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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

***Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the***

57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary  
Conference, London, United Kingdom

21 to 27 July 2011

October 2011  
Canberra

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# Contents

- Membership of the Delegation..... v
  
- 1 Introduction ..... 1**
  - Acknowledgements ..... 2
  - Canberra ..... 2
  - London ..... 2
  
- 2 57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference..... 3**
  - Introduction ..... 3
  - Business of the Conference ..... 4
  - Opening ceremonies and first plenary ..... 4
  - Plenary and workshop sessions ..... 5
  - General Assembly ..... 6
  - Executive Committee ..... 7
  - Working Party..... 7
  - Small Branches Conference..... 7
  - Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Meeting ..... 7
  - Meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments ..... 8
  - Concluding sessions ..... 8
  - Concluding comment ..... 9

3 Reform of the CPA .....11

Appendices



# Membership of the Delegation

Leader      Senator the Hon John Hogg

Member      Hon Teresa Gambaro

Mr Bernard Wright

Delegation Secretary



## Introduction

- 1.1 This is the report of the Commonwealth delegation that attended the 57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held in London from 21 to 27 July 2011. The conference was hosted by the United Kingdom Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).
- 1.2 This year the delegation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference did not involve a bilateral visit to a nearby country in the week or weeks preceding or following the conference as has occurred in recent years. Nevertheless, the leader of the delegation, the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon John Hogg, undertook an official visit to Morocco before the conference. This is covered in a separate report.
- 1.3 In 2009, the Executive of the CPA established a Working Party to inquire into and advise on reform of the association. The President of the Senate, Senator Hogg, has represented the Australian region on the Working Party. Concern about the governance and direction of the association together with the lack of progress in addressing genuine and much needed reform led to a decision by the Commonwealth of Australia Branch at its annual general meeting on 24 November 2010 to reduce its level of participation in the conference from five members to two. These matters are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this report. A meeting of the Working Party, along with the meetings of the Executive Committee, of which Senator Hogg is a member, was held in the lead-up to the conference, and a further meeting of the Executive Committee was held immediately after the conference concluded.

## Acknowledgements

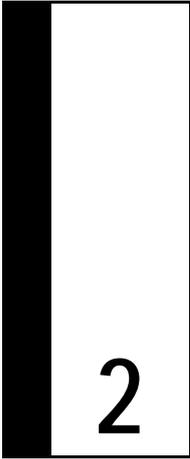
- 1.4 The delegation wishes to express its appreciation of the efforts of all those who contributed to its visit. In particular, the delegation acknowledges the following contributions:

### Canberra

- 1.5 The delegation received written briefing material from staff of the Parliamentary Library prior to its departure. The delegation records its thanks for this material.
- 1.6 The delegation also thanks the staff of the International and Community Relations Office, in particular Mr Andres Lomp and Ms Onu Palm, for their assistance prior to departure.

### London

- 1.7 The delegation thanks HE Mr John Dauth AO, LVO, High Commissioner, Australian High Commission London, and his staff, for his assistance during the delegation's visit.
- 1.8 The delegation wishes to thank the Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, the Rt Hon John Bercow MP and the members and staff of the CPA United Kingdom Branch for hosting the conference. It also wishes to record its appreciation of the work of the many staff of the British Parliament, led by the Clerk of the House of Commons, Sir Malcolm Jack, who contributed so significantly to the success of conference.



## 57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

### Introduction

- 2.1 The 57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was held in London, United Kingdom, from 21 to 27 July 2011. The conference was hosted by the Parliament of the United Kingdom and was chaired by the Rt Hon John Bercow, Speaker of the House of Commons (UK) and President of the CPA.
- 2.2 The CPA is a voluntary association of Commonwealth parliamentarians. The aims of the CPA are to promote knowledge and understanding about parliamentary democracy, especially good governance, transparency and accountability and respect for the rule of law, and individual rights and freedoms, irrespective of gender, race, religion or culture.
- 2.3 The CPA is composed of branches formed in parliaments and legislatures in Commonwealth countries which subscribe to parliamentary democracy. There are over 170 branches at national, state, provincial and territory levels in 53 of 54 Commonwealth countries, representing approximately 17,000 members. Branches are grouped, geographically into nine regions: Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean; Americas and Atlantic; Pacific; and South-East Asia.
- 2.4 Some 600 delegates, observers and officials from member parliaments attended the 57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. The Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the CPA was represented by a parliamentary delegation comprising Senator the Hon John Hogg,

President of the Senate, and the Hon Teresa Gambaro MP. In addition, a number of delegates attended from Australian State and Territory parliaments.

- 2.5 The theme of the conference was 'Reinforcing Democracy'.
- 2.6 The conference encompassed a number of components and associated activities. These were:
- meetings of regional groups of the CPA
  - the 31st Small Branches Conference of members from small legislatures
  - meetings of the Executive Committee of the CPA
  - a meeting of the Working Party on CPA reform
  - a plenary session and eight workshops
  - the annual General Assembly of the CPA
  - meetings of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians
  - the 48<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table, comprising parliamentary officials.

## **Business of the Conference**

### **Opening ceremonies and first plenary**

- 2.7 The official opening of the conference took place on Monday, 25 July 2011.
- 2.8 The opening ceremony and first plenary were held in Westminster Hall in the Palace of Westminster. This was particularly appropriate for the Centennial Conference, as the inaugural meeting had been held within the Palace of Westminster in 1911, and also because Westminster Hall itself had witnessed almost one thousand years of British parliamentary and constitutional history.
- 2.9 The ceremony began when the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Rt Hon John Bercow MP, President of the Association, welcomed the delegates and introduced Her Royal Highness, Princess Anne, the Princess Royal.
- 2.10 The Princess Royal read a message from Her Majesty The Queen welcoming the delegates from the many parliaments represented. Her Majesty recognised the conference theme 'Reinforcing Democracy'.

Princess Anne supported the CPA mandate to work towards strengthening both nascent and existing democracies. She told delegates that 'Reinforcing Democracy' was a very good title but that there were no easy answers and that maintaining strong democracies was hard work. The Princess Royal concluded her remarks by declaring the conference open.

- 2.11 The Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, the Hon Dato' Mohd. Shafie bin Haji Apdal MP, offered a vote of thanks to the Princess Royal (*and see* paragraph 3.9 below). Following that, the Lord Speaker, Baroness Hayman, President of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, made a concluding address.
- 2.12 After the opening ceremony, the first plenary session commenced with an address by the Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General, Ms Mmasekgoa Misire-Mwamba. She spoke of the evolution of debate and governance within Commonwealth nations, of the ideal of learning from one another and gaining from the mutual exchange of ideas, experience and insights, of the Commonwealth's 'twin pillars' of democracy and development and of members' responsibilities to the people, saying 'it is they who should be foremost in our thoughts'. She spoke of a 'circle of service and responsibility' that begins and ends with the electorate. She observed that one thousand years after the construction of the Great Hall of Westminster – architecturally designed for great consultations – the Commonwealth itself continued to stand on similar pillars of cooperation, respect and accountability. The text of her speech is at Appendix A.
- 2.13 Ms Misire-Mwamba's address was followed by a speech by the CPA Secretary-General, Dr William Shija.

## Plenary and workshop sessions

- 2.14 The principal business part of the conference comprised eight workshops and a plenary session with the following topics:
- Workshop A: The Commonwealth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
  - Workshop B: Parliament and Reforms – Raising the Benchmarks
  - Workshop C: Commonwealth Initiatives in Handling Migration Issues
  - Workshop D: Enhancing Good Governance and Accountability: Improving Standards of Probity and Performance

- Workshop E: The World Economy and Obstacles facing the Commonwealth
- Workshop F: Women as Agents of Change: Where Are We Now? The Way Forward
- Workshop G: Technological Threats to International, National and Personal Security
- Workshop H: The Role of Parliamentarians in Advancing the Transfer of Agricultural Technology and Research
- Plenary session: Reinforcing Democracy; Commonwealth Parliaments: Progress and Challenges

2.15 Members of the Commonwealth of Australia Branch delegation attended plenary and workshop sessions and participated in discussions. The Hon Teresa Gambaro was lead speaker in workshop session C - Commonwealth Initiatives in Handling Migration Issues, which was attended by over eighty delegates. Ms Gambaro introduced the session by explaining that true citizenship and participation were vital for the integration of migrants, whether long-term or temporary. She told the session that over 46 per cent of Australia's population was either born overseas themselves, or at least one of their parents was, and said that Australia valued and celebrated the contribution of its migrants. Ms Gambaro explained the way the migration (skilled and family migrants) and the humanitarian (refugees) programs worked. Ms Gambaro highlighted Australia's commitment to settlement services, which aimed to achieve social cohesion and good citizenship. She emphasised that it was not just work skills that were vital, but also cultural support, language training and housing and social security support. She also noted that programs sought to settle some migrants in rural and regional areas. A summary report of the workshop and final plenary session is at Appendix B.

## General Assembly

2.16 The 57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference included the annual General Assembly of Association, which was held on 27 July 2011. The main business of the General Assembly was the consideration and adoption of the Association's annual report, financial statements and budget estimates, and the election of office bearers.

## Executive Committee

2.17 The Executive Committee met on 23, 24 and 27 July. The Australian region was represented at these meetings by the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon John Hogg, the Hon Michael Polley (meetings on 23 and 24 July, representing the Tasmanian CPA Branch), the Hon John Mickel MP (meetings on 23 and 24 July, representing the Queensland CPA Branch), Ms Barbara Stone MP (meeting on 27 July, representing the Queensland CPA Branch) and the Hon Barry House MLC (meeting on 27 July, representing the Western Australia CPA Branch) – see Chapter 3 below on reform of the CPA.

## Working Party

2.18 As mentioned, in 2009 the Executive Committee appointed a Working Party to inquire into reform of the association. Senator the Hon John Hogg was the Australian Region's representative on the Working Party. The Working Party is further discussed in Chapter 3.

## Small Branches Conference

2.19 The 31<sup>st</sup> Small Branches Conference was held on 23 and 24 July. It was opened by the British Secretary of State for International Development, the Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP. Members discussed migration issues, and ways in which threats to the stability of small democracies, in the form of piracy, drug trafficking and terrorism, could be countered.

2.20 Australian region delegates Ms Meredith Hunter MLA, the Hon Robin Adams JP MLA, Ms Lynne Walker MLA, and the Hon Kerry Finch MLC, representing branches in the Australian Capital Territory, Norfolk Island, the Northern Territory and Tasmania, respectively, attended the conference. A summary report of the conference proceedings is at Appendix C.

## Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Meeting

2.21 The Hon Teresa Gambaro attended the meeting of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians which took place during the conference. The principal theme for the gender debate was 'Being an effective agent of change: pre-requisites and modus'. A summary report of the meeting is at Appendix D. The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee met on 22 July. During the CWP business meeting on 26 July, which preceded the gender discussion, progress reports were received on

regional CWP activities and on recent and future activities. Ms Lisa Baker MLA, the Western Australia CPA Branch, formally represented the Australian Region at both meetings.

## Meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments

- 2.22 The 48<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table was held on 26 and 27 July concurrently with sessions of the conference. The delegation secretary, Mr Bernard Wright, Clerk of the House of Representatives, attended the meeting and presented a paper on the experience gained with Australia's (Federal) Parliamentary Privileges Act.
- 2.23 The society aims to assist members to exercise their professional duties in their respective legislatures through the exchange of information, views and experience.

## Concluding sessions

- 2.24 The final proceedings of the conference were the General Assembly, and the Centennial Plenary. During the General Assembly, it was necessary to hold an election for the office of Chairman of the Executive Committee. The Rt Hon Sir Alan Haselhurst MP, of the UK Branch, was the successful candidate. The delegation sees this office as crucial in the reform of the Association – and see Chapter 3 below.
- 2.25 Speaking after his election Sir Alan said that it was important to acknowledge that “things are not entirely happy” in the association. He pledged an era of greater unity, communications and good governance. Sir Alan said “I will listen, I will consult, I will be accessible and strive at all times for a consensual experience ... it is frequently said we are a family. This is a family I want to strengthen and see expand.” Sir Alan said he would work to improve the participation of women and to provide swift responses when human rights issues or abuses were identified.
- 2.26 The final plenary session was on the theme of ‘Reinforcing Democracy’. Features of the session were addresses by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the Rt Hon David Cameron MP, and by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Rt Hon William Hague MP. Mr Cameron spoke strongly in support of the role of the Commonwealth in an increasingly globalised world. He told delegates that he saw the Commonwealth as “modern, mainstream, and practical” and pointed out that it was particularly relevant in a world where the superpowers were no longer dominant but where networks and friendships were critical. He

said that, with 54 nations represented, the Commonwealth was mainstream and not marginal, and that it represented one-third of the world's population and every major religion and ethnic grouping. The Australian delegation was particularly pleased to hear Mr Cameron speak of the importance of the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to be held in Perth in October. After his address Mr Cameron fielded a range of questions from the floor, and his detailed and frank replies were appreciated by delegates.

- 2.27 Mr Hague told delegates that he felt that the Commonwealth had not always received the attention it deserved from ministers. He said that the Commonwealth was to be repositioned 'back into the heart of British foreign policy'. He said that the Commonwealth could and should become one of the leading voices in the global economy, working to liberalise trade and break down barriers. Mr Hague said that during a period of transition in world affairs, greater cooperation among member states and more effective action to promote the values that bind people and improve their security were worth striving for.

## Concluding comment

- 2.28 The Australian delegation again extends its thanks to the members and staff of the UK Branch of the CPA, and the parliamentary staff who assisted so willingly, for their work in hosting the 57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and for their hard work and hospitality.
- 2.29 The delegation remains a strong advocate of genuine reform of the CPA to achieve greater transparency and accountability and improved performance. It believes that the Australian Branch will make decisions about its ongoing participation in the work of the association in light of worthwhile progress being made in reforms, realising that the future effectiveness and the credibility of the Association depend on such reforms. These matters are discussed in Chapter 3.



## Reform of the CPA

- 3.1 The Australian Commonwealth Branch has had grave concerns about the operation of the Association for a number of years. At its meeting in Tanzania in October 2009, during the 55<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, the Executive Committee agreed to establish a Working Party:

to inquire into reforms needed to ensure the CPA continues as a vital and relevant inter-parliamentary organisation as it enters its second century.<sup>1</sup>

- 3.2 It was, in our view, unfortunate, and also instructive, that despite the apparent recognition of the need for reform, the first meeting of the Working Party was then not held for eleven months. The Working Party first met on 9 September 2010 during the 56<sup>th</sup> Conference in Nairobi. At that time, Senator Hogg made a comprehensive submission to the Working Party, analysing the issues facing the association and outlining detailed proposals for reform. The full text of Senator Hogg's paper was published as an attachment to the report of the delegation to the 56<sup>th</sup> Conference at pp 58-70. Senator Hogg's proposals addressed the need for openness, transparency and accountability within the association. In particular, he argued:

- for reform of the governance structure in accordance with modern standards as far as the constitution, procedures for the operation of the association by the executive and the proper disclosure of interests, loans and advances to all employees, for the need for power to be shared amongst the regions on a rotational basis, consistent with a move to a consensus-based organisation and not one marked by bloc voting;

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1 CPA Executive Committee Document E 16 CPA 2010 Working Party – Preliminary Report, p 1.

- for a single term of appointment for the Secretary-General, with the post being filled on the basis of a regional rotation;
- for the establishment of an audit committee to ensure regular independent audits, including performance audits; and
- for reform of the annual conference to enhance its effectiveness.

3.3 A preliminary report of the Working Party was later circulated, and Working Party members were asked to consult with branches and to provide responses by 31 December 2010. The Commonwealth of Australia Branch made a detailed response, which it shared with other branches in the region. Commonwealth Branch concerns were shared by members in other branches and reflected in various ways in the responses they made to the invitation for comments.

3.4 During 2010 a further cause for serious concern emerged. At the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 2009 a decision was taken to establish an Eminent Persons Group to explore and recommend ways, in the context of promoting the Commonwealth's values and principles, that would strengthen the networks and raise the profile of the Commonwealth to ensure that it will remain relevant to the times and to people in the future. The Eminent Persons Group commenced a process of consultation, and this was naturally an important opportunity for the Association. After the event, the Branch learnt that the CPA Secretary-General had made a submission to the Eminent Persons Group without any consultation. The Branch was particularly concerned at such unilateral action by a member of the Association's staff. The submission was not considered by, let alone authorised by, the Executive Committee. The Branch considered that the action taken would have been inappropriate at any time, but that it was particularly inappropriate when a Working Party had been established to consider and advise on the future of the Association.

3.5 It was against these background events that the Commonwealth of Australia Branch reviewed its participation in the Association. At the branch annual general meeting on 24 November 2010, members reviewed the extent of the Branch's involvement in the Association at the international level and resolved to reduce the size of the delegation to the annual conference from five members to two. This decision was not taken lightly and was accompanied by a parallel decision that savings that would result from the decision should be available to support activities in the region. Further, it was resolved that if it became clear that the Association was taking seriously the issue of reform, then the

Commonwealth would review its level of affiliation with a view to reverting to previously established levels.

- 3.6 The delegation thus saw the 57<sup>th</sup> Conference as a critical one. As a centennial conference it had great symbolic importance. This symbolic importance was reinforced by the fact that the conference was held in London, where the inaugural meetings had been held in 1911. The conference was a symbolic opportunity to move the association forward to meet the challenges to democracy in the second century of its existence.
- 3.7 The delegation is pleased to be able to report that some features which had been of concern at recent conferences were not evident during the 57<sup>th</sup> conference. Plenary and workshop sessions were generally well conducted and better supported. The General Assembly was conducted in an open and business-like manner.
- 3.8 In our view, it was unfortunate that the commitment that the Working Party would make a final report in time for it to be considered during the London conference was not met. Senator Hogg had grave concerns that the momentum for reform appeared to be stalling. He attended the meeting of the Working Party on 22 July and made a statement outlining his concerns before withdrawing from the meeting, asserting that he would return when there was a desire to seriously consider reform. The delegation received some indications that Senator Hogg's actions in again setting out his concerns directly to members of the Working Party, and in putting them (again) in writing, was helpful in demonstrating the depth of concerns – concerns which the delegation believes are shared by many other members across the Commonwealth.
- 3.9 At the operational level, it appears that concerns expressed by (then) Senator the Hon Alan Ferguson, who represented Senator Hogg at a meeting of the Executive Committee in the Yukon in April, were reinforced by decisions of the Executive Committee taken in London to enforce the commitment that the association should not be allowed to budget for a deficit. As against this positive development, Senator Hogg was concerned that the Executive Committee did not support action to uphold and apply audit advice that the law of the UK required that the Association's registered number under British laws applying to charities needed to be shown on Association stationery. Senator Hogg took the view that he could not be associated with the position taken by the Executive Committee, and required that his decision be recorded in the Executive's minutes. A number of other Executive Committee delegates took the same action. A further disquieting matter was that despite decisions by both the Working Party and the Executive Committee that

the matter of changing the Association's legal status was not to be pursued, the possibility of its status being 'recast' from a charity subject to English law and regulations re-emerged during the conference. At the very beginning of the conference, in his address at the conclusion of the opening ceremony on 25 July, the outgoing Chair of the Executive Committee, the Hon Dato' Mohd. Shafie bin Haji Apdal MP, argued that the Association's status be changed to 'an internationally recognised body' and suggested that the membership be extended to non-Commonwealth jurisdictions, including states from the Middle East.

3.10 The challenges remain as they were identified when the Working Party was established in 2009. They are:

- the need to restore confidence and credibility by establishing a culture and practice of openness, transparency and accountability consistent with accepted contemporary standards;
- the adoption of a constitution and governance principles which reflect best practice, including in respect of the proper disclosure of interests and loans and advances to all employees;
- an end to bloc voting and the introduction of an open and transparent rotational system of regional representation for all positions; and
- the introduction of consensus-based decision making, reflecting a culture of consultation and agreement between all parties.

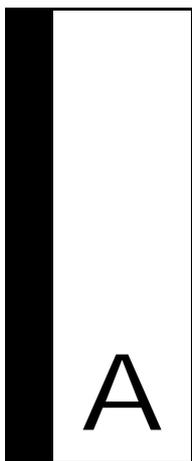
3.11 In our view, the next year will be a crucial one for the future of the Association. Members of the Executive Committee and members of the Working Party should be in no doubt about the challenges they face. These challenges must be addressed. In our view, if the efforts of Sir Alan Haselhurst as the new Chairman of the Executive Committee are supported and worthwhile reforms are made, there is great potential for the work of the Association at an international level to achieve the kind of success that has been achieved at a regional level. We have no doubt our colleagues in the Branch stand with us in being ready and willing to work with Sir Alan and other members of the executive, and in the broader membership, in meeting the challenges the Association faces.

3.12 All of the views we express in this report take into consideration the Commonwealth Parliament's enduring commitment to parliaments in the Pacific region to assist them in their efforts to improve openness, transparency and accountability in their own parliaments. Our commitments to the region will not falter, no matter what the outcome of the reform process of the peak CPA organisation might be.

John Hogg

Delegation Leader





Appendix A



## **25 July 2011 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**

**Centennial 57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference,  
Westminster Hall, London, UK**

**Address by the Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General, Mmasekgoa  
Masire-Mwamba**

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Mr Speaker, Lord Speaker, Honourable Speakers and Parliamentarians, Secretary-General Shija, distinguished guests, I am asked by the Secretary-General to convey his regret at not being able to join you. He sends his congratulations to you and wishes the conference every success.

It is an honour for me to address you, to speak on this historic occasion and in this historic place. If 100 years seems a long time in the context of the Commonwealth then assembling here at Westminster for this Centennial Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference sets everything within a far lengthier sweep of history. The millennium of history and tradition that surrounds us here tells a tale of the journey to democracy, sometimes through a process that has been gradual, at others more abrupt.

That same process, of evolving means of debate and governance, has taken place in all our Commonwealth countries. Over decades and centuries, traditions of consultation, regulation and legislation have developed. Cultural custom and local genius have given rise to a multitude of means for debate and methods of government. At times these have been shared, at others subsumed into systems adopted from elsewhere. Deep-rooted in our Commonwealth approach is the ideal of learning from one another and gaining through the mutual exchange of ideas, experience and insights.

This building in which we gather is surely the world's greatest monument to the development of parliamentary democracy: Westminster Hall, still being used by us today, nearly a thousand years after it was built, for its original purpose - as a place of consultation and discussion. Surrounded by such tremendous physical architecture, our minds are drawn to the symbolic architecture of the Commonwealth with its twin pillars of democracy and development. The strength of the structure lies in our core principles of mutual respect, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy, responsiveness, consensus and common action.

Our farsighted predecessors, the founders of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, saw within the ambit of the Commonwealth family both the need for common action to promote good practice in our parliaments, and the potential for mutual respect and inclusiveness by fostering good relations between parliamentarians. Freedom and friendship are themes that, since 1911, have characterised the work of the CPA. Even now, in a world that has been brought closer through advances in technology and cyberspace, there still remains the danger of alienation and fragmentation - and the Commonwealth is the antidote.

At conferences such as this, at ministerial meetings, and at Heads of Government summits, we find that wisdom can be distilled and commitment to our common values reinvigorated. We all gain from the strengths of others. Rwanda is the newest member of the Commonwealth family, and I believe the newest member of the CPA too. Yet the Rwandan parliament is the first where women MPs outnumber men. That is something to celebrate, particularly this year, as we focus on the current Commonwealth theme, *Women as Agents of Change*, drawing attention to the role of women and girls in accelerating social, economic and political advancement.

The capability of women to fulfill their potential as equal members of society, and of girls to see their future unconstrained by limits of inhibiting or repressive social custom, or discrimination on grounds of gender, is a Commonwealth goal. It is apt that a good deal of attention is being given to these vital issues in the course of this conference. There is a workshop tomorrow on the topic: *Women as Agents of Change: Where Are We Now? The Way Forward*. These are questions of concern not only to women parliamentarians, but to us all.

Distinguished delegates, by our attendance here, we are all able to express our shared Commonwealth identity, and I hope we will be lifted by that experience to find new ways of conveying to those we represent, particularly to our young people, that sense of belonging. The cross-connections and living links that are apparent in this hall, and become real through conferences such as this, need also to be made real for our citizens in every country of the Commonwealth. One way of doing this will be through our new global web portal, *Commonwealth Connects*, that goes live later this year enabling all in the Commonwealth, wherever they call home, to be informed, to communicate, and to transact.

The drive for reforms is given impetus in part by the fact that we now meet as a Commonwealth that is significantly larger than a generation ago, let alone 100 years ago. We have grown to an association of 54 members encompassing over two billion citizens. Particularly in this centennial conference of Commonwealth parliamentarians, it is good to be reminded of our responsibilities towards our people. It is in their cause and on their behalf that our parliaments legislate, and for their welfare, opportunities and security that our Commonwealth strives. The poor, the marginalised, the vulnerable, those whose voices are weak: it is they who should be foremost in our thoughts.

When leaders gather for CHOGM in Perth later this year they will receive recommendations from the Eminent Persons Group. If adopted, these proposals will have a considerable impact on how we do things in the Commonwealth, and for what end. Members of the EPG have deliberated long and hard on how the Commonwealth can make the greatest impact and maximise its contribution to promoting the values we cherish. Reinforcing democracy can be expected to be uppermost in the minds of leaders at CHOGM in October.

Democracy has been called government by discussion, and defining features of the Commonwealth's democratic way are: its commitment to consultation and consensus, and its reliance on co-operation rather than coercion. If consultation is the lifeblood of the Commonwealth, it is the lifeblood of democracy too and parliament is where its heart beats. Among the most visible ways in which the Commonwealth makes a difference is through providing a framework of support and assistance for credible electoral processes, for parliamentarians, and for parliamentary staff. *Enhancing Good Governance and Accountability: Improving Standards of Probity and Performance* is the theme for another of tomorrow's workshops.

Distinguished delegates, if democratic processes are to be seen as carrying conviction, as free and fair, constant attention needs to be paid to the environment in which elections take place, to the professionalism of government and parliamentary officials who serve elected representatives, and to the probity of elected representatives and other members of legislatures who serve our citizens. For democracy to flourish a level playing field and adherence to rule of law is imperative. At their summit in Trinidad & Tobago in 2009, Commonwealth leaders endorsed the establishment of a network of national election management bodies to increase collaboration and boost the standards of these institutions through peer support and ambitious benchmarking. The network was launched in Ghana last year and heads of the election management bodies agreed to meet every two years to review progress in creating and maintaining a Commonwealth 'gold standard'.

The Latimer House Principles speak of "ethical governance" and yet still, too often, during our observation of elections, we see the negative influence of money. Even in countries where sections of the population are struggling to survive or to make a decent living, vast amounts of money - sometimes including public funds - are spent on political campaigns with incumbents using the resources of the state for personal or party gain. Such abuse can be overcome if party funding is transparent and accountable. Where there are disputes over campaign finance or the conduct of elections, these must be dealt with expeditiously. Too often in the Commonwealth we see electoral disputes not resolved in a timely manner, sometimes not even resolved by the time of the next election. Establishing systems of electoral justice system that deal with grievances fairly and without delay is an area where both the CPA and the Secretariat can support reforms and improvements. Building confidence of citizens in the value of their vote must be a priority.

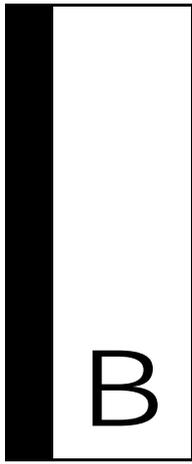
Distinguished delegates, most of you have campaigned hard to win your positions – first within your party and then for election to the legislature. We must fight with the same commitment and determination for the welfare of those we represent. This means defending democracy, promoting development, and upholding the rule of law, embracing tolerance, respect and understanding, and ensuring access to health and education, and a special concern for our women and youth. Over the years, the CPA has worked very effectively to encourage and support its members in Commonwealth Parliaments on improving committee structures, budgetary accountability and

many other areas that help Parliaments to play their full and expected roles in advancing peace, security and prosperity. We, at the Commonwealth Secretariat, work closely with Commonwealth Parliamentary Association on regional *Government and Opposition Workshops* bringing together members from all parties represented in parliament to discuss how ruling, main opposition and minority parties can develop norms and work together constructively towards good governance. We are consciously strengthening our capacity-building work on legislative drafting.

Political parties represented in parliament need to see themselves as partners in the development of democratic culture and process. It is important that we in the Commonwealth speak out and ensure that the rights of political parties and independents are protected. The freedoms of association, assembly and expression are at the heart of the democratic values we champion. Reinforcing democracy means we must understand the broader context of personal freedom and public debate. It means strengthening civil society, nurturing free and diverse media, embedding the role of national human rights commissions, and valuing the contributions made by young people and minorities.

Distinguished delegates, 2011 is a significant year in the history of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. It will also be remembered as the year of the Arab Spring when we saw an outpouring of the yearning for democratic accountability, for legitimate representation, and for human rights. This reawakening alerts us to the duty parliamentarians have to embed respect for human rights in legislation and national institutions. Where parliament fails to respect human rights, the people withdraw respect for parliament. Most of you depend for your legitimacy on credible electoral processes. Your mandate comes from the people via the ballot box. Governments derive their authority through being accountable to parliament and by maintaining the confidence of parliament; it is this that gives them their legitimacy. It is a circle of service and responsibility that begins and ends with the electorate, with the people of the Commonwealth.

Ladies and gentlemen, our shared Commonwealth values are our guiding beacon: values of peace and security; tolerance, respect and understanding; the separation of powers; freedom of expression and the rule of law. As this hall echoed the early rudimentary calls for freedom and justice in the eleventh century, and as Commonwealth Parliamentarians have carried the torch for liberty under the law and parliamentary representation since 1911, let us press ahead today, working on that great aspiration for the twenty-first century, and for the rising generations, to whom we pass on the flame.



Appendix B





**57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference  
London, United Kingdom  
21 – 28 July 2011**

## **Reinforcing Democracy**

# **Summary Statement**

Significant reforms must be made so the Commonwealth becomes a more active international organization, Parliament's domination by the executive is reduced and its public reputation improved and better global and domestic policies are developed on climate change, migration, technology and other issues, recommends a high-level group of Commonwealth Parliamentarians.

Parliamentarians attending the 57<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and associated meetings called for the Commonwealth and its member governments to take a world leadership role in promoting the values of good democratic governance and equitable development. The conference, hosted by the Parliament of the United Kingdom from 21 to 28 July, was composed of 600 Members and officials of Parliaments and Legislatures from more than 140 Commonwealth nations, states, provinces and territories. They listed parliamentary reform and strengthening the Commonwealth as an international institution as top priorities for immediate action and said greater use of the Commonwealth's parliamentary, governmental and other networks will help to identify and implement effective measures to raise standards of governance throughout the world.

Arguing that the Commonwealth and Parliament are very valuable institutions, the MPs called for Commonwealth co-operation to: mitigate the effects of climate change, increase the accountability of governments and Commonwealth institutions, curb cyber threats, improve access to technology and especially biotechnology, implement effective migration controls to benefit all societies, enhance the status of women, expand trade opportunities, enforce the rule of law, protect small states and involve citizens, especially young people, in governance. Both institutions must be more effective in countering abuses of democracy and human rights and in promoting globally and domestically the Commonwealth's fundamental values of democracy, freedom, equality and sustainable development for all.

The meeting in London, chaired by Rt Hon. John Bercow, MP, Speaker of the U.K. House of Commons and 2011 President of the CPA, included the Small Branches Conference on 23 and 24 July for Parliamentarians from jurisdictions with populations of up to 500,000 and a meeting of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians on 26 July.

Summary Statements containing the conclusions of all three conferences follow below.

**57<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth  
Parliamentary Conference  
26 – 27 July 2011**

## **Reinforcing Democracy**

### **Workshop A: The Commonwealth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The workshop concluded the Commonwealth should reform itself to play a more active role in setting internationally trade and climate change policies and in improving standards of democratic governance and accountability both of member states and of the organization.

In trade, it was argued that the Commonwealth should embrace trade engagements within partner states because there are many similarities in legal frameworks, political institutions and even business practices. The Commonwealth should be used not only as a network of 54 states but as a vehicle to access markets in China and elsewhere.

In climate change, it was agreed that the Commonwealth should do more to tackle the real threat posed by climate change as Members expressed concern about the severe impact they warned it will have on food production and standards of living. If countries do not act now, they will have to spend more in future to tackle the severe effects than they would spend if action is taken now. Participants were apprised of the fact that 32 islands vulnerable to sea level rise and the deterioration of water quality are in the Commonwealth.

In Commonwealth reform, Members called on member governments to recognize that the organization is the second largest political network after the United Nations and individual national interests should be modified for the benefit of the larger community. They recalled that the Commonwealth used to be the focus for democracy and liberation; but countries now prioritize other partnerships at the expense of the Commonwealth.

There should be an index of democratic compliance to assess how member countries are performing. The eviction of countries which perform poorly in the area of good governance should be explored and a Commonwealth Development Fund should be established so developed countries can assist developing ones to make the Commonwealth more relevant.

There was a strong consensus that there should be greater clarity on practical help available to member states and that clear outcomes and methods of holding the organization to account should be developed.

### **Workshop B: Parliament and Reforms – Raising the Benchmarks**

Participants at the workshop were unanimous in their agreement that parliamentary reform is necessary and timely to re-assert the supremacy of Parliament over the executive. Parliaments and their Members must have the political will to reduce executive domination of Parliament by such measures as strengthening committee scrutiny of executive actions, acting to curb corruption and extending scrutiny to areas of governance that executives strive to keep to themselves. Matters such as foreign treaties and quasi-governmental bodies were among areas sited for greater parliamentary oversight.

Steps should be taken to make Parliaments and their Members fully accountable and accessible to citizens, and to ensure they represent their people appropriately, particularly by improving the representation of women.

Members noted that the CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures provide a guide to ways to improve the effectiveness of Parliament; but ultimately it was agreed that Members themselves must summon up the political will and act in a collaborative way across party lines to carry out the reforms needed to make their Parliaments more effective.

## **Workshop C: Commonwealth Initiatives in Handling Migration Issues**

The challenge facing the Commonwealth is one of scale, urgency and connectedness. The Commonwealth was said to be uniquely placed to take a leadership role through international and bilateral agreements and by demonstrating best practice. There was agreement that migration can be an asset; but there is an urgent need for it to be properly managed rather than policed. It was also stressed that all Parliamentarians and governments have a responsibility to address negative public perceptions on migration using accurate evidence so that the benefits of migration for all countries and people are understood.

All participants acknowledged that migration is a complex and challenging global issue affecting all Commonwealth countries and requiring a united approach. Migration is predicted to grow in the future due to globalization, improved communication, changing demographics and a changing climate.

The beneficial contributions of migrants to economic and social development in all countries were highlighted: destination countries are provided with needed skills and labour, particularly vital in countries with ageing populations, whilst origin countries may receive valuable remittances and foreign exchange. In addition, cultural exchange can enrich the societies on both sides.

However, speakers also emphasized the challenges facing different countries within the Commonwealth: the impact of large-scale migration and emigration on small countries; the integration of temporary migrants and potential stresses on society's values and resources in large receiving countries; the impact on development of a "brain-drain" of skilled people, and the reliance of some economies on emigration and remittances.

The exploitation of vulnerable migrants was also raised, particularly where migrants are unaware of their rights or are taken advantage of by unscrupulous agents or human traffickers. The negative impacts of forced migration were especially emphasized.

## **Workshop D: Enhancing Good Governance and Accountability: Improving Standards of Probity and Performance**

The workshop supported governance reforms to improve the accountability of the executive to Parliament, upgrade Parliament's links with its citizens and raise standards of probity.

To improve accountability, the workshop suggested that there should be a mechanism to cull out government assurances and to follow them up through a parliamentary assurance committee. The committee system should be strengthened and the public outreach programme of Parliament should be further expanded and its effectiveness improved so that there is no disconnect between the public and Parliament. Being an MP should be a fulltime

job with adequate remuneration in order to serve the public and to secure good governance. Parliaments should have adequate infrastructures and high-quality human resource skills and capacities to improve the performance of Parliamentarians.

In order to improve the accountability of Members to the public, legislation enabling voters to recall their Members was also suggested. Parliament should be modernized to take advantage of information communication technology.

On the aspect of improving standards of probity, the workshop agreed that legislation should require Members to disclose their financial assets and business interests publicly. There should be a code of conduct for all Members to follow to ensure integrity, objectivity, openness, honesty and accountability. There should be institutions available to examine alleged violations of the code. A register of interest should be made available at the earliest opportunity after an election and there should be periodic declarations obtained from Members about incomes received over and above the parliamentary remuneration.

## **Workshop E: The World Economy and Obstacles Facing the Commonwealth**

The international economic and financial crisis has highlighted economic interdependency and the need for better economic governance and an effective regulation regime at a global level. Since 2008, the crisis has brought a fall in global demand and consequently a downturn in economic activity which has adversely affected small and developing economies that depend heavily on exports in the absence of a large internal market.

The barriers that exist in international trade, by way of tariffs, quotas and similar measures, which have been the subject of various conferences of the World Trade Organization, prevent access to the large markets of developed countries for the goods produced by developing countries. Within the Commonwealth, the developed countries ought to assist developing countries by facilitating trade because developing countries need trade and not aid which translates into dependency.

Commonwealth developing countries often suffer from a lack of access to financial resources and a sound legal system that protects investment. Development is also often undermined by corrupt practices and inadequate education and health services. Another obstacle to economic development is intercommunal discrimination on the basis of race, creed, religion, status and other such factors which put entire sections of society at a disadvantage in terms of education, job opportunities, income and social mobility. The remedy for intercommunal discrimination is that there should be concrete measures established to achieve social justice.

## **Workshop F: Women as Agents of Change: Where Are We Now? The Way Forward**

Women need to see themselves as individuals capable of creating change. They need to develop strategies to encourage and foster interest in politics, strategies that may well transcend partisan political lines. The work undertaken by non-governmental organizations was considered a prime means by which women can develop their talents and expertise in the political arena. Also of note were the effectiveness of Youth Parliaments in introducing women to politics and its processes.

Women have established or own nearly one quarter of the new businesses in the world. Such businesses have become the sparkplugs of new economic growth. Efforts to promote the

developments of small business may well broaden women's access to economic decision-making and power. Women are a high return on investment, yielding great dividends.

Women represent one half of the world's population and are becoming less dependent on the male-dominated power structure to act on their demands.

Despite some advancement of women in politics, a multitude of barriers continue to exist. These include: a lack of economic security; racial, cultural and religious norms, as well as competing priorities. Moreover, once these obstacles are overcome for women to find their respective places within the political arena, they are confronted by challenges from within political parties in an environment dominated by men.

## **Workshop G: Technological Threats to International, National and Personal Security**

Technological advances have had clear beneficial impacts both in a societal and financial sense. However, the huge progress made in recent times has led to the emergence of new threats. The most prominent threat is that posed by developments in information technology.

Cyber threats have a wide range of implications, from personal information security through to cyber espionage perpetrated against nation states and even disruptive attacks on national infrastructure. There was agreement that education on personal security is necessary, especially when individuals are not aware that many internet resources offer functionality at the expense of privacy. Legislation is also necessary on information security, an area where keeping abreast with developments in technology is problematic.

The difficulty in attributing blame over attacks and bringing perpetrators to justice represents a considerable challenge. Discussion leaders said that policing agencies require further funding and that countries should establish security agencies responsible to assess and address emerging threats. International communication and collaboration are vital to address cyber threats as they do not respect geographical or political borders. The CPA is well placed to assist in programmes on cyber threats and other areas such as biotechnology.

The use of the internet as a tool for dissent was also covered. The "Arab Spring" has shown that information and communication technologies are a social enabler. In contrast, the Wiki-leaks episode and subsequent attacks by so called "hacktivists" demonstrates how the internet also provides a means of dissent that could be deemed illegal. Government responses to Wiki-leaks have also shown how governments can attempt to keep information out of the public domain. Although participants and speakers agreed that governments have a duty to maintain secrecy over certain information, there were differing views on where the balance between security and openness should be found.

## **Workshop H: The Role of Parliamentarians in Advancing the Transfer of Agricultural Technology and Research**

The importance of investment into agricultural research was highlighted as a means for nations to become more domestically self-sufficient and achieve a comfortable level of food safety. Although a great deal of research has already been done, much of this work has not been communicated to the global population. Research should be made available to all countries to enhance domestic crop yields and increase local sustainability.

There was concern expressed from developing countries that much research is held in the Western world and can only be accessed at a high price. The issue of the “brain drain” was also raised. The workshop noted that scientific researchers are rarely responsible for implementing new technology in the field; entrepreneurs therefore need to be encouraged to implement advances to transfer new technology from the laboratory to the field.

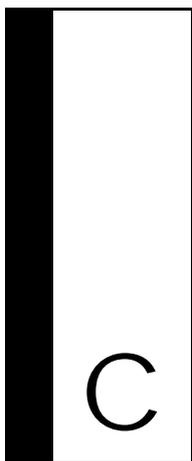
## **Final Plenary: Commonwealth Parliaments: Progress and Challenges**

The Commonwealth must be strengthened to enhance its global effectiveness in promoting good democratic performance, respect for the rule of law and joint international action in such policy areas as climate change mitigation, agreed speakers at the final plenary session.

Looking ahead to the Eminent Persons Group report on the future of the organization which is to be presented to Commonwealth Heads of Government at their October meeting in Perth, Australia, Members called for the organization to become a modern network of likeminded nations promoting the values for which the Commonwealth stands, including good parliamentary democratic governance, the rule of law and equitable development for all.

As an organization representative of nearly one-third of the world’s population spread over all regions, it is well placed to become a vocal global advocate for best practices not just in governance and in opposing oppression and racism but also in dealing with issues as diverse as climate change, trade, sustainable development, the empowerment of women, the involvement of young people in governance and social development and the protection of small states.

At the parliamentary level, member nations must share their experiences to help all Parliaments and Legislatures to reform in accordance with the highest benchmarks of good governance, argued Members.



Appendix C



# 31st Small Branches Conference

23 and 24 July 2011

## **1<sup>st</sup> Plenary: Commonwealth Initiatives in Handling Migration Issues**

Careful immigration controls to Commonwealth small countries through work permits to fill skilled and unskilled labour shortages has potential to stimulate economic growth while not degrading the quality of life and the environment, delegates agreed as they noted that controlled migration is clearly beneficial.

Delegates found cross-border migration is usually driven by the power of money and social and economic factors in both originating and recipient countries. Remittance money from migrant workers can improve living standards significantly. Targeted development aid and education programmes in originating countries were offered as positive ways of assistance.

Some concern was expressed about illegal immigration, especially in the Caribbean. Another sentiment offered on migration controls was that careful attention is needed to monitor economic conditions in small countries. Housing/rental shortages, population density and pressure on infrastructure can lead to resistance to work permit migrants.

Commonwealth Heads of Government, the Ramphal Centre and other bodies have been looking at these various issues. There was consensus that the full report of this session should be forwarded those institutions.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary: Countering Threats to the Stability of Small Democracies: Piracy, Drug Trafficking, Terrorism**

Drug trafficking, terrorism and piracy present a significant and growing threat to small democracies, concurred delegates attending this plenary session. A deliberative and cohesive strategy is necessary to counter this threat and it must be collaboratively developed between small and large jurisdictions alike, with input from international organizations, if such a strategy is to be truly effective. While an ominous task, these threats must be effectively countered as they represent truly serious global issues that result in very real and significant human, economic and social costs.

The plenary heard that piracy has existed for thousands of years and in various forms. Modern piracy (particularly in the Gulf of Aden and Somalia) has become more acute as a result of long-term political instability. More effective results in countering this threat would be realized if legislation, based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, was passed in affected jurisdictions allowing for the successful prosecution of pirates.

The plenary also heard how matters of piracy, drug trafficking and terrorism can destabilize small democracies at the political, social and economic levels. The result is that these very nations, in addition to suffering a disproportionate share of negative consequences, become the unfortunate home for such illicit activities.

Collaborative efforts such as the New York Declaration of 2009, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Djibouti Code of Conduct of 2009 have resulted in success in countering piracy; but more must be done and the CPA should help to ensure that it happens.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary: Women as Agents of Change in Small Societies**

A real paradigm shift is still necessary to attract more women into politics and to empower women generally, it was emphasized by discussion leaders and delegates in this debate.

Historically, women have paved the way for women's rights and have had access to professional careers. They have been agents of many changes since time immemorial. It was recognized in the debate that globally women have been a dominant force in their communities and assumed prominent positions such as Premiers, Prime Ministers, cabinet Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, and others in respective governments. But more needs to be done to enable women to change small societies.

Priorities such as economic security, protection and safety, leadership, social inclusion and education for women are essential tools to empower women to become change agents in small societies. Equally, not only women but also men can make a difference in transforming the lives of women in society and assist them in reaching their potential, it was agreed.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Plenary: Strengthening Democracy in Small States: Youth Leadership Training, Citizen Involvement and Parliamentary Reform**

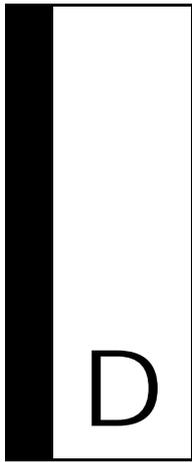
Delegates agreed that it is important to find new ways to involve citizens in the political process in addition to their ability to vote in elections.

In many small jurisdictions there is already considerable reliance on members of the community serving in a voluntary capacity on committees and other bodies. New methods of electronic interaction such as social networking sites are an effective means for citizens to mount campaigns on a variety of issues and this is particularly useful in small states with a large geographical area or in island archipelagos where it is difficult for citizens to meet in person. It was, however, agreed that it is important to take care that the views expressed vociferously by certain sections of the community are genuinely representative of general public opinion. Systematic measures of public opinion such as referenda have sometimes shown that the views expressed by some are not necessarily supported by the majority.

Many of the jurisdictions represented organize regular Youth Parliaments or have Youth Councils or similar bodies. These are not only a way to enable younger people to understand more about the political process, but they are also a valuable way for the views of young people to be expressed and taken into account by governments. Delegates recognized that many young people do not think that Parliaments are of any relevance to their day-to-day lives, so it is important to engage young people on issues that affect them.

The need for young people from many of the small states represented to travel abroad to attend school or university was seen as a barrier to young people developing an interest in political life in their home community; but this had to be set against the considerable benefit that education in another country can bring when students return home and bring knowledge and experience back with them.

Participants discussed the need for parliamentary reform, not only to improve internal parliamentary proceedings but also so that Parliaments do not become alienated from citizens. Examples were given of small states where the lack of a strong Parliament to ensure proper oversight of the executive had contributed to civil unrest, public disobedience and sometimes a coup.



Appendix D



# Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Meeting

26 July 2011

## **Gender Debate:           Being an Effective Agent of Change: Prerequisites and Modus**

Better economic empowerment measures and education is needed for Commonwealth women, agreed women Parliamentarians attending this debate. It was concluded that women need to see each other globally for their similarities and to work both together and with men, also important agents, to effect change.

Governments and Parliamentarians throughout the Commonwealth should share information on successful measures used in other countries, such as the United Kingdom's campaign against domestic violence which delegates heard has reduced the cost of domestic violence by billions of pounds. A global effort is needed to combat domestic violence everywhere.

Another success story for women noted by delegates has occurred in Rwanda since the end of the genocide in 1994. Changes effected without discrimination in that central African country have improved the participation of women in decision-making at every level.

Sharing experiences can also help to overcoming differing cultural values which are obstacles to change. Delegates noted that in the Pacific Region, for example, most governments preach democracy but its application varies because of differing cultural values. Setting up networks to help women Parliamentarians share their experiences would be beneficial in such cases, it was agreed.