



## 62<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

### Conference Concluding Statement

21 December 2016

**COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS attending the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference** and associated meetings recognised the Commonwealth's commitment to equality and for political, economic, social and cultural rights, in light of the conference theme '**A Collaborative Commonwealth: Unity, Diversity and Common Challenges**'.

The conference, hosted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Headquarters Secretariat from 11 to 17 December 2016 in London, United Kingdom, was attended by over 400 Members and Clerks representing Parliaments and legislatures from across the Commonwealth.

The meeting was chaired by the Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh. It also included the 35<sup>th</sup> Small Branches Conference (SBC) and the 5<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) triennial Conference.

This concluding statement contains

- the topics of discussion,
- a summary of delegates' discussions, and
- recommendations that were either endorsed or noted.

#### 62<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference - Opening Addresses:

The Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh, urged Commonwealth Parliamentarians to work together to find common solutions to global issues as she opened the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in London, United Kingdom.

The Chairperson welcomed Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth on behalf of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) at the opening ceremony of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. The Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee said: "*The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) provides a unique platform for inter-parliamentary dialogue to take place. The diverse nature of the membership provides the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association with a unique position within the parliamentary community to offer a comprehensive perspective on how to strengthen parliamentary democracy Commonwealth-wide and discuss new and innovative approaches on how to do so.*"

The unique conference brings together Speakers, Members of Parliament and Parliamentary staff representing the nine regions of the CPA – Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic; India; Pacific; and South East Asia. The CPA reaches all 52 countries of the Commonwealth as well as national, sub-national and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures bringing together over 180 CPA Branches of the Association.

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#### **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Statement of Purpose**

*The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association connects, develops, promotes and supports Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth.*

The opening ceremony of the conference heard from the Secretaries-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Commonwealth.

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr Akbar Khan welcomed Commonwealth Parliamentarians and delegates to the conference and said: *"The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference strengthens our networks and nurtures our shared Commonwealth democratic values. The fact that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association embodies diversity yet shares values of democracy, rule of law and human rights, only serves to strengthen and deepen our unity. The need for the CPA to continue to strengthen its core programmatic work and to translate the practical benefits of democratic governance to the peoples of the Commonwealth has never been greater."*

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland QC said: *"The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference is like a beehive. It buzzes with pollinators whose work will result in fruit throughout the Commonwealth. Thanks to Commonwealth Parliamentarians coming together, law reform and progressive social and economic development are accelerated. Exchanges of knowledge and expertise lead to institutions of governance being strengthened, while respect and goodwill within the rich diversity of Commonwealth identity helps build a safer, more prosperous and more inclusive future for us all."*

The Master of Ceremonies for the opening ceremony was Hon. Lindiwe Maseko, MP (South Africa) who welcomed all delegates before introducing the Commonwealth Youth Choir who performed both the Commonwealth Anthem and the Commonwealth Song under the conductorship of Simon Haw MBE, the Commonwealth Music Ambassador 2016-2018.

**CPA Video:** Highlights of the opening ceremony of the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference #2016CPC <https://youtu.be/23Zh3MnvNuk>

## **62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference: Side Events**

Alongside the substantive conference workshops and the CPA governance meetings (62<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly and Executive Committee meetings), the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference also included a number of additional events.

Delegates at the conference attended the CPA Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Regional 'Hot Topic' Forum on the 'hot topic' of the region - 'Seeking to Increase Women's Political Participation'. The CPA Regional Hot Topic Forum heard from a number of distinguished speakers. The CPA Regional 'Hot Topic' Forums bring together not only Commonwealth Parliamentarians, but also academics, students, civil society organisations and the wider Commonwealth family.

The inaugural Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture was held at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference with former Lord Speaker of the UK Parliament's House of Lords, Rt Hon. Baroness D'Souza CMG PC, who spoke of the Commonwealth's enduring political values that bring challenges and opportunities for Commonwealth Parliamentarians. The theme for the new Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture was *'The Promotion and Implementation of the Commonwealth's enduring political values - Challenges and Opportunities'*.

The United National Development Programme (UNDP) held a side event for Commonwealth Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: Tobacco Control Frameworks and effective Parliamentary Oversight.

A lunchtime event was held by the Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion and Belief (CIFoRB) on Engaging Effectively with Freedom of Religion or Belief.

## **62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference – Workshops:**

**Main conference theme: ‘A Collaborative Commonwealth: Unity, Diversity and Common Challenges’.**

**The six main conference workshops and their recommendations were as follows:**

### **Workshop A: There is a role for the Commonwealth in fostering freedom of religion or belief**

Freedom of religion is a fundamental human right of the people of any country. With a state religion, freedom of religion is generally considered to mean what the government permits; religious practices of others and sects besides the state religion and does not persecute believers in other faiths.

Throughout history, religion or beliefs have contributed towards social change and civilisation. In some contexts this has led to conflicts, and it was noted that ‘religious’ conflicts are not based on religious beliefs exclusively and instead should be seen as clashes of communities, identities, and interests that are secular religious or at least very much secular. Religion and peace building refers to the study of religion’s role and the development of peace. Scholars generally accept that religion has had a role at different points in history, and that this has been advantageous to the promotion of peace.

Religious pluralism is an attitude of policy regarding the coexistence of diverse religious belief systems in society. The plurality of religious traditions and cultures has come to characterise every part of the world today. It isn’t diversity alone, but the energetic engagement with diversity. Mere diversity without real encounters and relationships will yield an increase in tension in our society. The protection of religious freedom is an integral element of a functioning pluralist democracy.

#### **Recommendations from the workshop were:**

- **The Commonwealth should be able to sanction or call to order States perceived to be impugning freedom of religion.**
- **Provide a master class and/or bespoke training for parliamentarians on freedom of religion or belief.**
- **CPA may constitute a Committee to discuss loopholes and devise strategies for ensuring protection of an individual’s right to freedom of religion.**

**All recommendations from the workshop were noted.**

### **Workshop B: The role of the Commonwealth in supporting the outcomes of the COP21 Paris Agreement on Climate Change (*Small Branches Topic*)**

Delegates noted the adverse effects of climate change such as drought, flooding and rise in sea levels, and the fact that the impact was worse on small island states and developing countries. Delegates further noted the obligation under the Paris Agreement for countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to below 2% of pre-industrial levels. They, therefore, acknowledged the need to share best practices and assist island states and developing countries tackle climate change.

Delegates, in this regard, discussed measures being taken by some countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These included giving incentives to businesses that employ clean energy technology and using renewable energy sources such as solar and wind energy.

#### **Recommendations from the workshop were:**

- **Commonwealth states should cooperate to establish strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector by developing alternative fuel (ethanol and hydrogen), and vehicle electrification.**

- **The successful implementation of the Paris agreement requires collective and concerted efforts from all stakeholders, including national and local governments, individuals, businesses and community groups.**
- **The role of Parliament is essential in implementing the Paris Agreement and initiatives such as the sustainable development goals, including the added value of entities such as UNEP.**
- **Climate change is an issue for all nations and the Commonwealth should assist smaller nations in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and dealing with the effects of climate change.**

**All recommendations from the workshop were endorsed.**

### **Workshop C: The role of Parliamentarians in implementing and monitoring policies relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

While broadly supportive of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the workshop discussed the challenges in raising awareness of the goals and translating them into policy priorities at local and national level. It was noted that the SDGs apply to all countries, irrespective of their state of economic development. Implementation starts with personal choices but is influenced by the decisions taken by government bodies at all levels. Every country starts from a different position and the work involved in achieving the goals will be significant. Members were concerned about the resource implications and how international aid could assist achievement of the SDGs in developing countries.

Parliaments have a role to play in engaging the public and civil society on the SDGs, discussing and passing legislation and monitoring government action. Members raised questions about how the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association could assist parliaments both in setting up new monitoring mechanisms and ensuring that oversight of work to meet the SDGs is integrated across the broad span of parliamentary processes.

During the workshop the following additional recommendations were proposed:

- Each parliament to make a report to the CPA annual meeting on the progress towards Implementation of SDGs (Peer Review Mechanism).
- CPA to conduct seminars in parliament on the sensitization, processing and implementation of SDGs.

**Recommendations from the workshop were:**

- **Effective parliamentary oversight of the achievement by governments of the Sustainable Development Goals is essential to ensuring the quality of such achievement.**
- **Parliaments must ensure women's leadership, including best practice strategies developed by women's health, community organisations and networks, to improve gender equality and reduce gendered violence.**
- **Parliamentarians should proactively centre stage and monitor implementation of SDGs to ensure their rightful place in national priorities to become a reality by 2030.**

**All recommendations from the workshop were endorsed.**

## **Workshop D: Ending violence against women and girls: The impact of social media and the internet in perpetrating violence (*Gender Topic*)**

The growing reach of the internet and social media presents opportunities, social connections and networks. However, these social media platforms are used by perpetrators to carry out acts of violence against women and girls.

Cyber violence has broad categories as identified by the United Nations:

- Hacking;
- Impersonation;
- Surveillance/tracking;
- Harassment or spamming;
- Recruitment; and
- Distribution of malicious information.

Added to the above is revenge pornography aimed at humiliating and shaming women and girls. Victims of cyber violence suffer serious consequences, including murder in some instances and teenagers are driven to suicide. At political level, women tend to be unfairly targeted, stereotyped and bullied using body shaming rather than the focus being on the substance of their work or ideologies.

Laws that specifically address cybercrime are needed as reliance on existing legislation on gender based violence is not sufficient. Input made indicated that most countries in the Commonwealth have legislation that seeks to address cyber violence, however the following challenges were identified:

1. Lack of implementation;
2. Obscurity of perpetrators;
3. Lack of effective instruments for monitoring and tracking of perpetrators;
4. Lack of political will to dedicated resources to eliminate cyber violence;
5. In some instances women and girls are perpetrators themselves against other women.

During the workshop the following additional recommendations were proposed:

- The Commonwealth should ensure transfer of technology and knowledge used to track cyber violence to less developed countries.
- Inclusive government approach and multi-sectoral approach should be adopted to elimination of cyber violence.

**Recommendations from the workshop were:**

- **Parliament must ensure that Parliamentary Committees on Cyber Crime are resourced with technical assistance to adequately respond to cyber threats through Computer Incident Response Teams.**
- **CPA should develop digital literacy initiatives that provide: awareness campaigns and strategies to address cyber violence; computing and social media workshops to empower women through technology.**
- **The internet and social media provide young people with a range of benefits, and opportunities to empower themselves in a variety of ways. Young people can maintain social connections and support networks.**

**All recommendations from the workshop were endorsed.**

### **Workshop E: The radicalisation of young people and how we are dealing with this challenge throughout the Commonwealth**

Discussion leaders discussed their perspectives and experiences from within their jurisdictions. The workshop also heard from an outside expert - the Commonwealth young person of the year from Cameroon - who shared his experiences trying to combat youth radicalisation and create a space for young people to promote peace. Delegates and discussion leaders compared their experiences of what the causes of radicalisation of young people were, noting that younger people were more often the target of such approaches - one discussion leader pointed out that you never hear about older people retiring and being lured into terrorist acts. Some causes discussed in the workshop include the use of gangs, convicted terrorists using jails to convert young people, poor governance and a lack of democracy which contributes to intolerance and injustice, and the internet including social media.

One discussion leader noted that CHOGM in 2015 had as one its outcomes to combat radicalisation and pointed out the establishment of the Commonwealth Counter Terrorism Unit which was unveiled at the summit. He further suggested that to prevent radicalisation the Commonwealth Youth Council should be funded and a commitment made to the expansion of employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Another discussion leader suggested that a practical way to address the issue was to use as a roadmap the UN Security Council Resolution No. 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. The third discussion leader suggested that, just as we have sustainable development goals which are monitored and assessed, so too should we have benchmarks on youth radicalisation which could be moderated.

#### **Recommendations from the workshop were:**

- **Parliaments must ensure that governance, structural and developmental challenges that engender radicalization are prioritized and addressed, and that human rights-based counter-radicalization programmes are adequately resourced.**
- **Parliaments should partner with young people for sustainable peace, prevention of violent extremism, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 2250 – youth, peace and security.**
- **Formulate practical steps, procedures and goals to contain and prevent radicalization. To promote de-radicalization and set-up a monitoring/grading system evaluating attainment of such goals.**

**All recommendations from the workshop were endorsed.**

### **Workshop F: The media plays a large role in promoting public mistrust of Parliamentarians**

The workshop took the form of a debate, with two of the discussion leaders speaking in favour of the motion that *“the media plays a large role in promoting public mistrust of parliamentarians,”* and one speaking against. The majority of speakers in favour of the motion highlighted examples of factual inaccuracies in news reports, perceived media bias and the rise of social media. Arguments against included the importance of freedom of speech, journalists holding politicians to account for their actions and a free press being the fourth estate in a modern democracy. During a vote at the end of the workshop, the motion was carried by 16 votes to 6.

#### **Recommendations from the workshop were:**

- **The media portrayal of politicians and parliamentarians fuels public mistrust, deflects young people from politics and compromises those who work for constituents in public office.**
- **The media acts as an ombudsman for every endeavour in public life. Its accurate coverage of parliamentarians can encourage introspection and requisite course correction.**
- **The CPA should provide masterclasses or training for Parliamentarians on interaction with members of the media, effective communication and the use of social media.**

**The first and third recommendations from the workshop were endorsed. The second recommendation from the workshop was noted.**

## **5<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference**

**Main CWP Conference theme: ‘*Political Violence against Women*’.**

### **Session 1: Violence and Intimidation of Women during Elections**

The session focused on the fact that throughout the Commonwealth, women face violence and intimidation when they decide to run for political office. Such intimidation may range from being assaulted, sexually abused, psychologically manipulated or even murdered.

It is imperative that women in public office work to safeguard the protection of their right to serve in political life, and to put in place such measures as to ensure their protection. While violence and intimidation may be dismissed as a cost of doing politics, it rather serves as a severe detrimental cost to the entire political process.

**The summary of CWP Session 1 above from the workshop was endorsed.**

### **Session 2: Parliament’s Role in Raising Awareness of Political Violence against Women, and Women’s Equal Civil and Political Rights**

Members urged global parliamentary bodies such as the CPA to play an effective role in protecting and promoting the cause of women. The CPA was urged to consider establishing an Observer and Inquiry Commission under Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians where women’s grievances can be redressed. Further, the need for CWP to regularly monitor the status of women in political participation and publish periodical reports thereof, and exert influence on member states in ensuring transparency and level political field in and outside parliament was stressed.

One Member recommended the creation of parliamentary codes of conduct, in all countries, that addresses sexual harassment and associated complaint-settlement procedures. Parliaments were encouraged to establish women’s parliamentary caucuses as a gateway to solidarity in ending gender-based political violence.

The Inter Parliamentary Union representative reiterated the key role of both male and female parliamentarians in ensuring an equitable legal environment that deters violence against women, guarantees strong and enforced laws on equality and combats sexism and violence against women. Drawing on Canada as a positive case in point, it was recommended that parliaments and political parties ensure that women politicians work in an environment free from sexist remarks and sexual harassment.

Collaboration with civil society and the media in denouncing unacceptable behaviour against women was agreed as a viable means of mitigating the political culture barrier. The recommendations were attested to by positive follow up contributions from Members whose jurisdictions have implemented some of the recommendations outlined.

**Recommendations from the CWP Session 2 were:**

- **Parliaments should promote institutional reforms and political cultures that guarantee safe working environments for all, including internal policies against sexist language, attitudes and sexual harassment.**
- **Parliaments must provide conducive political environments for women by focusing on anti-women mind-sets (including within Parties) and to eradicate gender-based violence through effectively executing legislation.**
- **A Code of Conduct for Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Staff on Sexual Harassment, with training to promote understanding and enforcement with strong consequences for violations**

**All recommendations from the CWP Session 2 were endorsed.**

### **Session 3: Legislating Effectively to Protect Women from Political Violence**

Some of the significant factors and positions expressed during this session were: women in politics are exposed to violence by sheer virtue of being women in politics; violence against women politicians deters some women from seeking political office; once women have been elected, violence against them serves as an obstacle to fully performing their roles.

Of particular note, social media has greatly increased women politicians' exposure to threats of violence and abuse. In seeking to reduce violence against women, it is helpful to have quantifiable measures of violence against women. Where laws do not exist to prevent violence against women politicians, laws should be put in place. Furthermore, where legislation is in place, it needs to be effective and enforceable.

Where some women politicians have been demeaned or verbally disparaged by some male colleagues, parliamentarians should seek to model respectful behaviour. This in turn may contribute to changing the culture of violence against women politicians. Awareness needs to be raised that violence against women politicians is a real issue; and it was noted that education is key.

It is helpful for women in politics to stand up for each other. Violence against women affects everyone, not just women; it is important to recognise that many male colleagues also wish to prevent violence against women politicians. An inclusive approach that sees parliamentarians, regardless of gender, working together towards preventing violence against women, would be constructive.

#### **Recommendations from the CWP Session 3 were:**

- **Parliaments should undertake gender mainstreaming in their legislative processes and functions, through gender-based analysis built into standing orders and other rules of parliament.**
- **Parliament, having promoted the active participation of women in politics, must introduce effective measures to protect women from political violence.**  
**#nopoliticalviolenceagainstwomen**
- **Parliament must promote good practice in legislating to protect women from political violence and work with Parliaments across the Commonwealth raising awareness of women's issues.**

**All recommendations from the CWP Session 3 were endorsed.**

### **Session 4: The Role of Civil Society and the Media in Tackling Political Violence against Women**

Political violence against women remains one of the key obstacles adversely affecting the welfare of many democracies within the Commonwealth and beyond. This manifests itself in terms of physical, sexual and psychological violence. It is commonly observed that women face violence and intimidation when they decide to run for political office.

Delegates noted the different perspectives presented by the discussion leaders and made several recommendations for the consideration of parliamentarians within the Commonwealth community. The presenter also noted that abuse of language influences certain gender stereotypes which denigrate women in different political settings. Equally, lack of penal codes in the specific legislations remains a challenge in many parliaments.

Although media and civic society have a significant role to play in addressing the challenge of political violence, it is often argued that a majority of influential positions in the media are still occupied by male counterparts who are still uninformed about the rights of women.

To this end, participants endorsed the recommendation that Parliaments and Governments must work with media agencies to counter the use of language that minimises or trivialises violence against women in politics. Parliaments must criminalise political violence against women as such. When committed systematically,

political violence against women is 'persecution', a crime under international law. Civic society must invest in education of the boy child and in a change of attitudes.

**Recommendations from the CWP Session 4 were:**

- **Parliaments and Governments must work with media agencies to counter the use of language that minimises or trivialises violence against women in politics.**
- **Parliaments must criminalise political violence against women as such. When committed systematically, political violence against women is "persecution", a crime under international law.**
- **That political violence against women is not limited to acts against women running for office but has its genesis and perpetuation elsewhere.**
- **Women parliamentarians united, should speak out, address root causes of violence against women, perform awareness-raising and place the issue on the agenda in different platforms.**

**All recommendations from the CWP Session 4 were endorsed.**

### **35<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference**

**The CPA Small Branches Conference was held under the main conference theme: 'A Collaborative Commonwealth: Unity, Diversity and Common Challenges'.**

#### **Session 1: The role of the Commonwealth in supporting the outcomes of the COP21 Paris Agreement on Climate Change**

Many Small Branches struggle with a fundamental dilemma with respect to climate change. Many are island states who stand to feel the negative impacts of climate change first and most profoundly. However, because of their small populations and economies, they have limited ability to influence overall reduction targets and limited resources to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

Notwithstanding, Small Branches feel a responsibility to participate in climate change mitigation as a means of putting pressure on the efforts of large states, particularly those in the developed world.

**Recommendations from the Small Branches Session 1 were:**

- **Climate change is an issue for us all, but we cannot do it alone. The key role of the Commonwealth will be to support the smaller nations.**
- **The CPA can facilitate collaborative action, and it can support Parliamentarians in moving forward in terms of climate action.**
- **Global appetite for action on climate change has increased, which provides an opportunity for a small, isolated nation, to show global leadership and demonstrate commitment to combat this issue.**

**All recommendations from the Small Branches Session 1 were endorsed.**

## **Session 2: The role of Parliament in the protection and safeguarding of children**

The discussion leaders began the workshop by outlining some of the challenges currently facing Parliaments around the Commonwealth regarding the protection and safeguarding of children. In a very open and compassionate discussion, Delegates shared their experiences of serious issues facing children in their home countries, as well as initiatives undertaken by their Parliament to address them.

Similarities could be drawn in the problems faced by Parliamentarians in ensuring the protection of children, particularly indigenous children and those in the care of the state or in the juvenile detention system. The Delegates agreed that whilst the outcomes from Committees and Inquires were useful for providing recommendations and drawing attention to the issues, real financial support needs to be allocated by governments to ensure the recommendations are implemented and followed through.

### **Recommendations from the Small Branches Session 2 were:**

- **In small states the Parliament must play a pivotal role in ensuring legislative and administrative safeguards for our children, including through its committee system.**
- **Parliamentarians must be keenly aware of the historic and cultural factors that have led to the need to protect certain populations of children.**
- **Parliamentarians should give due attention to the implementation of human rights mechanisms and recommendations ensuring adequate budgetary provisions for the rights of the child.**

**All recommendations from the Small Branches Session 2 were endorsed.**

## **Session 3: Eliminating barriers to women's leadership in politics in Small Branches**

The presenters emphasised the need for Governments to ensure that adequate funds are available for programmes that promote women to participate in politics and enter into Parliament. These programmes, in the case of Guernsey, has increased the number of women involved in politics and 30% of MPs are women. There was also the recognition of the need for all to 'work together' to help mobilise women to stand for politics and increase the number of women in Parliament.

It was also recognised that women overall are still trying to prove to the community their worth to be Parliamentarians. The trend should be for women and men to be walking and working together. Gender equality should be promoted and encouraged at all levels. There should be a paradigm shift put into practice to rid society of barriers hindering women's opportunities to enter politics. It was acknowledged that because of their varied tasks, women became 'multi-skilled' covering wide-ranging areas which would be advantageous if they become MPs. Women have the highest number of victims from domestic violence and abuse. Yet in Parliament women have the lowest number in the Pacific region. MPs can enact much needed legislation and advocate gender equality in society including Parliament to encourage and support women in politics. It was generally acknowledged that there should be equal opportunity for women and men in all sectors of society.

It was recognised that in the labour market in many communities there are great discrepancies where women are considered second rate and their potential are undermined. There is also 'private violence' against women. In small island communities where everyone knows everyone else, even small issues relating to a specific woman would result in her being ostracized in the community and their chances of moving into politics would be minimal. On the other hand men don't get this kind of treatment. Sometimes perception about women in their society has not been too encouraging. People generally are far too judgmental about women. Nevertheless, women should be encouraged to be 'role models' for other women and young girls to look up to for their future.

'Equal rights for women and men' should not only be expressed verbally but should be followed up with commitment and practical meaningful actions. Too often women in the community are heavily and unfairly scrutinised, yet men are not treated as much as women in this regard. There is also the need to use 'gender neutral' languages, for instance, Policeman should be referred to as Police Officer.

It was acknowledged that the number of women MPs differs amongst the various jurisdictions due to numerous factors some of which are cultural, social and economic. We should not be relying on women to encourage women, this is a joint initiative between women and men. Traditionally women encourage women, but during these modern times we should be working together. By the same token, collaborative effort is necessary to rid the barriers hindering women's involvement in politics and opportunities to stand for Parliamentary elections. Nowadays there is an increase in the sharing of responsibilities between men and women in the home environment.

MPs can design policies and pass legislations to improve women's representation in Parliament. Even within the Parliamentary precincts, it could be possible to establish children's day care centres to enable young children to be close to their mother rather than the mother travelling back and forward to their homes to attend to the children's needs.

**Recommendations from the Small Branches Session 3 were:**

- **Parliaments must ensure that there is funding and support for campaigns to encourage more women to stand for election and take leadership roles within parliaments.**
- **Gender Based initiatives on increasing Women's representation in Parliament be backed up by mechanisms, strategies and Fundamental Principles including targets, supported by the CPA.**
- **The logic would suggest that women experience fewer and less severe obstacles to their leadership ambitions in small branches, but the reality is very different.**

**The first and third recommendations from Small Branches Session 3 were noted. The second recommendation from the workshop was endorsed.**

**-Ends-**