



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# **International Relations: Overview of activity, January 2022 - 31 March 2023**

**4 May 2023**

**Reference: SPCB (2023) Paper 33**

## **Executive summary**

1. The International Strategy agreed by the SPCB in September 2021 stated that the International Relations Office (IRO) would produce a twice-yearly overview of the core international work undertaken by the Scottish Parliament. Normally the report would cover a six-month period but this report, for completeness, covers all activity since January 2022 until 31 March 2023 as no report has been provided since then due to change in staff. No SPCB decision is being sought.

## **Issues and options**

2. Annexed is a list showing the activity in the period of this report.
3. In March 2020, all planned inward and outward international visits were cancelled by the IRO at the outset of the pandemic. Limited engagement activity took place online during the restrictions. However, with an easing of restrictions from early 2022, IRO has engaged in supporting both inward and outward visits and, whilst we aren't quite at pre-pandemic levels, we are moving in that direction.
4. As discussed previously with the SPCB, in considering its new International Strategy, a key benefit from the focus on

developing direct friendships and relationships with other legislatures and organisations allowed the IRO to quickly and easily approach others interested in the same or similar policy, procedural or corporate issues. For example, the Presiding Officer's outward visit to Lower Saxony in June 2022 allowed her to meet with her counterpart, enabling sharing of experiences and knowledge on the management of parliamentary business. This included seating arrangements in the Chamber; how Members request to speak and make points of order; timing of speeches; IT systems in the Chamber; maintaining impartiality; maintaining respect in proceedings; responding to COVID; broadcasting and public access; and many other matters relevant to the roles.

5. The key task for the IRO is to make the SPCB's focus on 'interparliamentary co-operations' work at a practical level, generate ideas around new ways of working and share experience, knowledge and practices.
6. Other international work managed by the IRO includes supporting the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Scotland Branch and the Scottish delegation to the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly. The composition of each:
  - CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee: Jeremy Balfour MSP, Sarah Boyack MSP, Stuart McMillan MSP (Branch President: Presiding Officer).
  - BIPA: Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP, Willie Coffey MSP, Ross Greer MSP, Pauline McNeill MSP, Tess White MSP.
7. Since March 2023, IRO has taken on the responsibility of supporting the Parliament's delegates to the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) as well as the Committee of the Regions UK contact group (CoR). The composition of the delegation to each is:

- CLRAE: Ben MacPherson MSP, full member, and Maurice Golden MSP, substitute member.
- CoR: Alasdair Allan MSP, full member, and Sarah Boyack MSP, substitute member.

## **Governance**

8. The IRO is responsible for the development and implementation of the International Strategy. While it facilitates most inward, outward and virtual international visits, it is not involved in every such engagement e.g. those undertaken by committees as part of an inquiry or by MSPs on cross party groups. This paper therefore does not reflect all international activity taking place, only that supported by the IRO.
9. The current International Strategy built on the experiences and practices applied by the Parliament in developing its international relations approach. The continued link of the Strategy to the Parliament's Strategic and Delivery plans and the focus on the procedural, corporate and policy interests of the institution allows the IRO to better plan activity, provides a more efficient link to resources and secures practical benefits. In short, it allows the Parliament to more easily identify what it wants to do, why, and when.

## **Resource implications**

10. There are no resource implications arising from this paper. All activity was accommodated from within the IRO budget.

## **Publication Scheme**

11. This paper will be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme. The IRO is considering how it might better present to the SPCB the information annexed to this paper e.g., through the use of infographics.

## **Decision**

12. The SPCB is invited to note the activity undertaken across the period from January 2022 to March 2023.

International Relations Office

March 2023

Annex

Jan 2022-March 2023 IRO Activity

Outward Visits

27 February – 28 February 2022: 61st British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) Plenary Conference, London: Attended by Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP, Tess White MSP, Pauline McNeill MSP and Ross Greer MSP

24 March – 25 March 2022: 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Association British Islands and Mediterranean Region Conference, Isle of Man. Attended by Jeremy Balfour MSP, Sarah Boyack MSP, Stuart McMillan MSP

7 April 2022: Presiding Officer visit to the Houses of the Oireachtas, Dublin

9 April – 10 April 2022: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Executive Committee Conference Assam, India. Attended by Stuart McMillan MSP

30 June – 2 July 2022: Presiding Officer visit to the Lower Saxon State Parliament, Hannover.

20 August – 26 August 2022: 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Halifax, Canada. Attended by Claire Baker MSP and Stuart McMillan MSP.

4 October – 7 October 2022: 9th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) British Isles and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference in Gibraltar. Attended by Sarah Boyack MSP.

12 October – 16 October 2022: Arctic Circle Assembly and visit to the Icelandic Parliament. Attended by Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP, Fiona Hyslop MSP, and Mark Ruskell MSP.

23 October – 25 October 2022: 62nd British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly Plenary in Cavan, Ireland. Attended by Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP, Ross Greer MSP, Emma Harper MSP, Pauline McNeill MSP, and Tess White MSP.

31 October – 3 November 2022: 74th Session of the Nordic Council in Helsinki, Finland. Attended by the Presiding Officer, Sue Webber MSP, and Clare Adamson MSP.

4 March – 6 March 2023: British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) Plenary Conference, Belfast: Attended by Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP, Tess White MSP, Pauline McNeill MSP and Ross Greer MSP

## Inward Visits:

24 February 2022: H.E. Wegger Strømmen, Ambassador of Norway: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

9 March 2022: Laurence Pais, Consul General of France: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

10 March 2022: Yevhen Mankovskyi, Consul of Ukraine: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

17 March 2022: Peter Müller-McDougall, Honorary Consul of Switzerland, and Dean of the Consular Corps in Scotland: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

23 March – 25 March 2022: Liesbeth Homans, Speaker of the Flemish Parliament: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

24 March 2022: Jim Himes and Sean Patrick Maloney, Members of the US House of Representatives: Meeting with Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP

30 March 2022: Stephan Weil, Minister President of Lower Saxony; Birgit Honé, Minister for European and Federal Affairs and Regional State Development; Dr Gabriele Andretta, President of the State Parliament and Members of the State Parliament: Meeting with the Presiding Officer and Members

31 March 2022: HE Saida Muna Tasneem, Bangladesh High Commissioner: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

31 March 2022: John Smith Centre Parliamentary Interns: Meetings with Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP, Pam Gosal MSP, Bob Doris MSP, Paul O’Kane MSP and officials

13 April 2022: Felicity Wilson MP, Member of Parliament of New South Wales: Meeting with Siobhian Brown MSP, Convener of the COVID 19 Recovery Committee

20 April – 21 April 2022: The Hon Jonathan O’Dea MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Parliament of New South Wales: Meetings with Presiding Officer

27 April 2022: Bijay Selvaraj, Consul General of India: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

28 April 2022: Laura Popescu, Ambassador of Romania to the United Kingdom: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

4 May 2022: Tadashi Fujiwara, Consul General of Japan in Scotland: Meeting with Presiding Officer

5 May 2022: Hon Masizole Mngqasela, Speaker of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament: Meetings with Presiding Officer, Members and officials

10 May 2022: Members of the Education Committee of the State Parliament of Lower Saxony: Meeting with Members of the Education, Children and Young People Committee

11 May 2022: Sophia Arvanitis, Agent General of Ontario: Meeting with parliamentary officials

18 May 2022: H.E. Ferenc Kumin, Ambassador of Hungary to the United Kingdom: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

19 May 2022: Members of the Provincial Assembly of Balochistan: Meeting with Members.

20 May 2022: Officials of the National Assembly and Embassy of the Republic of Korea: Meeting with parliamentary officials.

23 May 2022: Members of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) Committee D (Environment & Social): Committee Meeting.

25 May 2022: H.E. Piotr Wilczek, Ambassador of Poland to the United Kingdom: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

31 May 2022: Rt Hon. Lord McFall, the Lord Speaker: Meetings with the Presiding Officer, Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP and Members.

1 June 2022: Ma Qiang, Chinese Consul General in Edinburgh: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

1 June 2022: Kira Rudyk, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

9 June 2022: H.E. Markus Leitner, Ambassador of Switzerland to the United Kingdom: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

14 June 2022: Members of the Saxon State Parliament: Meetings with Members.

16 June 2022: Max Hiegelsberger, President of the State Parliament of Upper Austria and parliamentary colleagues: Meetings with the Presiding Officer, Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP and Members.

20 June 2022: Interns from the Ontario Legislative Assembly. Meetings with parliamentary officials.

23 June 2022: Hon Nathan Cooper MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta: Meeting with the Presiding Officer, Members and officials.

29 June 2022: Officials from the Embassies of Sweden and Denmark: Meeting with parliamentary officials.

30 June 2022: Members of the Victoria State Parliament: Meetings with Members.

6 July 2022: Fabio Monaco, Consul General of Italy for Scotland and Northern Ireland: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

6 July 2022: Hon Adam Searle MLC, Member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales: Meeting with parliamentary officials.

25 July 2022: Kim Man Heum, Chief of the National Assembly Research Service of the Republic of Korea: Meeting with parliamentary officials.

5 September 2022: Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programmes at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta: Meeting with parliamentary officials.

7 September 2022: Stephen Twigg, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association: Meetings with the Presiding Officer and Members.

22 September 2022: Luis García Montero, Director General of the Cervantes Institute: Meeting with Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP.

29 September 2022: Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Leader of the Opposition of Belarus: Meetings with the Presiding Officer and Members.

6 October 2022: Her Excellency, the Hon, Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

10 October 2022: Former Parliamentarians from Iceland: Meeting with Sarah Boyack MSP, Deputy Convener of the Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Nordic Countries.

25 October 2022: Members of the Housing and Heritage Committee of the Flemish Parliament: Meetings with Members.

26 October 2022: Veronica Ferrucci, Consul General of Italy: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

26 October 2022: Fergus Auld, UK Ambassador to Azerbaijan: Meeting with Sue Webber MSP.



28 October 2022: Robyn Lambley MLA, Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, Australia: Meeting with CPA Branch Executive Committee Members, Stuart McMillan MSP and Sarah Boyack MSP.

9 November – 10 November 2022: The Hon Anthony Rota MP, Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada: Meetings with the Presiding Officer, Deputy Presiding Officers, and Members.

10 November 2022: Members of the Committee for Industry and Services of the Romanian Parliament: Meeting with Members.

10 November 2022: Students from Duke University: Meeting with parliamentary officials.

11 November 2022: Officials from the Government of Canada: Meeting with parliamentary officials.

16 November 2022: Members of the Procedure Committee of the House of Commons: Meetings with the Presiding Officer, Members, and officials.

17 November 2022: H.E. Eitvydas Bajarūnas, Ambassador of Lithuania: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

23 November 2022: H.E. Marie Chatardová, Ambassador of the Czech Republic: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

1 December 2022: H.E. Miguel Berger, Ambassador of Germany: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

15 December 2022: John Smith Centre Parliamentary Interns: Meetings with Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP, Members, and officials.

11 January – 12 January 2023: Officials of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Japan: Meetings with officials.

17 January 2023: Members of the Environment and Communications Committee, Parliament of Iceland: Meetings with Members.

17 January 2023: João Pedro Corrêa Costa, Consul General of Brazil: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

18 January 2023: H.E. Hélène Duchêne, Ambassador of France: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

18 January 2023: H.E. Mikaela Kumlin Granit, Ambassador of Sweden: Meeting with Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP.

19 January 2023: Everiss Scholars from Otaki College, New Zealand: Meeting with Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP.

19 January 2023: Members of the Speaker's Conference of the House of Commons: Meeting with the Presiding Officer, Members, and officials.

24 January 2023: Andrii Kuslii, Consul of Ukraine: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

26 January 2023: Line Rivard, Agent-General of Québec in London: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

7 February 2023: H.E. Pedro Serrano, Ambassador of the EU: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

9 February 2023: John Smith Centre Parliamentary Interns: Meetings with Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP, Members, and officials.

23 February 2023: Canadian Parliamentary Interns: Meetings with Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP, Members, and officials.

28 February 2023: Young Leaders Programme, Malaysia: Meeting with officials.

1 March 2023: Gerry O'Donovan, Consul General of Ireland: Meeting with the Presiding Officer.

8 March 2023: Parliamentary Study Visit from the Parliament of Maldives: Meetings with Members and officials.

9 March – 10 March 2023: Clerk of the Parliaments of Western Australia: Meetings with officials.

14 March 2023: Parliamentary Study Visit from the Parliament of Sri Lanka: Meetings with Members and officials.

16 March 2023: Chief Minister and Parliamentarians from Bangsamoro (Philippines) Meetings with Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP, Members and officials.

21 March 2023: Parliamentarians from the Landtag of Saxony: Meeting with Members.

29 March 2023: Parliamentarians from the Parliament of Catalonia: Meetings with the Presiding Officer, Members and officials.

30 March 2023: H.E. Sturla Sigurjónsson, Ambassador of Iceland:  
Meeting with the Presiding Officer and Members.