



PARLIAMENT
OF AUSTRALIA

Australian Parliamentary Delegation

66th Commonwealth Parliamentary
Association Conference, Accra
1–5 October 2023

REPORT | February 2024



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Members of the Delegation

Leader of the Delegation

Senator the Hon Sue Lines
President of the Senate
Senator for Western Australia

Delegates

Ms Sharon Claydon MP
Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives
Member for Newcastle

The Hon Karen Andrews MP
Member for McPherson

Officials

Mr Jason Sherd
Delegation Secretary

Ms Alex Cullum
CPA Regional Secretary

Ms Nyat Mulugeta
Adviser to the President of the Senate

Introduction

This report provides an account of the attendance of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation, led by Senator the Hon. Sue Lines, President of the Senate, at the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Conference. The conference was held in Accra, Ghana, from 1 to 5 October 2023; the Concluding Statement is at Appendix A.

The delegation comprised the President of the Senate and two Members of the House of Representatives, listed at p. 1.

Acknowledgements

The delegation wishes to record its appreciation of the preparations made to ensure a successful visit, including briefing materials provided by the Parliamentary Library and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The delegation also thanks the staff of the International and Parliamentary Relations Office for their assistance with arrangements prior to departure and during the delegation.



The Australian Federal delegation: Senator the Hon. Sue Lines (centre), Ms Sharon Claydon MP (left), and the Hon Karen Andrews MP (right)

The delegation wishes to record its appreciation of the work of the staff of the Parliament of Ghana and the CPA Secretariat who contributed to the successful organisation of the conference. The delegation would also like to thank Her Excellency Berenice Owen-Jones, Australian High Commissioner to Ghana and

her staff for providing valuable support and briefing and for the additional visits to Australian funded projects. The High Commissioner provided opportunities for the delegation to meet with local NGOs, groups and individuals to gain an understanding of the culture in Ghana and the some of challenges that people face.

66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

The 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference (CPC) was held in Accra, Ghana from 1 to 5 October 2023. The conference was hosted by the Parliament of Ghana and the CPA Ghana Branch. The conference was chaired by the Rt Hon. Alban Bagbin MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana and President of the CPA (2022-2023).

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (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.

The CPA is composed of branches formed in parliaments and legislatures in Commonwealth countries which subscribe to parliamentary democracy. There are over 180 branches at national, state, provincial and territory levels of all 56 Commonwealth countries. Branches are grouped geographically into nine regions: Africa, Asia, Australia, British Islands and Mediterranean, Canada, Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic, Pacific, and South East Asia.

Over 600 delegates, observers and officials from member parliaments, representing 102 CPA Branches attended the 66th CPC. The Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the CPA was represented by a parliamentary delegation comprising Senator the Hon Sue Lines, President of the Senate, Ms Sharon Claydon MP, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Hon. Karen Andrews MP. In addition, a number of delegates attended from Australian State and Territory parliaments.

The theme of the 2023 conference was 'The Commonwealth Charter 10 years on: Values and Principles for Parliaments to Uphold'.

The conference encompassed a number of components and associated activities. These were:

- meetings of regional groups of the CPA
- the 38th Small Branches Conference of members from small legislatures
- meetings of the Executive Committee of the CPA
- a plenary session and eight workshops
- the annual General Assembly of the CPA
- meetings of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities networks
- the 57th General Meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table, comprising parliamentary officials.

Business of the Conference

Opening ceremony and speeches

The official opening of the conference took place on 4 October 2023, where the Rt Hon. Alban Bagbin MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana and President of the CPA (2022-2023) made welcoming remarks. CPA Chairperson Hon. Ian Liddell-Grainger MP, 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 Botchwey and Mr Stephen Twigg, Secretary-General of the CPA also made remarks.

The guest of honour at the opening, His Excellency Nana Akufo-Addo, the President of Ghana and Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, gave the opening address.

The vote of thanks was given by the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Dr Zainab Gimba, MP.

Plenary and workshop sessions

The conference featured eight workshops and a topical debate during the General Assembly covering the following topics:

- Workshop A: The threat of terrorism to statehood: the role of Parliament
- Workshop B: Gender Quotas in Parliament - a means to an end?
- Workshop C: What does sustainable trade and economic development mean for small jurisdictions?
- Workshop D: Youth Roundtable: Role of the Commonwealth in international security and peacebuilding
- Workshop E: Environmental approaches in tackling energy poverty
- Workshop F: 20 Years of the Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers: Is it working?
- Workshop G: The Commonwealth Charter: A Charter for all Human Rights, or just some?
- Workshop H: E-Parliaments: An effective mechanism for intersectional diversity and equitable public engagement?
- Topical debate: Food security and sustainability in the Commonwealth

Members of the delegation attended plenary and workshop sessions and participated in discussions. Senator the Hon Sue Lines was a panellist on Workshop F, and discussed the importance of embracing the Latimer house principles through benchmarking to reflect on the operations of parliament and achieve good democracy. Senator the Hon Sue Lines focussed on the principles of active and engaged citizens, and an inclusive and equitable society particularly for Indigenous peoples and women and girls.

“Citizens have a voice and can make changes in society so that we can work towards a society where everyone is respected and free.”

Ms Sharon Claydon MP was a panellist on Workshop D and spoke of the centrality of climate change on peace and security, the universality of human rights and the importance of policy makers engaging with and including young people, their perspectives and experiences in shaping a sustainable, inclusive and successful pathway to peace keeping and security.

While Workshop D was programmed as a Youth Roundtable, and many participants attended from several Ghanaian youth organisations, the format and lack of young people represented on the panel led to robust discussions about

better ways of including youth roundtables at future CPA conferences. The delegation supports renewed efforts by the CPA to include youth panel discussions – led by young people for young people – in future CPA conferences, noting the next opportunity being the 67th CPC in Sydney later this year.

A summary report of the workshops and final plenary session is contained in the Conference Concluding Statement at Appendix A.



President of the Senate, Senator the Hon Sue Lines, addressing a conference workshop

General Assembly

The 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference included the annual General Assembly of the Association, which was held on 5 October. Usual items of business included consideration and adoption of the Association’s annual report, financial statements and budget estimates, and the election of office bearers.

The General Assembly welcomed work undertaken to transition the CPA to a non-charitable international interparliamentary organisation.

The work of the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees was recognised by the General Assembly, and delegates endorsed reports from the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities and CPA Small Branches networks.

Future CPA meetings and conferences were also considered, with the 67th CPC to be hosted by New South Wales in November 2024.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the CPA met on 1, 2 and 5 October. The Australian region was represented at these meetings by the Hon Ben Franklin MLC (NSW CPA Branch – Vice-President of the CPA), Senator the Hon Sue Lines (representing the Commonwealth of Australia CPA Branch), the Hon Mark Shelton (representing the Tasmania CPA branch), Ms Kim Richards MP (representing the Queensland CPA branch), and Ms Joy Burch MLA (representing ACT CPA branch and Small Branches Chairperson).

Small Branches Conference

The CPA Small Branches network comprises 49 Commonwealth jurisdictions with populations under 1 million.

‘Mobilising relationships and resources for greater sustainability’ was the theme of the 39th CPA Small Branches Conference, held on 1 and 2 October. Ms Joy Burch MLA, Speaker of the ACT Legislative Assembly is the CPA Small Branches Chairperson.

Four workshops were held, exploring themes such as the impact of population changes on small jurisdictions, sharing services and resources, financial and administrative autonomy, and tackling climate change.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Meeting

All delegates attended the business meeting of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) on 2 October. Delegates discussed methods for reporting of CWP activities. The Hon. Kate Doust MLC, Parliament of Western Australia, was elected as CWP Vice-Chairperson for a one-year term.

Conclusion

The delegation regarded the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference as a valuable opportunity to consolidate the relationships between Commonwealth Parliaments and to renew their commitment to principles of the Commonwealth Charter. Delegates felt they were able to contribute effectively to the conference through participation in workshops and the general assembly.

The delegation greatly appreciated the informal program organised by the staff of the Australian High Commission. The visits to the YEVU Foundation Workshop and BASICS International provided an opportunity for the delegation to learn more about the ties between Australia and Ghana.

The delegation again wishes to thank the Members of the CPA Ghana branch and staff of the Parliament of Ghana for their diligent efforts in hosting the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

Senator the Hon Sue Lines
President of the Senate
Delegation Leader

February 2024

Appendix A: Conference Concluding Statement

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.

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-Grainger, 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 Botchwey. 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:

- 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.
- Annual Report - Noted the CPA Annual Report for the reporting period of January to December 2022.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- Internal Auditors - Agreed to reappoint internal auditors Sayer Vincent Auditors.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- Future CPC Conferences - Encouraged CPA Branches to put forward offers to host future Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences in 2025 and subsequent years.
- 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

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

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 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.

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.

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.