



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Report of the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

30 September – 5 October 2023

Accra, Ghana



Introduction

1. The 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) took place in Accra, Ghana 30 September- 5 October 2023. The theme of the conference was “The Commonwealth Charter 10 years on: Values and principles for parliaments to uphold’.
2. The annual conference brought together over 600 parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and decision makers from across the Commonwealth to address issues facing parliaments today. The conference offered Members the opportunity to benefit from networking, professional development, learning and the sharing of best practice examples with colleagues from 180 legislatures across the Commonwealth and leading international organisations.
3. Kaukab Stewart MSP was the official delegate of the Scottish Parliament and Stuart McMillan MSP attended the conference as a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association’s (CPA) Executive Committee (ExCo), representing the British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR).

Recommendations

- Kaukab wishes to have a further exchange with the National Assembly of Québec on promoting languages in the work of the parliament and a further discussion on embedding culture of gender balanced representation in elected roles.
- The President of the National Assembly of Québec expressed an interest to visit the Scottish Parliament in Spring 2024. The International Relations Office (IRO) passed on this information to the Presiding Officer and a date for the visit has been confirmed.
- After discussing CPA collaboration opportunities with Stephen Twigg, Secretary General of the CPA, Kaukab intends to bring the role and benefits of working more closely to the attention of elected members of the Scottish Parliament.
- Kaukab also wishes to explore mutual areas of interest between the Scottish Parliament and the CPA, for example Human Rights, with a view of informing the scrutiny of the forthcoming Scottish Government Bill on Human Rights.
- IRO agreed to send CPA HQ information on the Scottish Parliament's Summit to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities taking place on 25 November 2023. IRO has since then passed on the details and Jeremy Balfour MSP has written a blog for the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities network which can be used as a case study by other Parliaments considering hosting a similar conference.
- Following the meeting with representatives from the local LGBTQ+ community Kaukab wishes to raise awareness of the impact of current reforms through conversations and Cross Party Groups if appropriate; and maintain contact with some of the groups to ensure there is scrutiny and support available through the CPA mechanisms.
- Following discussions with Amanda Ellis, Senior Director, Global Partnerships and Networks, Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory, Kaukab would like to look into further research into Data insights "generation zero" and work of CTRAC (Climate, Tracking, Real time, Action, Carbon).
- Amanda Ellis also provided IRO with various sources relating to organisations' and parliamentary initiatives to tackle climate change and improve sustainability and IRO have passed these on to the relevant committees and other colleagues across the parliament.
- Kaukab would like to suggest that some CWP members are invited to a future women's events hosted by the Presiding Officer at the Scottish Parliament.
- Stuart McMillan MSP updated the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee (DPLRC) on discussions from the meeting with the Members of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria.
- Kaukab intends to liaise with the Presiding Officer on progress of the Scottish Parliaments Gender Sensitive Audit Implementation plan and IRO has agreed to provide feedback to the BIMR on progress of the Gender Sensitive Audit.
- Stuart McMillan MSP updated the DPLRC on discussions from the meeting with the President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales and Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.
- As a follow up of Kaukab's presentation on the workshop "The Commonwealth Charter: A Charter for all human rights, or just some?", IRO shared the Equalities,

Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee's report [The Human Rights of Asylum Seekers in Scotland](#), which was published on 24 October, with CPA HQ so that it could be promoted across the CPA. CPA HQ agreed to sharing the report on the workshop page. They also suggested that Kaukab may wish to make a short recording on the outcomes of the report for their upcoming course on Human Rights.

- Following the conference Kaukab wishes to:
 - Contact delegates that indicated they would be interested in being connected with MSPs.
 - Work with the IRO to plan and organise a virtual round table event to bring together CPA delegates and MSPs on areas of mutual interest such as Net Zero targets and Human Rights to share knowledge and practice.
 - Become involved in the work of the BIMR.
 - Connect with Michelle Thomson MSP in her role on the regional CWP steering committee.
 - Indicate to the Presiding Officer her willingness to meet with visiting members of the CPA.
 - Undertake any relevant training in order to be best placed to attend further international opportunities.
 - Promote the role of the CPA amongst colleagues through informal discussions.

Purpose

4. The purpose of the trip was for the Scottish Parliament to be represented at the 66th CPC. The conference also offered Members a unique professional development opportunity to meet, learn from and share best practice examples with delegates from 180 legislatures around the world. The conference provided workshops on topical issues, networking events, business meetings and time for additional meetings to develop bilateral relations.

Annexes

5. A copy of the programme is attached at Annex A, Kaukab Stewart MSP's report of the conference in Annex B and a copy of the Conference Concluding Statement can be found in Annex C.

Programme

Sunday 1 October

Meeting with Nathalie Roy, President; and Claude Reid, MNA, National Assembly of Québec

6. Prior to the conference commencing, Kaukab Stewart MSP and Stuart McMillan MSP met with Nathalie Roy, President; and Claude Reid, MNA from the National Assembly of Québec. The purpose of the meeting was to further strengthen our good relations with the National Assembly of Québec and to look for further knowledge exchange opportunities going forward.
7. *"We talked of our respective democratic structures, issues regarding equality, equity, and education. The use of French as the primary language was a particular interest, and I was able to show how we incorporate Gaelic into the*

proceedings of our parliament, our dual signages and the promotion of Scots language.”- Kaukab Stewart MSP

8. *“The meeting with colleagues from Québec was an interesting beginning to the CPC. It was clear that colleagues from Québec wish to work with the Scottish Parliament and could see possibilities where this may be able to happen. They recognise opportunities within the CPA that it can help facilitate greater engagement. There clearly were some similar political issues affecting both Québec and Scotland but at the same time, the recognition that we are both very different thus there can be little direct comparisons.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*
9. **Kaukab wishes to have a further exchange on promoting languages in the work of the parliament and a further discussion on embedding culture of gender balanced representation in elected roles.**
10. **The President also expressed an interest to visit the Scottish Parliament in Spring 2024. IRO passed on this information to the Presiding Officer and a date for the visit has been confirmed.**



CPA Executive Committee

11. The CPA Executive Committee (ExCo) rotates its membership within each region. The Scotland Branch took over the role at the 65th CPC in Halifax, Canada and will hold the Regional Representative role until the General Assembly of the 68th CPC. Stuart McMillan MSP represents the Scottish Parliament in this role and took part in the ExCo meeting.
12. *“The EXCO went very well. The main issues re. status and location of HQ were discussed in addition to other items. The EXCO has been united on the future*

of the organisation and that was once again apparent at this session. I took part in the discussion in relation to the future of the CPA.” – Stuart McMillan MSP

13. Furthermore, as part of the Regional Representative role Stuart McMillan MSP is a member of the ExCo Finance Subcommittee, which met on the first day of the conference.

14. *“This meeting passed without any issue or concerns. The CPA is financially well managed and reported.” – Stuart McMillan MSP*



Photo: CPA HQ

Meeting with Rev. Johnstone

15. In the afternoon Kaukab Stewart MSP met with Rev. Johnstone to gain an insight into the political environment in Ghana.

16. *“The primary aim of the meeting with the Reverend was to gain understanding of the political landscape in Ghana and the main areas of debate and challenges facing its legislature. Although there is a separation between state and religions, in reality, debates are led by the three main groups of Christians, Muslims and the Traditional Religions. Currently there is a debate on the definition of what constitutes being ‘Ghanaian’ and the legislation regarding family values and the status of LGBTQ+ is at stage 2.” – Kaukab Stewart MSP*

Meeting with Stephen Twigg, Secretary General of the CPA

17. In the evening Kaukab Stewart MSP met with Stephen Twigg, Secretary General of the CPA to discuss accessibility for women and girls to primary, secondary and higher education. They also discussed the work of the CPA and future collaboration opportunities.

18. **Kaukab intends to bring the role and benefits of working more closely to the attention of elected members of the Scottish Parliament.**

19. **Kaukab wishes to explore mutual areas of interest between the Scottish Parliament and the CPA, for example Human Rights, with a view of**

informing the scrutiny of the forthcoming Scottish Government Bill on Human Rights.

20. IRO agreed to send CPA HQ information on the Scottish Parliament's Summit to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities taking place on 25 November 2023. IRO has since then passed on the details and Jeremy Balfour MSP has written a blog for the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities network which can be used as a case study by other Parliaments considering hosting a similar conference.



Monday 2 October

Meeting with representatives from the local LGBTQ+ community

21. In the morning Kaukab Stewart MSP attended a meeting with representatives from the local LGBTQ+ community at the British High Commissioner's residence.
22. *"This gathering took place at the residence of the British High Commissioner and brought together a range of individuals and representatives of organisations that have views on the current bill that is passing through the Ghanaian legislature. I was able to hear very personal stories of the impact of the bill on members of the community and from members of the legal profession who have been scrutinising and challenging processes at stage 1 and stage 2. Example of the impact of the Bill made for very difficult listening, such as families disowning other family members who were LGBTQ+ leading to increased destitution and becoming victims of exploitation. I heard from grassroots projects who were documenting the history of LGBTQ+ communities in Ghana and to record their experiences and stories in written and visual form."*
23. Once back in Scotland, Kaukab wished to raise awareness of the impact of current reforms through conversations and Cross Party Groups if appropriate; and maintain contact with some of the groups to ensure there is scrutiny and support available through the CPA mechanisms.

Executive Committee

24. Stuart McMillan MSP took part in the second day of the CPA Executive Committee meetings.
25. *“Once again, this meeting was successfully managed and passed without any concern. I once again took part in the discussion as I normally do.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*

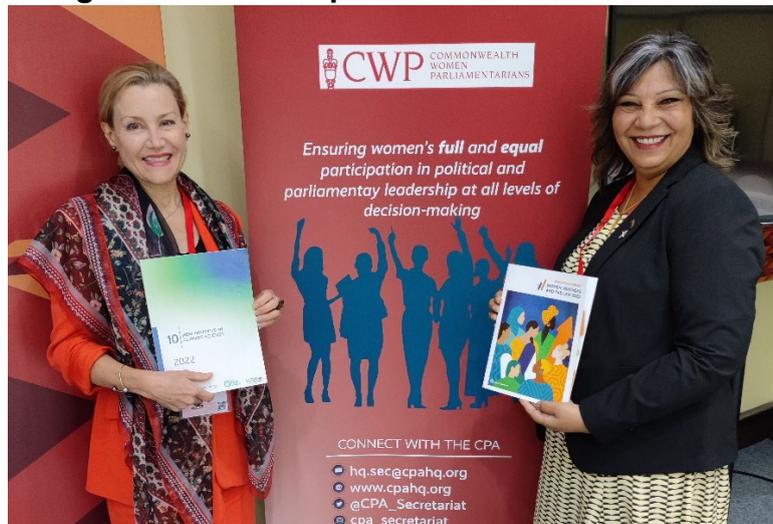
Meeting with Amanda Ellis, Senior Director, Global Partnerships and Networks, Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory

26. Kaukab Stewart MSP met with Amanda Ellis, Senior Director, Global Partnerships and Networks, Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory to discuss how universities and businesses collaborate to address impacts of climate change with regard to residential buildings.
27. *“It was a fascinating discussion around delivery of net zero targets, I was able to outline our initiatives, targets and plans around using a mixture of incentives and legislation covering the move from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, retrofitting and future house building standards, energy efficiency and a just transition to enable a secure, skilled and sustainable workforce. Recommendations are then made and tax rebates available if green products/works are taken up including the uptake of solar panels. Banks have a mandate to provide cheaper mortgages for energy efficient properties leading to a ‘race to the top’. Data is collected by all banks on the energy efficiency of properties which then enables cheaper mortgages and tax rebates. Much work had been done to expose the subsidies of fossil fuels which then led to change of view on subsidies for cleaner and greener energy. The importance of public consultation as well as including grassroots organisations. There appears to be a multi- player partnership model including entrepreneurs and philanthropists who have invested in bringing products and services to market such as EV charging.*

Areas discussed included:

- *Carbon Cure - injecting CO2 into concrete;*
 - *Children led campaigns such as installation of LED lightbulbs into public and domestic spaces e.g. street lamps;*
 - *Use of heat pumps;*
 - *Free assessments of living spaces (similar to current energy efficiency ratings that we have).”- Kaukab Stewart MSP*
28. **As a result of the discussions Kaukab would like to look into further research into Data insights “generation zero” and work of CTRAC (Climate, Tracking, Real time, Action, Carbon).**

29. Amanda provided IRO with various sources relating to the topics discussed and IRO have passed these on to the relevant committees and other colleagues across the parliament.



Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Business Meeting

30. In the afternoon, Kaukab Stewart MSP and Stuart McMillan MSP attended the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Business Meeting, where the Chair of the CWP provided delegates with an update on the CWP regional representatives' meeting which took place earlier that day.

31. *"It was wonderful for me, personally, to be in a room full of so many elected women of colour, it was a very passionate meeting with strong voices highlighting some areas of progress but also raising frustrations at a lack of progress as well."* - Kaukab Stewart MSP

32. Kaukab would like to suggest that some CWP members are invited to a future women's events hosted by the Presiding Officer at the Scottish Parliament.



CPA and UN Women: Mapping discriminatory laws across the Commonwealth

33. Following this, Stuart McMillan MSP attended the CPA and UN Women: Mapping discriminatory laws across the Commonwealth. The aim of the event was to increase support and capacity for action to achieve gender-responsive legislation and advance state commitments around global goals pertaining to gender equality.

Emilia Monjowa Lifaka Lecture

34. Finally, Stuart McMillan MSP attended the Emilia Monjowa Lifaka Lecture, in memory of Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, the late Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee and Deputy Speaker of Cameroon, which provided a tribute to her work.

Tuesday 3 October

35. On the Tuesday delegates took part in various tours arranged by the Parliament of Ghana.

Meeting with Michaela Settle, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Parliament of Victoria; and Melina Bath, Member of the Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria

36. Following his tour Stuart McMillan MSP met with Michaela Settle, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Parliament of Victoria; and Melina Bath, Member of the Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria to discuss the process of delegated powers and Law Reform Bills.

37. *“The meeting took place on a bus and lasted longer than the 30 min scheduled meeting later in the week. Our colleagues in the State of Victoria were interested in the work of our Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee (DPLRC) and our collaborative work alongside the Scottish Law Commission (SLC). Victoria also has a Law Commission and their approach differs from ours. As such, I encouraged them to either engage with our Parliament or to have their officials engage with us. One of the points I highlighted to Victoria colleagues was the SLC process producing their reports and how they come into the Scottish Parliament.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*

38. **Once back in Scotland, Stuart informed the DPLRC of the discussion that took place to keep them updated.**

Briefing for delegates and British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) meeting

39. Kaukab Stewart MSP attended the briefing for Delegates, Secretaries and Observers on behalf of the Scotland Branch, as well as the BIMR meeting.

40. *“I attended the briefing meeting and was able to take part with informal discussions after the briefing on some points raised. Details can be read in the*

main report, however the areas of particular interest to me were discussions around the work of the Disabilities Network and how the CPA will interact with the Council of Europe. I also noted that the expectation is that a third of

delegates were women, but it was clear to me that this target was exceeded. There was further discussion on the change of status of the CPA from charitable to non-charitable and routes through which this can be achieved. I was able to contribute during the gender sensitive reports. This message was very clear; it's not enough to just do an audit - action was required. I was able to share the progress of the Gender Sensitive Audit lead by the Presiding Officer, Alison Johnston, in the Scottish Parliament, with a board having been set up to oversee the implementation of the recommendations including ones sent to parliamentary committees to scrutinise.”- Kaukab Stewart MSP

41. **Kaukab intends to liaise with the Presiding Officer on progress of Scottish Parliaments Gender Sensitive Audit Implementation plan and IRO has agreed to provide feedback to the BIMR on the progress of the Gender Sensitive Audit.**



Photo: CPA HQ

Wednesday 4 October

Meeting with Hon. Ben Franklin MLC, President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales and Hon. Greg Piper MP, Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly

42. Stuart McMillan MSP met with Hon. Ben Franklin MLC, President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales and Hon. Greg Piper MP, Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly to discuss the process of delegated powers and Law Reform Bills.
43. *“The meeting was engaging after a slow start. The President of the Legislative Assembly in particular took an interest in the work of our Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee (DPLRC) and how we work alongside the Scottish Law Commission (SLC). New South Wales also has a Law Commission and their approach differs from ours. As such, I encouraged them to either engage with our Parliament or to have their officials engage with us. One of the points I highlighted to New South Wales colleagues was the SLC process producing*

their reports and how they come into the Scottish Parliament.” – Stuart McMillan MSP

44. **Stuart informed the DPLRC of the discussion that took place to keep them updated.**



Meeting with Hon. Nontembeko Boyce, Speaker of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature, South Africa

45. Following the official opening of the conference Kaukab Stewart MSP met with Hon. Nontembeko Boyce, Speaker of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature, South Africa and discussed gender equality. In particular, women’s access to employment and mechanisms of political parties to increase gender balance and diversity more broadly in their selection processes for future members.
46. *“Having previously met Hon. Nontembeko Boyce on her visit to the Scottish Parliament, I was delighted to meet with her again to discuss the barriers faced by women who stand for public office, many similar issued faced by women in Scotland. We also discussed initiatives and solutions to increase participation such as training, mentoring, financial and childcare support.”- Kaukab Stewart MSP*



Workshop: “Environmental approaches in tackling energy poverty”

47. In the afternoon Stuart McMillan MSP attended a workshop on “Environmental approaches in tackling energy poverty”. The workshop delegates unanimously endorsed the recommendation that “Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth must seek to ensure there is secure, reliable, efficient, affordable and environmentally sustainable energy provision available to all.”

48. *“I found this fascinating as we don’t tend to always obtain the detail of what’s happening elsewhere, which is understandable. I was greatly heartened by the vast increase in the use of solar power for some territories that have a great deal of daylight and sunshine. Utilising this natural resource is something I applaud. There was a great deal of recognition that a one size fits all strategy doesn’t work but harnessing the vast array of renewable energies was crucial to both helping deal with energy poverty but also cleaning up our act. The consideration for micro renewable energy generation was positive to see.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*

Workshop: “The Commonwealth Charter: A Charter for all human rights, or just some?”

49. Kaukab Stewart MSP took part in the panel for, and Stuart McMillan MSP attended, the workshop “The Commonwealth Charter: A Charter for all human rights, or just some?”. Kaukab spoke about the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee’s work on [Asylum seekers in Scotland](#).

50. The workshop, by majority, endorsed the recommendation that: “The Commonwealth Charter should apply to all Commonwealth citizens irrespective of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or political views and Parliaments should be actively working to promote the human rights of all”.

51. *“I was honoured (if slightly overwhelmed) to be a panellist at this workshop that attracted much interest and was standing room only. My presentation was a*

talk to slides rather than a speech. I outlined the work of the EHRCJ Committee Inquiry into the experiences of Asylum Seekers, was able to explain the complex landscape with Immigration being a reserved area under UK Government and the scope of the responsibilities under devolved competencies. Other panellists covered women, LGBTQ+ and an overview of where Human Rights Sits with legislatures, United Nations. I was struck by the robustness of discussions and at times very passionate exchanges on national cultures, identities, and tensions on interpretations of human rights and minimum core obligations. Concerns were raised about a roll back in basic rights for certain minority groups. I was able to respond to questions and comments from a wide range of CPA members and highlighted intersectional aspects and was delighted with the feedback I received on the clarity and effectiveness of my contribution from delegates.”- Kaukab Stewart MSP

52. *“This was both inspirational and frustrating in equal measure. I thought all panellists, including Kaukab Stewart MSP did tremendously well in offering their considerations about what has happened in their jurisdictions, in addition to some wider considerations. This helped stimulate some debate. At this point, the challenges we face in the Commonwealth were laid bare and highlighted that every territory is different and have different cultural norms and beliefs. None more so than with regards to the issue of homosexuality. The strength of courage that existed in the room for people campaigning for change was extremely powerful and this offered up hope for the future, however, this will not be an easy journey.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*

53. **Following the conference IRO shared the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee’s report [The Human Rights of Asylum Seekers in Scotland](#), which was published on 24 October, with CPA HQ so that it could be promoted across the CPA. CPA HQ agreed to sharing the report on the workshop page. They also suggested that Kaukab may wish to make a short recording on the outcomes of the report for their upcoming course on Human Rights.**



Thursday 5 October General Assembly

54. On the final day of the conference Kaukab Stewart MSP and Stuart McMillan MSP represented the Scottish Parliament at the General Assembly.
55. *“The format of the assembly included proposals such as the change in status of the CPA, questions, and answers, and updates from executive committee leads.”- Kaukab Stewart MSP*
56. *“This was well run and professional. It provided speakers with the opportunity to engage in and the President, aided by the Secretary General and Chair, performed their functions well. The main debate understandably centred around the future of the CPA. Despite what was a perhaps a more challenging start to that particular debate, the GA came together to back unanimously the proposals suggested by the Constitution Working Group and the EXCO, both of which I am a member of.” – Stuart McMillan MSP*



Executive Committee

57. Once the General Assembly had concluded Stuart McMillan MSP took part in the meeting of the new Executive Committee, following the allocation of new regional members.

Feedback

58. *“I was truly honoured to represent the Scottish parliament at the 66th CPA Conference in Accra. My knowledge of Commonwealth legislatures has increased, and I am able to compare different democracy models. I recognise that we have many established procedures that are effective and can consider other legislatures for examples of different ways of doing things such as how legislation is scrutinised, equality measures to increase representation.*
59. *Having been exposed to an international environment I recognise that I enjoy and am able to use my effective communication skills in diplomacy to establish and further develop good relationships and share good practice between the Scottish Parliament and other nations’ parliaments. This was my first experience of such an event and I know that I have grown in my knowledge, skills and understanding of cooperation, collaboration, and reaching consensus*

in an international setting. I hope that more opportunities such as this come my way and I believe I would be an excellent ambassador for the Scottish Parliament.

60. *My own confidence levels have increased, and I am already able to apply my knowledge and skills during my committee work and how I take part in debates.*

61. *My interest in international relations has been raised and I am keen to pursue this. This has been a very profound experience for me and has broadened my views and perspectives. I have felt a deep sense of privilege in not only been given the opportunity to attend such an event but also having played a full and active part during the conference.*

Follow ups:

- **Contact delegates that indicated they would be interested in connecting with MSPs.**
- **Work with the IRO to plan and organise a virtual round table event to bring together CPA delegates and MSPS on areas of mutual interest such as Net Zero targets and Human Rights to share knowledge and practise.**
- **Become involved in the work of the BIMR.**
- **Connect with Michelle Thomson MSP in her role on the regional CWP steering committee.**
- **Indicate to the Presiding Officer my willingness to meet with visiting members of the CPA.**
- **Undertake any relevant training in order to be best placed to attend further international opportunities.**
- **Promote the role of the CPA amongst colleagues through informal discussions.” - Kaukab Stewart MSP**

62. *“Attendance at the CPC is a crucial part of the Scottish Parliament’s international engagement. Since my involvement with the CPA, there has been a notable increase in engagement between colleagues from the Commonwealth legislatures and MSPs who attend CPA events, such as the CPC. These events allow MSPs to attend workshops, network and exchange information with counterparts, which we can then share with colleagues back home. Presently, the Scottish Parliament also has a representative on the Executive Committee, which allows Scotland to contribute to key decisions made by the CPA. It is important that we continue our engagement with our CPA colleagues, including at the CPC, to continue to look for ways to share information and learn from others.”- Stuart McMillan MSP*

Conclusion

63. Kaukab Stewart MSP and Stuart McMillan MSP represented the Scottish Parliament at the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Accra, Ghana.

64. The theme of the conference was “The Commonwealth Charter 10 years on: values and principles for parliaments to uphold” and the two Members took part in meetings, sessions and networking events over five days. In addition to this, the Members held seven bilateral meetings with delegates, representatives and

academics from Québec, Ghana, KwaZulu Natal, CPA HQ, New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand.

65. Kaukab Stewart MSP was also a panellist on the workshop “The Commonwealth Charter: A Charter for all human rights, or just some?”, discussing the work of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee’s work on [Asylum seekers in Scotland](#). Furthermore, she briefed BIMR colleagues on to work of the Scottish Parliament.
66. Stuart McMillan MSP took part in the CPA ExCo meetings representing the BIMR and both Members represented the Scottish Parliament at the General Assembly.
67. The conference allowed for in depth discussion and shared learning across a range of parliaments and topics. There were various recommendations/action points to take forward and the feedback from the Members showed it was a highly valuable conference to attend. Members particularly enjoyed sharing best practices and developing relationships with colleagues across the Commonwealth, enhancing their work as parliamentarians.

International Relations Office
November 2023

Annex A: Programme

Saturday 30 September

- 12.45 Depart London Heathrow (LHR) Terminal 5
- 18.25 Accra, Ghana (ACC) Terminal 3
- 19.30 Transfer to hotel: Movenpick Ambassador Hotel, Accra

Sunday 1 October

- 11.00-11.30 Meeting with Nathalie Roy, President; Claude Reid, MNA, National Assembly of Québec. Accompanied by the Associate Secretary General and Melissa Morin, International Relations Office (Stuart and Kaukab)
Mövenpick Hotel
- 12.30 Register for the Conference
Accra International Conference Centre
- 13.00- 15.00 Executive Committee Day 1 (Stuart)
Accra International Conference Centre

15.00- 17.00 Finance Subcommittee (Stuart)
Accra International Conference Centre

17.30- 18.00 Meeting with Stephen Twigg, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Kaukab)
Accra International Conference Centre

Accessibility for women and girls, access to primary, secondary and further, higher education. Barriers, what measures are being taken to identify and reduce barriers to access. Links with workforce planning.

Monday 2 October

08.30- 10.00 Meeting with Ghanaian LGBTQ+ community members (Kaukab)
British High Commissioner's residence

09.00- 13.00 Executive Committee Day 2 (Stuart)
Accra International Conference Centre

12.00- 12.30 Meeting with Amanda Ellis, Senior Director, Global Partnerships and Networks, Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory (Kaukab)
Accra International Conference Centre

How universities and businesses collaborate to address impacts of climate change with regard to residential buildings.

13.00-14.00 Lunch

16.00 – 17.30 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) - Business Meeting (Kaukab)
Accra International Conference Centre

17.30-19.00 CPA and UN Women: Mapping discriminatory laws across the Commonwealth (everyone)
Accra International Conference Centre

In the margins of the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, CPA and UN Women will co-host a side event to increase support and capacity for action to achieve gender-responsive legislation and advance state commitments around global goals pertaining to gender equality. The event will seek to sensitise women parliamentarians about trends in discriminatory laws, recent successful reforms and how they were achieved.

19.00-20.15 Emilia Monjowa Lifaka Lecture (everyone)
Accra International Conference Centre

The inaugural Emilia Monjowa Lifaka Lecture will take place at the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Accra, Ghana, in memory of [Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka](#), the late Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee and Deputy Speaker of Cameroon. Hon. Monjowa Lifaka was a passionate champion of the CPA and served as CPA Chairperson from November 2017 to her untimely passing in April 2021. The Lecture is intended to provide a fitting tribute to her work. A keynote address will be delivered by Betty Abeng, Chief Executive Officer of the [Commonwealth Education Trust](#), with a response from Dr Leslie Casey-Hayford, a Ghana-based international education development expert. The Lecture is supported by the [International Parliamentary Network for Education \(IPNEd\)](#).

Tuesday 3 October

08.00-16.00 Ghana Tours

16.00- 16.30 Meeting with Michaela Settle, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Parliament of Victoria; and Melina Bath, Member of the Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria. Accompanied by Sally West, Usher of the Black Rod. (Stuart)

Mövenpick Hotel

Process of delegated powers and Law Reform Bills

17.00-18.00 Briefing for Delegates, Secretaries and Observers (everyone)

Accra International Conference Centre

18.00-19.00 British Islands and Mediterranean Region meeting (everyone)

Committee Hall 2 on the Ground Floor of the Conference Centre

Wednesday 4 October

07.30-08.30 Meeting with Hon. Ben Franklin MLC, President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales; Hon. Greg Piper MP, Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly; and Liesl Tesch MP, Member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. Accompanied by Ms Carly Maxwell the Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and Mr David Blunt, Clerk of the Legislative Council. (Stuart)

Mövenpick Hotel

Process of delegated powers and Law Reform Bills

09.30- 11.00 Official Opening

11.00- 11.30 Meeting with Hon. Nontembeko Boyce, Speaker of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature, South Africa. Accompanied by Nokuthula Zuma, Coordinator (Kaukab)

Accra International Conference Centre

Gender equality. Womens' access to employment, barriers to employment, any government policies directed at reducing barriers and incentivising workplaces. Mechanisms of political parties and how they increase gender balance and diversity more broadly in their selection processes for future MSPs.

13.00- 14.00 Lunch

14.00- 16.00 Workshop E: Environmental approaches in tackling energy poverty
(Stuart)

Accra International Conference Centre

16.00- 18.00 Workshop G: The Commonwealth Charter: A Charter for all human rights, or just some? (Kaukab & Stuart)

Accra International Conference Centre

19.00- 22.00 Official Dinner

Accra International Conference Centre

Thursday 5 October

9.00-12.00 General Assembly (Kaukab and Stuart)

Accra International Conference Centre

12.00-13.00 Lunch

13.00-16.00 General Assembly cont. (Kaukab and Stuart)

Accra International Conference Centre

16.00-18.00 Executive Committee - Part 2 (Stuart)

Accra International Conference Centre

19.00 Depart hotel for airport

22.00 Depart Accra (ACC) Terminal 3

Friday 6 October

05.50 Arrive London Heathrow (LHR) Terminal 5

09.15 Depart London Heathrow (LHR) Terminal 5

10.45 Arrive Glasgow (GLA) Terminal M



30th September - 6th October 66th CPA Conference, Accra Ghana

2023

→ Kaukab Stewart MSP

Arrived after a long journey in Accra and I was immediately struck by how friendly everyone was, it was like a family reunion with the buzz and anticipation for a productive and exciting conference ahead, full of reconnections and new connections. Spotting the barriers of welcome, it all started to feel very real. We travelled from the airport to our accommodation with colleagues from BIMR amongst a flurry of introductions and warm welcomes as my own feelings of nervousness around my first attendance at an international event and the responsibility of representing the Scottish Parliament to the best of my ability.

Meeting with Nathalie Roy, President;
Claude Reid, MNA, National Assembly,
Québe

An inspiring and informative meeting with Nathalie (and Claude) who is settling well into her role. Her predecessor having visited the Scottish Parliament, I extended an invitation for her also to continue to strengthen the bonds of our legislatures. We talked of our respective democratic structures, issues regarding equality, equity and education. The use of French as the primary language was a particular interest, and I was able to show how we incorporate Gaelic into the proceedings of our parliament, our dual signages and the promotion of Scots language.

Follow up: further exchange on promoting languages in the work of the parliament, further discussions on embedding culture of gender balanced representation in elected roles.

Meeting with Rev. Johnstone

Meeting with Stephen Twigg, Secretary
General of the Commonwealth
Parliamentary Association

We discussed the role of the CPA and how it fits in with the democratic structures of the member countries, how it can influence decision making and promote key areas such as Human Rights. There was more in-depth discussion regarding workshops, including the current legislation on LGBTQ+ passing through the Ghanaian legislature. I was able to outline my keynote speech on Human Rights of Asylum Seekers, including the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee enquiry on the experiences of Asylum Seekers within the context of devolved and reserved areas of scope. It gained an understanding of the internal structures and the work of the CPA and of debates regarding the change of status of the CPA. Mr Twigg was enthusiastic at my proposal to arrange a virtual roundtable of interested CPA delegates and MSPs.

Follow up: bring the role and benefits of working more closely to the attention of elected members of the Scottish Parliament. Explore mutual areas of interest for example Human Rights, with a view of informing the scrutiny of the forthcoming Scottish Government Bill on Human Rights.



Meeting with representatives from the local LGBTQ+ community

This gathering took place at the residence of the British High Commissioner and brought together a range of individuals and representatives of organisations that have views on the current bill that is passing through the Ghanaian legislature. I was able to hear very personal stories of the impact of the bill on members of the community and from members of the legal profession who have been scrutinising and challenging processes at stage 1 and stage 2. Example of the impact of the Bill made for very difficult listening, such as families disowning other family members who were LGBTQ+ leading to increased destitution and becoming victims of exploitation. I heard from grassroots projects who were documenting the history of LGBTQ+ communities in Ghana and to record their experiences and stories in written and visual form.

Follow up: raise awareness of the impact of current reforms through conversations and CPGs if appropriate. Maintain contact with some of the groups to ensure there is scrutiny and support available through the CPA mechanisms.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) - Business Meeting

It was wonderful for me, personally, to be in a room full of so many elected women of colour, it was a very passionate meeting with strong voices highlighting some areas of progress but also raising frustrations at a lack of progress as well. At the start we all stood up to sing 'A song for women everywhere'. A rousing tune with inspiration and hope within its verses.

Follow up: Suggest invitation to future women's events hosted by the Presiding Officer at the Scottish Parliament.

Meeting with Amanda Ellis, Senior Director, Global Partnerships and Networks, Julie Ann Wrigley, Global Futures Laboratory

It was a fascinating discussion around delivery of net zero targets, I was able to outline our initiatives, targets and plans around using using a mixture of incentives and legislation covering the move from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, retrofitting and future house building standards, energy efficiency and a just transition to enable a secure, skilled and sustainable workforce.

Areas discussed included:

- ♦ Carbon Cure - injecting CO₂ into concrete;
- ♦ Children led campaigns such as installation of LED lightbulbs into public and domestic spaces e.g. street lamps;
- ♦ Use of heat pumps;
- ♦ Free assessments of living spaces (similar to current energy efficiency ratings that we have).

Recommendations are then made and tax rebates available if green products/works are taken up including the uptake of solar panels. Banks have a mandate to provide cheaper mortgages for energy efficient properties leading to a 'race to the top'. Data is collected by all banks on the energy efficiency of properties which then enables cheaper mortgages and tax rebates. Much work had been done to exposes the subsidies of fossil fuels which then led to change of view on subsidies for cleaner and greener energy. The importance of public consultation as well as including grassroots organisations. There appears to be a multi-player partnership model including entrepreneurs and philanthropists who have invested in bringing products and services to market such as EV charging.

Follow up: further research into Data insights "generation zero", Work of CTRAC (Climate, Tracking, Real time, Action, Carbon),





Kwame Memorial Park

Joined the Accra city tour that left from the vicinity of the Ghanaian Parliament which is an impressive building on the hill with a garden display of colourful flora and fauna.

A thoroughly enjoyable visit to the memorial of the first president of Ghana after he campaigned for and secured Independence for Ghana. This part of my report is best illustrated with photographs and with the following quotes that resonated with me.

"Those who would judge us merely by the heights we have achieved would do well to remember the depths which we started"
(Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, 1909-72)

A reminder to us all to be mindful of the different starting points that nations and individuals have and the barriers that can hinder our progress.

"I am not African because I was born in Africa, but because Africa was born in me".

As a migrant to Scotland myself, this expresses my passion and commitment towards Scotland.



National Museum (March 1957)



A fascinating guided tour of the National Museum that contained the geographical, cultural, and political history of Ghana in a relatively small but well-designed octagonal building. I was particularly interested to learn that strings of beads worn as adornments were used to communicate many messages depending on size and colour for example a women wearing red beads indicated that she is menstruating.



Briefing for delegates and BIMR meeting

I attended the briefing meeting and was able to take part with informal discussions after the briefing on some points raised. Details can be read in the main report, however the areas of particular interest to me were discussions around the work of the Disabilities Network and how the CPA will interact with the Council of Europe. I also noted that the expectation is that a third of delegates were women, but it was clear to me that this target was exceeded. There was further discussion on the change of status of the CPA from charitable to non-charitable and routes through which this can be achieved.

I was able to contribute during the gender sensitive reports

This message was very clear; it's not enough to just do an audit - action was required. I was able to share the progress of the Gender Sensitive Audit lead by the Presiding Officer, Alison Johnston, in the Scottish Parliament, with abroad having been set up to oversee the implementation of the recommendations including ones sent to parliamentary committees to scrutinise.

Follow up: provide feedback to BIMR on progress of Gender Sensitive Audit, liaise with Presiding Officer on progress of Scottish Parliaments Gender Sensitive Audit Implementation plan.

ay 4 October

Meeting with Hon. Nontembeko Boyce,
Speaker of the KwaZulu-Natal
Provincial Legislature, South Africa

Having previously met Hon. Nontembeko Boyce on her visit to the Scottish Parliament, I was delighted to meet with her again to discuss the barriers faced by women who stand for public office, many similar issues faced by women in Scotland.

We also discussed initiatives and solutions to increase participation such as training, mentoring, financial and childcare support.

Workshop: "The Commonwealth
Charter: A Charter for all human rights,
or just some?"

I was honoured (if slightly overwhelmed) to be a panellist at this workshop that attracted much interest and was standing room only. My presentation was a talk to slides rather than a speech. I outlined the work of the EHRCJ Committee Inquiry into the experiences of Asylum Seekers, was able to explain the complex landscape with Immigration being a reserved area under UK Government and the scope of the responsibilities under devolved competencies. Other panellists covered women, LGBTQ+ and an overview of where Human Rights sits with legislatures, United Nations. I was struck by the robustness of discussions and at times

very passionate exchanges on national cultures, identities, and tensions on interpretations of human rights and minimum core obligations. Concerns were raised about a roll back in basic rights for certain minority groups. I was able to respond to questions and comments from a wide range of CPA members and highlighted intersectional aspects and was delighted with the feedback I received on the clarity and effectiveness of my contribution from delegates.

Evening Reception

This was an excellent opportunity to network, continue discussions with delegates and further expand my knowledge of the key roles within the CPA. I was particularly delighted to meet with Farhat Ayesha, High Commissioner of Pakistan, and was able to share the work of the Pakistan CPG.



5 October



Our delegation arrived at the conference centre to a welcome that consisted of traditional dancers and drummers and much excitement. The wonderful music was a joy to listen to, the atmosphere was lively and very welcoming.

The General Assembly opening ceremony consisted of keynote speeches and songs from a choir. I was able to take in the truly international aspect to this gathering and seeing delegates in their national dress. The format of the assembly included proposals such as the change in status of the CPA, questions, and answers, and updates from executive committee leads.

Reflections

I was truly honoured to represent the Scottish parliament at the 66th CPA Conference in Accra. My knowledge of Commonwealth legislatures has increased, and I am able to compare different democracy models. I recognise that we have many established procedures that are effective and can consider other legislatures for examples of different ways of doing things such as how legislation is scrutinised, equality measures to increase representation.

Having been exposed to an international environment I recognise that I enjoy and am able to use my effective communication skills in diplomacy to establish and further develop good relationships and share good practice between The Scottish Parliament and other nations parliaments. This was my first experience of such an event and I know that I have grown in my knowledge, skills and understanding of cooperation, collaboration, and reaching consensus in an international setting. I hope that more opportunities such as this come my way and I believe I would be an excellent ambassador for the Scottish parliament.

My own confidence levels have increased, and I am already able to apply my knowledge and skills during my committee work and how I take part in debates.

My interest in international relations has been raised and I am keen to pursue this. This has been a very profound experience for me and has broadened my views and perspectives. I have felt a deep sense of privilege in not only been given the opportunity to attend such an event but also having played a full and active part during the conference. I am very grateful to Stuart McMillian MSP, Charlotta Craig and David McGill for their amazing support.

Follow up: Contact delegates that indicated they would be interested in connective with MSPs.

Work with the IRO to plan and organise a virtual round table event to bring together CPA delegates and MSPS on areas of mutual interest such as Net Zero targets and Human Rights to share knowledge and practise.

Become involved in the work of BIMR.

Connect with Michelle Thompson MSP in her role of CPA Women's Committee.

Indicate to PO my willingness to meet with visiting members of CPA.

Undertake any relevant training in order to be best placed to attend further international opportunities.

Promote the role of the CPA amongst colleagues through informal discussions.





66th COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMANTARY CONFERENCE ACCRA, GHANA 30 SEPTEMBER to 6 OCTOBER 2023

CONFERENCE CONCLUDING STATEMENT



CONFERENCE THEME: 'THE COMMONWEALTH
CHARTER 10 YEARS ON: VALUES AND
PRINCIPLES FOR PARLIAMENTS TO UPHOLD'



This document contains the Conference Concluding Statement for the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) which took place in Accra, Ghana from 30 September to 6 October 2023, hosted by the Parliament of Ghana and CPA Ghana Branch. The statement is also available at the CPA website: www.cpahq.org.

To catch up on all of the news from the 66th CPC – please visit the CPA website and social media hashtag #66CPC.

Images from the events of the 66th CPC are available at the CPA's Flickr page.

A full round up of all of the conference news and workshop reports from the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Ghana will appear in *The Parliamentarian: Conference Issue* out in November 2023. *The Parliamentarian, the Journal of Commonwealth Parliaments* is available to Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff through their CPA Branch Secretaries (print and digital editions) or to individuals and organisations by subscription. Email editor@cpahq.org for details about *The Parliamentarian*.

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66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference Conference Concluding Statement

6 October 2023

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS attending the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and associated meetings recognised the Commonwealth's commitment to democracy and met under the conference theme of '*The Commonwealth Charter 10 years on: Values and Principles for Parliaments to Uphold*'. 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the Commonwealth Charter which outlines the principles and values of the Commonwealth.

The conference, hosted by the Parliament of Ghana and CPA Ghana Branch from 30 September to 6 October 2023 in Accra, Ghana was attended by over 600 Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Clerks representing Parliaments and Legislatures from across the Commonwealth.

The conference was hosted by the CPA President (2022-2023), Rt Hon. Alban Bagbin, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana. This was the first time that the CPA Ghana Branch and the Parliament of Ghana hosted the CPA's annual conference and is the 17th time that the CPA Africa Region has hosted the CPA's annual conference.

During the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, there were also a number of additional conferences and meetings including: 39th CPA Small Branches Conference; meetings of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) networks; the 66th CPA General Assembly; governance meetings of the CPA Executive Committee; and the 57th Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SoCATT) meeting.

This concluding statement contains

- the main outcomes of the conference,
- a summary of the workshop discussions, and
- the recommendations that were either endorsed or noted by the Members in attendance.

Alongside the substantive conference workshops and the CPA governance meetings (66th General Assembly and CPA Executive Committee meetings), the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference also included a number of additional events.

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 the countries of the Commonwealth as well as national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures bringing together over 180 CPA Branches of the Association.

Issued by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Headquarters Secretariat on 11 October 2023 following the conclusion of the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC).

66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference - Opening Addresses

The Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), His Excellency Nana Akufo-Addo, the President of Ghana, urged Commonwealth Parliamentarians to work together to uphold democratic principles and the values of the Commonwealth as he opened the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (66th CPC) for over 600 delegates in Accra, Ghana. The CPA Vice-Patron and President of Ghana said: *“The world is still experiencing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which compelled us to work together to survive. As we exit the doldrums of the pandemic, the world*



has been hit again with a series of geo-political crises, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the recent coup d'états in some parts of Africa. These crises are a threat to the foundation of our democratic values and institutions, and a clarion call for us to work together to address this new challenge. It is a call on all Parliaments to act. I urge Commonwealth Parliamentarians to reflect deeply on the goal of the values and principles in the Commonwealth Charter and focus your discussions on the goal of attaining and maintaining the democratic ethos of this noble community. I commend the Commonwealth for its commitment to the rule of law, open and tolerant societies, equality for all and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms.”



Delegates to the 66th CPC were welcomed by the CPA President (2022-2023), Rt Hon. Alban Bagbin, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana who said at the opening ceremony: *“On behalf of the Parliament of Ghana, I welcome all Commonwealth Parliamentarians to Accra for the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference which brings together delegates on a single platform to share their experiences and good practices as well as promoting the values of the Commonwealth. This includes a commitment to the highest standards and principles of democratic governance and parliamentary practice. Democracy will remain elusive if we are not deliberate in our efforts to ensure the independence of Parliaments. Our Parliaments can be strengthened if we empower our oversight Committees to effectively review government actions, budgets and policies. We can strengthen our*

Parliaments through civic education programs that inform citizens about their rights and the need to protect parliamentary democracy.”

Delegates were also welcomed by the CPA Chairperson, Hon. Ian Liddell-Grainer, MP (United Kingdom); the CPA Vice-Chairperson, Hon. Osei Kyei-Mensah Bonsu, MP, Majority Leader in the Parliament of Ghana; and the Ghanaian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchway. The vote of thanks was given by the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Dr Zainab Gimba, MP (Nigeria).



The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg said: *“On behalf of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, it is my great pleasure to welcome delegates to the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, in Accra, and thank the CPA Ghana Branch and Parliament of Ghana, and in particular the CPA President and CPA Vice-Chairperson for their generosity in hosting this year’s conference. This conference offers an invaluable opportunity to come together and share best practice in addressing common issues and strengthening Commonwealth values, as the theme on the Commonwealth Charter attests. The values within the Charter, and the vital role the CPA has in sustaining and reinforcing them, are as relevant today as they were when they were originally signed in 2013. With our coming together on the tenth anniversary of the Commonwealth Charter, it provides us with an opportunity to review the relevance of its values and principles, as well as assessing how the Commonwealth is progressing against these pledges. Commitments to democracy, human rights and good governance are cornerstones of the CPA’s work, and these Charter principles play a part in everything we do as an Association.”*

66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference: CPA Officer Elections

CPA Vice-Chairperson: The 66th CPA General Assembly was followed by a meeting of the new CPA Executive Committee during which Hon. Arthur Holder, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Barbados, was confirmed for the position of Vice-Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee. The position of Vice-Chairperson is for a term of one year and the holder is also a Member of the CPA Co-ordinating Committee.



66th CPA General Assembly: Key Decisions

During the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Ghana, Commonwealth Parliamentarians attended the CPA General Assembly. The CPA General Assembly was presided over by the CPA President (2022-2023), Rt Hon. Alban Bagbin, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana and was attended by Members from 102 CPA Branches. The CPA General Assembly, the Association's supreme authority, is constituted by delegates to the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

The General Assembly also included a topical debate on food security and sustainability in the Commonwealth, with presenters from CPA Branches including Queensland, Tanzania, Canada, Isle of Man and Turks and Caicos Islands.

The key decisions and outcomes were:

1. CPA Status - Welcomed the legal and financial advice, and work undertaken so far to enable the CPA to be able to create a new non-charitable organisation later in 2023. Noted the legal and financial advice and work undertaken so far to enable the CPA to be able to create a new non-charitable organisation later in 2023. Agreed to create a new non-charitable organisation at the 66th CPA General Assembly. Welcomed and supported the renewed efforts to persuade the UK Government to agree to legislate to recognise the CPA as an international, interparliamentary organisation. Agreed to the pre-assessment stage of the benchmarks and instructs the CPA Secretariat to write out to all CPA Branches as soon as the 66th CPC has concluded. The communication from the CPA Secretariat should seek potential expressions of interest from Branches and include the assessment framework and methodology, and a series of FAQs. A decision on the next stage will be made at the Mid-Year CPA Executive Committee in 2024.
2. Annual Report - Noted the CPA Annual Report for the reporting period of January to December 2022.
3. CPA Secretary-General's annual appraisal and application for a second and final term - Approved the recommendation of the CPA Executive Committee that the CPA Secretary-General is appointed for a second and final term, with this commencing on 1 August 2024, and ending on 1 August 2028.
4. CPA Membership Report - Noted the suspended CPA Branches, and that Regional Representatives and CPA Branch and Regional Secretaries continue to be encouraged to engage with defaulting Branches in their respective Regions to settle outstanding Branch fees or to agree a payment plan as soon as possible. Noted the outstanding fees and agreed to the proposals for handling those Branches with arrears and for support to be provided to Branches as required. Acknowledged progress made to date in respect of reinstating previously suspended CPA Branches together with further action outlined during the meeting.
5. CPA Future Membership Subscriptions - Agreed the proposal for membership fees to increase in line with the revised budget and the recommendation from the CPA Executive Committee, by 4% for both 2024 and 2025.
6. Audited Report and Financial Statements: year end 31 December 2022 - Received the approved and signed CPA Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 December 2022.

7. Budgets and Financial Management Reports - Received and approved the result for the period and the forecast financial result for the year and the year-end financial position at 31 December 2023 in respect of the following reports and budgets:
 - (i) CPA Secretariat Financial Report: period ended 30 June 2023.
 - (ii) CPA Secretariat Forecast 2023, Budget 2024 and Projection for 2025.
 - (iii) Working Capital Fund Financial Report: period ended 30 June 2023, Forecast 2023 and Budget 2024.
 - (iv) Conference Assistance Fund Financial Report: period ended 30 June 2023, Forecast 2023 and Budget 2024.
 - (v) 2024 CPA Headquarters Budget and provisional budget for 2025.With regard to the Conference Assistance Fund, the meeting also noted the increased subventions for 2025 onwards.
8. Internal Auditors - Agreed to reappoint internal auditors Sayer Vincent Auditors.
9. Report of the Working Group on CPC Modalities - Approved and adopted the recommendations of the CPA Working Group on CPC Modalities as endorsed by the CPA Executive Committee in April 2023.
10. Matters Submitted by CPA Branches to the 66th CPA General Assembly - Endorsed the motion submitted by the CPA Isle of Man Branch noting the work of the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC) and calling for strong and independent Public Accounts or equivalent Committees to sustain and promote the highest standards of public financial oversight, and encouraging Public Accounts Committees in the CPA to avail themselves of free membership of CAPAC in order to pursue these aims and to share best practice.
11. Network Reports - Received and endorsed reports of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson, Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) Chairperson and the CPA Small Branches Chairperson.
12. Future CPC Conferences - Encouraged CPA Branches to put forward offers to host future Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences in 2025 and subsequent years.
13. Election of new Regional Representatives on the CPA Executive Committee - Elected, on valid nomination from CPA Regions, the prescribed number of incoming Regional Representatives on the CPA Executive Committee for each Region of the Association as submitted by CPA Regions.

Delegates also looked ahead to the next Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference – the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) – to be hosted by the CPA New South Wales Branch and Parliament of New South Wales in November 2024.

66th CPC Presentations

At the conclusion of the 66th CPC, the CPA Vice-Chairperson, Hon. Osei Kyei-Mensah Bonsu, MP (on behalf of the CPA President and Speaker of Ghana) was presented with a commemorative silver salver to thank the CPA Ghana Branch for their hosting of the conference. In addition, outgoing CPA Executive Committee Members were presented with commemorative plaques, traditionally donated by the CPA Malaysia Branch, to thank them for their service to the CPA.

Inaugural Lifaka Lecture highlights key role for Commonwealth Parliamentarians in promoting global education

The inaugural CPA Emilia Monjowa Lifaka Lecture highlighted the key role of Commonwealth Parliamentarians in global education. The Lifaka Lecture took place in the margins of the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Accra, Ghana and was attended by delegates and the Ghanaian diplomatic community.

The CPA Lifaka Lecture has been established in memory of Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, the late Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee and Deputy Speaker of Cameroon. Hon. Monjowa Lifaka was a passionate champion of the CPA and served as CPA Chairperson from November 2017 until her untimely death in April 2021. The CPA Lifaka Lecture is intended to provide a fitting tribute to her work.



The keynote address was given by Betty Abeng, Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth Education Trust, who spoke about the importance of education for all Commonwealth citizens and the key objective of achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 on ensuring “*inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*”. About 260 million children are not in school across the world, undermining efforts to achieve the 17 SDGs. She also highlighted the importance of effective communication skills for all children including the ability to read, understand and connect as this aids a young person’s journey in life. Her organization exists to curb ‘learning poverty’ by providing teacher support programmes to increase literacy among children below the age of ten.

The response came from Dr Leslie Casey-Hayford, Director of Associates for Change, West Africa and a Ghana-based international education development expert who highlighted the importance of a life of service and civic duty for all. The Commonwealth has a youthful population – with 60% of its citizens aged under 30 - which holds the potential to shape and secure fair, peaceful and sustainable globalisation and leadership. She concluded that the Lifaka Lecture effectively conveyed the idea that serving constituencies and communities requires dedication, commitment and advocacy for the concerns of the people.

The Chairperson of the Lecture, Hon. Mary Muyali Boya, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon welcomed the Lifaka Lecture as a fitting tribute to Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka and the session ended with a vote of thanks by Hon. Peter Nortsu-Kotoe, MP from Ghana.

The inaugural CPA Lifaka Lecture was also supported by the International Parliamentary Network for Education (IPNEd).

Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year Awards 2023 announced in Ghana

The Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year 2023 Awards have been announced at the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Accra, Ghana. The 2023 Awards were presented by Hon. Kate Doust, MLC, from the Parliament of Western Australia, who was the recipient of the first CPA Parliamentarian of the Year Award last year, and the CPA Chairperson, Hon. Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP (United Kingdom).



- Hon. Nelly Mutti, MP, Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia has been announced as the recipient of the 2023 Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year Award in recognition of her parliamentary service and her commitment to transparency in parliamentary processes. This nomination also emphasised the Speaker's contributions to upholding the rule of law and her dedication to ensuring the citizens of Zambia have quick and easy access to information. The Speaker is also a strong supporter of the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Zambia, in the CPA Africa Region and in the wider CPA membership.
- Hon. Ntombi Lentheng Mekgwe, MPL, Speaker of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature in South Africa was awarded the 2023 Parliamentary Equality and Diversity Award in recognition of her parliamentary service and her commitment to gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women's empowerment, the work of the Multi-Party Women's Caucus in Gauteng, and the sector Parliaments (including youth, LGBTQIA+, elderly citizens and women).
- Hon. Myrna Driedger, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in Canada was awarded the 2023 Parliamentarian Life-time Achievement Award in recognition of her parliamentary service and her commitment and contributions to the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network, particularly in the CPA Canada Region, as well as her work encouraging young women and girls to become active in politics and her 25 years of promoting the education of youth around the work of Parliament.
- Hon. Tanya August-Hanson, MLC, Member of the Isle of Man Legislative Council was awarded the 2023 New Parliamentarian Award in recognition of her contributions to promoting parliamentary democracy and engagement amongst young people, her role as an ambassador for the CPA, and her pioneering of the concept of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between Parliamentarians and the Government.

Awards are open to nominees who are current Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's unique membership includes almost 180 national, state, provincial and territorial Legislatures. The next awards will be open for nominees in 2024. The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg said: *"The Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year Awards aligns to our strategic objective of promoting the values of the Commonwealth, parliamentary democracy and sustainable development to a wide audience. Through these annual awards, the CPA will recognise and highlight the invaluable contributions that Parliamentarians are making to their local communities and both nationally and internationally within the Commonwealth."*

Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities highlight local projects

The Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network, led by the CPwD Chairperson, Hon. Laura Kanushu, MP (Uganda), highlighted the work of local projects helping persons with disabilities during the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Ghana. The CPwD Chairperson, accompanied by the Regional Champions of the network and the CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg, went to the Accra Rehabilitation Centre in the West Ridge area of Ghana's capital city, Accra, to see their work. The Centre runs vocational courses in visual art, leatherwork, masonry, carpentry, cosmetology, tailoring, needle work and rural craft to provide people with a variety of disabilities with employable skills.



The CPwD Chairperson said: *“Grassroots OPDs [organisations for persons with disabilities] are of vital importance to empowering people with disabilities globally. Any Parliamentarian, with or without a disability, must engage with such bodies to develop their understanding of how they can represent the disability community of their jurisdiction. This activity provided an excellent opportunity for the CPwD’s board to learn more about the work of OPDs in the 66th CPC’s host jurisdiction in Ghana and we will take back what we have learnt for our work as Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth.”*

The Regional Champions of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network also met during the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Accra. During the meeting, the CPwD Regional Champions set the agenda for the network for the year ahead. At the meeting, the Secretariat reported on its recent CPwD activities, such as its Capital Investment Fund supporting Parliaments to become more accessible, and the Champions were briefed on what projects are planned for 2024, such as an update to the CPA’s *Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines*.



66th COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE – WORKSHOPS:

Main conference theme: *'The Commonwealth Charter 10 years on: Values and Principles for Parliaments to Uphold'*

On day five of the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, delegates took part in eight learning and development workshops. The workshops provided a space for delegates to share their experiences as Parliamentarians and discuss issues including human rights, the separation of powers and gender quotas. Highlights included a showcase on how deepfakes can spread disinformation and a youth roundtable attended by students from universities across Ghana. Detailed reports from the workshops will be available in the next issue of *The Parliamentarian*, Journal of Commonwealth Parliaments.

The eight main conference workshops and their recommendations were as follows:

Workshop A: The threat of terrorism to statehood: the role of Parliament (CPA Ghana Branch Host Topic)

The workshop explored the threats of terrorist extremism to democracies and statehood, shedding light on the multifaceted challenges it poses across West Africa and their implications for security and stability. It further delved into the role that Parliaments must assume in combatting this menace to safeguard the security and integrity of states.

Panellists including the Ghana Minister for National Security and a Commandant from the Ghana Defence College underscored the role that Parliaments must play in combatting these threats: promoting good governance; ensuring accountability; sensitising the public through awareness campaigns and education; fostering national cohesion and unity; improving the quality of investigative mechanisms by funding security institutions; enacting laws to protect citizens; promoting collaborative endeavours between governments and civil society organisations (CSOs); allocating adequate resources to security organisations to counter terrorism; and driving accountability by ensuring efficient use of resources by security agencies.



At the end of the session, participants were of the view that:

- Parliaments should collaborate with stakeholders to improve governance architecture and ensure equitable distribution of resources; benchmark best practices for the involvement of Parliaments in combatting terrorism; perform their oversight responsibilities to ensure accountability; make appropriate legislation to combat cross-border terrorism; and address the root cause of terrorism.

Workshop B: Gender Quotas in Parliament - a means to an end? (Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians topic)

The workshop evaluated the effectiveness of gender quotas in Parliaments. Despite progress made in many areas, women's representation in Parliaments remains inadequate. Gender quotas have emerged as a promising strategy to address this disparity for an equitable distribution of power and influence.



Two Members from Bangladesh and Sierra Leone outlined the efforts in their Parliaments to achieve gender equality including constitutional amendments and proportional representation as well as some of the barrier facing women such as generational issues. The journey to achieving gender equality requires dedication, funding, legislative support and political will. The UN Women representative noted that women's representation is far from equal and intimated that there are several instances where a quota system may be passed, yet not implemented due to certain barriers. At the current rate of progress, gender parity in Parliaments would not be reached in national Legislatures before 2063 globally if further action was not taken.

The recommendation was unanimously endorsed by workshop delegates that:

- Parliaments of the Commonwealth, with less than 30% women Members, should implement a percentage of gender quotas through legislative means or via political party candidate selections.

Workshop C: What does sustainable trade and economic development mean for small jurisdictions? (CPA Small Branches topic)

The workshop explored what sustainable trade and economic development means for small jurisdictions as well as the challenges and opportunities they face in promoting sustainable economic growth through international trade. It was discussed that most small jurisdictions vary in size and population thereby presenting unique challenges faced by each in terms of global markets, infrastructure, market access and regulatory barriers.



Members from Jamaica, Malta, The Gambia and Fiji outlined their experiences of sustainable trade and development and emphasised that economic development requires a multi-faceted approach that meets the needs of small jurisdictions and finding innovative ways to use their

strength and ability to be agile. The concept of sustainable trade was also seen as a critical feature in minimizing poverty in small jurisdictions, and sometimes smaller jurisdictions are barred from entering international markets due low volumes of production.

Lowering trade barriers to promote economic development, promoting gender equality, an active private sector, developing transportation links of small jurisdictions to the international market, balancing economic growth and environmental diversification as well as social equity were also discussed as some of the factors to promote and improve sustainable trade and economic development.

The delegates at the workshop unanimously endorsed that:

- The Commonwealth's Parliaments in the smallest jurisdictions should collaborate to promote fair and sustainable international trade.

Workshop D: Youth Roundtable: Role of the Commonwealth in international security and peacebuilding (Youth topic)

This workshop took the form of a youth roundtable with youth participants invited from a number of Ghanaian youth organisations. The workshop focused on how the Commonwealth can address the issue of international security and peacebuilding and Members of Parliament from Australia Federal, the United Kingdom and Guyana provided insight into their experiences. With 1.2 billion of the world's population made up of youth aged between 15 and 24 years, it was acknowledged that the youth are often ignored in decision-making and policy formulation, yet they bear the brunt of the effects of climate change and insecurity. It was also recognised that the growth of information technology in the world coupled with more people turning to social media platforms, many young people need more protection online and measures should be in place to tackle cyberbullying. The representative from the Ghana National Peace Council explained that Ghana has a peacebuilding mechanism that helps resolve conflict and encouraged its adoption by other countries.

During the Q&A session, many young people expressed frustration with youth unemployment levels and the sidelining of youth in decision making, however, the panellists encouraged youth participants to go through the appropriate channels for redress.

The workshop delegates unanimously endorsed the following recommendation:

- Commonwealth Parliamentarians should champion peacebuilding initiatives, actively involve youth and collaborate across the Commonwealth network, in order to bolster the Commonwealth's role in international security for a more peaceful, secure future.



Workshop E: Environmental approaches in tackling energy poverty

The workshop heard from presenters from Kenya, India Union and a UK Government agency, the Crown Agents on the implementation of clean energy and facilitating the adoption of biofuels. Commonwealth Parliamentarians have a key role to play as legislators, scrutineers and representatives to help drive this agenda.



It was outlined that India is developing policies based on five key enablers: energy availability, accessibility, affordability, sustainability and efficiency. India has developed schemes in tackling energy poverty, such as Saubhagya and Ujjwala, and boasts of the largest solar park in the world. However, the presenter from Kenya remarked that it is the responsibility of both government and citizens to tackle energy poverty. A major challenge remains the unwillingness of communities in rural areas to transition from fossil fuel to clean energy as charcoal continues to be a cheaper option. Some solutions that have been initiated are rural electrification, diversification of electricity sources, creation of a National Energy Policy, compulsory use of solar for water heating systems, and community sensitisation.

The following recommendation was endorsed unanimously by workshop delegates that:

- Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth must seek to ensure there is secure, reliable, efficient, affordable and environmentally sustainable energy provision available to all.

Workshop F: 20 Years of the Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers: Is it working?

This workshop recognised the role of the CPA in drafting the original 'Commonwealth Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers' along with other Commonwealth organisations, but also outlined that all Commonwealth jurisdictions have a role in implementing them.



Panellists from Trinidad and Tobago, Malaysia and Australia outlined how their Parliaments implement the separation of powers and the challenges that it can bring. It was recognised that during the COVID-19 pandemic, some Parliaments enacted procedures in contravention of the separation of powers. It was suggested that a Parliamentary Service Act could be introduced as had been proposed in Malaysia. The presenter from Derby University spoke about the principle of veto powers by the Executive that operates in several Commonwealth jurisdictions and whether this promotes democracy or is antithetical to it.

No recommendation was passed during the workshop.

Workshop G: The Commonwealth Charter: A Charter for all Human Rights, or just some?

The workshop deliberated how Parliamentarians and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) could promote and uphold human rights values in the Commonwealth. Discussions led by Members from KwaZulu-Natal, Turks and



Caicos Islands, Scotland, the Commonwealth Equality Network and the Ghana Human Rights and Justice Commission highlighted gender equality, protection of the rights of LGBT+ persons, capacity-building, disability and refugees' rights. CPA Members were encouraged to promote human rights legislation and policies in their respective jurisdictions. The need to respect cultural rights were, however, expressed by some participants.

The workshop, by majority, endorsed the following recommendation that:

- The Commonwealth Charter should apply to all Commonwealth citizens irrespective of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or political views and Parliaments should be actively working to promote the human rights of all.

Workshop H: E-Parliaments: An effective mechanism for intersectional diversity and equitable public engagement?

The workshop focused on how effective e-Parliaments would promote public engagement, enhance Parliaments' legitimacy, transparency and accountability, and how to best include marginalised groups. Parliamentarians from Trinidad and Tobago, New South Wales and Malaysia outlined the need for making Parliaments more accessible, particularly to persons with disabilities, and the need to mitigate the risk



involved in integrating technology into the work of Parliament. During the COVID-19 pandemic, E-Parliaments helped to enhance public engagement in parliamentary processes through digital methods. However, there continues to be a number of challenges for Parliaments regarding the best way to engage the public and in measuring and evaluating these activities. The workshop intimated that, although the role of technology is essential in promoting democracy, there are notable challenges such as the digital divide in society and data protection and privacy rights.

The workshop delegates unanimously endorsed the following recommendation:

- Parliaments should embrace their representative function, both in the diversity of its membership and through engaging with the public, including via appropriate and innovative approaches.

39th CPA SMALL BRANCHES CONFERENCE

Conference Theme: 'Mobilising Relationships and Resources for Greater Sustainability'

Following several recent natural disasters that have affected the smallest jurisdictions in the Commonwealth, Parliaments and Governments are increasingly required to prepare for different eventualities. Commonwealth Parliamentarians met at the 39th CPA Small Branches Conference to examine the unique challenges they face in mobilising resources for greater sustainability. The conference discussed strategies to meet the unique developmental needs of the CPA's smallest Legislatures through key thematic workshops that helped to build parliamentary capacity for the CPA Small Branches and create greater opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, parliamentary strengthening and cooperation across the network.



The CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Joy Burch, MLA, Speaker of the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly said: *"The CPA Small Branches Conference helps to build capacities for the small Parliaments and Legislatures of the Commonwealth and create greater and more constant opportunities for the sharing of knowledge and cooperation across the CPA network. The CPA Small Branches come together to address their common difficulties, common strengths and their shared experiences."*



In the margins of the conference, the CPA Small Branches Steering Committee met to discuss the strategic direction for the network. The CPA Small Branches Steering Committee comprises the CPA Small Branches Chairperson and nine Commonwealth Parliamentarians who represent the nine Regions of the CPA. Of the almost 180 Branches of the CPA, forty-nine Branches are classified as 'Small Branches'. The classification for CPA Small Branches

was changed by the CPA General Assembly last year to raise the population threshold to one million people. The 39th CPA Small Branches Conference took place as part of the wider 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Accra, Ghana.

CPA Small Branches Workshop A: The Impact of Population Changes on Small Jurisdictions

The workshop noted that population changes have both negative and positive impacts which pose unique and varying effects on society. Some of the positive effects of population changes in small jurisdictions are strong community cohesion, diverse cultures (which could lead to having a big diaspora) and the drive to collect real time data to strengthen economic bases. However, panellists from the Isle of Man, Anguilla, Nauru and Guernsey dwelt more on the challenges and how their governments are mitigating them. Major among the challenges was the ‘brain drain’, where young people migrate to developed countries for greener pastures, resulting in lack of labour and an increased pressure on taxes. Other adverse effects are migration due to natural disasters, pressure on educational, health and housing resources, and payment of retirement benefits.



The following recommendation was endorsed by workshop delegates:

- Parliamentarians must actively engage in crafting and implementing strategic policies to address population changes in small jurisdictions, including social, economic and environmental factors.

CPA Small Branches Workshop B: Small Parliaments Working Together: Services and Resource Sharing

The workshop focused on how small Parliaments can collaborate to share resources and services for the mutual benefit of all. It looked at potential opportunities that might exist for sharing services and resources, and the challenges involved in achieving the set goals. Discussions on potential opportunities that exist for sharing services and resources, and the role that the CPA and other entities could play in facilitating the approach were held. Panellists came from Newfoundland and Labrador, Guernsey, Jersey and Fiji.



The following recommendation was endorsed unanimously by workshop delegates:

- Where possible, small Parliaments should consider pursuing opportunities to share or pool resources and services for mutual benefit in strengthening collective parliamentary good governance.

CPA Small Branches Workshop C: Building Independent Parliaments: Ensuring Financial and Administrative Autonomy

The workshop recognised that for Parliaments to function effectively, it is important for them to be independent financially and administratively. The workshop panellists from Belize, Australian Capital Territory, the Seychelles and the CPA Secretariat noted that in order to achieve independence, there ought to be a level of separation of powers, which admittedly is more difficult under the Westminster system of Government than the Presidential system. It was observed that there is the need for collaboration, without interference, among the three arms of government to ensure the independence of Parliaments. Although Legislatures acknowledge the principle of separation of powers in practice, the financial and administrative aspects of the operations of the Legislature are still tied to the Executive. To limit this, the workshop shared ideas on some of the ways to achieve independence, which include enforcing robust Parliamentary Committees, public education and applying the *sub judice* rule.



The following recommendation was endorsed by workshop delegates:

- Parliaments must be sufficiently independent of the Executive, and have access to resources and control mechanisms to function effectively, including those outlined in the CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures.

CPA Small Branches Workshop D: Tackling Climate Change Through Environmental Impact Assessments

The workshop deliberated on how climate change affects small jurisdictions and how they can play a pivotal role in addressing the global climate crisis. The effects of climate change include increasing levels of melting sea ice, rise in sea levels and flooding. The workshop considered the use of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) as powerful tools for change. Panellists came from Australian Capital Territory, Jersey, British Virgin Islands and ASU Global Institute of Sustainability and Innovation.



Workshop delegates unanimously endorsed the recommendation that:

- Parliamentarians must ensure that Environmental Impact Assessments align with and support sustainable development goals, avoiding conflicts and promoting a harmonious approach to climate resilience in small jurisdictions.

COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP)

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians aim to further gender equality and representation in Parliaments

Women Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth have met at the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Accra, Ghana. Meetings of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network were held at the conference to discuss gender sensitisation and quotas. This was also the first CPC held since the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association introduced new measures aiming to ensure equal gender representation at its annual conference resulting in a 60/40 male/female gender ratio amongst voting delegates.



The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) is the network of women Members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Parliament and Legislatures. The CWP network provides a means of building the capacity of women elected to Parliament to be effective in their roles; improving the awareness and ability of all Parliamentarians, male and female, and encouraging them to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role - legislation, oversight and representation and helping Parliaments to become gender-sensitive institutions.



The CWP Business meeting was opened by the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Hon. Dr Zainab Gimba, MP, Member of the House of Representatives, National Assembly of Nigeria who welcomed delegates and updated on the CWP activities delivered since the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada in August 2022. The CWP Chairperson also pledged to renew the effort to increase women's representation and political participation in Parliaments across the Commonwealth.

COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP)

Delegates debated the time and format of future CWP Business meetings and conferences as well as the methods for reporting of CWP activities through the Regional Secretariats, with a motion passed by delegates containing further recommendations for the CWP Steering Committee (more time to be allocated for CWP Business meetings, CWP reports be distributed to Members prior to Business meetings, themes are developed to guide annual activities of the CWP, and new Members receive an induction into the CWP).



The CWP Steering Committee met in Ghana representing the seven of the nine CPA Regions: Africa; Asia; Australia; British Isles and the Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic; and Pacific.



The CWP Steering Committee elected Hon. Kate Doust, MLC from the Parliament of Western Australia as the new CWP Vice-Chairperson for a one-year term and agreed on the establishment of a new Subcommittee to examine a future work programme for the network.

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COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP)

UN Women event: 'Ending Discrimination in Law: Celebrating the Gains'

In the margins of the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, delegates also attended a CWP and UN Women co-hosted event that highlighted the support available to achieve gender-responsive legislation and advance state commitments around global goals pertaining to gender equality. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination and they are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes. Parliamentarians and experts gave key highlights from legal assessments across the Commonwealth, concrete actions that have been taken and the elements of successful reform efforts.



The CWP President (2023), Hon. Patricia Appiagyei, MP from the Parliament of Ghana spoke to delegates about her experience as a legislator and stated that *“It is an indictable fact that women across the globe face various forms of discrimination in their everyday activities. Millions of women worldwide are denied access to education, health services, and economic opportunities due to their gender. According to the United Nations, women around the world between the ages of 24 and 35 are 25% more likely than men to live in extreme poverty. This unequal treatment of people based on their gender has serious lifelong and generational effects.”*

Panellists also included Hon. Donatille Mukabalisa, Speaker of the Parliament of Rwanda and Ms Marsha Caddle, MP, House of Assembly of Barbados. The Speaker of Rwanda spoke about gender discrimination and reflected on the impact of the Rwanda 1994 genocide on women such as exclusion from education, employment and property rights. Rwanda has since implemented gender mainstreaming policies, strategies and programmes resulting in the amendment of a number of discriminatory laws and the introduction of laws that promote gender equality. The Member from Barbados shared an update on significant reforms involving government, the private sector and labour to collaborate in the enactment of legislation and workshops on gender-based violence.

Dr Beatrice Duncan, Senior Policy Advisor, Rule of Law and Maureen Shonge, Policy Specialist WPP from UN Women spoke about the recent trends in discriminatory laws, successful reforms and how they were achieved.

57th GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY-OF-CLERKS-AT-THE-TABLE (SoCATT) IN COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTS

The 57th Meeting of the Society-of-Clerks-at-the-Table (SoCATT) took place in the margins of the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Accra, Ghana. The meeting brought together Parliamentary Clerks and parliamentary staff from Commonwealth Parliaments to discuss the latest legislative practices and to share best practice.



The Chair of the meeting was Mr Cyril Kwabena Oteng Nsiah, Clerk to the Parliament of Ghana and CPA Ghana Branch Secretary.

Presentations were made during the two-day meeting by a number of different Parliamentary Clerks on subjects including:

- Parliamentary system and developments in the Parliament of Ghana
- Parliamentary diplomacy in the Canadian Federal Parliament
- Ministerial accountability and privilege in the United Kingdom Parliament
- Cybersecurity in an E-Parliament: A case study from Western Cape
- Gender sensitive audits in the Scottish Parliament
- Ratification of treaties and conventions: National Assembly of Kenya
- Developments in procedure and practice in Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly
- Delegated Legislation: The shifting balance of power between the Legislature and the Executive in the United Kingdom
- Benchmarking against the CPA's Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr Ed Beale, SoCATT Secretary (United Kingdom) outlined a number of SoCATT reports and decisions, and proposals for the agenda for the 58th SoCATT General Meeting were agreed.

Please note that SoCATT has a separate administration to the CPA.
Visit http://www.societyofclerks.org/SCAT_Home.asp for further details.

-ENDS-



Issued by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Headquarters Secretariat on 11 October 2023 following the conclusion of the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC).

This document contains the Conference Concluding Statement for the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) which took place in Accra, Ghana from 30 September to 6 October 2023, hosted by the Parliament of Ghana and the CPA Ghana Branch. The statement is also available at the CPA website: www.cpahq.org.

To catch up on all of the news from the 66th CPC – please visit the CPA website and social media hashtag #66CPC.

Images from the events of the 66th CPC are available at the CPA's Flickr page.
Image credits: Parliament of Ghana/CPA Headquarters Secretariat/CPA Branches.

A full round up of all of the conference news and workshop reports from the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Ghana will appear in *The Parliamentarian: Conference Issue* out in November 2023. *The Parliamentarian, the Journal of Commonwealth Parliaments* is available to Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff through their CPA Branch Secretaries (print and digital editions) or to individuals and organisations by subscription. Email editor@cpahq.org for details about *The Parliamentarian*.

With thanks to the Rapporteurs team from the Parliament of Ghana for assistance in compiling these reports.

Please contact the CPA Headquarters Secretariat if you require any further information about the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

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66th COMMONWEALTH
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CONFERENCE CONCLUDING STATEMENT

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