

68TH COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

The Commonwealth – A Global Partner

WORKSHOP RESEARCH BRIEFING

By Matthew Salik



Workshop G: The Role of the Commonwealth in Good Governance, Multilateralism, and International Relations

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Executive Summary | 3 |
| Introduction: The Commonwealth in a Fractured World | 3 |
| Section 1: The Commonwealth's Normative Framework for Governance | 4 |
| 1.1 The Commonwealth Charter and the Latimer House Principles | 4 |
| 1.2 The Commonwealth as a Champion of Multilateralism | 4 |
| 1.3 Historical Foundations of Good Governance | 5 |
| Section 2: Responding to Global Challenges: A Parliamentary Action Plan | 5 |
| 2.1 Addressing Democratic Backsliding and Human Rights Abuses | 5 |
| 2.2 Navigating Geopolitical Conflicts and Economic Protectionism | 6 |
| 2.2a Peace, Security and Democratic Resilience | 7 |
| 2.2b Inclusive Economic Governance | 7 |
| 2.3 The Digital Frontier: Regulating AI for the Public Good | 8 |
| 2.3a Disinformation, Trust and Democratic Integrity | 9 |
| 2.4 Confronting the Climate Emergency and Ensuring Sustainable Development..... | 9 |
| 2.5 The Demographic Dividend: Leveraging a Youth-Centric Commonwealth | 10 |
| Section 3: Case Studies of Parliamentary Success and Best Practices | 10 |
| 3.1 Fostering Inter-Parliamentary Collaboration | 10 |
| 3.2 Upholding Accountability and Scrutiny | 12 |
| 3.3 The Role of Parliamentary Diplomacy | 12 |
| Section 4: Fostering Public Engagement and Outreach | 13 |
| Section 5: The Wider Ecosystem of Parliamentary Support | 14 |
| Policy Recommendations: A Roadmap for Commonwealth Parliamentarians | 16 |
| Conclusion | 17 |
| Endnotes and Works Cited..... | 18 |
| Works cited | 20 |
| Related Articles in <i>The Parliamentarian</i>..... | 23 |

Executive Summary

The Commonwealth, a voluntary association of 56 nations, is uniquely positioned to address the multifaceted challenges of a fractured and uncertain world. This report, aimed at Parliamentarians, argues that a cohesive, effective Commonwealth is not a given but is an active project that must be championed and upheld by its legislative bodies. The core of this argument is that the Commonwealth's shared values, enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter and the Latimer House Principles, provide a powerful normative framework that can be translated into practical action by Parliaments.

The report identifies several key global challenges—from democratic backsliding and geopolitical conflicts to climate change, artificial intelligence (AI), and demographic shifts—and details how Commonwealth Parliaments can serve as vital instruments of good governance and multilateralism. It demonstrates that the Commonwealth's strength lies not only in its shared history and language but in a deep-seated institutional capital that facilitates cooperation where other international forums often struggle. Through case studies of parliamentary action, the report highlights best practices in legislative oversight, fiscal management, and inter-parliamentary diplomacy. Ultimately, the report provides a roadmap for Parliamentarians to strengthen the Commonwealth's collective voice, uphold its democratic values, and ensure it remains a force for peace and prosperity for its 2.7 billion citizens.

Introduction: The Commonwealth in a Fractured World

In an era defined by geopolitical instability, economic fragmentation, and the unprecedented acceleration of technological change, the architecture of international relations is being profoundly tested. The rise of protectionist trade policies, as seen under the current US presidency, and the eruption of major conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, have placed severe strain on the post-war multilateral system.¹ Meanwhile, existential challenges such as global warming, democratic backsliding, and the increasing influence of autocracies present a complex web of interconnected threats that no single nation can address in isolation.

Within this turbulent context, the Commonwealth stands as a unique and potentially indispensable network. As a voluntary association of independent and equal sovereign states, its strength lies in the combination of its diversity and its shared inheritance in language, culture, and the rule of law. This common foundation gives the Commonwealth a distinct form of institutional capital that facilitates cooperation and dialogue on a wide range of issues. The purpose of this report is to examine how the Commonwealth, particularly its parliamentary institutions, can leverage this unique position to confront the world's most pressing challenges. It will argue that while the Commonwealth's foundational principles are powerful, they are only as effective as the actions of its member Parliaments. As the primary institutions representing the will of the people, Parliaments are not merely observers but are crucial instruments of good governance and multilateral

engagement. This briefing will provide a detailed plan for how Parliamentarians and Parliaments can actively strengthen the Commonwealth's role and, in doing so, reinforce the enduring values that define the association.

Section 1: The Commonwealth's Normative Framework for Governance

The Commonwealth's identity is rooted in a shared normative framework that provides a common language for discussing and upholding democratic values. This section establishes the foundational principles that guide the Commonwealth, linking these ideals directly to the practical role of Parliaments in their implementation.

1.1 The Commonwealth Charter and the Latimer House Principles

The Commonwealth Charter serves as a modern declaration of shared values and aspirations, affirming core principles such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.³ It explicitly recognises the inalienable right of individuals to participate in democratic processes and highlights the role of Parliaments and local governments as "essential elements in the exercise of democratic governance". The Charter's emphasis on accountability and transparency provides a strong basis for evaluating the conduct of governments at all levels and underscores the importance of a robust, multi-level system.

Building upon the Charter's broad ideals, the Commonwealth (Latimer House) Principles provide more detailed and practical guidance on the relationship between the three branches of government: the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary.⁵ A central tenet of the Principles is the concept of institutional responsibility and restraint, which calls for each institution to exercise power within its own constitutional sphere "so as not to encroach on the legitimate discharge of constitutional functions by the other institutions".⁵ While traditionally applied to the horizontal separation of powers, this principle is also a powerful lens through which to analyse the vertical distribution of power in multi-level governance systems. It provides a benchmark for evaluating whether a national government is operating within its constitutional or statutory limits, and it affirms that a legislature must be able to carry out its functions "free from unlawful interference".

1.2 The Commonwealth as a Champion of Multilateralism

The Commonwealth's unique strength is its function as a forum for multilateral engagement, where its voluntary nature and shared inheritance allow it to act as a cohesive bloc within the broader international system.³ For many of its member states, particularly small and vulnerable economies, the Commonwealth provides a platform to amplify their voices and advocate for their special needs on the global stage.

This collective voice is a vital tool for influencing international society and is a clear example of the Commonwealth's deep-seated institutional capital. The shared inheritance in legal, administrative, and political systems provides a common normative language for discussing good governance, the rule of law, and the role of legislatures. This shared understanding reduces the transactional costs of cooperation, allowing Parliamentarians and officials from different member states to move beyond foundational definitions and proceed directly to addressing complex problems. This shared legal and administrative heritage creates a basis for more efficient and impactful collaboration on a range of issues, from trade to human rights and legislative reform. It makes inter-parliamentary diplomacy and technical assistance more effective by building a foundation of mutual understanding that other multilateral bodies often lack.⁸

1.3 Historical Foundations of Good Governance

The Commonwealth's contemporary framework of democratic norms did not emerge in isolation but is built upon a series of landmark declarations that continue to shape its identity today. The Harare Commonwealth Declaration (1991) reaffirmed the association's commitment to democracy, human rights, and sustainable development at the end of the Cold War, establishing a baseline for collective action on governance. This was followed by the Millbrook Action Programme (1995), which introduced concrete mechanisms to uphold these values, including the empowerment of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) to respond to serious or persistent violations of democratic principles. Together with the Latimer House Principles and the Commonwealth Charter, these frameworks demonstrate that the Commonwealth's credibility rests on a long tradition of holding its members accountable to shared standards. For Parliaments, this history is a reminder that legislative institutions are not only national actors but also guardians of a wider Commonwealth compact on governance.

Section 2: Responding to Global Challenges: A Parliamentary Action Plan

This section directly addresses pressing global challenges, detailing the Commonwealth's response and outlining the specific, indispensable role of its Parliaments.

2.1 Addressing Democratic Backsliding and Human Rights Abuses

The world is currently witnessing an unprecedented trend of democratic decline, often driven by "executive aggrandizement," where an incumbent executive and their party weaken checks and balances and exert control over democratic institutions. This phenomenon is not limited to any single region, affecting wealthy nations as well as developing ones.¹⁰ The Commonwealth, as a community of democratic nations, has a specific mechanism to address these threats: the

Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG). CMAG acts as the "custodian" of the Commonwealth's political values, with a mandate that has been strengthened to address subtle violations such as the unjustified postponement of elections, the undermining of the judiciary, and constraints on civil society and the media. The case of Gabon's suspension following an unconstitutional change of government, and its subsequent restoration, provides a tangible example of CMAG's process in action.

Parliaments are at the forefront of the resistance to democratic backsliding. They must strengthen internal oversight and accountability mechanisms, such as public accounts and foreign affairs committees, to scrutinise executive actions and budgets.¹² It is also incumbent upon Parliamentarians to ensure the independence of key institutions, such as electoral commissions.¹⁵ The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) and the Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat work to build the capacity of national human rights institutions and empower Parliamentarians to engage with international human rights mechanisms.¹⁶ The ability of Parliamentarians to actively assert their independence and scrutinise the executive is essential to safeguarding democratic norms. In Canada, legislative reforms such as the Reform Act, 2014 sought to strengthen the role of individual Parliamentarians, while the Countering Foreign Interference Act, 2024 directly addresses a modern challenge to democratic integrity. Furthermore, Canada has used targeted sanctions against Venezuelan officials for human rights violations and undermining democracy, demonstrating a member state's direct action in upholding these values.

2.2 Navigating Geopolitical Conflicts and Economic Protectionism

In a world shaken by major conflicts in Ukraine and Israel and Gaza, multilateralism faces unprecedented strain. While the Commonwealth does not have a formal role as a security alliance, its network provides a critical platform for dialogue and coordinated action. Parliaments, through their foreign affairs committees, can play a central role in this context by shaping foreign policy, scrutinising humanitarian aid, and holding governments to account for their adherence to international law.¹⁴ For example, the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee provides essential scrutiny of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's policy and expenditure, including its role in multilateral organisations and its response to global conflicts.¹⁴ Parliamentarians also serve as vital channels for parliamentary diplomacy, influencing foreign policy and promoting peaceful resolutions through inter-parliamentary dialogue.

The rise of protectionist trade policies, particularly the US's approach under the Trump presidency, presents a direct challenge to the rules-based multilateral trading system. The Commonwealth can act as a counterbalance by fostering intra-Commonwealth trade. The "Commonwealth advantage," which includes 21 per cent lower bilateral trade costs due to shared legal and administrative systems, provides a strong foundation for boosting trade and investment among member states.²⁰ However, the trade landscape is complex. Member states have diverse economic interests and existing trade agreements with non-Commonwealth countries, which can sometimes lead to

divergent policies. This highlights the need for Parliaments to play a critical role in scrutinising trade agreements to ensure they serve the national interest while upholding the principles of fair, transparent, and rules-based trade.

The same centralising impulse that drives democratic backsliding can also undermine a nation's commitment to multilateralism and open trade. A government that centralises power and limits domestic parliamentary oversight is less likely to engage in good-faith multilateral cooperation, as its foreign policy may be driven by narrow political interests rather than broad-based democratic consensus. Conversely, a robust and independent Parliament is better equipped to act as a check on executive power, ensuring that foreign policy and international agreements are subject to proper democratic scrutiny and uphold the Commonwealth's shared values. Canada provides a clear example of a nation with a proactive, multi-faceted foreign policy. This includes defined strategies for its engagement with Africa, the Arctic, and the Indo-Pacific region, which are areas of significant geopolitical and economic importance. The Canadian Senate has also used committee reports to examine the country's role in international support for democratic development and to advocate for cultural diplomacy as a key component of its foreign policy, demonstrating a Parliament's ability to shape the diplomatic agenda.

2.2a Peace, Security and Democratic Resilience

While the Commonwealth is not a formal security alliance, its credibility as a values-based association is closely tied to questions of peace and stability. Weak governance, corruption, and democratic erosion often create the conditions for conflict, violent extremism, and social unrest. The Harare Declaration and the Millbrook Action Programme recognised that respect for democracy and human rights is not simply a normative aspiration but a prerequisite for long-term security and development. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), for example, has acted in cases where unconstitutional changes of government threatened peace within a member state, underscoring the link between governance standards and stability.

Parliaments have a direct role in strengthening democratic resilience as a foundation for peace. Through oversight of the executive, scrutiny of security and defence budgets, and the maintenance of independent institutions, legislatures can help ensure that security policies are grounded in transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. They can also use parliamentary diplomacy to reduce tensions, foster dialogue, and reinforce adherence to international humanitarian law. In doing so, Parliamentarians demonstrate that effective governance is itself a form of conflict prevention — one that strengthens trust at home while enhancing the Commonwealth's reputation abroad as a credible advocate for peace.

2.2b Inclusive Economic Governance

Alongside the challenges of protectionism, the question of how economic growth is shared within and among Commonwealth countries is central to the governance agenda. The association benefits

from the so-called “Commonwealth Advantage” — lower transaction costs and increased trade flows between member states due to shared legal and administrative systems¹ — yet the benefits of globalisation remain unevenly distributed. Small states, in particular, face structural vulnerabilities, ranging from heavy dependence on a narrow range of exports to limited bargaining power in multilateral trade negotiations.

Parliaments have a responsibility to ensure that trade and investment policies promote inclusive growth and protect vulnerable communities. This includes scrutinising trade agreements for transparency and fairness, ensuring that development aid and climate finance reach the most at-risk populations, and aligning domestic legislation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By placing equity at the centre of economic governance, legislatures can help ensure that the Commonwealth’s economic integration is not only efficient but also socially sustainable.

In this sense, inclusive economic governance is both a domestic imperative and a multilateral responsibility. A Commonwealth that demonstrates fairness and accountability in its economic policies can more effectively advocate for a rules-based trading system internationally, while also reinforcing the credibility of its call for global economic justice.

2.3 The Digital Frontier: Regulating AI for the Public Good

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) presents both a significant economic opportunity and a profound governance challenge. AI is projected to add over \$15 trillion to the global economy by 2030 and has the potential to be a “great equalizer” by bridging the digital divide.²¹ The Commonwealth is responding to this by establishing the Commonwealth Artificial Intelligence Consortium (CAIC), which aims to harness AI for sustainable development, focusing on small and vulnerable states.

Parliaments are indispensable in navigating the complexities of AI. They have a critical dual role: they must legislate to ensure AI is developed and deployed safely, ethically, and sustainably for the public good²¹, and they must also responsibly integrate AI into their own operations.²³ The Australian Parliament provides a compelling model of proactive parliamentary scrutiny in this area. Its Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit, in its report titled ‘Proceed with Caution,’ recommended the establishment of a dedicated “statutory Joint Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies” to provide continuous oversight. This committee would be responsible for scrutinising legislation, ensuring human rights protections are not eroded, and approving government rules and guidelines for AI use.

This approach underscores a crucial point: a Parliament that understands and responsibly implements AI for its own operations is better positioned to legislate on its external use. For example, the Australian Department of the Senate has adopted a cautious, ethical approach to its internal use of AI, guided by a shared responsibility model across parliamentary departments.²⁵ This internal

institutional strengthening is a prerequisite for effective external governance on complex, emerging issues. Parliamentarians must be both the legislators and the informed users, a difficult but critical dual role that requires ongoing education and adaptation to the evolving AI landscape.

2.3a Disinformation, Trust and Democratic Integrity

The digital age has not only accelerated the spread of information but has also amplified the risks of disinformation and misinformation. Coordinated online campaigns, often financed through opaque channels, can distort democratic debate, undermine electoral integrity, and weaken trust in public institutions.¹ For the Commonwealth, which already faces challenges of democratic backsliding, these threats represent an urgent governance concern.

Parliaments play a frontline role in responding to this challenge. By legislating for transparency in digital political advertising, scrutinising the financing of online campaigns, and promoting independent media and fact-checking initiatives, legislatures can help safeguard the information environment.² Commonwealth networks, such as the CPA and the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration, provide valuable platforms for sharing best practice on how to regulate digital spaces without infringing on freedom of expression.³

Ultimately, tackling disinformation is not just about technology regulation. It requires reinforcing public trust in democratic processes by ensuring that political messages, whether online or offline, are transparent, traceable, and subject to scrutiny. In this sense, strengthening governance in the digital era is inseparable from the Commonwealth's wider mission of protecting democracy and human rights.

2.4 Confronting the Climate Emergency and Ensuring Sustainable Development

The Commonwealth is home to 25 Small Island Developing States (SIDS), making it a crucial voice in the global climate debate.¹⁷ The Commonwealth Secretariat's Climate Change Programme and its innovative Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH) work to strengthen the resilience of member countries and help them unlock climate finance to meet their Paris Agreement commitments.²⁶ Despite progress on some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the pace of change is still "insufficient" to achieve all the goals by 2030, with millions still facing extreme poverty, hunger, and a lack of basic services.²⁸

Parliamentarians must hold their respective governments to account for their commitments under the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. They must scrutinise the allocation and effectiveness of climate finance, ensuring it reaches the most vulnerable communities. Beyond oversight, Parliaments have a direct role in legislating for sustainable development, as seen in the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Initiative, which promotes strategies to tackle the urgent challenges of climate change and

rapidly growing urban populations. By promoting and scrutinising green policies, Parliaments can ensure that climate action is not just a policy but a legislative imperative.³⁰

2.5 The Demographic Dividend: Leveraging a Youth-Centric Commonwealth

With over 60 per cent of its combined population of 2.7 billion aged 29 or under, the Commonwealth is a profoundly young organisation.³² This "demographic dividend" presents an immense opportunity for economic growth and innovation, but also carries significant risks if leaders fail to provide adequate education, employment, and political opportunities. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Report notes that while progress has been made, millions still face extreme poverty and a lack of basic services, which could exacerbate the demographic pressures.³⁴

Parliamentarians must ensure that young people are not only a demographic statistic but are active participants in political and economic life. This involves legislating for education, skills development, and youth employment. Legislatures can foster youth engagement by meeting with and mentoring members of a National Youth Parliament or establishing Youth Committees, establishing youth internship schemes and proactively encouraging youth voices are heard during select/standing committee enquiries. More broadly jurisdictions could consider reducing the voter age and minimum age to stand at an election and even establishing party quotas or reserve seats for youth representatives. These approaches strengthen democratic institutions from the ground up and ensures that future leaders are equipped to participate in the legislative process.

Section 3: Case Studies of Parliamentary Success and Best Practices

This section provides concrete examples of parliamentary action, highlighting successful models and lessons learned from across the Commonwealth. These cases demonstrate how legislative bodies, through collaboration and proactive oversight, can translate the Commonwealth's principles into tangible results.

3.1 Fostering Inter-Parliamentary Collaboration

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is a central mechanism for parliamentary cooperation. It brings Parliamentarians together to *"exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields"* and to identify benchmarks for good governance.¹² This is undertaken through the delivery of technical assistance programmes, professional development training, conferences, seminars, workshops and meetings. The CPA oversees three networks – the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network, the CPA Small Branches network and the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network. These networks facilitate inter-parliamentary collaboration on areas ranging from gender sensitive Parliaments to promoting the separation of powers.

Beyond the CPA Headquarters Secretariat, the wider Association also pursues individual projects and programmes of collaboration regionally and Branch-to-Branch:

- **Australia-Pacific Twinning Programme:** The CPA's twinning programme, initiated in 2007, is designed to foster collaboration and mutual learning between Parliaments. This programme links Australian state and territory Parliaments with a number of Pacific Parliaments to help them navigate common challenges. For example, the Queensland Parliament has formalised its twinning arrangement with the Parliaments of Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea through written agreements that facilitate information exchange, staff training, and official visits. These initiatives also provide a platform for parliamentary strengthening activities in conjunction with development agencies like the United Nations Development Programme.
- **Joint Inter-Parliamentary Committees:** Parliaments can work together through joint committees to address shared policy challenges. The Inter-Parliamentary Forum, for instance, provides a mechanism for dialogue and cooperation between Parliamentarians from the UK Parliament and the devolved Legislatures of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its purpose is to meet common scrutiny challenges arising from the UK's departure from the European Union. Similarly, the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) is a deliberative body with members from the UK and Irish Parliaments, as well as the devolved assemblies and Crown Dependencies. BIPA holds plenary sessions and its committees produce reports on a range of issues, such as post-Brexit trade, to foster common understanding among elected representatives from these jurisdictions.
- **CPA UK Modern Slavery Project:** CPA UK's project provides practical advice and support to Parliaments in developing anti-trafficking and anti-slavery legislation. The project's goals included increasing Parliamentarians' understanding of modern slavery crimes, supporting them in strengthening legislation, and building their skills in oversight and scrutiny. The UK Government Funded Project 2016-2020 and its subsequent evaluation found that the Project deepened the knowledge of over 100 Parliamentarians from more than 15 Legislatures and helped to create networks that were still active years later. The project also published books on legislating against modern slavery, which have been downloaded more than 2,000 times.

Beyond individual case studies, one of the Commonwealth's enduring strengths lies in its web of specialised parliamentary networks. The **Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)**, the **CPA Small Branches network**, and the **Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD)** provide platforms for legislators to exchange experiences on shared challenges ranging from gender-sensitive legislatures to climate resilience in microstates. These networks illustrate how the Commonwealth adds value by creating safe spaces for dialogue among peers who might otherwise lack an international forum tailored to their unique circumstances.

Partnerships with external organisations further enhance this collaborative ecosystem. The CPA's cooperation with groups such as the **Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)**, **UN Women**, and the **Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)** has strengthened parliamentary

responses to issues as diverse as gender-responsive budgeting, ethical conduct, and human rights monitoring. By combining the convening power of the Commonwealth with the technical expertise of global partners, these networks ensure that collaboration is not merely symbolic but leads to practical reforms within legislatures.

Taken together, these initiatives underscore that inter-parliamentary collaboration in the Commonwealth is not confined to ad hoc projects or bilateral exchanges. It is part of a wider, strategic ecosystem that equips Parliamentarians with the knowledge, tools, and solidarity needed to meet global governance challenges while remaining rooted in shared Commonwealth values.

3.2 Upholding Accountability and Scrutiny

A core function of any Parliament is to hold the executive to account. The Commonwealth provides several examples of effective oversight mechanisms, underscoring the importance of independent financial scrutiny.

- **Australia's AI Governance Report:** The Australian Parliament's Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit serves as a model of proactive scrutiny on an emerging and complex issue. Its report, 'Proceed with Caution,' provided a detailed examination of the use and governance of AI in the public sector.²¹ It made specific recommendations, including the creation of a dedicated, statutory committee for continuous parliamentary oversight of AI. This case demonstrates how a Parliament can anticipate a challenge and provide a forward-looking, institutional response.
- **Canadian Legislative Reforms:** Canada's Reform Act, 2014 sought to increase the autonomy of individual Members of Parliament, strengthening their capacity to scrutinise the executive. Similarly, the Countering Foreign Interference Act, 2024 and the Sanctions Against Venezuelan officials demonstrate a legislative and executive commitment to confronting external threats to democracy and human rights through legal frameworks.

3.3 The Role of Parliamentary Diplomacy

Parliaments and individual Parliamentarians can and do influence foreign policy. Select committees provide a formal mechanism for this influence. The UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, for instance, scrutinises the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, including its role in multilateral organisations and its response to international conflicts.¹⁴ Through inquiries, the committee gathers oral and written evidence from ministers, academics, NGOs, and experts, providing a powerful check on the executive's foreign policy decisions.¹⁴ This process of detailed scrutiny ensures that a nation's foreign policy is subject to proper democratic oversight. Committee work is also supplemented by inter-parliamentary visits, attendance at regional and international conferences, parliamentary country friendship groups and caucuses, which can be mirrored by individual political parties.

Beyond these practical mechanisms, parliamentary diplomacy should also be understood as one of the Commonwealth's distinctive forms of soft power. Legislatures and individual Parliamentarians are often able to engage in dialogue even when intergovernmental channels are strained, creating spaces for trust-building and conflict prevention. The Commonwealth's shared language, legal traditions, and parliamentary practices reduce barriers to cooperation, allowing Parliamentarians to focus quickly on substantive issues where other forums may stall.

This gives Commonwealth parliamentary exchanges an added influence: they not only strengthen bilateral ties but can also help coordinate member states' positions within broader multilateral institutions such as the United Nations or the World Trade Organization. Ultimately, the effectiveness of this diplomacy depends on the credibility of Parliamentarians at home. Legislators who demonstrate transparency, accountability, and independence in their domestic contexts are better placed to promote these principles internationally, reinforcing the Commonwealth's reputation as a values-based community.

Section 4: Fostering Public Engagement and Outreach

Effective parliamentary governance relies not only on strong internal processes but also on meaningful public engagement. Parliaments that are connected and responsive to citizens' concerns are more likely to earn the trust of the people and improve the quality of their work.³⁹ Public engagement serves to increase the reach and diversity of people involved in the democratic process, which in turn leads to a broader range of perspectives being considered in legislative business.⁴⁰

The benefits of this approach are clear:

- **Improved Legislation and Scrutiny:** The quality of laws and policies is enhanced when they are informed by the views and experiences of citizens. This allows Parliament to better scrutinise the executive's performance and ensure that national policies and development goals meet the real needs of the people.³⁹
- **Increased Trust and Relevance:** When citizens understand the vital role of the legislature in representing their rights and concerns, they are more likely to value the institution and its work. This helps improve the Parliament's reputation as a relevant and trusted body.³⁹
- **Enhanced Inclusion and Participation:** Public engagement initiatives, such as open Parliament and open government movements, help create a more accessible and transparent legislature.³⁹ By identifying and removing barriers to participation for different communities - whether based on geography, socio-economic circumstances, or lived experience - Parliaments can deliver more inclusive services.⁴⁰

Parliaments can leverage a variety of tools to achieve these benefits. This can range from providing simple information and educational programmes to more participatory opportunities like submitting a petition or providing testimony to a committee.³⁹ Some Parliaments are even using artificial

intelligence (AI) to enhance public engagement by analysing public submissions, classifying citizen comments on bills, and powering chatbots to answer questions about legislative processes.²³ In an effort to make engagement more effective, Parliaments are also establishing long-term strategic partnerships with civil society groups who have the trust of diverse communities and can help bridge the gap between citizens and parliamentary processes.³⁹

Section 5: The Wider Ecosystem of Parliamentary Support

Beyond the Commonwealth's own institutions, a number of other multilateral organisations and civil society groups are actively engaged in parliamentary strengthening and democratic development. These organisations provide valuable lessons and models for Commonwealth Parliamentarians.

- **Organisation of American States (OAS):** The OAS is a regional multilateral organisation with a broad mandate to promote democracy, human rights, and regional security. The U.S. Congress has, through legislation, specifically directed funds to support OAS activities related to democracy and human rights, demonstrating how national legislatures can influence the priorities of international bodies.⁴¹
- **ParlAmericas:** This is a network of Parliamentarians from the Americas and the Caribbean that promotes "legislative openness." The ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network (OPN) provides a framework for Parliaments to develop action plans and track their progress on transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and ethics.⁴³
- **International IDEA:** As an intergovernmental organisation focused on strengthening democracy, International IDEA leads initiatives like Inter Pares, the European Union's flagship program for parliamentary peer-to-peer learning. It also collaborates with the IPU on a Women and Youth Democratic Engagement (WYDE) initiative, which aims to advance gender equality and political participation for women and young people.⁴⁵
- **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU):** A global organisation for national Parliaments, the IPU facilitates parliamentary diplomacy and strengthens Parliaments to be more representative and effective.³⁷ The IPU provides a platform for Parliamentarians to exchange good practices and has published case studies on a range of topics, including how Parliaments can use AI for public engagement and how Parliamentary Committees can address future challenges.³⁷
- **Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA):** This is a non-governmental, multi-party network of over 1,100 legislators. PGA mobilises parliamentary leadership to advance core democratic values and provides practical tools for lawmakers to defend democracy, uphold the rule of law, and promote human rights.⁴⁷
- **Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD):** WFD is a UK-based non-departmental public body that works to strengthen parliamentary democracy. It collaborated with the CPA on a report on the Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures and is noted for its work on gender-responsive budgeting and AI policy.³⁴
- **Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE):** PACE is the "motor" of the Council of Europe, holding governments to account on human rights and democratic standards. It plays

a central role in probing human rights violations and sends Parliamentarians to observe elections and mediate crises.⁴⁹

- **SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PA):** This regional inter-parliamentary body for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) provides a platform for Parliamentarians to promote regional integration, human rights, and good governance. It also works to promote the participation of civil society in regional activities.⁵¹
- **East African Legislative Assembly (EALA):** As the legislative organ of the East African Community (EAC), EALA has core functions of lawmaking, oversight, and representation. It is mandated to liaise with national assemblies and make recommendations on matters of regional integration.⁵³

Table 1: The Commonwealth's Response to Global Challenges

| Global Challenge | Commonwealth Policy/Mechanism | Role of Parliamentarians |
|--|---|---|
| Democratic Backsliding & Human Rights | The Commonwealth Charter, Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) | Strengthen internal oversight, scrutinise executive action, ensure independence of electoral bodies, advocate for human rights domestically and internationally ³ |
| Geopolitical Conflicts | Multilateral dialogue, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), Commonwealth Secretariat | Engage in parliamentary diplomacy, use foreign affairs committees to scrutinise foreign policy, promote adherence to international humanitarian law ¹ |
| Trade Protectionism | Commonwealth advantage, support for WTO, trade ministers' meetings | Scrutinise trade agreements, advocate for fair and rules-based trade, use shared legal systems to reduce transaction costs for intra-Commonwealth trade ² |
| Rise of AI | Commonwealth Artificial Intelligence Consortium (CAIC), UN initiatives on AI governance | Legislate for the ethical and safe use of AI, establish dedicated parliamentary oversight committees, and responsibly integrate AI into parliamentary operations to improve efficiency and public |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | | engagement ⁵⁵ |
| Climate Change & SDGs | Commonwealth Climate Change Programme, Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH) | Hold governments to account for Paris Agreement and SDG commitments, scrutinise climate finance, legislate for sustainable urbanisation and green policies ³⁰ |
| Population Changes & Youth Engagement | National Youth Parliaments, Committees inviting youth representatives for enquiries, youth Parliamentarians | Legislate for education and skills, mentor young leaders, facilitate youth participation in the political and economic life of the nation ⁹ |

Policy Recommendations: A Roadmap for Commonwealth Parliamentarians

Based on the preceding analysis, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the role of Parliaments in advancing good governance, multilateralism, and international relations within the Commonwealth:

1. **Strengthen Parliamentary Oversight of the Executive:** Parliaments should enhance the powers of their select committees, particularly those focused on foreign affairs, defence, and public accounts.¹³ These committees must have the capacity to hold the executive to account for its international commitments, foreign policy decisions, and the allocation of climate finance and development aid. This will ensure that a nation's external actions are consistent with its domestic democratic values and are subject to proper scrutiny. The use of Parliamentary Committee reports to shape foreign policy in Canada provides an excellent model for this.
2. **Champion Proactive and Forward-Looking Legislative Reform:** Parliaments should not wait for global crises to react. Legislators should establish dedicated, cross-party committees to proactively address emerging challenges like AI and climate change. This will ensure that legislative frameworks are developed in advance of, rather than in response to, technological and environmental disruptions.
3. **Harness and Expand Inter-Parliamentary Networks:** Parliamentarians should actively use and contribute to inter-parliamentary networks such as the CPA and its affiliated bodies.⁸ These forums are invaluable for sharing best practices on topics ranging from gender-responsive budgeting and ethical conduct to the reform of party politics.⁹
4. **Promote Youth and Gender Inclusion in the Legislative Process:** To fully realise the demographic dividend of the Commonwealth's young population, Parliaments must move

beyond symbolic gestures to actively integrate young people into the legislative process.⁹ This includes establishing formal mentoring programmes and youth Parliaments.

5. **Reinforce the Independence and Autonomy of Parliament:** Ultimately, a Parliament's effectiveness hinges on its independence. Parliamentarians should advocate for greater fiscal and administrative autonomy for their legislative institutions.²⁰ This ensures that legislative power is not rendered meaningless by financial reliance on the executive and that the separation of powers is upheld not just in principle but in practice. This is a crucial step in resisting democratic backsliding and ensuring that Parliaments can truly serve as the guardians of democratic values.
6. **Ensure Consistent and Adequate Funding and Promote Coordinated Action:** National Parliaments have a vital role in ensuring that the Commonwealth Secretariat receives the consistent and adequate funding necessary to address the complex challenges facing member countries sustainably. As seen in the case of other multilateral bodies, a lack of funding can hamper the ability to fulfil mandates when new responsibilities are assigned without commensurate funding.⁴¹ Parliaments can influence this by scrutinising government budgets and advocating for appropriate financial contributions. Furthermore, Parliamentarians should encourage the Commonwealth Secretariat to enhance its collaboration with other key Commonwealth organisations, such as the CPA and various Commonwealth associations. The CPA's partnerships with groups like the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, UN Women, and the Human Rights Initiative have proven effective in strengthening governance and human rights³⁴, demonstrating the value of a coordinated approach. By working together, these organisations can meet challenges in a more coordinated and impactful manner.

Conclusion

The Commonwealth is more than a historical relic; it is a dynamic and essential network for cooperation in a fragmented world. Its foundational principles of good governance, the rule of law, and democracy provide a powerful framework for collective action, but these values require consistent and vigilant stewardship. As this report has shown, Parliamentarians are at the heart of this endeavour.

By actively strengthening their oversight functions, championing proactive legislative reform, and leveraging the unique platforms for inter-parliamentary collaboration, legislators can ensure the Commonwealth remains a force for good. They can resist the forces of democratic backsliding, navigate the complexities of geopolitical conflict and economic protectionism, and address existential threats such as climate change and the rise of AI. The contrasting models of parliamentary governance—from the proactive committee work in Australia to the collaborative spirit of CPA workshops—demonstrate that there is no single solution, but rather a wealth of best practices to draw upon. Ultimately, the Commonwealth's future as a beacon of shared values rests

on the shoulders of its Parliaments. By upholding the enduring principles that define the association and translating them into tangible, cooperative action - including through coordinated funding and collaboration - Parliamentarians can ensure the Commonwealth continues to be an indispensable platform for building a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.

Endnotes and Works Cited

- The Commonwealth, The Commonwealth Charter, <https://thecommonwealth.org/charter>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth, The Commonwealth Charter, <https://thecommonwealth.org/charter>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, https://www.cpahq.org/media/kafl4zuf/commonwealth_principles_cpa_sept_2023-v2_single.pdf, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, https://www.cpahq.org/media/kafl4zuf/commonwealth_principles_cpa_sept_2023-v2_single.pdf, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, https://www.cpahq.org/media/mzep3lls/fcdo-outcome-rpt-2023_24_final.pdf, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, https://www.cpahq.org/media/mzep3lls/fcdo-outcome-rpt-2023_24_final.pdf, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Parliament of Australia, (https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees), accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Journal of Democracy, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/misunderstanding-democratic-backsliding/>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Cornell Chronicle, <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2024/01/democratic-decline-global-phenomenon-even-wealthy-nations>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), <https://thecommonwealth.org/organisations/commonwealth-human-rights-initiative-chri>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat, <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-work/promotion-and-protection-human-rights-commonwealth>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat, <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-work/Commonwealth-Climate-Change-Programme>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Commonwealth Planners, <https://www.commonwealth-planners.org/sustainability>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Sustainable Development Report, <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Sustainable Development Goals Report, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Parliamentarian: 2025 Issue Two, https://issuu.com/theparliamentarian/docs/the_parliamentarian_2025_issue_two_why_does_pol, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Parliamentarian: 2025 Issue Two, https://issuu.com/theparliamentarian/docs/the_parliamentarian_2025_issue_two_why_does_pol, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Hansard, ([https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/7A6B7D6B-5A4D-4CC0-A844-86F22EAC4E36/CommonwealthParliamentaryAssociationAndInternationalCommitteeOfTheRedCross\(Status\)Bill\(Lords\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/7A6B7D6B-5A4D-4CC0-A844-86F22EAC4E36/CommonwealthParliamentaryAssociationAndInternationalCommitteeOfTheRedCross(Status)Bill(Lords))), accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/case-study>, accessed 27 August 2025.

- The Commonwealth Secretariat, https://thecommonwealth.org/case-study?area_of_work=52&page=2, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Hansard Daily: Legislative Council, <https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/daily/uh/2025-05-22/52?sid=183ccfc1026749d39c>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/world-leaders-call-increased-multilateralism-face-global-division>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- gov.uk, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/multilateralism-remains-the-best-tool-we-have-to-meet-the-shared-challenges-of-the-21st-century-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth Artificial Intelligence Consortium (CAIC), <https://caic.thecommonwealth.org/>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- PA.gov, <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/oa/documents/policies/it-policies/artificial%20intelligence%20policy.pdf>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/about/facts>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Commonwealth Club, <https://www.commonwealthclub.org/events/archive/video/how-low-birth-rates-and-longer-lifespans-could-disrupt-global-economy>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/publications/global-youth-development-index-update-report-2023/global-picture>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Parliament of Australia,
(((https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Public_Accounts_and_Audit/PublicsectoruseofAI/Report))), accessed 27 August 2025.
- WFD, <https://www.wfd.org/commentary/how-parliaments-can-harness-benefits-ai-democratically>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Parliament of Australia,
(https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Department_of_the_Senate/Accountability_and_reporting/AI_transparency_statement), accessed 27 August 2025.
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association,
https://www.cpahq.org/media/kafl4zuf/commonwealth_principles_cpa_sept_2023-v2_single.pdf, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/gabon-restored-full-membership-within-commonwealth>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/world-leaders-call-increased-multilateralism-face-global-division>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Hansard, (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-02-24/debates/A15E930D-A53E-4781-8CCA-B20FE33E41CA/Ukraine>), accessed 27 August 2025.
- gov.uk, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-statement-on-the-middle-east>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPciCljPEs8>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_free_trade, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/blog-resilient-together-reflecting-commonwealth-trade-priorities-fractured-global-trading>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/commonwealth-ministerial-action-group>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-work/promoting-democracy>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/strengthening-role-commonwealth-ministerial-action-group>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- YouTube, (((<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZXWD2cXfaA>))), accessed 27 August 2025.
- St. Helena Government, <https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/sessional-paper-8.pdf>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union, <https://www.ipu.org/news/case-study>, accessed 27 August 2025.

- Parliamentary Indicators, <https://www.parliamentaryindicators.org/case-studies>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, <https://www.uk-cpa.org/what-we-do/commonwealth-women-parliamentarians-cwp>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/world-leaders-call-increased-multilateralism-face-global-division>, accessed 27 August 2025.
- House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Report 28: A New Era of Partnerships: Canada's Engagement with Africa, 44th Parliament, 1st Session (November 2024), accessed 27 August 2025.
- House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Report 28: Renewing Canada's Role in International Support for Democratic Development, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session (June 2019), accessed 27 August 2025.
- Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Report 26: Cultural Diplomacy at the Front Stage of Canada's Foreign Policy, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session (June 2019), accessed 27 August 2025.
- Government of Canada, Response to Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade Report 26, (March 2024), accessed 27 August 2025.
- Parliament of Canada, Reform Act, 2014, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Parliament of Canada, Countering Foreign Interference Act, 2024, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Global Affairs Canada, Canada's Africa Strategy, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Global Affairs Canada, Canada's Arctic Strategy, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Global Affairs Canada, Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, accessed 27 August 2025.
- Global Affairs Canada, Future of Diplomacy: Transforming Global Affairs Canada – Discussion Paper (June 2023), accessed 27 August 2025.
- Global Affairs Canada, Backgrounder: Canada imposes sanctions against Venezuelan officials (March 2025), accessed 27 August 2025.
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Project: Strengthening the capacities of social movements led by women in Latin America and the Caribbean, accessed 27 August 2025.
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Project: Youth engagement for a democratic future in Bangladesh, accessed 27 August 2025.

Works cited

1. Multilateralism remains the best tool we have to meet the shared challenges of the 21st century: UK statement at the UN Security Council - GOV.UK, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/multilateralism-remains-the-best-tool-we-have-to-meet-the-shared-challenges-of-the-21st-century-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>
2. Commonwealth free trade - Wikipedia, accessed September 2, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_free_trade
3. Commonwealth Charter, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://thecommonwealth.org/charter>
4. Charter - Commonwealth, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.commonwealth.org.uk/charter/>
5. Separation of Powers: Commonwealth Latimer House Principles: 20 Years of Recognition, accessed September 2, 2025, https://issuu.com/theparliamentarian/docs/parl2023iss4finalonline_single_reduced/s/40187434
6. Commonwealth Latimer House Principles on the Three Branches of Government, accessed September 2, 2025, https://www.cpahq.org/media/kafl4zuf/commonwealth_principles_cpa_sept_2023-v2_single.pdf
7. Blog: Resilient together – reflecting on Commonwealth trade priorities in a fractured global trading landscape, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/blog-resilient-together-reflecting-commonwealth-trade-priorities-fractured-global-trading>

8. COMMONWEALTH GOOD GOVERNANCE PROJECT 2023/2024, accessed September 2, 2025, https://www.cpahq.org/media/mzep3lls/fcdo-outcome-rpt-2023_24_final.pdf
9. Hansard Daily: Legislative Council - Thursday, May 22 2025, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/daily/uh/2025-05-22/52?sid=183ccfc1026749d39c>
10. Democratic decline a global phenomenon, even in wealthy nations | Cornell Chronicle, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2024/01/democratic-decline-global-phenomenon-even-wealthy-nations>
11. Misunderstanding Democratic Backsliding | Journal of Democracy, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/misunderstanding-democratic-backsliding/>
12. The role of Parliamentarians in upholding the separation of powers in the smallest jurisdictions - YouTube, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZXWD2cXfaA>
13. Committees - Parliament of Australia, accessed September 2, 2025, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees
14. Role - Foreign Affairs Committee, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/78/foreign-affairs-committee/content/174757/role/>
15. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), accessed September 2, 2025, <https://thecommonwealth.org/organisations/commonwealth-human-rights-initiative-chri>
16. Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Commonwealth, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-work/promotion-and-protection-human-rights-commonwealth>
17. World leaders call for increased multilateralism in the face of global division, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/world-leaders-call-increased-multilateralism-face-global-division>
18. Foreign Affairs Committee - Summary, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/78/foreign-affairs-committee/>
19. Foreign Secretary statement on the Middle East - GOV.UK, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-statement-on-the-middle-east>
20. CPC Workshop Research Briefing National and Subnational_SoP.docx
21. Report 510: Inquiry into the use and governance of artificial intelligence systems by public sector entities - 'Proceed with Caution' – Parliament of Australia, accessed September 2, 2025, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Public_Accounts_and_Audit/Public_sector_use_of_AI/Report
22. Artificial Intelligence Policy, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/oa/documents/policies/it-policies/artificial%20intelligence%20policy.pdf>
23. How parliaments can harness the benefits of AI democratically, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.wfd.org/commentary/how-parliaments-can-harness-benefits-ai-democratically>
24. AI transparency statement - Parliament of Australia, accessed September 2, 2025, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Department_of_the_Senate/Accountability_and_reporting/AI_transparency_statement
25. Commonwealth Climate Change Programme, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-work/Commonwealth-Climate-Change-Programme>
26. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025 — SDG Indicators - the United Nations, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/>
27. Sustainability & Climate Action | cap-website - Commonwealth Association of Planners, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.commonwealth-planners.org/sustainability>
28. Case studies - Commonwealth Secretariat, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://thecommonwealth.org/case-study>
29. Case studies - Commonwealth Secretariat, accessed September 2, 2025, https://thecommonwealth.org/case-study?area_of_work=52&page=2
30. Commonwealth parliamentarians trained on Climate Change - UNEP, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/commonwealth-parliamentarians-trained-climate-change>
31. climate change and small - Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, accessed September 2, 2025,

- <https://www.cpahq.org/media/hnpdzwpq/cpa-small-branches-climate-change-toolkit-feb-2020-online-single.pdf>
32. Facts - Commonwealth Secretariat, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://thecommonwealth.org/about/facts>
 33. The Global Picture - Commonwealth Secretariat, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://thecommonwealth.org/publications/global-youth-development-index-update-report-2023/global-picture>
 34. St Helena government commonwealth parliamentary association St Helena Legislative Council Benchmark Assessment Report, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/sessional-paper-8.pdf>
 35. Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and International - Hansard ..., accessed September 2, 2025, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/7A6B7D6B-5A4D-4CC0-A844-86F22EAC4E36/CommonwealthParliamentaryAssociationAndInternationalCommitteeOfTheRedCross\(Status\)Bill\(Lords\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/7A6B7D6B-5A4D-4CC0-A844-86F22EAC4E36/CommonwealthParliamentaryAssociationAndInternationalCommitteeOfTheRedCross(Status)Bill(Lords))
 36. The Parliamentarian: 2025 Issue Two – Why does politics need to ..., accessed September 2, 2025, https://issuu.com/theparliamentarian/docs/the_parliamentarian_2025_issue_two_why_does_pol
 37. Case studies | Inter-Parliamentary Union, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/news/case-study>
 38. Case Studies | Indicators For Democratic Parliament, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.parliamentaryindicators.org/case-studies>
 39. Parliaments and Public Engagement - Global Partners Governance, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://gpgovernance.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Guide-to-Parliaments.-Paper-9-Web.pdf>
 40. Public Engagement Strategy, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/spcb/strategic-plans/public-engagement-strategy.pdf>
 41. Organization of American States: In Brief - Congress.gov, accessed September 2, 2025, https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R47230/R47230.6.pdf
 42. Organization of American States: In Brief - Congress.gov, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47230>
 43. About the OPN - ParlAmericas, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://parlAmericas.org/about-the-opn/>
 44. ParlAmericas › open parliament, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://parlAmericas.org/open-parliament/>
 45. Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union | International IDEA, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.idea.int/speech/interaction-between-united-nations-national-parliaments-and-inter-parliamentary-union>
 46. Political Participation and Representation | International IDEA, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.idea.int/theme/political-participation-and-representation>
 47. Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) - Global Democracy Coalition, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://globaldemocracycoalition.org/partner/parliamentarians-for-global-action-pga/>
 48. PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION (PGA) - | International Criminal Court, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://asp.icc-cpi.int/complementarity/parliamentarians-global-action-pga>
 49. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - Wikipedia, accessed September 2, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_Assembly_of_the_Council_of_Europe
 50. Council of Europe - Wikipedia, accessed September 2, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Europe
 51. SADC Parliamentary Forum | The National Assembly of Seychelles, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.nationalassembly.sc/committees/international-works/sadc-parliamentary-forum>
 52. SADC Parliamentary Forum, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.sadc.int/institutions/sadc-parliamentary-forum>
 53. Mandate and Functions of EALA - East African Legislative Assembly, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.eala.org/about/category/mandate/1000>
 54. Gabon restored to full membership within the Commonwealth, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/gabon-restored-full-membership-within-commonwealth>

55. Commonwealth Artificial Intelligence Consortium, accessed September 2, 2025, <https://caic.thecommonwealth.org/>
56. CPA Australia, CPA Australia Pacific twinning programme, accessed 2 September 2025. <https://cpaaus.org/twin-peek-a-closer-look-at-parliamentary-twinning/>
57. CPA UK, CPA UK Modern Slavery Project, accessed 2 September 2025. https://www.uk-cpa.org/media/4643/cpa-uk-modern-slavery-project-assessing-the-impact-of-modern-slavery-legislation-and-increased-awareness_compressed.pdf
58. UK Parliament, Joint Committee on Human Rights, accessed 2 September 2025. <https://www.uk-cpa.org/what-we-do/modern-slavery> <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/tackling-modern-slavery-in-the-commonwealth/>
59. UK Parliament, Inter-Parliamentary Forum, accessed 2 September 2025. <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-constitution-europe-external-affairs-and-culture-committee/business-items/inter-parliamentary-forum>
60. UK Parliament, British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, accessed 2 September 2025. <https://erskinemay.parliament.uk/section/4527/the-britishirish-parliamentary-assembly>
61. UK Parliament, CPA UK Modern Slavery Project Evaluation, accessed 2 September 2025. https://www.uk-cpa.org/media/4643/cpa-uk-modern-slavery-project-assessing-the-impact-of-modern-slavery-legislation-and-increased-awareness_compressed.pdf

Related Articles in *The Parliamentarian*

1. M. C. Mukasine, Upholding the Values of the Commonwealth Charter: The Role of Parliaments and Parliamentarians in Protecting Human Rights, *The Parliamentarian*, Issue 3, 2024, <https://issuu.com/theparliamentarian/docs/parl2023iss3finalonlinesinglereduced/32>
2. J. Robbins, The Commonwealth Charter 10 years on: Values and Principles for Parliaments to Uphold, *The Parliamentarian*, Issue 3: 2023, <https://issuu.com/theparliamentarian/docs/parl2023iss3finalonlinesinglereduced/34>
3. S. Bidwell, The Commonwealth Charter 10 years on: Values and Principles for Parliaments to Uphold' - What, if anything, unifies the Commonwealth? *The Parliamentarian*, Issue 3: 2023, <https://issuu.com/theparliamentarian/docs/parl2023iss3finalonlinesinglereduced/58>
4. Dr L. Yueh, The Convening Power of the Commonwealth, *The Parliamentarian*, Issue 3: 2023, <https://issuu.com/theparliamentarian/docs/parl2023iss3finalonlinesinglereduced/60>
5. P. Scotland, Commonwealth Secretary-General reflects on 75 years of the 'modern' Commonwealth, *The Parliamentarian*, Issue 2, 2024, <https://issuu.com/theparliamentarian/docs/parl2024iss2finalonlinesinglereduced/26>

© Commonwealth Parliamentary Association 2025

All rights reserved. This publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photography, recording or otherwise provided it is used only for educational purposes and is not for resale, and provided full acknowledgement is given to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association as the original publisher. Rights are not extended for the reproduction of any photography or design not owned by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association as contained in this publication.

Views and opinions expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters Secretariat and should not be attributed to any Parliament or Member of the Association.