can involve Parliamentarians in the discussion of key issues before such issues are made into policy or binding instruments in particular, like international conventions that require ratification by Parliaments. On issues of safety and security as well as peace-building and maintenance, it is important to involve the Legislatures and Parliaments so as to enforce pro-active laws rather than re-active ones.

To strengthen Parliamentarians work, adequate resources for research and capacity building of Parliamentarians remains key.

While thanking my colleagues for placing their confidence on my modest person to lead the CPA, I wish to reiterate my commitment to work in close collaboration with the CPA Secretary-General and his team, the nine regions that make up the Association and all other parts of the Commonwealth to push forward our agenda.

Finally, I wish to thank the CPA UK Branch for inviting me to this very important gathering which, judging from the selected themes promises to be very enriching.

CPA UK Chairperson, fellow panellists, Honourable Members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank you all for your kind attention.

This article is taken from a keynote speech given by the CPA Chairperson at the opening panel session at the Commonwealth Parliamentarians Forum, ahead of the 2018 CHOGM/Commonwealth Summit, which took place in London, United Kingdom from 26 February to 1 March 2018, organised by the CPA UK Branch and the UK Government.
A COMMON FUTURE: WHAT’S IN IT FOR CPA SMALL BRANCHES?

View from the CPA Small Branches Chairperson

HON. ANGELO FARRUGIA, MP, CHAIRPERSON OF THE CPA SMALL BRANCHES AND SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PARLIAMENT OF MALTA.

This is one of the main areas which will be tackled once the Strategic Plan of the CPA Small Branches is approved and launched later this year, following the CPA Executive Committee meeting in Mauritius. Building resilience among our States and Branches should give us a stronger voice and channel our strength as a team.

Furthermore, during the 36th CPA Small Branches Conference held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in November 2017, we were in unanimous agreement that security in our respective Branches is very high on the agenda, where we as legislators are facing an ongoing battle against terrorism, cybercrime and organised crime, both internally and internationally.

The promotion of diversity and good governance remain a horizontal challenge amongst our Branches. With regard to the latter, CPA Branches need to be in a position to ascertain that any measures taken by the respective governments are such that they are being taken to ensure the greater good and not to advance the cause of some instead of others.

Another challenge will be that of supporting the growth of intra-Commonwealth trade, especially since the United Kingdom will possibly be facing new economic challenges in the light of the upcoming ‘Brexit’ negotiations. The new situation Britain will find itself in, should be turned into new opportunities for the Commonwealth to strengthen ties and explore new avenues of trade.

CHOGM 2018 and its fringe activities including the Commonwealth Parliamentarians’ Forum and the social fora should be a good occasion to network and share experiences. The CPA Small Branches have acknowledged the fact that we have made the past CHOGM possible, that we are waiting on you to deliver.

To forward the spirit of this statement, I urge all the CPA Branches, large or small, to support one another and create a common goal so that we can all move on as one, to reach out to one another in order to build a common future together, enshrined within the same principles that brought the Commonwealth together in the first place, amongst which democracy, international peace and security, tolerance, respect and understanding, freedom of expression and good governance, amongst others.

I firmly believe that a ‘Common Future’ is achievable by seizing new opportunities for strengthening existing ties among the Commonwealth countries. May this not only be a slogan or a cliché, but the target which translates our present actions into our future successes.

Never has there been a more opportune moment to make full use of the slogan of this year’s CHOGM: ‘Advantage Commonwealth’. It is the time when the Commonwealth can be a force for good. To protect our Commonwealth, we have to change it. To make our Commonwealth relevant, states must start pushing one another to change and to improve. It is in the interests of all Commonwealth states to do this. The UK is particularly keen on using CHOGM 2018 to bring the Commonwealth back into relevance. I call on all of you across our Commonwealth to be bold and truly to be a force for good. Your Commonwealth, my Commonwealth and our Commonwealth are waiting on you to deliver.*

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Above: The future of the Commonwealth depends on its one billion young people. The Commonwealth Youth Forum 2018 will provide an opportunity for the young people of the Commonwealth to build cross-cultural connections and networks, debate the challenges facing their young people, and agree youth-lead initiatives to influence decision makers and ensure young people have a voice in its future.

The long awaited theme of the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) ‘Towards a Common Future’ was announced by the British Prime Minister, Rit Johnson, Theresa May in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly Meetings in New York. The theme forms the basis for discussions at this year’s Commonwealth Summit, the biennial meeting of Commonwealth leaders last hosted by the UK in 1997. The timing could not be more auspicious, coming against a backdrop of Brexit and a UK pivot towards a ‘wider world’ foreign policy.

Expectations are running high for a successful Summit which it is hoped will renew and revitalise the UK’s trading relationship, amongst other areas, with the Commonwealth family while raising the bloc’s profile in the UK especially amongst young people who are mostly unaware of the nature and benefits of belonging to the world’s oldest political Association.

In a 2015 poll of British school children conducted by the Royal Commonwealth Society, only 7% could identify a Commonwealth flag; only 23% could correctly select three Commonwealth countries; and only 50% could correctly identify the Queen as the Head of the Commonwealth.

With approximately 60% of the Commonwealth’s 2.4 billion citizens across its 53 countries currently under the age of 30 years, the importance of young people identifying with the Commonwealth and embracing its values is now urgent and pressing. This is why the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) has led the way through its innovative CPA Roadshows for young people which visit schools and universities across the Commonwealth with Parliamentarians to discuss the importance of democracy and to give voice to the views of our young people.

According to UK Prime Minister May, the 2018 Commonwealth Summit will pursue an ambitious agenda focused on realising a more prosperous, secure, fair and sustainable future for all Commonwealth citizens. Importantly, at a time when trust in government and public institutions is falling, the challenge for Commonwealth leaders will be to lift the Commonwealth Summit from just another international junket into a dynamic empowering global force for good that captures the imagination of all citizens, is transformative of Commonwealth values for their benefit, and which champions change for the marginalised and excluded in our societies while celebrating inclusion and diversity in all its forms, whether based on gender, race, ethnicity, cultural or sexual orientation.

The high watermark of the Commonwealth proudly standing against the scourge of apartheid in support of its peoples’ needs to be re-ignited again in the 21st century with the Commonwealth positioning itself strongly and unequivocally beside its citizens in the fight against climate change and the inequities and inequalities that cause so much poverty and injustice in our societies, especially in our small and vulnerable states, which make up over 30 of the Commonwealth’s 53 nations.

Central to realising the Summit outcomes lies the key role of Commonwealth Parliaments. Parliaments are unique institutions sitting at the centre of a network of accountability that reaches into the executive and other branches of government, the political party system and to the public. No two Parliaments are the same as each will reflect their own unique historical evolution, but what all Parliaments have in common is a capacity to strengthen democracy by acting as powerful agents of change for the improvement of their nations.

In our Commonwealth, it is the role of Parliaments and our elected representatives to forge, develop and implement the Summit outcomes which should align themselves with the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals. These goals underscore the importance of the close relationship between democracy and development. As the former UNDP Administrator, Helen Clark has stated, the principles which underpin the new development goals go directly to the importance of active, effective, honest and fair governance at all levels and lying at the core of a flourishing democracy are the values of good governance.

As a guarantor of democracy itself, Parliament has a duty to represent ordinary citizens, the young and old, women and men, academics, Parliamentarians and governments to come together in support of democracy as a central tenet of our common future. A keen focus on realising the development outcomes of the Summit will be essential to renewing and revitalising the credibility of the Commonwealth in the minds of ordinary citizens, many of whom have been left behind by globalisation and yet to feel the tangible benefits of belonging to this longstanding ‘sleeping beauty’ of a political association, especially if the Commonwealth is to survive for future generations.

The high watermark of the Commonwealth proudly standing against the scourge of apartheid in support of its peoples’ needs to be re-ignited again in the 21st century with the Commonwealth positioning itself strongly and unequivocally beside its citizens in the fight against climate change and the inequities and inequalities that cause so much poverty and injustice in our societies, especially in our small and vulnerable states, which make up over 30 of the Commonwealth’s 53 nations.”

A version of this article was published in November 2017 in the Bangladesh Daily Star on the eve of the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

View from the 7th CPA Secretary-General

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The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

CPA Photo Gallery

Right: The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Hon. Darryl Plecas, MLA and the Clerk of the House, Mr Craig James met with the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan in London, United Kingdom.

Above and right: CPA Secretary-General Mr Akbar Khan met with the High Commissioner of Kenya to the UK, His Excellency Lazuins O. Amayo to discuss closer collaboration and parliamentary strengthening opportunities between the Kenya Parliament and the CPA. A delegation from the Parliament of Kenya also visited the CPA Headquarters Secretariat ahead of the Kenya Post-Election Seminar.

Below right: The Speaker of the Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly, Hon. W. McKeela Bush visited the CPA Headquarters Secretariat in London to discuss the CPA’s parliamentary strengthening work in the region and youth engagement in democracy. The Speaker met with CPA Director of Operations, Mr Jarvis Matiya and CPA Headquarters Secretariat staff members.

Below: The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Headquarters Secretariat held its annual Commonwealth breakfast event at the Parliament of the United Kingdom for partners and supporters with presentations by the CPA Vice-Chairperson, Hon. Alexandra Mendes, MP (Canada) and the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan to review 2017 activity and to look forward to new projects in 2018.

Below left: The CPA Chairperson, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, accompanied by the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan visited the United Kingdom Parliament and met with Mr David Natzler, Clerk of the House of Commons.

Below: CPA Secretary-General Mr Akbar Khan meets with Hon. Barry Sheerman, MP, Chairman of Leadership Council of the Global Network for Road Safety Legislators and David Ward, Secretary-General, Global NCAP to discuss their work in road safety and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the role of Commonwealth Parliamentarians in Manifesto #4RoadSafety.

Below: Members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly in Pakistan visited the CPA Headquarters Secretariat to discuss the CPA’s Parliamentary Fundamentals Programme on Practice and Procedure and parliamentary strengthening opportunities. The CPA provides programmes for national, sub-national, provincial, state and territorial legislatures to network, share good practice and strengthen the role of Parliament as an institution.

Left: The CPA Chairperson, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, who is also the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon attended the 6th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association India Regional Conference held in Patna, Bihar from 16 to 19 February 2018. She is pictured with the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan and Hon. Robyn Lambley, MLA from the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly who also attended the CPA India Regional Conference. Please see page 16 for full conference report.

Above: The Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, who is also the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon attended the 1st Commonwealth Parliamentary Association India Regional Conference held in Patna, Bihar from 16 to 19 February 2018. She is pictured with the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan and Hon. Robyn Lambley, MLA from the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly who also attended the CPA India Regional Conference. Please see page 16 for full conference report.

Above: The first Commonwealth Parliamentarians Forum opened with a panel discussion featuring (left to right) the UK Minister for the Commonwealth, Rt Hon. Lord Ahmed of Wimbledon; the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC; Hon. James Duddridge, MP, CPA UK Chair; the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr Akbar Khan; and the Deputy President of the Senate of Nigeria, HE Senator Ike Ekweremadu.

Above: CPA Secretary-General Mr Akbar Khan visited the United Kingdom Parliament and met with Mr David Natzler, Clerk of the House of Commons.

Above and right: The Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, who is also the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon attended the 1st Commonwealth Parliamentary Association India Regional Conference held in Patna, Bihar from 16 to 19 February 2018. She is pictured with the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan and Hon. Robyn Lambley, MLA from the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly who also attended the CPA India Regional Conference. Please see page 16 for full conference report.

Above left: The CPA Chairperson, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, gives an interview to Ms Sue Osnlows from The Round Table and Institute of Commonwealth Studies about the modern Commonwealth and the role of the CPA.

Below: CPA Secretary-General Mr Akbar Khan meets with Professor David Everatt, Head of the Wits School of Governance, University of Witwatersrand in South Africa to discuss the university-accredited CPA Parliamentary Fundamentals Flagship Programme for Commonwealth Parliamentarians.

Above: The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon visited the CPA Headquarters Secretariat on her first official visit to the UK since her election to meet with staff and to receive briefings on current projects.
Commonwealth Speakers meet in Seychelles for 24th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth

Over 50 Speakers and Presiding Officers from across the Commonwealth have met in Seychelles for the 24th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) which took place from 8th to 11th January 2018 and was officially opened by the President of the Republic of Seychelles, His Excellency Mr Danny Faure. The CSPOC Conference brought together the Speakers and Presiding Officers of 22 bicameral Parliaments and 30 unicameral Parliaments – a total of 74 members from 52 nations. The Speakers from the Parliaments and Legislatures of the Commonwealth participated in working sessions and plenaries, focusing on different topics of discussions on matters of Parliament; providing a forum for the sharing of parliamentary best practices and fruitful collaborations across the Parliaments of the Commonwealth.

Topics varied from discussions on the use of technology to support Members and house business, touching on subjects concerning methods to improve and benefit the Parliaments through the use of technology; the development of efficient social media channels and website portals to ensure that parliamentary information is accessible not only to the parliamentary Members and staff but also to the public to promote democracy and transparency. Other topics debated included the role of the Speaker in parliamentary diplomacy for both regional and international co-operation, emerging security issues for Parliamentarians as well as strengthening parliamentary research for the effective functioning of legislatures.

In his opening address, President Faure welcomed the delegates to Seychelles and expressed his pride that as a Small Island Developing State, Seychelles was hosting the conference. He highlighted the diversity and fundamental unity of all Commonwealth member states, saying: “We are all committed to the values inscribed in the Commonwealth Charter – democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. We are all dedicated to the development of free and democratic societies, and the promotion of peace and prosperity to improve the lives of our people.”

The President also expanded on the successful cohabitation in Seychelles, saying: “The Seychelles National Assembly as an essential branch of Government has transformed into an exemplary institution in the region. There are vibrant debates of divergent views, but there is also a new working environment; one where there is dialogue and consultation. And most importantly, mutual respect.

Under the leadership of Honourable Speaker Patrick Pillay, our National Assembly has seen greater transparency, openness and accountability. The sittings are broadcast live on both television and radio. Through modern technology, citizens are able to directly contact their respective representatives while the debates are taking place, making use of platforms such as WhatsApp and social media. This is permissible by our Speaker. As for the Executive Branch, members of my Cabinet make themselves available to take Private Members’ questions from the Leader of the Opposition, and both urgent and 10-days’ notice questions from Members of the National Assembly,” said the President.

The Speaker of the National Assembly of Seychelles, Hon. Patrick Pillay, welcomed the delegates and encouraged them to experience the Seychelles’ unique local culture. Hon. Patrick Pillay also highlighted the work of the National Assembly of Seychelles that has seen greater transparency, openness and accountability. As per the tradition of the CSPOC opening ceremony, the assembled Speakers and Presiding Officers, led by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Seychelles and the Sergeant at Arms, participated in the official Speaker’s Procession in their ceremonial robes.

The Conference, being held in Seychelles for the first time, brings together the Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Parliaments and Legislatures of the Commonwealth. CSPOC operates on a two-year cycle, holding a conference of the full membership every two years. It focuses on the sharing of experiences, collaboration, and partnership across the Parliaments of the Commonwealth. CSPOC was created in 1969 and is a separate independent organisation, although many of its participants are also Members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Executive Committee, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, who is also the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon also attended the Conference and observed the working sessions. The Speakers and Presiding Officers, accompanied by their Clerks and Parliamentary officials, also visited the Parliamentary Museum and the Chamber of the National Assembly of Seychelles.

The visit was an educational tour where the Delegates had an insight into the functioning of the Assembly. Delegates also attended a reception by the President at the State House and a reception with the British High Commissioner, HE Caron Roshler.

The visit was a wonderful experience for me – meeting the Secretary-General and Madam Lifaka was unforgettable. The Secretary-General talked about the values of respect, tolerance, love and equity and I have also heard about democracy, parliament and being a good citizen and to be well educated because it’s our future.”

Chairperson builds new three year strategy for CPA as she launches CPA Roadshow for young people in Cameroon with CPA Secretary-General

The new Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Executive Committee, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP is building a new three year strategy for her term of office as she welcomed the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Akbar Khan to Cameroon on his first official visit since the Chairperson was elected in November 2017. During the working visit, the CPA Chairperson, who is also the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon, welcomed the Secretary-General to the Parliament of Cameroon.

The CPA Secretary-General held a number of bilateral meetings including: His Excellency Philemon Yang, the Prime Minister of Cameroon; His Excellency Dr Joseph Dion Ngute, Minister Delegate in Charge of Relations with the Commonwealth; Hon. Marcel Niat Njifenj, President of the Senate. The CPA Secretary-General also met with Members of the CPA Cameroon Branch. During his stay in Cameroon, the Secretary-General also met with His Majesty Chief Tabetandjo, President of CPDM Parliamentary Group of the Senate.

The CPA Chairperson and the CPA Secretary-General then travelled to Buea, the capital of the Southwest region of Cameroon and one of the English-speaking regions of the country. Following their arrival, the CPA delegation met with the Governor of the Southwest region before travelling to the Government Bilingual High School at Limbe to launch the CPA Roadshows for Young People for the first time in Cameroon. The school is a secondary grammar school and over 200 students from eight local government schools aged 12 to 18 attended the CPA Roadshow.

An engaging CPA Roadshow session was held providing an opportunity for the young people to learn about the political values of the Commonwealth such as diversity, development and parliamentary democracy; to discuss issues of concern about the society in which they live; and to find out about the work of the CPA through their questions at the session.

The CPA Roadshows highlight 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 Roadshows held in Cameroon also provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the 2018 Commonwealth Summit due to be held in the UK in April 2018 on the theme of ‘Towards a Common Future’.

The CPA Secretary-General said: “I am delighted to visit Cameroon to launch the CPA Roadshow for Young People here with the CPA Chairperson and to engage with local students on the values that unite the Commonwealth. The CPA’s public engagement work across the Commonwealth and engaging young people in the democratic process by discussing the importance of the Commonwealth are key objectives of the CPA and our visit to Cameroon has emphasised this.”

Feedback from the audience was very positive with one student remarking: “The CPA Roadshow was a wonderful experience for me – meeting the Secretary-General and Madam Lifaka was unforgettable. The Secretary-General talked about the values of respect, tolerance, love and equity and I have also heard about democracy, parliament and being a good citizen and to be well educated because it’s our future.”
Renewed focus on sustainable development goals and re-commitment to the independence of the legislature at 6th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

India Regional Conference

Over 100 Commonwealth Parliamentarians from across India have renewed their focus on Parliament’s role in the sustainable development agenda and reaffirmed their commitment to the separation of powers between the legislature, the judiciary and the executive at the 6th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) India Regional Conference held in Patna, Bihar from 16 to 19 February 2018.

The Chairperson of the CPA India Region and Speaker of the Lok Sabha, India Parliament, Hon. Sumitra Mahajan, MP reaffirmed the independence of the legislature and stressed the importance of good relations with the judiciary by saying: “In a parliamentary democracy, the legislative assembly plays a vital role... the judiciary and the executive are equally important. They are the pillars of democracy and a balance between them is of high importance. Neither can be ignored.” The CPA India Regional Chairperson also announced that four new regional zones would be created in the India Region to conduct zonal regional seminars and conferences for legislators to interact with each regularly across the country in between the biennial CPA India Regional Conference.

The new Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, addressed Members at the opening ceremony. The CPA Chairperson said that Parliamentarians must be part of the sustainable development agenda as they can play a vital role in its implementation. She also expressed her delight that her first official overseas conference as the new Chairperson of the CPA India Region can be a role model for the many regions of the Commonwealth. Representatives also attended from Uganda, Australia and other Commonwealth countries.

To see highlights of the closing ceremony please visit: https://youtu.be/xda9EjxWfJE.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association embeds good governance and democracy in St Helena, one of the remotest legislatures in the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) has helped to strengthen parliamentary practice and procedure for the St Helena Legislature following the recent elections in July 2017 through a CPA Post-Election Seminar for newly elected Members to 20 to 27 January 2018. One of the remotest legislatures in the CPA’s membership of over 180 Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures, the St Helena Legislature is in the British Overseas Territory located on a small island in the Atlantic Ocean with a population of 4,500 people.

On 26 July 2017 St Helena held transparent, free and fair elections which demonstrated the Territory’s commitment to the democratic ideals and standards upon which the Commonwealth is founded and the ideals enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter.

The CPA is the only Commonwealth body that works to strengthen territorial assemblies and legislatures such as the St Helena Legislative Council as well as working with national, state and provincial legislatures. The CPA provides a key platform to develop good parliamentary practice in St Helena and other self-governing UK Overseas Territories and to share good practice between similar legislatures across the Commonwealth.

The CPA Post-Election Seminar saw Members of the St Helena Legislature provided with an excellent opportunity to ask questions about parliamentary practice and procedure. It provided Members with a better understanding of the parliamentary system and democratic processes in other Commonwealth jurisdictions. The seminar was opened by Hon. Eric Benjamin, MLC, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of St Helena and Her Excellency Lisa Phillips, Governor of St Helena. Hon. Derek Thomas, MLC, former CPA Executive Committee Member, and Ms Meenakshi Dhar, on behalf of the CPA Headquarters Secretariat made addresses. Commitment to improving democratic processes in the legislature was demonstrated by the active participation in the seminar of Councillors, both new and those returning to the House.

The five newly elected and seven returning Councillors heard from experts from across the Commonwealth at the CPA Post-Election Seminar including: Hon. Barry House, Former President of the Legislative Council of Western Australia; Mr Roger Phillips, Clerk of Tynwald, Secretary of the House of Keys and Counsel to the Speaker, Isle of Man and the Attorney-General from St Helena. The CPA Secretary-General, Mr Aklab Khan, in a message delivered on his behalf by Ms Meenakshi Dhar from the CPA Headquarters Secretariat, said: “The CPA Post-Election Seminar in St Helena demonstrates the CPA’s commitment to our Small Branches and to the territorial legislatures that we represent. The CPA Post-Election Seminar is emblematic of the mutuality of learning among CPA members, small and large, which is so much part of the life blood of the CPA family. I am delighted that the CPA is able to share good practice with local Members on such the i m p o r t a n c e of 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. This peer-to-peer learning and bringing together of expertise from across the Commonwealth, goes to the heart of the CPA’s key strength as an Association.”

Hon. Eric Benjamin, Speaker of the Legislature said in his closing remarks: “The week-long Seminar has been educational and greatly beneficial as Councillors have engaged in constructive exchanges with the visiting CPA resource team who have shared with us how different Legislatures across the Commonwealth operate. I believe that Councillors will reflect on how some of the ideas shared can be implemented here in the House to help improve the way in which we function and better represent the people of St Helena.”

Following the CPA Post-Election Seminar, the CPA Roadshow for Young People was launched at Prince Andrews School in St Helena as part of the CPA Roadshows tour of Commonwealth schools and universities. Over 300 students discussed the importance of the Commonwealth and parliamentary democracy with the visiting CPA delegation and local Councillors, Derek Thomas, Christine Scipio-O’Dea and Cruyff Buckley. The CPA Roadshows provide an opportunity for young people to learn about the political values of the Commonwealth such as diversity, development and parliamentary democracy, the role of St Helena Councillors in representing the population of 4,500 people.
The Commonwealth is about involvement and inclusiveness. It works, and makes other things work better, because our people share ideas at every level. We co-operate, provide mutual support, and are able to work together easily and rise above difference and division because shared inheritances have made our systems of law, government, and education very similar, and we speak a common language. Above all, we are committed to the values of the Commonwealth Charter: democracy, development, sustainability, and respect for the rights of all.

April 2018 promises to be one of the most momentous months in modern Commonwealth history and development. First there will be the Commonwealth Games in the Gold Coast, Australia, bringing together thousands of athletes from across Commonwealth nations and territories set in every continent and ocean. Their diversity, and the goodwill of sporting competition at the ‘friendly games’ will for the millions watching be a showcase of everything the Commonwealth is and does.

The focus then shifts immediately to the other side of the world, from Australia to the United Kingdom, for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. This speaks eloquently of the range and reach of the Commonwealth. From the Pacific to Europe, from Africa and Asia to the Caribbean and the Americas, the people of the Commonwealth connect and work together at multiple levels and for many purposes, yet with shared goals and towards a common future.

The summit meeting of the leaders of the 53 independent countries of the Commonwealth family shows the cooperation and commitment at its highest level – including to agree a Commonwealth Blue Charter to protect our oceans, and to serve the needs of the marginalised and vulnerable by building resilience. The focus will be on working towards a future that is fairer, more prosperous, more sustainable, and more secure. Alongside the Heads of Government Meeting, there will be Commonwealth forums for youth, women, business and civil society.

This range, this connection, the inclusiveness and vitality, attract participation by Parliamentarians and students, human rights defenders and investors, advocates for social and economic change, health workers and environmental campaigners - there is room for everyone. Wherever we live, learn, work or play in the Commonwealth, there are ways for each of us to become involved and to celebrate our Commonwealth identity by connecting with others and working towards a common future.

The country’s application was unanimously supported by the previous 52 member states and The Gambia will now be invited to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April 2018 in London.

Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC said, “When The Gambia left in 2013, the heads of government expressed their regret in its leaving the Commonwealth family. We’ve looked forward to The Gambia’s return and were delighted when, after his election victory in December 2016, President Barrow pledged to return. The Gambia’s application to re-join has been unanimously accepted by all 52 member states, who welcome back their brothers and sisters to again play their full part in the Commonwealth family.”

With thanks to the Commonwealth Secretariat for news story and images.
As the UK’s Minister for the Commonwealth, it gives me great pleasure to contribute to this special issue of The Parliamentarian, in advance of the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) here in London in April.

It promises to be a month of wonderful celebration of the modern Commonwealth. It will start with two weeks of Commonwealth Games on Australia’s Gold Coast, where athletes from 70 nations and territories will gather for a festival of elite international sport. The Games will be followed by the week of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting here in the UK, concluding with celebrations across the Commonwealth to mark the 92nd birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on Saturday 21 April, and her incredible service to the Commonwealth family over more than 60 years.

As host country, we in the UK have the privilege of welcoming national leaders, foreign ministers, business people, civil society representatives, and, perhaps most importantly, young people from every corner of the Commonwealth to our country for the summit.

We are particularly delighted to also be welcoming our friends from The Gambia to London, following their return to the Commonwealth in February. I had the great privilege of visiting The Gambia a week after the country officially rejoined this wonderful association, where I was delighted to present His Excellency President Adama Barrow with a formal invitation to the summit from our Prime Minister, Rt Hon, Theresa May, MP.

We are proud to see The Gambian flag flying, once again, outside Marlborough House. Their delegation will be welcome guests in London and we will join me in congratulating them on their successful return to the Commonwealth.

The summit provides the 53 members of the Commonwealth with the opportunity to build upon the important work started in Malta in 2015 of rejuvenating this incredible organisation for the 21st century, to make it relevant to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth has deep roots and profound strengths. Over seven decades, it has helped newly-independent countries develop their national institutions, make economic progress and share common experiences through the networks across a range of areas and disciplines.

Home to one third of the world’s population, some of its fastest growing economies and accounting for one-fifth of global trade, the Commonwealth is an exceptional 21st century network. It has a tremendously diverse membership which shares a belief in being a united force for good in a turbulent world.

With two thirds of its population under the age of 30, it also has extraordinary potential for global influence. We are particularly delighted to see the four Commonwealth Young Leaders’ Forums that will start the week – on Business, People, Youth and Women – demonstrate this well. Taking place over three days, these will offer an opportunity for people from across the Commonwealth to come together and debate some of the key issues and challenges facing us all. For the first time, all four forums will convene in the same venue for one of the days, allowing cross-over between the delegates, speakers and discussions.

The UK appreciates the excellent work that is being done by the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat to organise and prepare for these important events.

The forums will be followed by meetings of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers and the official Heads of Government Meeting. These will take place in Lancaster House, Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, which Her Majesty The Queen has graciously offered as the location for the Leaders’ Retreat on the Friday of summit week.

This will be one of the largest gatherings of national leaders that the UK has ever hosted. However, as we all know, the Commonwealth is much more than simply a collection of member states and a secretariat. The third element of the Commonwealth is the network of links between its people. Indeed, we in the UK believe that one of the Commonwealth’s greatest strengths lies in the many institutions and people who work together across our borders.

These connections are often organised by the more than 80 organisations that are officially accredited to the Commonwealth and the vibrant diaspora communities that exist across it. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is an outstanding example of the power of this third pillar.

One of the Commonwealth’s fundamental values is a commitment to representative democracy, as outlined in Article 1 of the Commonwealth Charter. For more than a century, CPA Branches have upheld this commitment acting as a powerful voice and advocate for Parliaments across the Commonwealth

The fact that CPA now works with over 180 Parliaments and legislatures and its 17,000 members is a testament to how successful you have been in pursuing this mission.

By enabling the Commonwealth’s political leaders to share their varied experiences, your efforts strengthen and enhance standards of governance around the world and, as a result, help to improve standards of living for all Commonwealth citizens.

I was delighted to see this important work first-hand during the recent Commonwealth Parliamentary Associations’ Forum hosted by the CPA UK Branch in London.

The gathering meeting fifty-nine delegates from over thirty Commonwealth Parliaments the opportunity to discuss a range of issues around the four areas that leaders will focus on in April. Importantly, it has also provided those Parliamentarians with a chance to raise awareness of the summit and influence their national debates ahead of it.

While the voices of today were busy in London, the voices of tomorrow were making themselves heard in the ninth Commonwealth Youth Parliament in Jersey. This annual programme has firmly established itself in the CPA calendar as an opportunity for young people from across the Commonwealth to network with like-minded peers and get a feel for what it is like to sit in a democratic Parliament.

As I saw such an impressive and diverse mix of Parliamentarians gather for the forum in London, I was reminded of the power of the Commonwealth in the 21st century: as a global network of people and countries united by their shared values and common hopes for the future.

This April will be a moment for all of us, from every corner of the Commonwealth, to demonstrate the positive role this network must play in bringing about a more peaceful, progressive and prosperous world.

It was Eleanor Roosevelt who famously said: “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

The beauty of the Commonwealth is clear for all to see. I hope we can work together to help turn this ambition into a reality. We look forward to welcoming the Commonwealth family of nations to London!
FIRST COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS’ FORUM HELD AHEAD OF CHOGM 2018

hon. james dudridge, mp

is the Chair of the
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch (CPA UK). Since 2005, he has been the MP for Rochford & Southend East. Before politics, he pursued a successful business career in the private sector and was a banker with Barclays private sector and was a banker with Barclays London and in Africa, working in the Ivy Coast and Botswana. He was also a founding member of the highly successful international polling firm YouGov. He has held positions in government as a Government Whip and was Foreign Office Minister between 2014 and 2016.

During a cold and snowy week in the United Kingdom, nearly 100 Commonwealth Parliamentarians and youth delegates arrived in London for the first ever Commonwealth Parliamentarians’ Forum, hosted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK (CPA UK). It was the first time that Parliamentarians were given the space to explore and discuss the themes and issues ahead of an upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), which will take place in April this year.

The UK-hosted CHOGM 2018 will see leaders from member countries of the Commonwealth convene in Windsor and London to reaffirm our common values, address the global challenges we face, and agree how to work to create a better future for all of our citizens. With 53 independent countries and 2.4 billion people, of which 60% are below the age of 30, it is no surprise that this issue is one of the main priorities of this meeting.

The Forum brought out and shared best practice among Commonwealth Parliamentarians in a way that has not happened before. There were opportunities to collaborate, to apply new learning, and to grow networks.

The Speaker of the UK House of Commons, Rt Hon. John Bercow, MP hosted an evening reception enabling delegates to network and hear from the UK Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon. Boris Johnson, MP, in a speech on the future of the Commonwealth.

Later that week, delegates also heard from other high-profile speakers including the Leader of the UK Opposition, Rt Hon. Jeremy Corbyn, MP and Amb. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Forum not only brought together Parliamentarians, but also 11 bright and ambitious youth delegates, highlighting the significance of a future-oriented and renewed Commonwealth.

Hearing their perspectives on pressing issues was both refreshing and energising; it kept the youth focus of the Commonwealth at the heart of discussions and sessions, and held Parliamentarians accountable.

I chaired the opening panel session of the Forum and there was a clear message from the guest speakers: that the Commonwealth holds significant value, whether historical or future-oriented, for all Parliamentarians and all citizens within its 53 nations.

The guest panelists had unique roles within the Commonwealth, including: the UK Minister for the Commonwealth, Rt Hon. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC; the Deputy President of the Senate of Nigeria, HE Senator Ike Elueremadu, and the newly-elected Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Hon. Emilia Lilika, MP (Cameroon), who reminded delegates of our shared principles and allegiance to the Commonwealth Charter.

The Charter was the subject of a mock chamber debate. Its relevance and challenges were discussed allowing both Parliamentarians and youth delegates to air constructive thoughts and ideas on how to improve the Commonwealth in practice. Insightful suggestions were made about reforming the language of the Charter in order to integrate gender equality as a key principle.

As one of the three cross-cutting themes, gender equality was cleverly woven in throughout the Forum. It wasn’t discussed as an isolated subject but rather an area that should be represented throughout, as with the other two cross-cutting themes of inclusivity and youth.

As Parliamentarians, we have a mandate to represent citizens from all walks of life and to ensure they get the best possible standard of living. We do this by holding the government of the day to account on matters such as the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Whether it means forming Implementation Committees or involving Parliamentarians in the scrutiny and reviews of international conventions, the Forum enabled Parliamentarians to generate and share these parliamentary strengthening ideas.

Transparency emerged as a recurring theme, and for good reason. Our relationships with our constituents define our roles. It is essential that we relay information to our constituents with transparency in order to build that foundation of trust. UK Parliamentarian, Rt Hon. Maria Miller, MP, Chairperson of the Women and Equalities Select Committee, made an important point about how our engagement should extend beyond our voter base into schools and among young people who are beginning to learn about how Parliament functions. Our roles should not be on a pedestal but understood widely amongst our communities and particularly those groups who are underserved by their current government.

During a session on governmental strengthening ideas, transparency was the key theme, therefore, not only for purposes of engaging our constituents and building relationships with those who we represent. It is also crucial to the way we measure and monitor our work and that of the government. Evidence-based findings have become the gold standard for information.

By the start of the third day, specific topics were given well-deserved focus: climate change, global health, conflict prevention, modern slavery and more. The split sessions enabled delegates to delve deeper into subjects of their choice ranging from global health, peace and security, inclusivity and freedom of religion. On another day these subjects included: youth engagement, legislative change and smarter and more inclusive cities.

It was clear that climate change was at the top of the agenda for many of the island nations, as they bear the brunt of...
Its damage yet receive minimal funding to support their green initiatives. When delegates had the chance to witness each other’s pitches and pleas on the final day, it became clear that a concrete take-away of the Forum would be an initiative to take action on climate change proposed by a youth delegate and sponsored by a Parliamentarian from the Cayman Islands. A letter is being sent to the UK Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Theresa May, MP, as the current Chair of the Commonwealth, which has been signed by over 50 Commonwealth delegates calling for a Climate Change Committee to be formed.

A session dedicated to young people explored representation and whether youth should be considered as a demographic or generation. Seeing the readiness of our parliamentary experience, or in spite of it?

One of my highlights of the week was spending the week building a mural of ‘Possibilities’ where we rely on one another’s strengths. Anna Geyer from New Possiblities spent the week. Left: UK Leader of the Opposition, Rt Hon. Jeremy Corbyn, MP addresses delegates at the first Commonwealth Parliamentarians Forum.

One of my highlights of the week was spending the week building a mural of ‘Possibilities’ where we rely on one another’s strengths. Anna Geyer from New Possibilities spent the week. Left: UK Leader of the Opposition, Rt Hon. Jeremy Corbyn, MP addresses delegates at the first Commonwealth Parliamentarians Forum.

The Forum’s varied techniques and whether youth should be considered as a demographic or generation. Seeing the readiness of our parliamentary experience, or in spite of it? Having a vocal youth delegation immediately made us more accountable—we were speaking about our plans for their futures.

One of my highlights of the Forum was the lively session led by Martin Kalungu-Banda, author and Leadership Consultant, who challenged everyone on their views of leadership. After watching a short clip of an orchestra playing, there were conflicting views on who the leader was: the singer or the conductor. This sparked a lively debate. The thought-provoking exercise concluded that leadership should be a shared enterprise where we rely on one another’s strengths. Tong Yee, founder of the Thought Collective, led a self-reflective session that not only set the tone for the rest of the Forum, but using his personality analogies of a ‘Lover, Jester, Warrior and King/Queen’, he also impressively cross-referenced these with the four CHOGM 2018 themes. This exercise allowed everyone in the room, Parliamentarians and youth delegates alike, to better understand their relationships to these themes. Rarely do facilitators manage so effectively to get Parliamentarians to let their guards down!

Throughout the Forum, Parliamentarians were inspired to take an active role in the delivery and implementation of the CHOGM 2018 outcomes, and to ensure that actions are not only proposed, but also concretely followed up on.

Fellow Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth have now returned to their countries, better informed to influence and encourage their respective governments. CHOGM 2018 will take place in April in London and Parliamentarians must now ensure their governments are well-equipped with the views of their democratic institutions in order to effectively represent their citizens.

The next two years will be an opportunity for us in the UK to remind everyone that the Commonwealth is alive and kicking with a secure, sustainable, fair and prosperous future for generations to come.

Now that the first Commonwealth Parliamentarians’ Forum has been a success, we hope there will be a Forum ahead of the next CHOGM in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2020.

DECLARATION OF THE FIRST COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS’ FORUM

CPA UK BRANCH, WESTMINSTER, LONDON, 26 FEBRUARY – 1 MARCH 2018

The UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA UK) hosted the first ever Commonwealth Parliamentarians’ Forum in London, from 26 February to 1 March 2018. 90 delegates from 30 Commonwealth countries met 50 days ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2018, also taking place in London, from 16 April. The following Declaration reflects their discussions and decisions over four stimulating days.

• The Commonwealth and its nations are like a body. Parliamentarians and Parliamentarians are essential to the future health and success of that body.

• The Commonwealth Charter is the essential skeleton for the Commonwealth body. It has as its first core value and principle Democracy; its second Human Rights. The Charter asserts that Parliamentarians are essential elements in the exercise of democratic governance. Delegates committed to playing the roles assigned to them by the Charter, including automating and promoting democratic cultures and practices, and being accountable to the public in this regard. They represent the people, and must reflect the people’s priorities.

• The values and principles of the Charter are the heart of the Commonwealth body. Parliamentarians must help ensure that Commonwealth Governments live up to those values and principles, including the Rule of Law, backed by an independent, impartial, honest and competent judiciary; and Freedom of Expression, including through a free and responsible media. The Latimer Principles remain an excellent basis for ensuring accountability and transparency.

• Parliamentarians can act as the intelligent head of the Commonwealth body. Delegates committed to seeking and sharing the knowledge and information which their people need. They supported the holding of a second Forum, early enough to influence CHOGM 2020.

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• Parliamentarians committed to playing their particular role to support and scrutinise progress by the Commonwealth and its members towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

• Parliamentarians drew inspiration from the presence of youth delegates from a variety of Commonwealth countries. They committed to promoting greater engagement with and by young people in pursuit of the Commonwealth’s values and principles. This should be one example of the Commonwealth’s strength through diversity and inclusivity, as well as through its unity in action.
TOWARDS A COMMON FUTURE: A VIEW FROM A PARLIAMENTARIAN

Hon. Njume Peter Ambang, MP was elected as a Member of the National Assembly of Cameroon in 2013. He was a CPA Cameroon Branch Member who welcomed Parliamentarians for the 60th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Yaoundé in 2014. He was previously a teacher trainer and held several positions in mostly rural areas of Cameroon including Inspector of Primary and Nursery Education of eight sub-divisions and Coordinating Inspector for Primary, Nursery and Teacher Education for the South West Region.

A more prosperous future for its citizens has always remained a constant challenge for the leaders and governments of the world today. To achieve this goal, several strategies are being put in place which include promoting trade and investment as a means to drive economic growth which will lead to job creation and better living conditions for its citizens. This is the common vision of all the member states of the Commonwealth of Nations.

The Commonwealth is home to over 2.4 billion people, making up nearly one third of the world’s population. Of this population, 60% are under the age of 30. These young people need to be guaranteed a better future. The Commonwealth can provide this assurance to its growing young population and make itself a model of a union of a diverse prosperous people in the world. The prosperity of this diverse great Commonwealth family can be guaranteed through the putting into practice of effective and realistic mechanisms that will enable member countries work together as a people with a common future, a common destiny and a common vision.

In the words of Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh: “the strength of our Commonwealth lies in its unity of vision of pluralism, liberalism, democracy and political institutions amid the diversity in race, ethnicity and religion.”

A more prosperous future for our citizens in the Commonwealth can be made possible but will depend greatly on our will to sincerely work together in various domains of policy which will include:

• Creating a multilateral free trade area: During the colonial era, there existed the preferential trade regime within the British Empire among Commonwealth nations under the Imperial Preference System. This system and the great spirit behind it was dismantled after World War Two due to changes in geopolitics and the pattern of global trade, and the United Kingdom’s entry into the European Economic Community. Today, however, due to the evolution of the global economy, the creation of a multilateral free trade era should be given serious consideration as an appropriate response to improving on the economies of member states of the Commonwealth of Nations. Recent statistics show that the 53 Commonwealth members combined exports of goods and services are valued at around US $3.4 trillion (£2.7 trillion), which is about 15% of the world’s total exports. If Commonwealth governments should seek and engage in strengthening dialogue, networking and collaboration on trade and economic issues between member states, a more prosperous future for the citizens of this great family can be a reality.

• Genuine cooperation in the fields of education, fight against corruption and innovative technology: Low-quality education is an endemic problem in most developing countries including those in the Commonwealth. This is one major contributing factor to the poor economic advancement of these countries. Quality education, which is usually measured in terms of cognitive skills, has a very high correlation to economic growth. In fact, a recent study by Hanushek titled: “The Long Run Importance of School Quality” shows large economic gains associated with improvements in education quality. It becomes therefore imperative and compelling for developing Commonwealth countries to start designing policies to improve educational outcomes. Co-operation in this area is very necessary. In fact, developing countries need good schools with good curricula that will provide an enabling environment for students to study and acquire the necessary skills and capacities that will enable them obtain good jobs. The prevalent situation in most developing Commonwealth countries especially in Africa is that where one finds many schools with few and sometimes unqualified teachers, several schools with very poor infrastructure, and schools providing pupils and students with a curriculum that does not enhance the development of critical and creative skills. Such a schooling system does not produce a strong work force. Consequently, we find many young people who are unemployed but have high school and university certificates that do not make them qualified for the job market.

Sustaining economic growth will require fiscal discipline. Corruption, bad governance and the lack of accountability are the its commonly responsible for the dismal economic growth in most sub-Saharan Commonwealth countries. Fighting these ugly forces will greatly contribute to improving economic growth and thus provide more jobs for our growing and young population. Sharing success stories and experiences in these domains among Commonwealth member states is necessary and will encourage the commitment in using the resources of the countries for the general interest of the citizens. The agricultural sector offers the greatest potential for poverty reduction and job creation in most sub-Saharan Commonwealth countries. Innovation is however necessary to design new models for investment. What is therefore needed is the transfer of innovative technologies within the Commonwealth member states that will lead to structural transformation in the agricultural sector. This will make agriculture more profitable and will encourage many young people to be engaged in this sector. In conclusion, Commonwealth member states should have the dream of making this family a model of cooperation in development in the world. Through a strong spirit of commitment of working together in trade and investment, education, fight against corruption and the transfer of innovative technologies, Commonwealth governments can guarantee a more prosperous future for their citizens. After all, these aspects are inherent in the vision and mission of the Commonwealth.
HOW CAN THE COMMONWEALTH BE A BEACON FOR FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF?

The Commonwealth is a unique family of nations bonded by history, a stated commitment to free, open and democratic societies, and an extensive network of relationships. The Commonwealth covers more than 2.4 billion people in 53 countries spanning six continents. As the balance of world power shifts away from Europe, the member states of the Commonwealth are growing in importance, consequently so is the opportunity for the Commonwealth to act as a force for human rights on the world stage.

A vital, but sadly often neglected, human right is freedom of religion, thought and conscience as enshrined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. This neglect is within the Commonwealth where according to Pew Research Centre around 70% of the people living in the Commonwealth currently experience high or very high levels of government restrictions on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB).

What is even more concerning is that 68% of the Commonwealth live in countries where there are high or very high levels of social hostility towards and between religious groups. This is a problem that affects members of all faiths, and it is an area where most faiths are also guilty of persecution. This is an area where every country should engage in careful reflection of their conduct and laws, the UK itself has high levels of social hostility towards some religious people, shown especially in high levels of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

The Commonwealth Summit theme for 2018 is ‘Towards a Common Future,’ highlighting the importance of young people to the Commonwealth. More than 60% of the Commonwealth is under 30 years old and the UK Prime Minister, RH Hon. Theresa May said on 19 September 2017 “we will put young people at the heart of our Commonwealth.” However, it seems that too many young people across the Commonwealth are currently growing up without their Article 18 rights and thinking of those who hold no faith or have a different faith as ‘other.’

This could be a serious impediment to the future that we hope to build together. As well as damaging the autonomy of the individual to explore their spiritual development, restrictions on FoRB can cause immense damage to society. Research by Finke and Martin show that denial of FoRB and targeting individuals based on their religion or belief is closely correlated to high levels of social conflict.

Eleven of the Pew Research Centre’s top sixteen countries with ‘very high’ government restrictions on FoRB rank within the bottom 18% of countries in the Global Peace Index. Ten out of eleven of Pew’s ‘very high’ social hostilities countries rank within the top 25% of the Global Terrorism index. Conversely, the Association of Religious Data Archives found that none of the countries with low government restrictions had widespread violence related to religion, whereas 45% of countries with high government restrictions had widespread religious-related violence across the country.

Violations of Article 18 can also be a barrier to education (Sustainable Development Goal 4), which is of course key to providing a prosperous future for the Commonwealth. Education is a multiplier right and denial of education perpetuates cycles of exclusion and marginalisation. According to Minority Rights Group International, the majority of children who are out of school worldwide belong to minority and indigenous groups. Many minority religious groups face barriers to education. For example, according to the Movement for Solidarity and Peace, the Hindu America Foundation and the Aurat Foundation, around 1,000 young Christian and Hindu girls are kidnapped, raped and forcibly converted every year in Pakistan. This has led to many Christian and Hindu families being too afraid to send their young girls to school, as they fear that they will be kidnapped. In Punjab on 27 August 2017, with his teacher looking on, a Christian boy, Sharan Masih, was beaten to death by his classmates on his third day of school. He had initially been bullied for being a Christian, and told not to drink out of the same glasses as Muslims. This story is a tragic example of how religious minorities can be brutally barred from accessing education.

The 2018 Commonwealth Summit is an unparalleled opportunity for the UK to take the lead in bringing the value and significance of FoRB to the top of the Commonwealth agenda.

In her Christmas 2017 message, the UK Prime Minister called for a ‘reaffirmation of our determination to stand up for freedom of people of all religions to speak about and practice their beliefs in peace and safety.’

As outlined above, the Commonwealth has many problems in FoRB but there are also shining examples within the Commonwealth from every corner of the globe, Jamaica, Mozambique, Malta and New Zealand all have extremely low levels of government restrictions and social hostility towards religions. The strength of the Commonwealth lies in its ability to share best practice across borders to harness the role of governments, civil society and individuals. The Faith in the Commonwealth Initiative is an excellent example of how the institution of the Commonwealth can bring together young, grassroots leaders who can help build respect for cultural and religious diversity.

To be a member of the Commonwealth, governments have to commit to the Commonwealth Charter. Commitment to the Commonwealth Charter includes the pledge to promote human rights, including the right to Freedom of Religion and Belief. Parliamentary Caucuses have a key role to play in holding their respective executives to fulfill their pledges to protect the human right of their citizens to freedom of religion and belief.

Parliamentarians are the voice of the people that they represent and therefore should speak on behalf of the diverse range of religions within the Commonwealth. As leaders within their communities, they have an opportunity and a duty to promote religious tolerance and freedom within their respective communities and legislators. It is heartening to see that Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth are tackling this duty seriously.

In Pakistan, Religious Freedom Caucuses were established in the National and two Provincial Assemblies (Punjab and Sindh) in 2015. These Caucuses aim to promote interfaith harmony and highlights issues affecting minorities. These Caucuses helped the passing of the Hindu Marriage Act (2017) and supported the Sindh Criminal Law (Protection of Minorities Bill) which was later rejected by the Governor after opposition from Islamist parties. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Freedom of Religion and Belief in the UK has empowered Parliamentarians to consistently advocate for FoRB. For example, UK Parliamentarians succeeded in changing the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Schemes to allow non-Syrian nationals, including the persecuted Yazidis, to be resettled in the UK. Currently, the Australian Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade is inquiring and reporting on The Status of the human right to freedom of religion or belief. The inquiry is also concerned with the status of FoRB within Australia. The Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion and Belief (CIFoRB) facilitates Parliamentarians in this crucial role of promoting Freedom of Religion and Belief. CIFoRB does this by providing Parliamentarians with the best academic knowledge and analysis about the state of FoRB and how best to promote it, both domestically and internationally. Key to this has been providing research to Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth showing what rights are guaranteed under Article 18 of the UDHR and how vital FoRB is in promoting stable and successful societies.

For example, during the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in December 2016 in London, the Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion and Belief (CIFoRB) held a workshop on ‘Engaging Effectively with Freedom of Religion and Belief’ attended by around 35 Parliamentarians from five different continents.
“Shared networks and cultural ties are the arteries of the Commonwealth. Keeping it alive and full of purpose, this networked nature is vital for dealing with an international network like religion. CIFoRB firmly believes that the shared values and democratic nature of the Commonwealth provides the perfect platform on which a true respect for FoRB can be built. The diversity of the Commonwealth is a remarkable institution. Shared networks and cultural ties are the arteries of the Commonwealth keeping it alive and full of purpose. This networked nature is vital for dealing with an international network like religion. CIFoRB firmly believes that the shared values and democratic nature of the Commonwealth provides the perfect platform on which a true respect for FoRB can be built. The diversity of the Commonwealth provides the ability to learn and share best practice. Parliamentarians have a crucial role in strengthening these ties and learning from each other to hold their governments to account. Parliamentarians have a crucial role in strengthening these ties and learning from each other to hold their governments to account. CIFoRB has provided a position paper on human rights and FoRB. This was built by CIFoRB in December 2016 in London, CIFoRB held a workshop attended by around 35 Parliamentarians from 5 different continents. Parliamentarians who took part in the session highlighted how they wanted a greater understanding of FoRB and further training about how it could be implemented. CIFoRB also conducted a workshop at the Commonwealth Parliamentarians Forum in February 2018 to explain the rights granted under Article 18 and the importance of presenting FoRB. CIFoRB has also provided research and analysis about some of the most pressing FoRB issues across the Commonwealth. For example, CIFoRB has conducted research into the problem of forced conversions of religious minorities in Pakistan suggesting ways the problem can be alleviated and how both Pakistani and UK Parliamentarians can help. CIFoRB has also contributed to UK parliamentary business by providing speeches and parliamentary questions concerned with FoRB, highlighting problems as they occur across the Commonwealth. CIFoRB has also facilitated the utilisation of the Commonwealth network through sharing best practice by highlighting the benefits of Parliamentary Groups for Freedom of Religion and Belief. In January 2018, CIFoRB hosted a delegation of South African Parliamentary Whips to highlight and discuss the benefits and important of promoting FoRB. CIFoRB provided a position paper analysing Legislative Member Organisations around the world and how they can be utilised to promote FoRB. To further the spread of best practice, CIFoRB will be holding a seminar on ForRB in India in May 2018. West Africa has significant issues with ForRB and Nigeria suffers from extensive violence related to religion. More than 30,000 people have died during the conflict with Boko Haram, and according to the Global Terrorism Index, 60,000 people have been killed in clashes between predominantly Muslim Fulani tribesmen and largely Christian farmers in West Africa since 2001. However, Ghana is a good example of how low government restrictions on FoRB can lead to low socio-economic instability and conflict between religions and acceptance in diverse societies. By basing the conference in Ghana, CIFoRB hopes that a wide cross-section of Commonwealth countries will become champions of FoRB throughout the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is a remarkable institution. Shared networks and cultural ties are the arteries of the Commonwealth keeping it alive and full of purpose. This networked nature is vital for dealing with an international network like religion. CIFoRB firmly believes that the shared values and democratic nature of the Commonwealth provides the perfect platform on which a true respect for FoRB can be built. The diversity of the Commonwealth provides the ability to learn and share best practice. Parliamentarians have a crucial role in strengthening these ties and learning from each other to hold their governments to account and creating tolerant and diverse societies that will enable all to prosper. Through academic research and advice CIFoRB stands ready to assist in turning the Commonwealth into a beacon for Freedom of Religion and Belief. To find out more about CIFoRB please visit www.ciforb.org.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARLIAMENTARIANS: LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Vijay Krishnarayan is the Director of the Commonwealth Foundation. He has supported civil society organisations in the UK, Caribbean and the wider Commonwealth over the last 25 years. A land-use planner by training, he has a special interest in the relationship between development and the environment. Before joining the Commonwealth Foundation in 2006, he spent over a decade in the Caribbean, most notably as Managing Partner for the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), one of the region’s sustainable development think tanks.

The Commonwealth calendar is defined by the regular rhythm of the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM). While attention focusses on the gathering of Heads, it’s what happens in the wings that tells us much about Commonwealth concerns and provides insights on the challenges ahead. The Forums that take place in the days leading up to CHOGM provide an opportunity for women, young people, businesses and civil society organisations to come together, making the point that the Commonwealth is much more than an association of governments. The Commonwealth provides both a frame and a forum for people to exchange, which enables advocacy and learning.

Civil society organisations have been seeking to engage with CHOGM since 1991, when they convened in Harare with the intention of influencing Heads of Governments’ deliberations. Since then activists, writers, performers and other catalysts for social change have looked to the Commonwealth Foundation to support and coordinate what has become the largest Commonwealth gathering of civil society. Now they come to learn from each other as much as to engage with Commonwealth leaders on global development issues at the Commonwealth People’s Forum (CPF).

The CPF convenes in London on the eve of CHOGM and builds on the discussions that took place in Malta at the last People’s Forum. At CHOGM 2015 in Malta, Heads noted the consonance of the Commonwealth Foundation’s mission and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 with its emphasis on peaceful and inclusive societies and building effective, accountable institutions. CPF 2018 brings a civic perspective to the global dialogue on SDG 16, which holds the key to realising the potential of the whole SDG agenda. This year the People’s Forum’s central theme is Inclusive Governance: The Challenge for a Contemporary Commonwealth. Over 250 delegates from 53 countries will participate in a programme that combines panel discussions, in-depth conversation, case studies and creative expression.

They will be making the connection between inclusion and Commonwealth renewal - a response to the perennial debate on the continuing relevance of the institution. One can see why the Commonwealth Foundation has a direct interest in the CPF. Every country that hosts a CHOGM asks the Foundation to organise a People’s Forum as part of the Summit programme. They recognise the Commonwealth Foundation’s intergovernmental mandate to strengthen and mobilise civil society in support of Commonwealth principles and values (as stated in the CHOGM 2011 Communiqué). They also acknowledge the role of the People’s Forum in animating the CHOGM agenda in any given year. The Commonwealth Foundation is dedicated to strengthening people’s participation in all aspects of public dialogue, enabling people to act together and learn from each other to build democratic societies. The Foundation’s current strategy commits the organisation to strengthening civic voices so they can engage with policy processes, hold
The following examples serve to illustrate our approach:

- **Aware Girls** is an organisation that encourages young women as they exercise their right to vote and participate in public life in north-west Pakistan. In conjunction with Peace Direct, this collaborative project supported women as they became active citizens. In the first year of the project, 1,349 young women voted for the first time in local elections.

- By the end of the project, ten young women that had participated in training and networking, contested and won seats in Swabi and Mardan local elections. These included women from less represented social classes and religious minorities.

- The Africa Working Group brings together more than 150 African civil society organisations that are committed to improving lives on the continent for example by engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals. In Tanzania, civil society organisations set up an SDG network, which brings together more than 150 African civil society organisations that are committed to improving lives on the continent for example by engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals. In Tanzania, civil society organisations set up an SDG network, which feeds into a multi-stakeholder forum that was established by the government. The forum includes a parliamentary caucus, which comprises MPs that are championing the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs. The relationship between the Parliamentarians and civil society is a close one, with monitoring providing a particular focus for dialogue.

- The Nigeria Network of NGOs is engaging with government on the regulatory environment for civil society. The project is holding consultations with civil society organisations to develop recommendations for a law that aims to enable Nigerian civil society to be effective and accountable. The project requires close collaboration with regulatory bodies in order to review the current legislation and present draft amendments for discussion.

“Parliament is a mechanism that enables people to hold those that are delivering public goods to account. Civil society and Parliamentarians work well together to construct regulatory regimes that can satisfy the public’s demand for accountable institutions – whether those be public, private or not-for-profit.”

It has also provided a catalyst for discussions with MPs on the value of an enabling regulatory environment as they prepare to deliberate on revisions to the Company and Allied Matters Act.

In the context of fairness, these three examples highlight some of the ways in which civil society can contribute to fairer decision-making.

Parliament is an essential part of any democracy and civil society can contribute to fairer decision-making.

Parliament is the embodiment of representative democracy yet it often fails to represent the diversity of populations. More than 20 years ago, the international community committed to addressing the societal barriers that prevent women from equal participation in decision-making processes. Progress has been uneven. As of June 2016, only 20.4% of all national Parliamentarians were women. The Commonwealth has more to do in addressing this matter – with member states lagging behind, for example, Nordic countries (where, as of June 2017, average participation by women in single, lower and upper houses combined ran at 41.7%). The need for action on this front is even more urgent for women that aren’t middle class or that are disabled or from other minority communities. Perhaps civil society’s most profound contribution to building a culture of democracy in its advocacy for Parliament to better reflect the diversity of our populations. As CPF 2018 will assert, inclusive governance is central to a renewed Commonwealth – a Commonwealth that leaves no one behind.
HOW THE COMMONWEALTH IS BECOMING ONE OF THE WORLD’S LEADING GLOBAL BUSINESS NETWORKS

This year is a significant year for the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) will be convening for the 25th time, providing a prime opportunity for the Commonwealth to realise its potential. The rapidly changing global landscape is forcing global powers and big business to reconsider the status quo and consider new ways of doing business. The Commonwealth should be at the forefront of this debate as a 'great global good' which promotes human rights, good governance and democracy as key components of good business practice.

The potential of the Commonwealth – its member states, business and civil society organisations, as well as its own Commonwealth institutions – should not be underestimated. It is a young, diverse and growing network, containing not only some of the most stable economies in the world such as Australia and Canada, but also some of the fastest growing, such as India, projected to be the second largest economy in the world by 2050.

Today the Commonwealth contains fifty-three countries, covers a quarter of the globe’s landmass and contains a quarter of the world’s people. It boasts a combined Gross National Income of $10.7 trillion. The Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC) is actively working to reposition the network as a powerful global trading platform fit for the 21st century and beyond.

At the CWEIC, we believe that the Commonwealth is the perfect network for business and the best way to support the Commonwealth in achieving its full potential and make sustainable change is to bring Government and private sector together. One without the other will never be as effective. By utilising the Commonwealth’s historical and cultural links, businesses can gain access to emerging markets, enhance existing trading relationships and take advantage of this global partnership.

From the 16th to 18th April 2018, the 11th Commonwealth Business Forum (CBF) will bring together over 800 leaders in business and government to discuss trade and investment issues affecting the Commonwealth’s 53 countries. Organised by the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC) in partnership with the City of London, CBF will be a historic opportunity for the Commonwealth to assert itself as a driver of global trade and investment fit for the 21st century and beyond.

Following years of neglect, two decades of rapid growth in developing markets in Asia and Africa sparked a resurgence in interest in the trading potential of the Commonwealth. Stagnating global trade following the global financial crisis in 2009 and further global economic uncertainty stemming from Brexit has further accentuated the necessity for countries to seek new opportunities in global markets. The Commonwealth Business Forum will provide a platform to address many of these issues.

The viability of the Commonwealth network and its potential is supported by key data. The Commonwealth is a market of 2.4 billion citizens, 60% of whom are under the age of thirty. By 2050 this will account for 40% of the global workforce. The Commonwealth is adding to its middle class faster than any grouping so that, also by 2050, it is expected to contain 1 billion middle-class consumers. Between 2013 and 2015 Commonwealth countries grew at a combined rate that was faster than that of both the US and the EU. Spanning some of the world’s largest, smallest, richest and poorest countries, the Commonwealth has an enormously diverse range of markets with a combined GDP of $1.5 trillion expected by 2020. In addition to all this, owing to the shared use of the English language as well as shared cultures, values and similar legal and regulatory systems, we estimate that trade costs between Commonwealth member countries are on average 19% lower than with non-Commonwealth countries.

During 2003-2013, trade in goods and services between Commonwealth countries expanded from $950 billion to $1.6 trillion; registering an average annual growth rate of about 10%. It is estimated that the intra-Commonwealth trade in goods and services in 2015 was $837 billion and is projected to surpass $1.5 trillion by 2020. In 2013, Commonwealth members’ combined total exports of goods and services to all countries stood at $3.4 trillion, estimated to be 19% of global exports.

These are notable figures, but they become particularly impressive when we consider that this growth, and the Commonwealth’s cheaper business costs, have been achieved in the absence of any formal Commonwealth trade policy mechanisms. It has also been achieved with most Commonwealth members being active in their own formal regional trading arrangements.

This context provides a platform for a whole range of additional strategic advantages to business. Firstly, the similarities which make up the Commonwealth Factor generate one of the most priceless commodities in business, trust. Businesses that work in multiple Commonwealth countries often speak about a familiarity in the way business is done, even when they are working in locations on opposite sides of the world to each other. This consistency in patterns of trade, of trade insurance, of common approaches on tax and interpreting a range of regulations as well as in language, standards, values and respect for the rule of law, aids mutual understanding even in countries as superficially diverse as say, Singapore and Nigeria.

The issue of values is also key. With political considerations always important for investors, the Commonwealth’s focus on democracy, good governance and sustainable political systems lends many Commonwealth markets greater long-term viability.

Second, the diversity of the Commonwealth includes some of the world’s most exciting emerging markets. India for example is due to grow by 7.4% in 2018 and projected to have a middle class larger than China. Huge opportunities in banking and other sectors are opening up as disposable income grows. The Commonwealth also includes 19 countries in Africa with its abundant natural resources, status as the continent with the world’s fastest economic growth and a rapidly increasing population. These include Nigeria and South Africa, by far the continent’s two largest economies as well as rapidly growing East African states. Nigeria averaged growth of 5.7% per year between 2006 and 2016, has one of the largest populations of youth in the world and has the largest natural gas reserves on the continent. Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda are projected to record consistent 6-7% GDP growth over the next ten years with opportunities in agriculture, tech, education, healthcare, real estate, consumer goods and entertainment all on the rise.

Kenya has become a major communications and logistics hub whilst Tanzania and Rwanda...
are amongst the top five fastest growing African nations. Key to this growth is the ongoing transition from being low income, agriculture based economies to becoming knowledge-based, service-oriented economies. But this transition is also part of a wider trend in the global economy with services being the new growth area in international trade. They now make up one quarter of all trade receipts with McKinsey suggesting that more than half the wealth generated by international trade now comes from services and various forms of data transmission. With the services sector already over 70% of GDP in countries such as Canada, Singapore, Australia and the UK, the Commonwealth is perfectly primed to take advantage. The Commonwealth is also blessed with a network of global cities that are agile and powerful enough to exploit this change. Tech hubs include Nairobi, London, Bangalore, Kingston and Vancouver whilst major International Financial Centre’s (IFCs) include London, Singapore, Vancouver, Melbourne, Montreal, Sydney and Toronto. These centres represent significant levels of opportunity for both major corporates and SMEs. There are signs that governments as well as businesses are starting to take note of the Commonwealth opportunity. CWEIC convened over 35 Trade Ministers and 100 business leaders in London in March 2017 for the inaugural Commonwealth Trade Minister Meetings. Attendees discussed an Agenda for Growth focused on the six key pillars of Financial Services, Ease of Doing Business, Technology and Innovation, Business and Sustainability, Creating an Export Economy and Attracting Investment. At the meeting, Nigerian Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Hon. Dr Okechukwu Enelamah noted that “Nigeria believes that a carefully defined trade-based agenda for the Commonwealth is overdue.” As the world’s fastest growing major economy and surely the Commonwealth’s key growth driver in years to come, India has a key role to play in the Commonwealth trade and investment agenda. Their growing engagement with the Commonwealth bodies well for any ambitious pan-Commonwealth Trade and Investment agenda. At CWEIC, our Strategic Partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry continues to thrive and we recently hosted our first India-UK University Industry Roundtable, with the aim of exploring opportunities for innovation and technology collaboration across the Commonwealth. We are looking to establish an office in India in the near future. Speaking at an event in London in January 2018, Commerce and Industry Minister, Suresh Prabhu stated that “India is fully committed to promote the idea of the Commonwealth as a strong trading bloc and remove roadblocks. There is huge potential of investment within the Commonwealth and it is the right time to revivify it into a new entity altogether.” The Minister also said India was keen to inject new dynamism into the bloc. This enthusiasm from government is matched in the private sector where speaking at the CBI’s launch event in Mansion House in December 2017, top level executives from a number of major corporates spoke of the huge potential that they see in Commonwealth markets. The Commonwealth represents a unique opportunity to converse influential business leaders from key markets in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe * commented Richard Pare, Vice-Chairman of Standard Chartered Bank. The SME (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) sector is a key focus for CWEIC, recognising that these companies represent the heartbeat of the global economy and are the real drivers of innovation and economic growth. Our CommonwealthFirst programme has selected 100 outstanding UK SMEs across a range of sectors to act as Commonwealth Export Champions. With the backing of the Royal Mail Group, the programme helps Export Champions explore opportunities in Commonwealth markets through high level profiling, trade missions, training and mentoring and access to our networks. So far, CommonwealthFirst has taken companies on highly successful trade missions to India, Malaysia, Singapore and Canada, allowing Export Champions to see the value of the Commonwealth Factor first hand. I will personally be leading a trade mission to the Gold Coast in early April to participate in the Gold Coast’s Commonwealth Games private sector programme. CWEIC is looking to establish CommonwealthFirst in a variety of other key Commonwealth markets. Overall, the outlook for the Commonwealth looks extremely bright from a trade and investment perspective. Its flourishing and diverse markets, linked by common ties and interests are recognising the gains to be made by increasing cooperation on a vibrant multilateral trade agenda. By fulfilling our critical role of convening the Commonwealth’s public and private sectors, CWEIC is ensuring that potential can become reality. Visit www.cweic.org for more information.

THE POWER AND POTENTIAL OF COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIPS

Dr Joanna Newman, MBE is Chief Executive and Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU). Established in 1913, the ACU is the world’s first and oldest international university network, with more than 500 member institutions in over 50 countries. Prior to joining the ACU in 2017, she was Vice-Principal (International) at King’s College London and she worked previously at the UK Higher Education International Unit and the British Library. She has also taught history at University College London and the University of Warwick.

In the long summer of 1959, education ministers from across the Commonwealth met in Oxford to launch a bold new plan – a plan to be built on cooperative action, the free flow and exchange of ideas, and a sense that happiness and prosperity could be achieved only “through education in the deeper and wider sense.” This was the genesis of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) – a programme that would go on to become one of the world’s largest and most prestigious scholarships schemes in higher education. And while much has changed since its inception, its founding aspirations remain as relevant ever.

In 1959, the future must have seemed rife with uncertainty, with the storm clouds of political tensions never far from the horizon. Then, as now, boundaries were drawn and sabres were rattled. Yet here was a plan built on reciprocity, equity and optimism. “Each country has something to learn from the others,” noted a report of the proceedings, “each has something to give.”

From the outset, the plan sought to be distinct from any other. Open to men and women from the beginning, its guiding principles required that it be flexible enough to take account of the diverse and changing needs of individual countries, relevant and responsive to their differing needs, and offer mutual benefit and opportunities for all.

In the nearly 60 years since that auspicious meeting, the CSFP has enabled more than 35,000 individuals to experience international study. Many have gone on to transform their communities, societies and nations, helping to create a world that is fairer, safer, healthier and more democratic. Put simply, these scholarships change lives, far beyond the individual who undertakes them. And for that reason, it is vital that these opportunities are made available as widely as possible.

At the Association of Commonwealth Universities, international mobility is very much at the heart of our work. Through our management of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK, as well as the prestigious Chevening and Marshall Scholarships, we have gained a unique insight into the transformational impact of these awards. So, why is it that international academic mobility has such far-reaching impact? And why is it so vital that governments across the Commonwealth reaffirm their commitment to the CSFP?

Building capacity

First, international scholarships build human capacity across the Commonwealth. In other words, the skills and knowledge that a student gains during their studies are then applied, shared and multiplied in the country to which they return, yielding benefits far beyond the duration of the scholarship itself.

This power to build capacity makes scholarships an important mechanism for international development. In fact, the importance of scholarships to sustainable development was arguably cemented by their inclusion in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (target 4.B of which is to “substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries” by 2030). Commonwealth Scholarships can open the door to cutting-edge education in countries across the region.
A wider world view

Second is what the founding fathers of the CSFP described as education in “the deeper and wider sense” – that is, the power of international scholarships to broaden both the minds and horizons of those who undertake them – and at a critical and formative time in their lives.

This element of the scholarship experience is perhaps less tangible, but no less profound. International experiences in higher education have been shown to generate a more expansive worldview, greater intercultural awareness, and a sense of interconnectedness and solidarity. Meanwhile the academic and experiential challenges of life and study in another country build communication skills, confidence and an openness to the new and unknown.

In a world that often feels more divided than not, international experience arguably has the power to promote a more peaceful future, fostering understanding and tolerance across cultures and borders. Indeed, greater intercultural awareness was among the strongest findings of a study of international alumni published by the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Large numbers reported greater cultural sensitivity and an improved ability to understand and communicate with others from different national and social backgrounds. “These,” the report notes, “are characteristics of global citizenship, which will help them to work and operate anywhere.”

Enhanced employability

This latter point reminds us, of course, that the benefits to being a ‘global citizen’ are about more than solidarity. Across the Commonwealth, employment prospects for young people present a glimmer picture – more than 71 million young people are unemployed worldwide. And this dour situation looks set only to worsen: between 2015 and 2030, 600–800 million more young people will enter the job market – nearly 1 million a month in both India and sub-Saharan Africa.

In this fiercely competitive environment, an international mind-set can offer a considerable advantage. Multinational companies increasingly seek ‘global graduates’, prized and ready with language skills, cultural understanding, and an international outlook. One study, undertaken by the Erasmus programme, found that more than two thirds of employers consider international experience to be an important asset. A huge 92% of employers, meanwhile, sought the so-called ‘soft skills’ that such experience is shown to impart – including problem solving abilities, and tolerance towards the values and behaviours of others.

Repeated studies, meanwhile, show a compelling correlation between international experience and improved employment outcomes. The same Erasmus study, for example, found that students who had studied abroad were half as likely to experience long-term unemployment as those who had not.

Networks, friendships and soft power

Cooperation within higher education can be a powerful opportunity for universities to establish or strengthen their reputation on a global stage – and this is true of international scholarships. Studies tell us that international alumni return to their countries with a positive understanding of their host country’s culture, people and values. They may recommend it – and its universities – to others. Moreover, the personal and professional connections they make during their award often endure long after their return.

For those with an eye on the ‘soft power’ potential of scholarships, a report by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills highlighted another striking outcome of international experience: trust.

International students who had studied in the UK reported increased trust in the UK as a nation, society, and its enterprises and individuals. “Last but by no means least, international academic mobility can lead to crucial collaborations in research and development, building ties between researchers and institutions. This matters because international collaborations are repeatedly shown to be more likely to lead to vital breakthroughs in innovation – breakthroughs that will be pivotal to transforming and safeguarding our future.”

In a Commonwealth context, academic mobility has particular potential to connect those countries most acutely affected by global challenges with relevant research and expertise across the world.

Widening opportunities through the CSFP

The more we know about what an asset international experience can be – for individuals, their host nations and the countries to which they return – the more important it is to ensure that such opportunities are made available as widely as possible. While we can be very proud of the countries already offering awards through the CSFP – in particular the work of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK, which has administered the majority of awards to date – there is great potential for growth, particularly to low and middle income countries.

The case for expanding the CSFP – in terms of numbers but also, crucially, its geographic reach – was one we were proud to make at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Fiji in February. Ministers were urged to reaffirm the support of their national governments for this prestigious scheme, and to actively support its growth through the CSFP endowment fund.

This special fund aims to ensure that this unique programme is genuinely Commonwealth-wide in its nature, and can continue to yield profound benefits to, but also tenable within, low and middle income countries, which might not otherwise be in a position to offer them.

In doing so, this vital fund recognises the quality of higher education on offer right across the Commonwealth and the rich diversity of knowledge and expertise available. It enables all Commonwealth countries to reap the benefits of outward and inward mobility – from collaborative research opportunities to diplomatic relations – and creates new and diverse pathways for student mobility.

The expansion and reinvigoration of this wonderful plan would be a fitting celebration of its 60th anniversary next year. Increasing its reach would, I feel sure, have delighted its founders, whose words still inspire: “If the plan is to achieve its purpose” they wrote, “we must bring the widest possible variety of cultural exchange between all parts of the Commonwealth and so facilitate the development of a multilateral trade in ideas.”

And whether rich or poor, large or small, this ‘trade in ideas’ is one to which all countries of the Commonwealth have a great deal to contribute.

For more information about the Association of Commonwealth Universities please visit http://acu.ac.uk.
A JOURNALIST’S VIEW OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Mahendra Ved
The Parliamentarian | 2018: Issue One

A snapshot of issues deliberated at the Malta CHOGM, the last one that took place in 2015, as listed in its concluding statement, would include battling/strongly countering radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism; promoting and strengthening human rights, rule of law and sustainable development; managing/facilitating migration and climate change; encouraging/ enhancing the role of civil society organisations, women and youth, fighting corruption and underscoring the need for transparency in governance and much else.

As we approach the UK CHOGM in April 2018, it is essential to take a serious note of the fact that not just the Commonwealth nations, but the world as a whole has witnessed a series of issues. We are living in a difficult world – and making it more difficult to live in – with our individual, collective, national and international actions and inactions.

We are talking at each other higher today with the Internet and social media becoming weapons of mass mental destruction. Violence by extremist groups and acts of terrorism, some of it state-sponsored, other by ‘non-state actors’, has increased since Malta. Paris, Nice, Brussels, Dhaka, Jakarta, Nairobi and London are among the new terror-spots. Millions are migrating, fleeing more from man-made misery than those brought about by natural calamities. The desperate search of the migrants for safety is part of an unstoppable process, at the bottom of the sea, into prisons, or into societies where they are unwanted.

The list is endless. It is being cited, not to belittle the little good that is done, but to underscore the huge amount of work that remains to be done. If this is true of the world as a whole, and the United Nations and other world bodies, it equally true of the Commonwealth.

The Malta CHOGM met on the eve of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Understandably, it featured high on the agenda. Since then the climate issue is divided and disrupted with some even walking out of it.

Radicalisation of the young is higher today with the Internet and all around that are craving for attention and redressal. The colonial experience has come to be questioned by the former ‘subjects’ and a section of opinion-makers in Britain itself. This became sharply evident during the recent debate at Oxford wherein Dr Shashi Tharoor, Indian parliamentarian-writer-diplomat, made a strong, but persuasive argument, full of logic but shorn of any acrimony, about oppression and exploitation that India, the largest of the colonies, underwent.

And yet, Commonwealth nations, especially the smaller ones – 20 out of the total of 53 – the distant ones located on far-flung the high seas, are crying for help. For instance, Fiji and Seychelles face the increasing threat of being submerged under the sea. Is the Commonwealth ready to take the initiative to help them fight the growing danger of rising sea levels through measures such as the Netherlands have done, of building walls and fortifying themselves from the sea waves? Is the Commonwealth ready to address the challenges faced by these vulnerable nations?

Another perception, no longer a secret, is that the Big Guns and the well-off ones among the Commonwealth members are losing interest in the body. They are too preoccupied with their domestic woes. The global recession has affected them all. Can the London Conference revive their interest and commitment and revitalise their participation and contribution?

The big ones among the members include those like India, South Africa and Nigeria who have over the years progressed economically. Can they share the burden? Since this is being proposed from New Delhi, it is to be hoped that India, who did not participate at the summit level during the last three CHOGMs, would ‘return’ with India Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading his team and, hopefully again, take initiatives the Commonwealth sorely needs.

Britain remains at the heart of the Commonwealth, a position it cannot shed, nor share. Did records say that when it joined the European Union in 1973, its aim to assist the Commonwealth members got restricted and this had let down many a member. Did they think of even a portion of the four trillion trade – and this figure is a decade old – being conducted under the Commonwealth banner. It is more than evident that the Commonwealth would gain traction only if it is backed by economic muscle. A contrarian example would be that of China which is using its economic strength to push its political agenda, especially in Africa. This is something that should have fallen to the lot of the Commonwealth which has 19 members from the Continent. If these countries and their people were fit to be colonized then, they deserve to be helped today.

This is for now and for the future. But to ensure that the future safety and wellbeing of people living in all the Commonwealth nations, more needs done. The UK CHOGM needs to think out of the box.

“There is an English proverb: Money makes the mare go. Solid economic content in the form of trade needs to be injected to revitalise the relations among the Commonwealth members. As of now, many of them engage in economic co-operation and in trade. They do so without the label of Commonwealth. Will the UK Summit discuss ways to create a mechanism and persuade its members to try it out, albeit on a voluntary basis?”

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END
THE CHALLENGE OF A FAIRER FUTURE

“The early Commonwealth of the 1960s was primarily concerned with peaceful democratic transitions, particularly for African states following the end of empire. In this context, the movement towards a fairer future was one where Commonwealth citizens could have a say in their leadership and how their countries were governed. These struggles are still ongoing, albeit in different ways, in a number of Commonwealth nations.”

The period leading up to a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is always one of reflection on the role of the Commonwealth, its future and how best it can evolve with the modern world. This year’s CHOGM will take place in an international political climate that is defined by change, resistance and emerging movements across the Commonwealth and the wider world. Under the theme ‘Towards a Common Future’, delegates at the CHOGM will discuss four sub-themes covering sustainability, security, prosperity and fairness. This fourth sub-theme concerning ‘a fairer future’ lies at the heart of the history of the Commonwealth, and is central to keeping the organisation relevant in a crowded modern international space. A fairer future is one where Commonwealth values of good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law are upheld.

Recent developments in two East African states reveal a number of challenges to this fairer future, and just how important it is for the Commonwealth to refine its activities. Further, it is important to emphasise that the fairer future is for young Commonwealth citizens who themselves are already involved in problem-solving and agitating for change. The early Commonwealth of the 1960s was primarily concerned with peaceful democratic transitions, particularly for African states following the end of empire. In this context, the movement towards a fairer future was one where Commonwealth citizens could have a say in their leadership and how their countries were governed. These struggles are still ongoing, albeit in different ways, in a number of Commonwealth nations.

In East Africa in particular is the site of ongoing challenges to good governance, the rule of law and human rights. In 2017 both Kenya and Uganda faced moments of significant political conflict at the highest level. In Kenya’s case, in September the Supreme Court nullified the August presidential election, in which Uhuru Kenyatta had claimed victory. The leading opposition candidate, Raila Odinga, had filed the petition, and the Supreme Court concluded that the elections were ‘neither transparent nor verifiable’. The election nullification sent shockwaves across the continent, where a presidential election has only been overturned by courts once before. A rerun of the election was called, Odinga pulled out, and Kenyatta declared winner, with all legal challenges thrown out. Odinga continues to contest Kenyatta’s victory and in a challenge to the legitimacy of President Kenyatta, on 30th January 2018 Odinga held a symbolic inauguration ceremony.

In response, the Kenyan government shut down three television stations that broadcast the event, in a move that followed wider restrictions on journalists and a constitutional amendment, which removed the right to strike from journalists.

In Uganda, the 2016 presidential elections were marred by enduring controversy. The yet-to-be-seated President Yoweri Museveni had claimed victory in the election, the first of its kind held under the third-powersd constitution. In response, opposition leader and around 200,000-strong movement against the incumbent, the National Unity platform, mobilised against the election, culminating in a mass demonstration on 21st February 2016, in which 37 people were killed and scores injured.

In a Somto distribution of POWER, the Supreme Court nullified the election, and the Museveni campaign launched its own legal challenge to the nullification and the Ugandan government shut down three television stations that broadcast the event, in a move that followed wider restrictions on journalists and a constitutional amendment, which removed the right to strike from journalists.

In response, the Kenyan government shut down three television stations that broadcast the event, in a move that followed wider restrictions on journalists and a constitutional amendment, which removed the right to strike from journalists.

In 2017, the hashtag #Togikwatako trended on Ugandan and diaspora Twitter and Facebook. The Luganda word ‘Togikwatako’ translates to ‘don’t touch it’ and is a term often used by parents to warn their children. The term was used by those campaigning against the removal of the presidential age limit of 75 years in Uganda’s constitution, which would allow then 79-year-old President Yoweri Museveni to run for re-election in 2021.

At over 30 years in power, Museveni is the second-longest serving president in the Commonwealth, and with the age limit lifted after months of opposition, violent scuffles in Parliament, suppression of protests, and challenges to freedom of the press, the road has been paved for this record to continue. In a concession to opponents, Parliament also voted to return term limits and remove the lower age limit. Nonetheless, a fairer future in which the rule of law is respected is a complicated one if the laws can be changed to benefit those in power.

Arguably the most visible proponent of the Togikwatako movement was then newly elected Member of Parliament, 35-year old Robert Kyagulanyi, commonly known by his stage name Bobi Wine. Kyagulanyi, a member of the opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party is a popular musician-turned-politician who used his celebrity and status as the self-styled ‘Ghetto President’ to propel himself into a strong voice for Ugandan’s poor and disenfranchised. Kyagulanyi continues to perform and has long used his music to discuss political and social issues. During the campaign, Kyagulanyi used his heavily subscribed platforms on social media to involve ordinary Ugandans in discussion on the proposed constitutional amendment, shared images and videos from his campaign, and – perhaps most importantly – document the actions of state police who clashed with his supporters on a number of occasions. This style of political engagement is a move towards a somewhat new kind of politician in Uganda – one who is younger, much more accessible and uses new forms of technology to communicate directly with the people.

It remains to be seen whether politicians like Robert Kyagulanyi can make a significant impact in a state with as powerful a machine as Museveni’s National Resistance Movement (NRM), but this is certainly an interesting if precarious time in Ugandan politics. The Commonwealth has long presented itself as an organisation invested in peaceful democratic transitions. As such,
TOWARDS A
COMMON FUTURE:
LOOKING AHEAD TO
CHOGM 2018

it is important for the organisation to find innovative ways of creating space for individuals to develop their skills in political organisation, communication and documentation. Doing so would not necessarily mean interfering with the politics of member states, but rather equipping Commonwealth citizens with the tools they would need to affect change themselves. If successful, the Commonwealth could contribute to the political development of people – particularly young people – across member states who are eager to make a difference in their country, but who may be lacking the skills.

The Commonwealth has already demonstrated its support for young leaders with initiatives such as the Queen’s Young Leaders, the Commonwealth Youth Parliament, and the biannual Commonwealth Youth Forum, and there is still more that could be done to develop leadership skills amongst young Commonwealth leaders. More importantly, these initiatives need to be initiated in countries that are more accessible to Commonwealth citizens, as young people in countries that have often difficulties obtaining visas to travel to the UK for example, and using digital means that allow for instant global communication. In doing so the Commonwealth can enable citizens to build their own future, creating spaces where information can be shared from across member states and where – crucially – leadership can be interrogated and moulded to fit the particular needs of different countries and communities.

The contemporary history of the Commonwealth is one of an organisation determined to reinvent itself, to find a niche in a world of powerful international organisations with less controversial origins. Much has been made of the fact that more than 60% of the population is under 29 years old. A Commonwealth dominated by the ideas and opinions of older Commonwealth statesmen is one in which much of the younger generation of Commonwealth practitioners are men – is one that risks losing the opportunity to tap into the energy and drive of some of the most passionate, creative people. As such, any discussion of the future of the Commonwealth is one concerning the future of an organisation made up of young people who have grown up in a new millennium with challenges and opportunities unforeseeable by the architects of the Commonwealth.

Young Commonwealth citizens in earlier decades communicated with one another through letters that often took weeks to arrive but nevertheless built relationships between those involved. Today, young people from Accra to Wakatobi are more connected to one another than ever before, with social media meaning instant conversations are now possible between people who may still never meet in person. In these spaces, with potentially global audiences, we see conversations about many ideas of fairness the development of movements for social justice, and resistance to anti-democratic regimes.

In Kenya and Uganda, we have seen young people calling out those in power, using memes and 240 character messages to make political statements, and holding their elders to account. Further, online discussions about feminism and LGBT rights in traditionally conservative nations offer some critical approaches to engaging with what remain the most contentious social issues in the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth as a whole can learn from how young people are organising and communicating online, and how they are building virtual networks that are far removed from the channels of the past. The Commonwealth youth are already speaking and it is imperative that Commonwealth leadership – from the Secretariat to Presidents, Prime Ministers and Parliamentarians – pay attention. The future will be for these Commonwealth citizens so their voices must be heard and their ideas incorporated.

The 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting is a unique opportunity for the Commonwealth to state its purpose and areas of focus at a time when the international system has been shaken by political developments in Europe and the United States. A Commonwealth and Commonwealth leaders invested in a fairer future have to engage and empower those working towards that goal. That support will not look the same as it has in the past, with high-level meetings, and phone calls between world leaders.

Support for a fairer future will also mean strengthening grassroots Commonwealth activities in civil society and professional organisations, greater engagement on social media and other digital innovations, and panning the way for young people to take the lead. If a fairer future means one where democracy, good governance, the rule of law, and human rights are upheld as values across the Commonwealth, then all three other sub-themes are contingent on this one. It is impossible to consider a more sustainable future without understanding the unequal impact of climate change on poorer and small island nations who bear the brunt of the effects but produce a negligible fraction of carbon emissions. Any initiatives towards countering violent extremism and building a more secure future must also be committed to protecting the civil liberties of communities that are often victims of the same crimes that small factions perpetrate.

Finally, a prosperous future is simply uneatable without interrogating the international system and historical inequalities that hamper economic development in many Commonwealth countries.

For Kenya and Uganda, with ongoing challenges to democratic government and peaceful power transitions, efforts towards sustainability and prosperity become secondary while environmental degradation and income inequalities grow. Security on the other hand is interpreted in potentially harmful ways by powerful state police forces and government institutions. If we are to move towards a common future then, fairness must always be a priority for any and every Commonwealth citizen.

“Support for a fairer future will also mean strengthening grassroots Commonwealth activities in civil society and professional organisations, greater engagement on social media and other digital innovations, and paving the way for young people to take the lead.”

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THE MODERN COMMONWEALTH’S GAMES

Event of the Commonwealth Games’ stature was so important in the modern world. This led us to being very explicit about the value we place on host communities and citizens, and the positive impact we seek to achieve in all that we do.

- From protecting, promoting and safeguarding clean athletes.
- From publishing pre-Games and post-Games Human Rights reports.
- To embracing the fair living wage.
- To procuring ethically and sustainably, and implementing community benefit clauses in tenders and contracts.
- To changing the face of accessibility standards and services for events and tourism.
- To actively promoting LGBT rights and embracing diversity every single step of the way.
- To promoting and funding for children’s rights through a global partnership with UNICEF – where $30m was raised for children during our opening ceremony in Glasgow.

These are just some examples of how one city, in one nation with the power of one Games made a difference. And we have capitalised on this momentum and formalised this ambition into our own strategic plan Transformation 2020.

Today, the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) is far more than the curator of a great Games. Our strategic blueprint marks a historic change in the movement’s focus from the four-year cycle of overseeing Commonwealth Games to a wider, ambitious role of delivering sports leadership within the Commonwealth, based on partnership, engagement and value generation.

Just like our competing national teams at a Games, we all sought to change the script for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games and beyond – reflecting on who and what the Commonwealth Family is and why a Mega Sporting Commonwealth has never been more important – as we continue to develop the Commonwealth Games as an event that truly engages, supports and transforms society. This is why our impact framework, for example, explicitly maps and measures the ambitions and contributions of the Games to support peace, sustainability and prosperity across the Commonwealth.

It is also why we have transformed our Games delivery model and host city selection processes, to maximise efficiency and effectiveness in our delivery of an event that is world-class but also community-relevant. Our collaborations with Commonwealth partner, civil society and third sector organisations are equally vital – as the CGF contributes to and relies on joint projects that broaden the action, awareness and advocacy of today’s Commonwealth; whilst also providing a major platform for Commonwealth discussions, activities and collaboration at Games-Time.

Indeed, the Commonwealth Games on Australia’s Gold Coast, opening on 4 April 2018, will demonstrate just how far we have come, and how committed we are to ensure that the benefits of the Games stretch beyond the thrilling impact of 11 days of sport.

All our efforts are focused on delivering worldwide recognition and respect for the Gold Coast and Queensland, jobs and economic growth, community engagement right across Australia and, above all, the promise of greater reconciliation and social justice. It’s why Gold Coast 2018 will be the first Mega Sporting Event in Australia with a Reconciliation Action Plan, why Festival 2018 will celebrate the diverse and dynamic cultures of the Commonwealth, and why we’re proud to become the first multi-sport event in the world to create a truly level playing field of gender equality – with an exactly equal number of medal opportunities for men and women. These very clear examples of progress are the reason the resurgent Commonwealth Sport Movement is alive, and is thriving, today. These societal-driven causes are the Commonwealth Games.

Sport Movements’ raison d’être in the twenty-first century, and why we stand apart from any other sporting movement or institution worldwide.

With 6,500 athletes and officials from every corner of the Commonwealth, Gold Coast 2018 will be an inspiring and inclusive festival of community, culture and sport. It will be a loud and proud celebration of today’s Commonwealth, and for that we can all be excited.

Above: The countdown to the Commonwealth Games Gold Coast 2018.

About the CGF: The Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) is the organisation that is responsible for the direction and control of the Commonwealth Games, and for delivering on the vision of the Commonwealth Sports Movement: to build peaceful, sustainable and prosperous communities globally by inspiring Commonwealth Athletes to drive the impact and ambition of all Commonwealth Citizens through sport.

www.thecgf.com
As the new International Vice-Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and as the Regional Chair of CWP in the British Islands and Mediterranean (BIM) Region, I have dedicated my political life to help eradicate, support and educate people about human trafficking and modern slavery.

A decade ago: Wales and Human Trafficking/Modern Day Slavery

I was elected to the National Assembly for Wales in 2007. One of the first things I did as an Assembly Member (AM) was to establish a cross-party group to look at human trafficking and modern-day slavery. It raised a few eyebrows at the time. Understandably, perhaps, some people didn’t see what it had to do with Wales, especially in mid and west Wales, the region I represent.

I remember at one early meeting, we were in the middle of taking evidence from the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) when the two agents giving evidence had to rush off to attend a case. It turned out to be the arrest of Thomas Carroll, who was later convicted of running a prostitution network of trafficked Nigerian women in Ireland from the Pembrokeshire village of Castlemartin. He was jailed for seven years and had £2 million of assets seized. For the most part, back in 2007/8, to many people, it was unthinkable that such abhorrent crimes might be happening in Welsh cities, let alone towns and villages.

I published my report into human trafficking in Wales, titled ‘Knowing No Boundaries’ in 2010. My findings were a real wake-up call. The Welsh Government moved quickly to appoint a national trafficking co-ordinator, the first such appointment in the United Kingdom.

This was nearly a decade ago. So where are we now? Considerable progress has been made and to combat modern slavery and human trafficking, to wipe out labour exploitation and accept abuse, action against sexual exploitation and domestic servitude.

A decade of changed global environments

Having been an AM for over 10 years, an old adage comes to mind: ‘A week is a long time in politics.’ By that measure, a decade is a geological age. The global events we’ve experienced over the past decade is unprecedented, certainly in my lifetime. The global financial crash and refugee crisis have triggered seismic upheavals. Human trafficking is a common thread across the world. It raised a few eyebrows at the time.

We often describe trafficking as a hidden crime. But what do we know? We know that, last year, there were more than 2,000 modern slavery offences in England and Wales – a 159% increase on the previous year and a 300% rise on 2011. We know that more than half of suspected victims referred to the national referral mechanism were from Albania, Vietnam, Nigeria, China and the UK. The majority of child trafficking victims were British. And we know the number of people living in slavery in the UK is likely to be in the tens of thousands. These problems – the global conditions – are not going away. And now we must add Brexit to the equation.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International, the Fawcett Society and lots of organisations have warned that the ‘Brexit’ Bill going through Parliament, by removing the EU charter of fundamental rights, will not protect people’s rights in the way we were promised. What might that mean for victims of trafficking, especially non-nationals? Just look at the way the UK Government were willing to gamble with EU citizens’ residency rights.

Some say ‘Brexit’ is a golden opportunity to go out into the world making great trade deals, slashing regulation and undercutting competitors. I would ask at what cost to ethical supply chains?

Stephen Chapman (Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator for Wales) and the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group have highlighted this issue – and the Welsh Government has clearly established a Code of Practice to support the development of more ethical supply chains for public sector and third sector organisations.

Everyone in society has a role to play in supporting victims of modern slavery, to track down and ensure criminals are punished and to end the trade in human misery.

“Impact on modern slavery and human trafficking in Wales

The UK is not alone in tackling modern slavery. It raised a few eyebrows at the time. Understandably, perhaps, some people didn’t see what it had to do with Wales, especially in mid and west Wales, the region I represent.

Jane Hutt, a former Minister in the Welsh Government, spoke at an event in October 2017, highlighting the tremendous work being done in Wales to tackle modern day slavery. The Welsh Government is working with its partners to develop the Organised Crime and Modern Slavery Course. This is a three day joint training provision for Law Enforcement Senior Investigating Officers and Crown Prosecutors.

Legislation alone will not solve the problem

The Welsh Government has introduced new data collection systems and continues to work with partners to develop a better evidence base that more accurately reflects the level of this crime in Wales. They are working with partners to provide support for refugees coming to Wales which will help mitigate against the risk of exploitation.
The Welsh Government is asking all commercial organisations based in the UK to publish an annual Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement. This includes the Welsh Government’s Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains, published in March 2017. Tackling modern slavery is at the heart of this code.

The Code builds on the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 that all commercial organisations based in the UK with a turnover of more than £36 million, should publish an annual Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement, explaining the actions they have taken in the previous year to combat slavery and human trafficking.

Keeping up the pressure – CPA UK’s Modern Slavery Project

I welcome the CPA UK Branch’s Modern Slavery Project: a two-year multifaceted project providing practical advice and support to Commonwealth legislatures in the pursuit of combating modern slavery. The project aims to encourage and facilitate a greater understanding of the national and international benefits of introducing modern slavery legislation through highlighting the value and subsequent lessons learnt from the passing of the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Modern slavery is a global phenomenon with The Walk Free Foundation’s Global Slavery Index 2016 estimating there are 45.8 million people living in modern slavery worldwide. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that the global modern slavery trade is worth $150 billion USD.

The project will be led by Commonwealth Parliamentarians and senior officials, sharing good practice to support colleagues in harnessing their heightened understanding to develop and strengthen modern slavery legislation across their jurisdictions. CPA UK proposes to work closely with six Commonwealth countries, each partnership unique in its goals and objectives, whilst also supporting partnerships across the CPA Regions to share good practice in tackling this heinous crime.

During the first year of the Modern Slavery Project, CPA UK delivered two regional workshops. One workshop was delivered in April 2017 that focused on the Asia-Pacific Region and a second workshop was delivered in Uganda in July 2017 that focused on the Africa Region.

Thankfully, there is a growing awareness of and determination to end the invidious crime of modern day slavery on an international scale. By unite, as a single force to that end, the CPA and other international organisations can change the future. It is only by working together that change will happen. Small and big nations can and are acting in their own right. Nations acting as part of a collective can help to ensure that all that can be done should be done to help eradicate slavery.

For further information about the CPA UK Modern Slavery Project please visit www.uk-cpa.org/modernslavery.

Below: The Welsh Assembly in Cardiff.
The two training workshops have also developed staff knowledge, skills and confidence and will assist them in undertaking their role effectively. These were common sentiments shared by the participants after the training.

Another staff from Parliament, Mateo Lagimiri was overwhelmed with the new skills he has learned. "Following the training, I am now confident in writing speeches. Before, I only provide data, do research but not really write a speech. Now, it’s all possible, thanks to the training and thanks to CPA,” said Mr. Lagimiri.

**Development of parliament education videos**

A unit in the Fijian Parliament (Civic Education and Media Unit) organised the filming, development and creation of ten educational videos.

The different stages of the project included: hiring of a new staff, planning, scripting writing, filming and interviews, editing and voice over recordings, airing of the videos on TV and uploading of the videos to the Parliament website and other social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube.

The Fijian Parliament also organised a special training to equip relevant Parliament staff on script writing for the development of the educational and documentary videos. The training has enabled staff to develop ten Parliament education videos that were aired on television with the funding from the CPA-TAP.

With the acquired and necessary skills, the Parliamentary staff that have been trained are now primed to write scripts for future video productions like education videos, short documentaries, news, creative stories and other education initiatives which will augur well for Parliamentary outreach targeting youths, students in schools and the general public as well.

**Cost arrangements**

The utilization of the CPA TAP funding was based on the prices determined by the two major television stations in Fiji. The two stations boast more than 70% coverage of the whole of Fiji and the airing of these videos has taken Parliament’s outreach to an exciting new level. All of the videos (3-4 minutes duration) provide basic explanation and contain real time footage (interviews, illustrations, narration with scrolling on screen texts) and snapshots of Fiji’s current Parliament and cut-away shots from the past based on relevancy.

**Amazing feedback**


The videos received overwhelming feedback on Facebook with the total reach for the ten videos reaching 435,259 impressions with 5,036 views, 2,632 reactions and 536 shares. Most of the comments were received were positive urging Parliament to continue producing more similar videos.

The CPA TAP funding for this project has been crucial in reaching many people who previously had little information about the Fijian Parliament and the airing of these videos has enabled the Fijian Parliament to reach out to viewers using cutting edge technology, the project has successfully met its objectives and has also motivated staff in the Fijian Parliament to continue producing videos to enhance outreach to the public.

The assistance has created greater awareness and appreciation of Parliamentary functions and more interest in the Parliamentary system, procedures and protocol amongst all members of society. We have received overwhelming feedback that has given us more motivation to continue with this wonderful work. We are so thankful to the CPA,” said Speaker Dr. Jiko Luveni.

The Fijian Parliament educational videos can be accessed on the Fijian Parliament website education page: www.parliament.gov.fj/education. For further information about the range of CPA Technical Assistance Programmes available please contact the CPA Headquarters Secretariat via hs.secretariat@parlau.org.
Background and Introduction
The adoption of the Paris Agreement in December 2015 marked a red-letter event for global climate diplomacy. World governments agreed to a treaty that saw every country contributing to an effort to address global climate change. The Paris Agreement has as its primary objective to limit the increase of global average temperature attributable to man-made climate change to well below 2 degrees Celsius, while pursuing efforts to restrict that increase to below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Countries have therefore submitted to the United Nations what they commit to do reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, which are the gases responsible for global climate change. These commitments are referred to as Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs. Governments also agreed to achieve net zero emissions in the second half of this century. In order to get to this point, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – a consortium of climate scientists nominated by Governments to advise the UN on climate issues – estimates that global emissions will have to peak by 2020 and substantially be reduced thereafter. However, when the submitted NDCs are summed, they fall short of what is required to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement. In other words, more needs to be done on the part of world governments to reduce their emissions, or put more simply, a greater amount of ambition is required. Governments are also required to submit new NDCs periodically with each new NDC representing an increase in emission reductions compared to the previous NDC.

The Paris Agreement provides for ‘global stock takes’ to be conducted every five years. Other governments to collectively track the progress towards the achievement of the objectives of the Agreement as well as the need to inform new NDCs. When the Paris Agreement was adopted, Parties decided to have a first such conversation in 2018 called the ‘Facilitative Dialogue’ to take stock of collective progress and to inform the next round of NDC submissions due in 2020, which was also part of the decision adopting the Paris Agreement. 2018 also marks the deadline that governments have agreed to for the finalisation of the rules and modalities that would govern the implementation of the Paris Agreement. 2018 is therefore looking to be politically significant for driving greater ambition.

During the preparations for the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP 23) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) or the pre-COP, as it is commonly referred to, held in Bonn, Germany in November 2017, the Facilitative Dialogue was rechristened the ’Talanoa Dialogue’, reflecting the Fijian/Pacific concept of ‘Talanoa’ which describes a process of sharing stories, building empathy and making wise decisions for the collective good, and perhaps more importantly, also one that is participatory and transparent.

Structure of the Talanoa Dialogue
At COP 23 in Bonn, Germany, the Presidencies of Fiji (COP 23) and Morocco (COP 24) conducted consultations with Parties on the structure of the Talanoa Dialogue, with the following parameters which were confirmed by the Conference of the Parties:

- The dialogue will be structured around three general questions:
  - o Where are we?
  - o Where do we want to get to?
  - o How do we get there?

- The dialogue should be constructive, facilitative and solutions oriented, and conducted in a manner that promotes cooperation;

- The dialogue should lead to discussions of a confrontational nature in which individual Parties or groups of Parties are singled out;

- The dialogue will be conducted in a manner that promotes enhanced ambition, and will consider, as one of its elements, the efforts of Parties on action and support, as appropriate, in the pre-2020 period;

- The dialogue will fulfill its mandate, in a comprehensive and non-restrictive manner:
  - The dialogue will consist of a preparatory and a political phase, and the Presidencies of COP 23 (Fiji) and COP 24 (Poland) will jointly lead both phases of the dialogue and co-chair the political phase at COP 24.

The Talanoa Dialogue was officially launched at COP 23 with the preparatory phase running from January to November 2018 and the political phase at COP 24 in December 2018 in Poland. While the mandate is clear as to the issues that need to be considered, being the tracking of progress and preparation of the next round of NDCs, issues regarding the scope of the Dialogue may inevitably arise as part of the discussions, and it may be instructive to take into consideration other auxiliary issues that directly and indirectly impact on the discussions.

During the negotiations on the Paris Agreement, the original conceptual aspect of NDCs was generally accepted as one regarding mitigation or reducing, avoiding or sequestering greenhouse gas emissions, in keeping with the long term goal of restricting global temperature increase. However, as negotiations progressed, issues relating to adaptation, or measures to cope with the adverse impacts of climate change crept into the NDC discussions and gained prominence to the extent that adaptation components of NDCs were included in some countries’ NDCs. Some countries’ NDCs therefore include an adaptation component.

Additionally, and perhaps critically, the provision of financial support to developing countries in order for them (developing countries) to implement their commitments in their NDCs is an obligation of developed countries. Technology transfer and capacity building are also forms of support that would be required by developing countries of developed countries to effectively and efficiently implement their commitments under their NDCs. As a result, the Dialogue may inevitably have to include aspects of support and adaptation in the context of tracking progress as well as determining the level of ambition for developing countries in preparation for the next round of NDC submission. In a nutshell, the issue of finance is likely to be a central issue on the table in the context of determining future ambition.

The Preparatory Phase
The preparatory phase is expected to benefit from, and be informed by various inputs from various sources. These inputs are expected to include the Special Report by the IPCC on global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius requested by the COP for which dedicated space will be allocated to fully understand the implications of the report. Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement, Parties have increasingly recognised the roles of non-State actors in contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the Agreement. Such actors include cities, states, the private sector, business and industry, and civil society organisations. In keeping with the spirit of Talanoa, it is expected that these players would also provide important inputs in the Dialogue. Inputs would also be drawn from Parties, stakeholders and expert institutions. To facilitate these inputs, the UNFCCC Secretariat has created an online platform to receive such inputs. Throughout 2018 therefore inputs are expected to be received and which will be collated into a synthesis report, which would then further inform the political phase to be held at COP 24 in Poland.

The Political Phase
The political phase will bring together high-level representatives of Parties to:

(i) take stock of the collective efforts of Parties in meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement, and

(ii) inform the preparation of the NDCs. Political discussions will include roundtables to ensure focused and interactive discussions among Ministers. The political phase is therefore designed to build momentum toward, and at COP 24 in a space where political leaders can agree on where we need to go and how we can get there in the global fight against climate change.

Political leaders, Ministers and other high-level country representatives will be able to discuss in the spirit of Talanoa, whether countries are collectively achieving what they agreed to in the Paris Agreement and whether they

Kishan Kumarsingh has been the lead technical negotiator on international climate change negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for Trinidad and Tobago since 1998, and has served in various capacities including Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform which was the subsidiary body mandated to negotiate the Paris Agreement. The views expressed in this article are the author’s alone, based on his background knowledge and involvement in the climate negotiation process.

CLIMATE CHANGE: AFTER PARIS: WHERE ARE WE NOW? WHERE DO WE NEED TO BE? HOW DO WE GET THERE? THE TALANOA DIALOGUE
The political signalling of the Talanoa Dialogue is clear on the inputs required to inform its discussions, including the content and scope of the political conversation outlined above, and therefore answers to the three questions should benefit from the preparatory phase as well as the discussions in the political phase taken as a whole. Any outcome from the Talanoa Dialogue must exist in any event at a minimum, include political guidance and commitment to increasing ambition, which can then be reduced to meaningful action on the ground, so that achieving the long-term objectives of the Paris Agreement are kept within reach.

Conclusion
It is submitted that the true potency of the Talanoa Dialogue lies in the spirit of Talanoa that ought to allow an opportunity for politicians to look themselves squarely in the mirror and ask the hard and candid questions of themselves, but more importantly to provide the political guidance to the rest of the world. The Talanoa Dialogue should therefore be the opportunity to reinforce political faith and certainly in the battle against climate change. Indeed, it should set the tone for the upcoming global stocktake in terms of the political ambition that would be needed in the future. While the Talanoa Dialogue can probably be distinguished from the periodic global stocktake provided for in the Paris Agreement in terms of its genesis and its one-off nature, what cannot be disputed is that the Dialogue is intended to reinforce and maintain on the political momentum created in Paris in 2015. This political momentum has inspired action by non-state actors in an unprecedented manner, and has accrued political currency which ought not to be sqaudered. The political signalling to inspire action outside of the UNFCCC process, and particularly to facilitate action by non-state actors therefore cannot be over-emphasised, as action on the ground, facilitated by political ambition and enabling environment is where the trajectory to the Paris goals invariably lies.

The Commonwealth includes among its membership large developed countries, large developing countries, emerging economies, low-lying developing coastal states, and small island developing states - a veritable representative mix of the countries of the wider world. Most, if not all, of the Commonwealth countries have played critical roles, including leadership roles in the shaping and final form of the Paris Agreement, thereby underlining the significant influence of this grouping of countries. The imminent 25th meeting of the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth in April 2018 therefore presents a unique opportunity for this diverse mixture of countries to set the tone and provide the political leadership for shaping the answers to the questions being asked after Paris, and by extension the success of the Talanoa Dialogue, and in the ongoing battle against climate change.

The author, Kishan Kumarasinghe, gave the first Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture for the CPA Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic (CAA) Region in August 2017 in Trinidad and Tobago on the subject of 'The Geo-political response to Climate Change'.

Political parties have a significant role in the working of a democratic polity. Whips in turn have rule cut out for them in smooth conduct of party affairs particularly in matters pertaining to House proceedings. The outcome of their endeavours and the efficacy of whips is manifest in the effective conduct of the passage of legislation and from a larger perspective, the House proceedings. Whips as an expression in its political context has its origins in hunting terminology. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term ‘whip’ as ‘a huntsman’s assistant who keeps the hounds from straying by holding them back with the whip into the main body of the pack’. According to this dictionary, the first recorded use of the term ‘whip’ in the parliamentary sense occurs in 1772. However PDS. Thomas in ‘House of Commons in the Eighteenth Century’ cites examples of the use of the term pre-date 1772. It was within the context of such summations to Members’ out of town that the first known Parliament of the instance of the use of the term ‘whip’ occurred in a debate on 8 May 1769 on petitions from Middlesex freeholders against the seating of Henry Luttrell instead of John Wilkes. Edmund Burke who, in a debate in Commons described how the King’s Ministers had made efforts to bring their fellows together, how they had sent for their friends to the north and to Paris, whipping them in. The phrase adopted by Burke caught the public fancy and soon became popular.

Coming to the very basic question, what are whips? A whip is an officer of a political party or legislature who takes the leadership of the party that a motion be adopted. Whips are the direct line of communication between the leader of the party and the backbenchers. They are also the direct line of communication from the leader of the party and their party’s members of Parliament respectively. It is within this triangular space that the action takes place.

Before Parliament, there is a question that a Bill be taken into consideration, clauses be adopted, the Bill be passed etc., or a motion be adopted. The party takes a position or a stand on which their Members need to vote. The party, therefore, enforces their whip’s (the office holders) to ensure that their Members vote as per the party’s position on the Bill or motion. Accordingly, the whips (acting instructions) are issued by the whips (the office holders) for compliance, upon the Members who are parties to the Bill or motion. The whips force their Members to vote as per the party’s instructions.

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For their Members who are unable to attend sessions of the House, secure the personal services of a number of officials known as whips, chosen from Members of the party itself. In fact, the efficient and smooth functioning of the House depends very largely on the efficiency of the whips on the party in power and the party or parties in opposition. In the Indian parliamentary context, the whip of a parliamentary party is the one in whose office has been designated to ensure that Members of the party are present in adequate numbers and vote according to the decision of the whip on important questions. The whip of the Government party in Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha is the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, who is also by virtue of holding such a position a Member of the Cabinet. Consequently, on the appointment of the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs as the Leader of the House in February 1966, the whip of the Government party in Lok Sabha was again raised to a position of Cabinet rank. In the Indian parliamentary system, such a move is always intended as a measure for effecting party discipline and ensuring effective floor management, as provisions of Tenth Schedule are made a part of the Constitution of India for Members of State Legislative Assemblies or Legislatures. The leaders and Chief Whip of a parliamentary party are invariably the persons responsible for seeing to it that the parliamentary business takes place in orderly manner. As regards the whipping authority, it is usually exercised by a member of the party in power on the party’s Members or other Members who are appointed to attend to divisions to ‘jail’ with the different regions and opinions but also the counsellors of Members.\footnote{Provisions under Anti-Defection Law}

**Whips as directives**

During sessions of the House, whips of different parties tend to influence their parties to adopt a certain line of conduct and directives informing them of the important, probable hour of voting and demanding their presence at that time. Such notices and/or directives are also called ‘whips’. In this sense, have, however, not been defined either in the Constitution or any law of the House, party shall be disqualified for being a Member of the House if he votes or abstains from voting in such contrary to any direction issued by the political party to which he belongs or by any person or authority authorized by him in this behalf, without obtaining, in either case, the prior permission of such political party, person or authority and such voting or abstention has been demanded by such political party, person or authority within fifteen days from the date of such voting or abstention.\footnote{Provisions under Anti-Defection Law} What is referred to above constitutional provisions, a whip has been referred to as direction. It is in this manner, therefore, that whip has been taken cognisance of as far as the provisions of Tenth Schedule are concerned. Hence, violation of whip by a Member which is referred to as disqualification and the provision of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution without prior permission of concerned political party if not condoned – would make the Member liable for disqualification.

**Judicial interpretation on applicability of provisions of para 2 (1) (b)**

It would be of interest to note interpretations given by Courts of Law on the provisions and applicability of provisions of para 2 (1) (b) of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution. In the case of the Supreme Court deciding into the force of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution one of the contentsions before the Punjab & Haryana High Court in (b) of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution have been invited for consideration of the members on several occasions and there are many examples.

Facilities open to Chief Whips

Realising the vital role played by the Chief Whips and the Leaders of parties and groups in Parliament as important functionaries, an Act namely ‘The Leaders and Chief Whip’s of Recognized Parties and Group in Parliament (Facilitates) Act 2017’ has been introduced during the tenure of the Twelfth Lok Sabha, which came into force in January 1998. In the definition clause ‘recognised group has been defined to mean (i) in relation to the Council of States, every party which has a strength of not less than fifty four Members in the Council and (ii) in relation to the House of the People, every party which has a strength of not less than thirty Members and more than fifty four Members in the House. The text of this Act has been defined to mean (b) in relation to the Council of States, every party which has a strength of not less than twenty five Members in the Council and (b) in relation to the House of the People, every party which has a strength of not less than fifty four Members in the House. As regards the vires of the provisions of para 2 (1) (b) of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution have been invited for consideration of the members on several occasions and there are many examples. Representation in a Parliamentary Committee or other Committee, it may be linked to additional remuneration or other body set up by the Government or it is entitled to similar telephone and secretarial facilities provided to the Members of House hold by the government or a local authority or corporation owned or controlled by the government or any other local authority.

Conclusion

In parliamentary democracy, effective floor management, party discipline and directives for ensuring party discipline can be a means for effecting party discipline to ensure compliance of party directives assumes importance. It is in such context that party whips and directives, are necessary. There are checks and balances to ensure that party directives and rules do not affect the rights of Members to freely express their views and at the same time, there is effective party floor managements. The endeavours of all parties have been to judiciously balance these two.

**References**

In the Commonwealth, women’s suffrage – the right of women to vote – has been achieved at various times. In some jurisdictions, women’s suffrage was granted before universal suffrage and therefore many women and men from certain classes or ethnic backgrounds were still unable to vote. Some jurisdictions granted the vote to both sexes at the same time.

The Parliamentarian, the legislature of the Isle of Man, is recognised as the world’s oldest Parliament in continuous operation, and some women in the Isle of Man (part of the geographic British Isles but not part of the United Kingdom) gained the right to vote in 1881 (see The Parliamentarian 2015: Issue Three for an article on this subject).

However, New Zealand was the first country in the world (and in the Commonwealth) in 1893 where women had the right to vote in parliamentary elections, and this was closely followed by South Australia in 1894, where women were also able to be candidates in elections for the first time. The world’s first female Members of Parliament were elected in Finland in 1907, following the implementation of universal suffrage the previous year, the first country in Europe to do so.

Throughout the Commonwealth and the CPA, many jurisdictions are marking anniversaries since the introduction of the first female Members of Parliament were elected in Finland in 1907, following the implementation of universal suffrage the previous year, the first country in Europe to do so.

In the United Kingdom, on 6 February 2018, to mark the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act 1918 and the first women to gain the right to vote, the UK Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Theresa May, MP officially launched the UK Parliament’s Vote 100 programme at a reception in Westminster Hall with all female Members of Parliament past and present being invited. The UK Parliament’s Vote 100 project is a year-long programme of events celebrating a century of women’s voices in the UK Parliament, the journey towards universal suffrage and the first women MPs.

Immersive and interactive technologies will be used to tell the story of women and Parliament. Lost historic spaces which were used to segregate women from the business of Parliament will be recreated and the story of those crucial campaigners and trailblazers retold. Throughout 2018, Vote 100 will celebrate milestones in women’s suffrage and the contribution of women to politics in the UK, with a series of events, exhibitions and educational programmes including its main exhibition ‘Voice & Vote’.

The ‘Voice & Vote: Women’s Place in Parliament’ exhibition will be staged in Westminster Hall and will cover the campaign for votes for women through to the representation of women in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Throughout the exhibition, rare and previously unseen historic objects, pictures and archives from the Parliamentary collections and elsewhere will be on show. Together with immersive and interactive technologies, the exhibition will tell the story of women in Parliament, the campaigning, the protests and the achievements.

Women have now occupied the highest positions in the UK Parliament, including Rt Hon. Baroness Betty Boothroyd, the first woman Speaker of the House of Commons and RH Hon. Baroness Hayman, the first Lord Speaker in the House of Lords.

Voice & Vote: ‘Women’s Place in Parliament’ will be held in the UK Parliament’s Westminster Hall from 27 June to 6 October 2018. Visit www.parliament.uk/vote100 for more information.

Above: The UK Prime Minister and women Members from both Houses of the United Kingdom Parliament gather in Central Lobby to celebrate the centenary of the Representation of the People Act, 1918.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians representing over fifty national and provincial Parliaments from across the Africa Region gathered in January 2018 at Zimbali Conference Centre in Ballito, outside Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, to discuss the issues of gender equality, women empowerment and the emancipation of women.

The two-day workshop, organised by the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Africa Region and hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature, was held under the theme of: ‘Mechanisms to Strengthen Gender Equality’. Opening the Regional Gender Sensitisation Workshop, the Chairperson of the CWP Africa Region, Hon. Thoko Didiza, MP (South Africa) said that the gathering was an opportunity for women Parliamentarians to share practices and experiences on women’s empowerment and emancipation as well as ideas on what can be done to increase women’s representation in Parliament and in government. “The discussions in this workshop will motivate and inspire us to achieve the goal of gender equality and women’s empowerment,” said Hon. Thoko Didiza.

The CWP Members who attended the workshop included Speakers, Deputy Speakers, Committee Chairpersons as well as Members of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures. The CPA Africa Region Chairperson, Hon. Lindiwe Maseko, MP (South Africa) who was one of the guest speakers said public policy was another mechanism for change and gender equality. She said that Parliamentarians should heed a call to ensure that the legislative process was open and transparent for women to participate.

Hon. Lydia Johnson, MPL, Speaker of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature told her colleagues to focus on what the different Parliaments were doing to increase women participation in development matters and ensuring gender equity. “Today, as we are meeting here under the theme: ‘Mechanisms to Strengthen Gender Equality’ we need to focus on what we as Parliamentarians are doing to strengthen mechanisms for gender equity. The CWP was founded to enable women Parliamentarians with an opportunity to discuss strategies to increase representation in Parliament and work towards mainstreaming of gender considerations in all CPA activities and programmes. Many countries including South Africa have also made strides towards improving women’s representation in Parliaments but we are not yet there.”

She also said that the establishment of the CWP was in response to the call of increasing women’s representation in political institutions. “CWP international encourages us as women Parliamentarians to work and focus on equipping women Parliamentarians with the skills or tools to lobby for the better representation of women for women’s issues; share experiences and information and learn about obstacles affecting women Parliamentarians and women’s representation in politics.”

South Africa’s Communications Minister, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane also spoke at the workshop and said that women’s participation in the Information Communications Technology (ICT) sector was woefully low, more especially in the countries of the South. “It is important to encourage young women to consider careers in areas such as the science and ICT sectors. Studies show that women still have limited access to education and therefore fewer women are able to enter the ICT sector.”

Emphasising the importance of ICT in accelerating women’s empowerment, Kubayi-Ngubane said the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) called for speedy transformation in the ICT sector. “With the dawn of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, women’s empowerment is no longer an option. We need to enact policies that will ensure that there is an increased and affordable access to internet connectivity. The Fourth Industrial Revolution can provide women with broader access to online services such as health care and education. It can eliminate the gender digital divide which remains most severe in poorer countries. Lack of awareness about the ICT benefits for women is a huge barrier to entry for women’s empowerment.”

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Pacific Regional Mentoring Programme held in New Zealand

The New Zealand Parliament and CPA New Zealand Branch hosted Members from the CWP Pacific Region at a regional mentoring programme for women Parliamentarians, involving Members from Fiji, Niue and Tonga which took place from 5 to 6 December 2017.

The mentoring programme was designed to build technical capacity and social capital in the Pacific Region by establishing long-term meaningful relationships between participants and New Zealand’s women Parliamentarians, while giving the participants practical strategies and skills they can take back to their own Parliaments.

Participants were given an opportunity to connect with others in the same position, establish a mentor relationship, and undertake workshops aimed at strengthening their confidence and abilities in their new representative roles.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Pacific Region Chairperson, Hon. Poto Williams, MP said: “Sadly, the Pacific (including New Zealand) remains one of the lowest regions in the world for women’s political representation. However, the past few years have seen momentum and commitment deliver great gains, including a woman Deputy Prime Minister (Samoa), and two women Speakers (Fiji, Cook Islands).

In the 2017 elections, women’s representation in the Tongan Parliament and Nue Legislative Assembly doubled and I hope to see similar success in the 2018 Fijian Election.”

The overarching goal for the programme was to provide the attending women Parliamentarians with a safe space to ask questions, share concerns, and build up the confidence and skills to effectively advocate for women in an often male-dominated environment.

The programme schedule included the opportunity for conference delegates to meet with the newly elected Prime Minister of New Zealand, Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern, MP, the Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives, Rt Hon. Trevor Mallard, MP, and Minister for Pacific Peoples, Hon Aupito William Sio.

A series of workshops were also held on a number of topics, including how to manage an office budget, how to use the media in a strategic manner, and how to handle abuse, criticism and setbacks.

The Programme was held as part of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Regional activities and was part-funded by the CWP Regional Strengthening Funds from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters Secretariat.

With thanks to our Parliamentary Report and Third Reading contributors: Stephen Boyd (Federal Parliament of Australia); Ravindra Garimella (Parliament of India); Dr Jayadev Sahu (Parliament of India); Erin Virgint (Federal Parliament of Canada); Luke Harris (Parliament of New Zealand); Ayeesha Waller (Parliament of the United Kingdom); Lisa Hill (British Columbia Legislative Assembly); André Grenier (National Assembly of Québec); Neil Iddawala (Parliament of Sri Lanka).
THIRD READING: BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

During the 2nd Session of the 41st Parliament, three legislative initiatives were adopted which will have a significant impact on British Columbia’s electoral landscape.

Election Amendment Act, 2017

Introduced on 18 September 2017, the Election Amendment Act, 2017 makes changes to provincial electoral financing rules, as well as the provisions governing third party advertisers during electoral campaigns.

The legislation will establish a transitional annual allowance for political parties receiving less than 1% of the total number of votes in the province, at a rate of 2.50 per vote. The per vote allowance for 2018 will be set at $2.50 per vote and will decrease to $1.75 per vote per year until 2022. The provisions in the Act require a Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly to conduct a review of the allowance and within six months of being appointed, submit a report to the Legislative Assembly with recommendations regarding whether or not the allowance should be continued after 2022 and if so, at what rate and for how long.

The legislation will also institute a separate individual limit of $1,200 for candidates in the provincial electoral system, as well as extending the limits for contributions to political parties, candidates and third party election advertisers in a manner similar to provinces in the federal system.

Amendments to the Act require that a referendum must be held before third party advertising limits could be broadened to include direct mail, public polling, and the use of more modern technologies. Mr. Martin also expressed his caucus concerns regarding the $1,200 maximum individual contribution limit, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, introduced the Local Elections Campaign Financing Amendment Act, 2017 which imposes an additional charge on the public cost of a private Member as, if adopted, it would impose an additional charge on the public cost of a private Member. Total contributions from union and corporate local election donations would be limited to 1% of the total number of votes in electoral districts.

The government’s objective was to have such reforms to local election campaign financing in place for the fall 2018 general local elections. The government’s objective was to have such reforms to local election campaign financing in place for the fall 2018 general local elections.

Consumer Protection

Bill 134, the Consumer Protection and Housing, Bill 134, said that the Government wishes to address commercial practices that contribute to and increase the cost of living. The bill was passed, five days of reflection had been held on the subject in early 2017 and a government strategy had been tabled in August to address third party ads targeting sexuality, including sexual assault. It also refers to any other misconduct, including that relating to sexual and gender diversity, in such forms as unwanted direct or indirect pressure, or comparative or adult-oriented sexual pronouncements.

The institutions’ policies must set out rules for students’ social activities and activities for welcoming new students (commonly known as ‘initiation’); include a code of conduct specifying the rules that a person who is in a relationship of authority must comply with if the person has an intimate relationship with the student. It also includes that a student accorded with a relationship of authority must comply with if the person has an intimate relationship with the student. New rules also include that a student should comply with if the person has an intimate relationship with the student.

The Act also introduces a protection regime relating to debt settlement service contracts, which prohibits debt settlement companies from charging fees before having obtained a client debt settlement offer that has been accepted by the consumer and before a payment has been made for the benefit of a creditor. The Act requires certain merchants to assess the consumer’s capacity to repay the credit requested or to perform the obligations arising from a long-term contract of trade or good faith. Furthermore, it is possible to open credit contracts (credit cards, lines of credit and accounts with merchants) which have been modernized. With regard to credit card use, the Act stipulates that 5% of the amount owing must be paid on a monthly basis for one year. This rate will then be increased by half a point every year until it reaches 6%

The Act also seeks to regulate advertising practices. Among other things, they prohibit the use of pictures that are not accurate depictions of the goods or services actually offered. This rate will then be increased by half a point every year until it reaches 6%.

THIRD READING: QUÉBEC, CANADA

During Bill’s passage, the National Assembly passed Bill 148, An Act to regulate generic medication procurement by physician and pharmacists, and set out rules to address commercial practices that contribute to and increase the cost of living. The bill was passed, five days of reflection had been held on the subject in early 2017 and a government strategy had been tabled in August to address third party ads targeting sexuality, including sexual assault. It also refers to any other misconduct, including that relating to sexual and gender diversity, in such forms as unwanted direct or indirect pressure, or comparative or adult-oriented sexual pronouncements.

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Consumer Protection

The National Assembly passed Bill 134, An Act many to modernize rules relating to consumer credit and to regulate debt settlement service contracts, high-cost credit contracts and loyalty programs, which amends consumer protection legislation, particularly with regard to credit. The first version of the Consumer Protection Act dates back to 1911. Bill 134 incorporates certain guidelines from Bill 24, which was tabled in 2011 but lapses in 2012 when the House was dissolved.

Life Theriault, Minister responsible for Consumer Protection and for Housing, through Bill 134 said that the Government wishes to address commercial practices that contribute to and increase the cost of living. The bill was passed, five days of reflection had been held on the subject in early 2017 and a government strategy had been tabled in August to address third party ads targeting sexuality, including sexual assault. It also refers to any other misconduct, including that relating to sexual and gender diversity, in such forms as unwanted direct or indirect pressure, or comparative or adult-oriented sexual pronouncements.

The Ministry pointed out that the new measure aims to give small generic drug manufacturers a reasonable market access and to prevent the development of monopolies. More specifically, the legislation will prohibit the owner of one or more pharmacies from buying more than 50% of the monetary value of all the generic drugs they purchase in a given year from a same manufacturer.

The Act complements two other pieces of legislation passed in 2017. The first allows the Minister of Health and Social Services to issue calls for tender to enter into exclusive supply contracts with generic drug manufacturers for the purposes of the Public Prescription Drug Insurance Plan.

The second grants the Régie de l’assurance-maladie du Québec (RAMQ) the power to appoint inspectors authorized to investigate and inspect premises where health professionals, drug manufacturers and wholesalers carry out their activities. These different pieces of health field-related legislation had been unanimously passed by the National Assembly.

Legalisation of recreational cannabis

In April 2017, two bills to legalise the recreational use of cannabis were tabled in the Canadian Federal Parliament. This action at the federal level impacted provincial jurisdictions. Among
other things, the provinces will be responsible for regulating and supervising cannabis sales and marketing. This led to the Minister for Rehabilitation, Youth Protection, Public Health and Healthy Living, Lucille Charlebois, to introduce Bill 157, An Act to constitute the Société québécoise du cannabis, to enact various highway safety-related provisions, in the National Assembly on 16 November 2017.

The Committee on Health and Social Services then held special consultations and public hearings on the Bill in December 2017 and again in early January 2018. Examination of Bill 157 will continue during the winter/spring session of parliamentary proceedings. In principle, the legislation of cannabis under federal legislation is scheduled for 1 July 2018.

References
1. In an open credit contract, a merchant may increase the membership or renewal fees or the credit rate without entering into a new contract. He or she must, however, send the customer a notice to that effect at least 30 days before the date the increase becomes effective.
2. The Act to reduce the cost of certain medications covered by the basic prescription drug insurance plan by allowing doctors for special patients, SIG 2016, c. 15 and the Act to extend the powers of the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec, regulatory and non-partisan practices relating to prescription drugs and protect access to voluntary termination of pregnancy services (modified title), SIG 2016, c. 28.
3. This program offers coverage to persons who are not eligible for a private prescription drug insurance plan, persons aged 65 and over and last-resort financial assistance recipients.

In the House of Commons
On 20 November 2017, Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Justin Trudeau, MP apologised in the House of Commons touben, gay, lesbian, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) members of Canada’s military, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the public service who had suffered discrimination. Between the 1990s and the 2010s, the government had financed dozens or thousands of federal employees due to their sexual orientation. Conservative Party Leader, Hon. Andrew Scheer, MP, and the New Democratic Party’s (NDP) Parliamentary Leader in the House of Commons, Guy Caron, MP, also condemned these discriminatory practices. Along with the apology, the government introduced Bill C-6, the Expungement of Historically Unjust Convictions Act, which would allow people convicted of historically same-sex offenses to have their criminal records expunged. The Bill would also permit spouses, parents, siblings, children or, however, send the customer a notice to that effect at least 30 days before the date the increase becomes effective.

Historic secret ballot vote in the House of Commons
On 30 November 2017, for the first time in the Parliament of Canada’s history, MPs voted in a secret ballot to overturn or uphold a Committee ruling. Until this vote, secret balloting had only been used in the House of Commons to elect a Speaker. Earlier in November, in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs deemed that a Private Member’s Bill on shipwrecked vessels that was introduced by NDP Member, Sheila Malcolmson, MP, was ‘non-votable’ because the government had introduced simple legislation. Ms Malcolmson appealed the Committee’s decision to the House of Commons Speaker, Hon. Geoff Regan, MP. The Speaker invoked the never-before-used rule allowing MPs to appeal to the entire House of Commons in a secret ballot. The vote ran over two days, and MPs voted in private, as opposed to the typical standing votes in the House. Ultimately, the House of Commons sided with the Committee, deeming Ms Malcolmson’s Bill ‘non-votable’.

Legislation
Recently, a number of Bills have received royal assent, including: • Private Member’s Bill, Bill C-210, An Act to amend the National Anthem Act (gender), alters Canada’s national anthem ‘O Canada’ by replacing the verse ‘in all thy sons command’ with ‘in all of us command’, to achieve gender-neutrality. The Bill was introduced in January 2016 by the late Liberal, Hon. Mauril Belanger, MP, who died in September 2016. The Bill received Royal Assent on 7 February 2018. • Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Statistics Act, which strengthens the independence and powers of the Chief Statistician, establishes the Canadian Statistics Advisory Council, and removes imprisonment as a penalty for individuals who do not respond to Statistics Canada’s requests or who provide false information. • Bill C-17, An Act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act repeals a number of provisions established by the previous government regarding the Yukon’s environmental assessment process. • Bill C-61, An Act to give effect to the Ash untreated Nation Education Agreement, which gives effect to an agreement made on behalf of the Government of Canada and 3 Ashanizhké nation First Nations on education. Furthermore, a number of Bills were introduced by the government, including: • On 7 November 2017, the government introduced Bill C-65, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and violence), in the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017. This Bill would implement new rules and processes for dealing with harassment, sexual harassment and bullying in federally regulated workplaces. If passed, these rules will apply to Parliamentarians and their staff. On 8 February 2018, the government introduced Bill C-69, An Act to enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulatory Act, to amend the Navigation Protection Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. This Bill would make major changes to the approval process for major natural resources projects, replace the National Energy Board with the Canadian Energy Regulator (a body that would regulate pipelines) and empower a new body, the Impact Assessment Agency, to conduct more extensive consultation with groups affected by development.

On 2 February 2018, the government introduced Bill C-68, which would make significant amendments to federal fisheries legislation, including a ban on capture of cetaceans (marine mammals such as whales, dolphins and porpoises).

House Committee Hearings and Reports
Prior to the return of the House in late January, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics held a meeting to study the report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner entitled The Trudeau Report. During this meeting, former Ethics Commissioner, Mary Dawson discussed her finding that Prime Minister Trudeau breached four sections of the Conflict of Interest Act when he accepted a free family vacation to the Aga Khan’s private island in the Bahamas in December 2016. During December 2017 and early February 2018, a number of reports were tabled by House Committees, including: • Taking action against systemic racism and religious discrimination including Islamophobia (Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage) • Moving the Relationship Forward: NAFTA Modernization and North American Trilateral Cooperation (Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development) • Comparative Study of Services to Veterans in Other Jurisdictions (Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs) • Building an Inclusive Canada: Bringing the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in Step with Modern Values (Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration) • Preserving Canada’s Heritage : the Foundation for Tomorrow (Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development)

The Senate
On 4 December 2017, Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Justin Trudeau, MP announced the appointment of two Senators based on the advice of the Independent Advisory Board on Senate Appointments to fill vacancies in Manitoba and Nova Scotia. The new Senators are: • Hon. Mary Coyle, a long-serving advocate for women’s leadership, gender equality and the rights of Indigenous Peoples • Hon. Mary Jane McCallum, a long-time provider of dental and health services to northern, First Nations and Indigenous communities.

Other changes to the House of Commons
On 11 December 2017, four federal elections were held. Liberal Chrystia Freeland, MP, won the Newfoundland riding of Bonavista-Burin-Trinity; Liberal Kent Hehr, MP, won the Ontario riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, a riding left vacant by her husband, the late Arnold Chan, who died in September 2017; Conservative Rosemary Falk, MP, won the Saskatchewan riding of Battlefords-Lloydminster, and Liberal Gordie Hogg, MP, won the British Columbia riding of South Surrey-White Rock. As of 8 February 2018, the standings in the House of Commons were: 183 Liberal, 97 Conservative, 44 New Democratic, 10 Bloc Québécois, 1 Green, 2 Independent and 1 vacant. Currently, 91 or 26.9% of MPs are women.

Supreme Court Appointments
On 18 December 2017, Hon. Sheila L. Martin was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. This appointment is the second under the Government of Canada’s new Supreme Court selection process, in which an independent and non-partisan Advisory Board identifies suitable candidates for Supreme Court Justices. This nomination fills the vacancy left by the retirement of Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin on 12 December 2017. To replace her, Rt Hon. Richard Wagner, who has served on the Supreme Court since 2012, was appointed Chief Justice.
52ND NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT OPENS

New Zealand’s general election was held on 23 September 2017, with the official results published on 7 October. Although the previously governing National Party won the most seats (66), it was unable to find support from another party to obtain the confidence of the 120-seat House of Representatives. This was the first occasion, since New Zealand adopted its MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) electoral system in 1996, that the party with the most support at the election did not form the government. Instead, after approximately two weeks of negotiations, the Labour Party (46 seats) and New Zealand First (9) signed a coalition agreement and provided the Cabinet, with the support of the Green Party (8) on confidence and supply.

The appointment of three Green Party members as Ministers outside Cabinet was a first for that party, as none of its Members had previously joined the Executive. Only one other party, ACT New Zealand (1 seat), returned to the House - the total of five parties being the smallest number of parties in the House since 1993.

The 52nd Parliament met on Tuesday 7 November for policy commitments and Legislative Council Chamber, the first occasion, since 1996, another party to obtain the supply. (46 seats) and New Zealand the party with the most support was the first occasion, since 1996, another party to obtain the supply. (46 seats) and New Zealand the party with the most support was the first occasion, since 1996, another party to obtain the supply. (46 seats) and New Zealand

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Parliamentary report

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52nd NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT OPENS

Christ Church Cathedral Reinstatement Bill

The Christ Church Cathedral Reinstatement Bill passed into law on 21 December 2017 after receiving unanimous support in Parliament. The Bill seeks to facilitate the fast-track and reinstatement of the Christ Church Cathedral, which was badly damaged in an earthquake in February 2011, and includes an instruction to the Government to appoint a Christ Church Cathedral Reinstatement Review Panel to oversee the reinstatement project.

The Mōrī in charge of the Bill, Dr Megan Woods, MP (Labour), stated in her Third Reading speech that “We are recognising the cathedral’s contribution to the cultural, social, and economic wellbeing of our city. It’s important to Christchurch’s regeneration and, importantly, its heritage value.” Dr Woods also mentioned that, alongside the Bill, she was in the process of setting up a trust that will raise funds for, and help to deliver, the reinstatement project. Hon. Nicky Wagner, MP (National) noted that “it’s been more than 10 years of debate over the cathedral’s rebuilding, even though lots of people had different ideas and no everybody supported a reinstatement, everybody has got to the stage that we need a decision, we need to go forward, and we now have a decision in place.” Ms Wagner also commented on the building’s wider significance, noting that “It’s not only a church, but also a community facility, and also a very important part of our tourism industry.”

Mr Mark Patterson, MP (NZ First) echoed this sentiment when speaking of submissions’ concerns about the commitment of Government funding to the rebuilding of a privately owned religious institution, stating that “This is not just a church. This is a significant and historic building that is very much loved by the city of Christchurch, and anything less than a reinstatement would not have done.”

Hon. Eugene Sage, MP (Green) mentioned that “This Bill, as others have mentioned, does override other legislation with these powers that the Minister has to recommend Orders in Council, but the Green Party is satisfied that there are sufficient checks and balances on that power.” However, Hon. Dr Nick Smith, MP (National) pointed out that “It’s not in this Parliament and heard my colleagues draw brownelee accused of being a Henry VIII, accioed of all sorts of sins for identical law, actually, under unforeseen circumstances in the immediate recovery of Christchurch and Canterbury.”

Ms Deborah Russell, MP (Labour) reminisced about her first visit to the cathedral, noting that “there was a plaque on the wall, there with those words that we all know now: he tangata, he tangata, he tangata. It is people, it is people… I hope that in years to come, when I look at that cathedral again as its reinstated, I hope to see that plaque again with those words about the people - the people that it is all about.”

Families Package (Income Tax and Benefits) Bill

The Families Package (Income Tax and Benefits) Bill, a core piece of legislation arising from the new coalition Government’s 100-day plan to bring New Zealand children out of poverty, passed into law following an urgent sitting of Parliament on 14 December 2017. The new Act forms a Families Package that contains measures to boost the incomes of low- and middle-income families by increasing the Family Tax Credit by introducing a Restart payment to help families with the costs incurred during a child’s early years of life, by introducing a Writers’ Ergonomic Payment to help both older New Zealanders and many of our poorest families to heat their homes, and by increasing paid parental leave to 26 weeks.

In describing the Families Package, the Minister for Finance, Hon. Grant Robertson, MP (Labour) stated “‘It’s a new Government’s law-making.’” Hon. Joyce said “I think what we have seen in the House working at its best, with a degree of purpose and solidarity around this, and it was the signal that we needed to send to the people of Christchurch from this House.”

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Scott Morrison, MP MP. When the Treasurer, Member, Campan was transferred to there were concerns that he
Matt Canavan Party Minister, a job in the office of National Mr Joyce's office and found to perform his role as Deputy
resources and his capacity often cautious about these this noting that it was a personal
In February, it was reported that Mr Joyce had left his wife of 24 years and his four daughters for his former staff, Ms Vikki
Campion, who is expecting his baby. The Opposition was initially reluctant to scrutinise this noting that it was a personal

 Matte media scrutiny of Mr Joyce, however, raised questions about his use of public resources and his capacity to perform his role as Deputy Prime Minister. For example, Ms Campion was moved from Mr Joyce's office and found a job in the office of National Party Minister, Senator Hon. Matt Canavan. When Senator Canavan stood for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Australia, Mr Joyce responded that "Mr Maguire approached me. He made an offer. I offered to pay for it. He said that I didn’t have to worry about it, because there were concerns that he might be a dual citizen, Ms Campion was transferred to the office of another Nationals Member, Mr Damian Drum, MP. When the Treasurer, Hon. Scott Morrison, MP, was interviewed about the validity of these staff placements within the National Party he was asked who was authorised to check these movements. Mr Morrison, a Liberal Member, confirmed that it was Mr Joyce as Leader of the National Party who was responsible.

Further questions were raised about Mr Joyce's unusual high claim of 50 nights travel allowance in Canberra when Parliament was not sitting. The figure reported was well in excess of other Ministers. But of more concern for Mr Joyce was confirmation that after his separation from his wife he received more than six months free accommodation from a local businessman, Mr Greg Maguire. The Opposition scrutinised this matter heavily during Question Time.

The Shadow Attorney-General, Hon. Mark Dreyfus, OET, MP, in a question to Mr Joyce stated, "four times the Deputy Prime Minister told the Parliament that he did not approach Mr Greg Maguire to ask him for a place to stay. Since then, the Daily Telegraph and The Australian have both publicly confirmed that Mr Maguire told them it was the Deputy Prime Minister who phoned Mr Maguire. Has the Deputy Prime Minister already misled the Parliament four times today, in breach of the Ministerial Standards?"

Mr Joyce responded that "Mr Maguire approached me. He made an offer. I offered to pay for it. He said that I didn’t have to worry about it, because there were concerns that he might be a dual citizen, Ms Campion was transferred to the office of another Nationals Member, Mr Damian Drum, MP. When the Treasurer, Hon. Scott Morrison, MP, was interviewed about the validity of these staff placements within the National Party he was asked who was authorised to check these movements. Mr Morrison, a Liberal Member, confirmed that it was Mr Joyce as Leader of the National Party who was responsible.

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This week the Prime Minister has expressed his own reservations over Mr Joyce's role were raised about his suitability as Acting Prime Minister when Mr Turnbull was scheduled to leave the country during the week commencing 19 February. During Parliament on 15 February Mr Turnbull advised that "the Deputy Prime Minister will be taking leave from Monday 19 February to Sunday 25 February. Accordingly, Mr Turnbull will not be able to be Acting Prime Minister while I’m overseas on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday of next week."

Tension between the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister reached a tipping point when Mr Turnbull was scathing in his criticism of Mr Joyce and stated that his actions were the result of a "shocking error of judgement." While Mr Joyce had not breached the Ministerial Standards as they were drafted at that time, Mr Turnbull stated that Mr Joyce's actions were an "unequivocal assurance that he did not intend to meet the Statement of Ministerial Standards. He has given me unequivocal assurances that he has been scrupulous in ensuring the legitimacy and accuracy of any claim for entitlement to ministerial, parliamentary or official allowance.

Honourable Members opposite wish to assert that he has breached a clause in the Ministerial Standards then they should identify the clause.

The crisis caused tension between the Liberal and National Party Members. The Leader of the Opposition had challenged Mr Turnbull to sack Mr Joyce but under the Coalition arrangement this was not possible. The National Party elects its leader and that person becomes Deputy Prime Minister of so only the parliamentary National Party can remove Mr Joyce.

More questions about Mr Joyce’s role were raised about his suitability as Acting Prime Minister when Mr Turnbull was scheduled to leave the country during the week commencing 19 February. During Parliament on 15 February Mr Turnbull advised that “the Deputy Prime Minister will be taking leave from Monday 19 February to Sunday 25 February. Accordingly, Mr Turnbull will not be able to be Acting Prime Minister while I’m overseas on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday of next week.”

Tension between the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister reached a tipping point when Mr Turnbull was scathing in his criticism of Mr Joyce and stated that his actions were the result of a “shocking error of judgement.” While Mr Joyce had not breached the Ministerial Standards as they were drafted at that time, Mr Turnbull stated that Mr Joyce’s actions were an “unequivocal assurance that he did not intend to meet the Statement of Ministerial Standards. He has given me unequivocal assurances that he has been scrupulous in ensuring the legitimacy and accuracy of any claim for entitlement to ministerial, parliamentary or official allowance. Honourable Members opposite wish to assert that he has breached a clause in the Ministerial Standards then they should identify the clause.”

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Mr Joyce commented that “I didn’t have to worry about it, because there were concerns that he might be a dual citizen, Ms Campion was transferred to the office of another Nationals Member, Mr Damian Drum, MP. When the Treasurer, Hon. Scott Morrison, MP, was interviewed about the validity of these staff placements within the National Party he was asked who was authorised to check these movements. Mr Morrison, a Liberal Member, confirmed that it was Mr Joyce as Leader of the National Party who was responsible.

Further questions were raised about Mr Joyce’s unusual high claim of 50 nights travel allowance in Canberra when Parliament was not sitting. The figure reported was well in excess of other Ministers. But of more concern for Mr Joyce was confirmation that after his separation from his wife he received more than six months free accommodation from a local businessman, Mr Greg Maguire. The Opposition scrutinised this matter heavily during Question Time.

This week the Prime Minister has expressed his own reservations over Mr Joyce’s role were raised about his suitability as Acting Prime Minister when Mr Turnbull was scheduled to leave the country during the week commencing 19 February. During Parliament on 15 February Mr Turnbull advised that “the Deputy Prime Minister will be taking leave from Monday 19 February to Sunday 25 February. Accordingly, Mr Turnbull will not be able to be Acting Prime Minister while I’m overseas on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday of next week.”

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The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, in building a strong and cohesive society.”

and community protection are all important elements of skilled labour for our domestic economy, business relationships, revenue collection, law enforcement and national security outcomes, travel and tourism and the general integrity of our immigration systems in building a strong and cohesive society.”

Mr Dutton stated that “to carry out these functions, our department obtains information exclusively, including personal information, from foreign governments and foreign partners. Some of this information is highly sensitive and must be carefully managed. We must ensure that it is only used and disclosed for legitimate purposes.” The Minister advised that the amending legislation “clarifies the secrecy and disclosure provisions in the Australian Border Force Act 2015 (the ABF Act) to reflect the policy intent of those provisions.”

The Minister explained that “Part 6 of the ABF Act establishes these important secrecy and disclosure provisions that are in place in that part of the former Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and a range of other Commonwealth agencies. These provisions are intended to prevent and deter unauthorised disclosure or a record or disclosure of information. Breach of these requirements is punishable by imprisonment for two years.”

Mr Dutton noted that the Australian Border Force Protection (Amended Protection) Bill will “clarify part 6 and related provisions to reflect the original intent of the legislation, which is to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of information that could harm the ability to do public business.”

The Minister explained that “the aim of this measure is to ensure that Immigration and Border Protection information is provided in the most appropriate manner for a targeted manner, but is also able to be disclosed when it is appropriate to do so.” The Minister noted that “the legislation will only disclose information to the extent that it is necessary and is consistent with the policy purpose, and that the amending legislation specifies that the information will be protected and must be retained to include only certain kinds of information, such as that relating to the security, defence and international relations of Australia, protection, detection and investigation of offences; protection of public health and safety or sensitive personal and commercial matters.”

During debate in the Senate, Senator Katy Gallagher indicated that Labor would oppose the legislation. However, Senator Gallagher commented that “while I’ve said we won’t oppose these Bills through the Parliament, we certainly don’t believe that a broader housing response, will reduce the pressure on housing affordability that’s needed, particularly in certain markets.” Senator Gallagher noted that “this government, which has now been in power for five years, has failed to have a Minister responsible for housing, has failed to have a housing strategy, has failed to renegotiate a national housing agreement and has failed in any way to respond to the genuine pressures that are affecting particularly those on lower incomes, those who are renting and those who own their homes.”

In addition, Mr Sukkar added that “federal policy will also be given greater flexibility to contribute to the progress of the sale of their home into a superannuation. This will help free-up housing stock, which is desirable in the short term, and it will also help Australia’s作出了 huge progress by reducing barriers to allow Australians to diversify their personal returns that are not available through their existing contractual superannuation arrangements. The Minister of City Planning and Urban Development will introduce the Bill and the phasing of this Bill is to facilitate and conduct the Local Authorities Election in the New Electoral System, which was approved by the Local Authorities Election (Amendment) Act, No. 22, 2012. The New Electoral System was introduced to abolish the preferential voting system and to elect Members through a proportional representation and ward system.”

He further stated that the provision has introduced a female representation through the Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Act, No. 2016, which was a very progressive move in the history of the country, where women were given a quota of 25%. He also mentioned that the requests of Political Party Leaders on how to elect half of the members of the new electoral system were taken into consideration to increase the quota of proportional representation to 40% in order to facilitate the representation of all parties. Hon. Anura Kumara Dissanayake, MP, Chief Opposition Whip stated that the nature of the Bill was to change the preferential votes electoral system while safeguarding proportional representation. He also stated that unlike the previous preferential voting system, the new electoral system fulfills the aspirations of the people to have a Member for their constituency. He also pointed out the difficulty faced by the small parties in nominating women representatives, that the small parties are entitled to send one or more members to the local authorities and also suggested not to make it compulsory for small parties to nominate women members. Hon. Ajith Pereira, MP, Deputy Minister of Power and Renewable Energy stated that the New Electoral System introduced by the Bill is a step forward in harvesting women’s contributions in the legal, health, education and all other fields in the political field. Therefore, the proposal was to have minimum 25% women representation in legal, health, education and all other areas are applicable other than in the political field. The proposal was to have a quota of 40% proportional representation to address the grievances of the minority communities and to introduce multi-member wards to address the grievances of the minority communities.

Hon. Lasantha Alagiyawanna, MP, Deputy Minister of Finance and Mass Media stated that the Government wanted to rectify the shortcomings of the proportional representation system by way of introducing a proportional representation system in both a ward system and a proportional representation system together, which would help in addressing the grievances of all small parties and minority communities and an increase in the quota of proportional representation up to 40% would guarantee the proportional representation of small parties in the local authorities.

Hons. Dinesh Gunawardena, MP stated that the new electoral system that gave priority to the ward system was introduced in the recent amendments to the Special Committee on the Electoral System that was appointed by Parliament in 2002, subsequent to a Private Members’ Motion moved by him in 2002 to introduce a mixed electoral system. He pointed out the advantage of the proportional representation system was the election of Members as per the choice of the people of the particular area. He further stated that the Amendment brought to the Local Government Elections Act in 2012 had lots of issues that have been addressed in this new legislation by making provisions to elect 60% Members through the proportional or the electoral system, through the proportional representation system.

Hon. V.S. Radhakrishnan, MP Stressed while appreciating the move to elect members by ward system and proportional representation system pointed out the shortcomings of not considering the issues of minority parties and minority communities. He also requested that the grievances of minority communities be addressed properly and make arrangements for a representation system through the ward system.

Hon. Dr Sudanthini Fernando, Minister of City Planning and Water Supply expressed her pleasure in the decision to make provisions for mandatory women’s representation in local authorities and also insisted that the women’s 30% representation need to be safeguarded. She also stated that the Women’s Caucus recommended that women’s representation need to be increased not only in local authorities but in all sectors including statutory bodies and provisions should be made in the Constitution in this regard. Most of the Members spoke favourably for the new electoral system and for making provisions for women’s representation. Members also pointed out that the elections should not be delayed.

The Bill was passed by majority vote by conducting an electronic vote in the House. The Speaker on 31 August 2017 and came into effect on the same day.
In 1834 it was the tally sticks. Relics of a long defunct accounting method, they were deemed obsolete and ordered to be burnt in the furnaces beneath the Palace of Westminster. The intense heat set House of Lords chamber alight. Fire spread rapidly destroying almost all the ancient Palace of Westminster. The new Palace created by Pugin and Barry rose in its place over the next thirty years. In the 50 years preceding the fire, MPs and experts had warned of the risks posed by the building’s design and the danger of a catastrophic fire spreading.

**In the 21st century, it will be the mechanical and electrical services – gas, steam pipes, drainage, sewage, electricity – that underlay, in many cases literally, the Palace. Crammed into the basements, Victorian steam pipes compete for space with 21st century data cables. The congestion of systems built on top of one another since the 1860s which have not been renewed since the 1940s and are at least forty years past their anticipated lifespan.**

In 2016, a Joint Committee of seven MP and six Peers tasked with looking at the issue concluded that a “complete and sudden failure of these systems[... the kind that would require the Palace to be abandoned immediately] is a real possibility.” They concluded that: “there is a clear and pressing need to tackle the work required to the Palace of Westminster and to do so in a comprehensive and strategic manner to prevent catastrophic failure in the next decade. We have also concluded that, in principle, a full decant of the Palace of Westminster presents the best option under which to deliver this work.”

In summary, in the mid-2020s, MPs and Peers would leave the Palace of Westminster and relocate to other buildings in the immediate vicinity of Parliament whilst the work to repair the Palace took place. The Committee set out a series of steps for how the full relocation, restoration, and renewal of Parliament should be set in motion. The first stage was the formal approval of both Houses to its recommendations and the setting up of a body to manage the project. The Committee set out a draft motion for both Houses to approve.

2016 and 2017 passed without the Government bringing forward the necessary motion. In January 2018, it put two alternative proposals to MPs. Neither implemented the Committee’s recommendations in full, both sought – in different ways – to delay the moment when Parliamentarians would need to make the decision on whether to relocate. In response to this the Chair of the influential Public Accounts Committee, Hon. Meg Hillier, MP (Labour) put forward an amendment. The effect of this would be the full endorsement and implementation of the Joint Committee’s recommendations immediately: including agreement to the proposal that MPs and Peers move out of the Palace of Westminster for the duration of the work.

On 31 January 2018, the House of Commons debated the issue. Introducing the debate for the Government, the Leader of the House, Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom, MP, stated that “this debate should have taken place about 40 years ago.” She emphasised “the need to be sure that we are acting in the right way, with the right planning and design capabilities in place. … we have to be able to justify to our constituents and to taxpayers that we are doing what is necessary to safeguard the Palace of Westminster and that we have thoroughly examined the costs.”

The “eye watering” cost of the work also concerned Hon. Pete Wishart, MP (SNP): “Of all the things this House can do to endear itself to our constituents, spending billions of pounds on renovating our place of work is not one of them. In these days of austerity and tightening of belts, and with the impending economic disaster of Brexit coming our way, I would bet this would be near the bottom of the very bottom of the public’s concerns.”

The Scottish Nationalists demanded included that further consideration be given to the relocation of Parliament outside London for the duration of the works.

Speaking against the Government, Hon. Chris Bryant, MP (Labour), a Member of the Joint Committee, accused the Government of wanting to kick the issues into the “very, very long grass” which would be an “utter dereliction of our duty” and be “degrading and national asset.” He was among many MPs who highlighted the risks to MPs, visitors and staff from the state of the building. Meg Hillier, who proposed the amended motion endorsing immediate action argued: “We need to make a decision tonight about this building: … this building is at risk unless we make a decision. Let us move forward and get the full costings and the full programme of works so that we can get on with the job.”

The Northern Ireland MP, Hon. Jan Paisley, MP (Democratic Unionist Party) admitted that he started a sceptic about the urgency of the work, but “the evidence led to one undeniable and unalterable conclusion: in order for us to preserve a building that we love, a heritage that we cherish and a history that we are in charge of, we have to decant from this building, refurbish it, restore it, renew it and revile it, and on that basis allow ourselves to have a new building for future generations.” He concluded: “As Members of this House, when we enter each day we walk over stones that were laid by William the Conqueror’s descendants. We walk where Cromwell marched his army. We hear echoes around this building, the place where Wilberforce chanted the call for freedom. We pass through corridors where the smoke of Winston Churchill would have passed by: … if we really love this building, as many say they do, we should be brave and urge that we get on with this process expeditiously.”

The Government’s arguments did not succeed and MPs voted in favour of the proposal to press ahead with the full decant. The following week the House of Lords debated the MPs’ decision. In the Upper House, the Leader of the House of Lords, Rt Hon. Baroness Evans of Bowes Park had “no hesitation in commending” MPs’ conclusions. She urged peers not to divert from the MPs’ decision. “This would mean it was likely that no progress could be made until time was found for the [MPs] to debate this matter again and, in effect, reconsider the position that it agreed last week only after lengthy delays and a series of votes, and I am afraid that we would be no closer to making progress.”

Rt Hon. Lord Naseby sought to challenge the Commons conclusions “on the grounds of cost, timing and particularly the impact internally and externally.” However, Lord Naseby’s view was not the majority in the debate and eventually he withdrew his opposition. A former Clerk of the House, Rt Hon. Lord Lissane told of his “sleepless hours” when he was the legally responsible officer for parts of the estate. He painted a graphic picture of the risks: “A highly plausible scene might be on a hot summer’s evening, with both Houses sitting late to finish business before the Recess. One of the too many minor fires, which we are told occur each year, swiftly becomes a major fire and spreads rapidly because of the lack of completed fire compartmentation. The electricity supply goes down completely. A huge demonstration which happens to be taking place in Parliament Square means that the emergency services cannot get to us quickly. There are hundreds of casualties and possibly fatalities. How do we feel about continuing to carry that risk for seven years or more?”

Rt Hon. Baroness Stowell of Beeston, Co-Chairman of the Joint Committee, emphasised “We are the custodians of something precious that belongs to everyone. We owe it to the public, whose building this is, to follow the route that is quickest, with the lowest cost and the least risk.” The House of Lords agreed to the motion without dividing. These votes mean that the next phase of the restoration and renewal project begins. The project’s website suggests that is “thought to be the biggest and most complex renovation programme of any single building this country has known.”

For further information visit https://restorationandrenewal.parliament.uk.
On 29 January 2018, the first day of the first session of the year, the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, informed the Parliamentarians about the achievements of the government, in particular the strengthening and modernising efforts in sectors like agriculture, industry, space and atomic energy. He highlighted the various achievements that took place during the past year and the future goals in those fields.

The government has started a number of programmes to promote growth and social justice. Lauding the various initiatives, the Prime Minister said that the government has made significant progress in these areas.

Shri Mohammad Salim (CPM) mentioned that the government has failed to protect the rights of the poor and that the Prime Minister has not granted any loans which has increased the prices of essential commodities. He said that the government has not provided adequate funding to drought prone areas.

Shri K.H. Muniyappa (INC) lamented that there is no proper provision to ensure a constant decrease in inflation, pro-growth said there has been a constant decrease in inflation.

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The Footwear Design and Development Institute was established in India in 1986 with the objective of providing skilled human resource to the leather sector. The Footwear Design and Development Institute in India had been growing both in terms of value and volume. India is the third biggest market of footwear and prominent exporter of leather in the world. Being a highly labour intensive industry, the requirement for trained human resources for leather and footwear sector is immense. There is a strong need for upgrading the Footwear Design Institute to deal with international standards and markets.

The global footwear market is expected to reach US$ 220.2 billion by 2020 from the current level of US$ 150 billion. The opportunity cost of not investing in human resources required for this sector in India at this juncture would result in increased imports thereby impacting domestic and export sector of footwear and leather products. It had, therefore, been proposed to empower the Institute to improve its capacity and performance with a view to address the shortage of the trained human resource. The Government, accordingly proposed to declare the Footwear Design and Development Institute as an institution of national importance and enable it to emerge as a centre of excellence with the objective of meeting the national and international standards for the promotion and development of national and international standards for the promotion and development of leather and footwear sector.

The Indian Institutes of Information Technology (Public Private Partnership) Act, 2016 was brought forward to achieve this objective. Everybody’s participation is needed and hence the underlying importance of private partnership. Finally, the Minister observed students should get a good education so that they can make progress. Good education and good institutes would help in increasing employment. The Bill had been brought forward to achieve this objective. It also empowers the Institutes to grant degrees to the students.

The National Institutes of Technology (Second Amendment) Bill, 2017 seeks to amend the Act so as to incorporate the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research at Tirupati in the Schedule to the Act. The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on 19 July 2017 and by Rajya Sabha on 27 July 2017. The Bill as passed by both Houses of Parliament was assented to by the President of India in August 2017.

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The Indian Institutes of Information Technology (Public Private Partnership) Bill, 2017 Education is a key element for developing human resources and contributing to the growth in all areas or disciplines relating to footwear and leather products design and development and to frame Statutes and Ordinances and to alter, modify or rescind the same. The Institute would open to all across India and classes. Provision would be made for the maintenance of a Fund by the Institute which shall be applied towards meeting the expenses of the Institute.

Debate: The Bill broadly found favour with Members during the discussion on the Bill in both Houses of Parliament. Members commented that the Footwear Design and Development Institute is a large scale industry and the footwear and leather marketing sector has gone through transformational change. Through this Bill an effort was being made to set up national level institute for this sector and this would facilitate the exchange of latest global technology with India. The Footwear and leather sector had been experiencing a surge in years in India and it has been evolving over the years. India ranks third globally after China and Vietnam with regard to export of leather products and footwear.

The Minister in charge of the Bill while replying to the debate informed the Members that the foremost need is for giv....
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Speaker, Malacca (2016-2019)

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