



59th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

Conference Concluding Statement

No. 01, 18 October 2013



PARLIAMENTARIANS attending the 59th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and associated meetings recognized the values and aspirations for which the Commonwealth strives to achieve as contained in the Commonwealth Charter. The conference theme *'Effective Solutions to Commonwealth Developmental Challenges'* was particularly pertinent given the Commonwealth's commitment to equality and the respect of political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development.

The conference, hosted by the Parliament of South Africa from 28 August to 6 September in Johannesburg, was attended by approximately 550 Delegates representing Parliaments and Legislatures from around the Commonwealth.

The meeting, chaired by Hon. Mninwa Johannes Mahlangu, MP, Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces and 2013 President of the CPA, included the Small Branches Conference on 30 and 31 August for Parliamentarians from jurisdictions with populations of up to 500,000 and a Conference for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians on 1 September.

Some of the recommendations given by delegates include the need for the separation of powers, significant gender representation, good governance and the eradication of violence against women as espoused in the Commonwealth Charter.

This concluding statement contains three main areas: the topics of discussion, summary of delegates' discussions and recommendations which were either endorsed or noted.

CPA Statement of Purpose

The CPA connects, develops, promotes and supports Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth.

The eight conference workshops and their recommendations were as follows:

Workshop A: Land access and ownership: progress and challenges experienced by rural communities in accessing land. What could be the role and intervention of Parliamentarians?

Delegates discussed the possible solutions to land reform in South Africa. They highlighted a number of methods to achieve the objective, including using land as collateral, engaging traditional leaders, and classifying co-operatives as legal entities.



It was acknowledged that in some communities, land is an integral part of the individual and collective identity. It was considered that land allocated for food production should be protected to minimize the risk of conflict.

It was further considered that in order to achieve land reform, pre- and post-settlement support, training, credit, market access, equipment, pricing strategy, infrastructure and land tenure security, were important factors to helping rural communities.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- **Governments must understand the needs of rural communities by creating effective platforms for discussion and Parliamentarians must pass responsive legislation to correct imbalances.**
- **Communities needing access to land are largely poor and marginalized, mostly women, which raises the need for Parliament to engage in regular outreach programmes to rural communities.**

Note: The first recommendation from the Workshop was endorsed, the second was noted.

Workshop B: Should there be parliamentary intervention in the informal economy and entrepreneurship sectors?



Delegates acknowledged that parliamentary intervention in the informal economy and entrepreneurship sectors is a necessity to establish a framework with three different operational levels; namely: the micro, the macro and the meta level. This could be achieved through legislative and policy measures that also equip women-led entrepreneurship with socio-economic protection and enhance their limited bargaining power.

Some delegates proposed there may be potential in further developing the agricultural sectors in some jurisdictions to focus on the supply of alternative therapies and medicines.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- **Cannabis has gained acceptance as a very effective drug for many medical conditions. Parliaments should therefore consider legislating strict conditions under which it can be grown for export.**
- **Parliament may effectuate change in informal economy sector dynamic through legislative and policy measures to equip women-led entrepreneurship with socio-economic protection, enhancing limited bargaining power.**
- **Forge closer linkages between Parliament, civil society, and the private sector in order to facilitate the promotion of women entrepreneurship in an integrated approach.**

Note: All three recommendations from the Workshop were noted.

Workshop C: The challenges of attaining the Millennium Development Goals

There was general agreement from the delegates that progress had been made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, they also acknowledged that there was more work to be done. It was observed that progress had been slow on the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. It was emphasized that the introduction of the quota system had increased women representation in some countries. A challenge that still remained was with regard to the existing inadequate funding to ensure that there was true gender equality beyond just numbers.



Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- **People everywhere need to be conscious of their responsibilities and should press governments and international developmental partners to augment, not deduct, resources dedicated to the MDG[s] effort.**
- **Parliamentarians must ensure all interventions are framed in the context of national development strategies that define appropriate actions to ensure the long-term sustainability of results.**
- **That the challenges in meeting the MDGs by 2015 show why Parliamentarians must play a central role in ensuring a robust post-2015 development environment.**
- **There is a need for the Research and Development budget to be prioritized towards a comprehensive human development strategy.**

Note: All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Workshop D: Inequitable resource-sharing: a threat to democratic governance



Delegates urged Parliamentarians to ensure that transparency, accountability, knowledge-sharing, good governance and effective leadership were the principles by which a nation managed its resource wealth. Resource extractive industries have to operate with consideration for social and ecological issues, while legislation has to address corruption issues. The CPA should continue to build the capacity of Parliamentarians for effective and responsive representation to mitigate the effect of inequitable distribution of resources.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- **The CPA should continue to build the capacity of Parliamentarians for effective and responsive representation to mitigate the effect of inequitable distribution of resources.**
- **Natural resource extraction lies at the core of economic and social development, so Parliamentarians must address the critical issue of inequitable sharing of resource wealth.**
- **“People-centric” must be the core of Parliamentarians who must lead the political will to transform the democratic fundamentals of their nations without fear or favour.**
- **Ensure transparency to foster proper natural resource revenue use through clearly defined responsibilities, an open budget process, public availability of information and assurances of integrity**

Note: All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Workshop E: Role of Parliamentarians in transfer of technology and research to boost agricultural productivity

Delegates noted that Parliaments have to ensure that technological knowledge and research and development findings are appropriately disseminated and implemented to increase sustainable agricultural production. Appropriate policies benefiting farmers have to be developed and implemented to ensure that the existing infrastructure and capacity safeguard food security. Therefore, Parliaments must spearhead the debates on the ethics of food production.



Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- **Parliamentarians must lobby governments to ensure that the relevant departments of agriculture have the capacity to transfer technologies which will directly reach out to the farmers.**

- **Parliament may ensure the value of democratic governance, rooted with meaningful coordination and understanding amongst Legislature, bureaucracy and implementing agencies to foster agriculture development process.**
- **Parliamentarians must encourage the creation of collaboratively funded research and development organizations and promote new technology through specialist commercialization units that work directly with farmers.**
- **National Agriculture Committees should investigate with companies such as Microsoft, Apple and Vodafone how their Digital Revolution can most effectively promote our Green Revolution.**

Note: All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Workshop F: Governing democratically in a tech-empowered world: deepening partnerships between Parliaments and Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations (PMOs)



Delegates examined the use of technology in the dissemination of information to the public and the role played by Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations (PMO). While there was scepticism around the passing of protection of information bills in many countries, the adoption of the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness by all PMOs was considered a step in the right direction in monitoring the work of Parliaments. The role of PMOs should also cascade down to State or Provincial Legislatures in order to increase public participation and sharing of information. Public education around the role of Parliament is a crucial component and technology could be employed to assist in this regard.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- **Democratic governance has assumed global significance roles; Parliaments and Parliament Monitoring Organizations play complementary roles in governance processes. ICT should provide an interface for such processes.**
- **Enhancing public participation and education about Parliament involves more than using technology to provide information; Parliaments must ensure information is explained and put into context.**
- **The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association endorses the principles of the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness and should develop recommended benchmarks for democratic parliamentary conduct.**
- **The role of Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations should be enhanced to make Parliamentarians, especially young Parliamentarians, performance up to mark and make the Parliament Committees effective.**

Note: All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Workshop G: Separation of powers and good governance

Delegates discussed the origin and development of the doctrine of *Separation of Powers* and the importance of good governance. Discussions centered on the differences between developed and developing countries, those that have written and unwritten constitutions, and the difficulties experienced by Small States regarding separation of powers.



It was proposed that if Legislatures wanted to fulfill their responsibilities effectively, they needed to be financially and administratively independent.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- **The concepts of the separation of powers and good governance must take into account the need for rapid political, social and economic development.**
- **Parliamentarians must be able to operate independently of the Executive through scrutiny mechanisms that are invested with significant powers and provided with adequate resources.**
- **Commonwealth Parliaments should ensure the promotion of awareness of the Latimer House Principles and enact legislation to preserve Judicial Independence and Judicial Accountability.**
- **Radical constitutional reform is necessary to ensure the successful existence of the doctrine of the separation of powers and by extension, continued good governance.**

Note: All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Workshop H: Policy solutions for caring of an ageing population



Delegates discussed the increase of life expectancy and the quality of life of senior citizens. They also examined how to improve and support policy directives and decision-making for the ageing population. It was considered that Parliamentarians would develop an effective legislative framework to ensure that the aged population should be assisted with reasonably comfortable homes in their community. Consequently, although countries were not equally resourced, it was important that policy makers and legislators should ensure that programmes and policies were developed for improved quality of life and dignity for all senior citizens.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- **Parliament should empower citizens to decide their care and treatment as they age and at life's natural end, and protect professionals who respect those decisions.**
- **Commonwealth countries are facing a population that will live longer so governments and Parliaments must investigate all options in establishing care systems for ageing populations.**

- **Parliamentarians should foster a society where seniors can age in place within their homes and the community.**

Note: All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Final Plenary: A parliamentary response to the Commonwealth Charter



Delegates recognized the principles enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter. These include democracy, human rights, international peace and security, tolerance, respect and understanding and freedom of expression. They generally agreed that the Charter was a useful instrument to uphold and enforce the Commonwealth principles.

The commitment of some countries to uphold the values contained in the Charter was seen as a milestone in the development and prosperity of the Commonwealth. This could be further achieved through integration and domestication of the Charter, as well as passing resolutions and legislation that reflected and guarded it.

It was further noted that the Charter should be used to enhance discussions on issues such as women's rights, education, economic inequalities, sexual orientation, HIV and the progress of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It was recognized that although there were differences of opinion on particular issues, the overall importance of the Charter should not be lost.

Delegates acknowledged the need for greater emphasis on the engagement of citizens.

Recommendations from the Final Plenary were:

- **CPA Member Parliaments must integrate the provision of the Charter in their work. Parliaments should popularize, monitor and exercise oversight on the Executive for compliance.**
- **Commonwealth Parliamentarians and Parliaments have a duty to hold their governments to account if they fail to uphold the values set out in the Charter.**
- **Parliaments are the heart of democratic society and indispensable for popularizing, implementing and enhancing the fundamental principles and values of the Commonwealth Charter.**

Note: All recommendations from the Final Plenary were endorsed.

33rd Small Branches Conference

30 -31 August 2013

1st Plenary: Separation of powers and good governance in small states

Delegates to the Small Branches Conference generally reached a consensus that the separation of powers was fundamental to achieving good governance. It was also considered that it would be necessary to strengthen the system of checks and balances in Small States.



It was further considered that each of the three arms of government should act independently but compliment each other's responsibilities to enable maximum impact on good governance. State institutions should also provide opportunities for civil society organizations to participate.

Recommendations from the 1st Plenary were:

- **As a parliamentary officer, the Auditor-General's appropriation should be approved by the Parliament and not just by the executive to ensure their independence.**
- **Parliament should be amenable to embracing greater general oversight from other Commonwealth Parliamentary colleagues and committees, and should facilitate this interface with the requisite amenities.**
- **Parliaments should ensure that judicial appointments should normally be permanent, where contract appointments are inevitable, such appointments should be subject to appropriate security of tenure.**

Note: The first recommendation was endorsed while recommendations two and three were noted in the 1st Plenary.

2nd Plenary: Is education meeting local employment needs in small states?



Delegates stated that a country's economic strength depended on people with core training and necessary skills in respect of finance, manufacturing, information communication technology and engineering, as well as in the field of science. The on-going issue of youth unemployment was highlighted in Small States. It was noted that governments had to play a critical role in addressing the issue. Appropriate programmes needed to be implemented to ensure that citizens had the relevant skills to fill available employment opportunities.

Recommendations from the 2nd Plenary were:

- In Small States the education system should attempt to maximize the development of appropriate skills to support local business and create meaningful pathways to employment.
- Appropriate programmes need to be put in place by governments to ensure that citizens have the relevant skills to fill employment opportunities that are available.
- Parliaments must press upon their respective education systems to provide for and maintain basic numeracy and literacy standards for school leavers.
- An education system should provide good quality and relevant education, soft skills, vocational training, on-the-job work experience, lifelong learning, and build partnership with world of work.

Note: All the recommendations from the 2nd Plenary were endorsed.

3rd Plenary: **Self-determination, self-sufficiency and self-governance**

Delegates resolved that self-determination should be premised on the will of the people as opposed to the interests of outside factors. Innovation towards economic growth in Small States should be encouraged in order to dissuade people from seeking employment overseas. Innovative ways of expanding the economy can include: e-Gaming, engineering and the film industry.



Recommendations from the 3rd Plenary were:

- [It was noted that...] **the past, present and the future of the Falkland Islands in terms of its progress to Self Determination, Self Sufficiency and Self Government.**
- **Small Countries should seek to achieve self-determination, self-sufficiency and self-governance by a process of peaceful evolution and/or peaceful revolution.**

Note: The first recommendation was noted while the second was endorsed in the 3rd Plenary.

4th Plenary: **Ensuring technical and legislative capacity for ethical tax-raising in small states**



Delegates observed that States should have a strong political commitment to develop effective legislation on improving efficiency, transparency in tax administration and tax policies.

It was considered that simplicity in tax administration would ensure that the system was understood and accepted to maximize compliance. These efforts would also contribute to the overall revenue tax base.

Delegates further observed that in order for Parliaments to be effective in shaping tax policy, it would be important to have dedicated research staff, independent think-tanks and parliamentary budget offices.

Recommendations from the 4th Plenary were:

- **Commonwealth Countries should cooperate more with small states to ensure technical and legislative capacity exists for technical tax raising in small jurisdictions.**
- **Small States should pool information and resources to ensure that international standards and norms of ethical tax raising can be achieved.**
- **A simple tax system is easiest to implement and manage and creates fewer opportunities for rent-seeking, while social needs are best addressed through targeted benefits.**

Note: All recommendations from the 4th Plenary were endorsed.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference

1 September 2013

Session 1: Increasing women's political participation: leadership, electoral systems and campaign funding

Delegates observed that women's political participation should be continuously monitored and assessed. They further recommended that all Commonwealth Women Parliamentarian (CWP) Chapters should embrace the CPA Strategic Plan in order to advocate for increased women's political participation in their respective countries.



They recognized that the CWP had a critical role to play in increasing female representation in Parliaments, as well as mainstreaming gender considerations in all CPA activities and programmes. They further advocated that CPA and CWP should consider involvement of the leadership of political parties to ensure greater awareness about women's issues.

Recommendations from Session 1 were:

- **Conscientisation of society from family upbringing and gender role clarification to adaptation of political will and the acceptance of women as equal partners.**
- **Considering the significant role women play in Legislatures and Commonwealth statistics on women's parliamentary representation, strategies should be considered to increase women's political participation in politics.**
- **Effective leadership requires women's political participation and implementing strategies to encourage more women representatives with improved constitutional changes to accommodate for this.**

Note: All recommendations from Session 1 were endorsed.

Session 2: Women Parliamentarians and social media



Delegates agreed that sensitizing women to the role of social media was paramount as it further enhanced the capacity of Parliamentarians in reaching their constituencies. However, as much as social media could be considered a useful public participation tool, it also had the potential to be abused. Parliaments in the Commonwealth should enhance the capacity of their Members in the use of social media to boost constituency outreach. Parliaments must ensure that Parliamentarians are equipped with the knowledge and resources to effectively engage with social media.

Recommendations from Session 2 were:

- **Social media has brought the world to the fingertips of women parliamentarians and the challenge may no longer be accessibility and affordability.**
- **The beneficial use of the powerful social media channel should be facilitated by promoting its harmless applications as a popular means of information dissemination.**
- **Parliaments in the Commonwealth should enhance capacity of their Members in the use of social media to boost constituency outreach.**
- **Parliaments must ensure that Parliamentarians are reassured with the knowledge and equipment to actively and effectively engage with social media.**

Note: All recommendations from Session 2 were endorsed aside from the first one which was noted.

Session 3: Informal economy and entrepreneurship

Delegates agreed that women must receive adequate training to ensure they have the necessary skills to maximise profits whilst remaining economically independent. They recognized that infrastructural development should be put in place to facilitate women-led projects in the informal sector. Micro-lenders should be monitored by financial regulators to ensure the development of low interest rates in the informal sector.



Recommendations from Session 3 were:

- **Although women entrepreneurs within the informal sector can help to alleviate poverty, they need to formalise their activities to avail themselves to social protection measures.**
- **Advocating legislation that promotes access to capital, assets and markets, legislate credit that supports people (interest rates) especially women. National Credit Acts and Micro-finances.**

Note: All recommendations from Session 3 were endorsed.

Session 4: Women, poverty and homelessness



Delegates acknowledged that women's rights to equality, economy and dignity are guaranteed by international conventions and are constituted in the national laws in many Commonwealth countries. However, the increasing rate of poverty and lack of shelter (homelessness) make women more vulnerable and deny them their basic human rights.

Recommendations from Session 4 were:

- **The distinct of poverty and homelessness experienced by women must be a priority for action by women Parliamentarians in the CPA and Commonwealth governments.**
- **The post-2015 global development agenda must address women's access to resources and opportunities, including land and equal pay to enable women to become economic citizens.**

Note: All recommendations from Session 4 were endorsed.