



**Speech by Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP**

**Chairperson of the Executive Committee**

**Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)**

**Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon**

**24<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

**56<sup>th</sup> CPA Canadian Regional Conference, Ottawa, Canada**

**22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> July 2018**



- The Right Honourable Speaker of the Senate
- The Right Honourable Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons
- The Honourable Chair of the Canadian Region
- Distinguished Delegates and Dear Colleagues,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning

I am delighted to have been invited to attend this 56<sup>th</sup> Canadian Regional Conference and give a brief overview of the road ahead for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). This invitation gives me the opportunity to once more, thank your Region for the total collaboration that I have received from your Region since my election as Chairperson to serve our distinguished Association during our last General Assembly that was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in November 2017. There is no doubt that the Canadian Region is a very strong force to reckon with. Once more, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to serve.

Before any further ado, permit me to sincerely thank the authorities of Ottawa for the warm welcome given me since my arrival in this beautiful region of Canada. This warm reception is testimony to the excellent cooperation ties existing between members of the Commonwealth family and the legendary hospitality of the Canadian people. Special thanks to Hon. Yasmin Ratansi, Chair of the Canadian Branch, who on your behalf extended an invitation to me, I am truly humbled by this show of affiliation.

Dear Colleagues, from every indication you and the other colleagues have left no stone unturned in making this ceremony an exemplary one. I am indeed overwhelmed with the logistical organization of this Conference and the massive participation of delegates. This demonstrates not just the extent to which this region upholds the CPA but also its desire to contribute to the furtherance of the lofty ideals and values of the CPA.

**Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

With your assent, let me provide you with an overview of the road ahead for the CPA. I wish to reassure you that the promises I made to you during my campaign are being pursued but equally to invite you on this journey. As an old African adage says, *“If you want to go fast, walk alone but if you want to go far, walk with others you can lean on when the going gets tough and celebrate with when you attain your objective.”*

The CPA is a global community, diverse in its composition. Our diversity must be regarded as our strength. The CPA will continue to reflect on how best we can draw on our diverse histories and cultures to build a stronger and a very united Association. One of the cores issues that were making the CPA divided was the idea of change of status. My predecessor had taken this issue very seriously and had already engaged a series of meetings.

In continuation with the actions that were undertaken by my predecessor, may I use this opportunity to announce to delegates that the meeting of the Working Group on CPA Status to reconstitute the CPA from charity status to a new international body met in London in June this year. All the coopted members

that were agreed by the Executive Committee at its last meeting in Mauritius, were in attendance except Hon. Ronald Kiandee (CPA South East Asia Region) who was unable to confirm his attendance. The attendees at the meeting were as follows:

- CPA Africa Region - Hon. Justin Muturi, Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya.
- CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region - Hon. Roberta Blackman-Woods, MP (United Kingdom).
- CPA Canada Region - Hon. Alexandra Mendes, MP (Canada Federal) - *Alexandra, I wish to thank you very much for the total collaboration I have received from you as my Vice-Chairperson. You have been very cooperative and understanding and that has made our job enjoyable. This is proof that women when given the opportunity, can work together and produce the require results. Alexandra, once more thank you.*
- CPA Australia Region – Hon. Russell Wortley, President of the Legislative Council (South Australia) – also Chairperson of the Working Group on CPA Status.
- Also, the CPA Treasurer, Mrs Vicki Dunne, MLA (Australian Capital Territory) as an ex-officio Member of the Working Group.

The Working Group on CPA Status held a very constructive and collegial meeting and considerable progress has been made with identifying the way forward and the content of the ‘business case’ required by Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom. All Members were pleased with the progress made under the Chairperson, Hon. Russell Wortley of Australia.

## Next Steps:

- The CPA Secretary-General will now be working with the CPA external lawyer, the Working Group Chair and Members to prepare the draft that will be submitted to the Executive Committee for its consideration in November 2018 for onward submission to Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. Hon. Roberta Blackman-Woods (BIM Region) who will provide a steer as to how to position the submission so that it is best received by Her Majesty's Government, bearing in mind that the consistent position of Her Majesty's Government is that they will not be able to look at the CPA request until after 'BREXIT' at the end of March 2019.
- CPA UK Branch will establish a small core group under their Chairperson, Hon. James Duddridge, MP, to champion the business case across Westminster once it is submitted.
- A request has been made by the CPA Coordinating Committee through the CPA UK Branch, to secure a meeting for myself and Members of the CPA Coordinating Committee with UK Prime Minister, Theresa May and also the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Jeremy Corbyn, MP, in the margins of the Executive Committee meeting in November, to discuss these and other issues that might require their assistance.
- Another Working Group on CPA Status in 2019 (subject to EXCO agreement) will need to be established to draft the new governance arrangements that will sit under the new international legal structure.

The CPA Fundamental Programme on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure is ongoing. The 2018 programme has begun with the Small Branches programme

that started on 9 July. A report from the CPA Secretary-General says 35 Parliamentarians have so far been nominated to attend the programme.

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We intend to continue with the CPA Masterclasses that were launched in January 2018. The CPA Masterclasses provide online digital training for Members and parliamentary staff to build an informed parliamentary community across the Commonwealth. These classes expand CPA's outreach and enhance its value as a knowledge platform offering a smart guide on some of the burning issues that 21<sup>st</sup> century Parliamentarians face.

We equally plan on continuing with the programme 'Professional Development Certificate in Parliamentary Management' which is delivered in partnership with McGill University in Canada and the Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training in Nairobi, Kenya. The programme is designed to upskill new and talented Parliamentary staff members in the principles of parliamentary management and explore best practice from across the Commonwealth.

The CPA will also continue with its Commonwealth Youth Programmes such as the Commonwealth Youth Parliament. We need to ensure that our focus on youth is sustained. Our populations are getting younger and younger particularly in the developing world. Sooner or later, the majority of the voters will be younger and also our candidates for seats in our respective parliaments. Therefore, we need to develop strategies to engage in this sector of the society.

Lastly, we intend to introduce more programmes that are in line with the changing times. In this connection, I intend to ensure the organisation of inter-regional meetings for experience sharing among CPA Branches and Members. I will continue to work with all the nine Regions, the CPA Secretary-General and his collaborators to uphold what the CPA stands for.

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

Due to the absence of a Host Branch, there will be no Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference this year. The CPA Uganda Branch will host the next Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in 2019.

The CPA Executive Committee will meet in London from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2018 in keeping with our constitution. The Mid-year Executive Committee meeting in 2019 will be held in Northwest Territories Branch in Canada. I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of the Executive Committee to thank the CPA Northwest Territories Branch which has opted to host the Mid-year meeting.

Prior to and during the elections that took place in November last year, I made a solemn promise to build more bridges to keep us more connected as members of this prestigious organization. It is my belief that, what makes us 'common' are the shared values and principles, while our rich diversity which permits us to contribute to building sustainable societies is our 'wealth'. I hope we shall all find common grounds to pursue this.

It is my wish that during my tenure, we create a special fund with the intension of buying our own property to host our CPA Headquarters Secretariat in London.

This idea was floated in the last Executive Committee meeting and I will continue with the discussion and see how far I will be able to push it hoping to get the support of the Canadian Region.

I therefore call upon all of you, members of the CPA Canada Region together with all other Regions, represented here today or those listening to us from afar, to join hands - let's build solid bridges, promote mutual respect and uphold what we stand for by tapping into our rich diversity. Let us fulfill our mission of making the Commonwealth of Nations 'Common', and an enviable Association.

**Dear Colleagues of the Canadian Region**

Finally, I wish to congratulate your total commitment to the growth of the CPA, and all of the Branches in this Region have fulfilled their financial obligations toward the CPA. I salute you for that.

In conclusion, I look at this Regional Conference with a lot of hope with regards to its resolutions. On behalf of all the Members from the other eight Regions attending this Conference, Members of the Executive Committee who could not be here, I wish to thank everyone who has worked so hard towards the successful organization of this conference.

On this note, I wish the Canadian Region total success in its deliberations.

**Long live the Canadian Region; Long live the cooperation existing among the nine Regions; Long live the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.**

**ENDS**