



59TH COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

28 August – 6 September 2013

**THEME: “Effective Solutions to Commonwealth Developmental
Challenges”**

CONFERENCE REPORT

CPA Wales Delegation

Joyce Watson AM (Branch Chair)

Simon Thomas AM

Ann Jones AM

Adrian Crompton (Director of Assembly Business)

Al Davies Delegation Secretary



Photo: CPA Wales Branch delegates Joyce Watson AM, Simon Thomas AM and Ann Jones AM photographed in the Sandton Convention Centre.

Background

1. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) holds Plenary Conferences once per year. The devolved legislatures of the UK, all of which have active CPA Branches, were invited to send one delegate as well as the opportunity to send observers. The CPA Wales Branch was invited to fulfil the role of Secretary to the Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales Branches. This role is rotational and accordingly Northern Ireland will provide the Secretary in 2014 and Scotland in 2015.
2. All three Branches were also represented at the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) meeting at the Johannesburg conference, which runs in parallel with the main Conference and was held on 4-5 September. Adrian Crompton (Wales), Trevor Reaney (Northern Ireland) and Andrew Mylne (Scotland) attended this conference. A copy of the meeting agenda and other papers presented can be accessed [here](#) (please note

that some of the papers are password protected for access by registered SOCATT members).

3. The theme for this year's Plenary Conference was "**Effective Solutions to Commonwealth Developmental Challenges**". The format for the conference, which is determined by the International Executive Committee of the CPA in partnership with the host branch, involved an Opening Ceremony, Regional Group Meeting, 8 Themed Workshops, 2 specific Plenary Sessions and a meeting of the General Assembly of the CPA. Some networking functions were also held outside of the main sessions.
4. The Conference was attended by some 550 parliamentarians and officials from across all 9 Regions of the CPA. The conference provided an opportunity for parliamentarians across the Commonwealth to learn about the strengths and challenges of democratic governance and to discuss and exchange best practices.
5. A copy of the full conference programme can be obtained at the link below:

<http://cpc2013.parliament.gov.za/pages/programme/conference-programme>

or by clicking [here](#)
6. Please note that passage at the end of the CWP, Workshop and Final Plenary sections of this report are extracts taken from the relevant section of the official post conference Concluding Statement.
7. Selected photographs from the conference can be accessed from the following link:

http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/content.php?Category_ID=483

Thursday 29 August 2013

8. Patricia Ferguson MSP, as the recently elected British Isles and Mediterranean (BIM) Regional Representative, attended the meeting of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Committee.

Sunday 1 September 2013

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarian Conference

9. Joyce Watson AM and Ann Jones AM attended the CWP Conference meeting which included an opening ceremony as well as four formal sessions.

10. Joyce Watson AM noted that it became apparent during the conference that there was a “queuing system” in operation where delegates were expected to “know the rules of engagement” and hand a request- to-speak in advance and that the clerks on hand were not particularly open to help those who wanted to speak in the debates without advanced notification. Joyce Watson AM was eventually fortunate enough to be called to speak, but had to insist on this. Joyce spoke about how statistical information could be used positively and that anyone wishing to assist women should be welcomed into the forum.
11. Ann Jones AM commented that the CWP conference was like attending a very large committee meeting with its purpose to receive report-backs on the previous year’s events; however as there were clearly wide differences among CPA Regions in terms of activities then this became quite futile and only served to frustrate those who have managed to progress issues, either formally or informally.

12. **Session 1: Increasing women’s political participation: leadership, electoral systems and campaign funding**

Progress with promoting women’s political participation should be continuously monitored and assessed according to participants from the session. All Commonwealth Women Parliamentarian (CWP) Chapters needed to embrace the CWP Strategic Plan and advocate for increased women’s political participation in their respective countries. Although the CWP had made great strides in improving the numbers in terms of women representation, it took time to change societal attitudes and women had to persevere in their quest for gender equality.

The CWP, working together with the CPA, had a critical role to play in this regard, as it aimed to increase female representation in Parliaments and work towards the mainstreaming of gender considerations in all CPA activities and programmes. The CPA and CWP should involve the leadership of political parties in their projects and activities to create awareness about women’s issues and to promote the cascading of women’s rights to the political structures of all countries.

Recommendations from Session 1 were:

- Conscientisation of society from family upbringing and gender role clarification to adaptation of political will and the acceptance of women as equal partners.
- Considering the significant role women play in legislatures and Commonwealth statistics on women’s parliamentary representation, strategies should be considered to increase women’s political participation in politics.

- Effective leadership requires women's political participation and implementing strategies to encourage more women representatives with improved constitutional changes to accommodate for this.

All recommendations from Session 1 were endorsed by participants.

Session 2: Women Parliamentarians and social media

Sensitising women to the role of social media was paramount as it further enhanced the capacity of Parliamentarians in reaching their constituencies. However, as much as social media could be considered a useful public participation tool, it also had the potential to be used as a tool for abuse.

Participants spoke about the importance of copyright and other related policy issues, as well as the internet still largely biased towards the privileged minority.

Additionally, the nexus between women, business, social media and affordability had to be strengthened to the benefit of women, whereby adequate monitoring methods need to be established.

Recommendations from Session 2 were:

- Social media has brought the world to the fingertips of women parliamentarians and the challenge may no longer be accessibility and affordability.
- The beneficial use of the powerful social media channel should be facilitated by promoting its harmless applications as a popular means of information dissemination.
- Parliaments in the Commonwealth should enhance capacity of their Members in the use of social media to boost constituency outreach.
- Parliaments must ensure that Parliamentarians are reassured with the knowledge and equipment to actively and effectively engage with social media.

All recommendations from Session 2 were endorsed aside from the first one.

Session 3: Informal economy and entrepreneurship

Although legal, semi-legal, and illegal entrepreneurship still exists, democracy and transformation must allow access to land in order to safeguard the enterprising spirit of women globally.

Women must further receive adequate training to ensure their ability to maximise profits whilst remaining economically independent. A push towards infrastructure development must be coupled with projects in the informal sector which are principally run by women but mostly governed by micro-lenders. These micro-lenders must be regulated by financial instruments that are in line with the promotion

of an interest free informal sector development.

This should translate into the formalisation of the economy, whereby the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund need to show more visibility in these ideals.

Recommendations from Session 3 were:

- Although women entrepreneurs within the informal sector can help to alleviate poverty, they need to formalise their activities to avail themselves to social protection measures.
- Advocating legislation that promotes access to capital, assets and markets, legislate credit that supports people (interest rates) especially women. National Credit Acts and Micro-finances.

All recommendations from Session 3 were endorsed.

Session 4: Women, poverty and homelessness

Women's right to equality, economy and dignity are guaranteed by international conventions and constitute the national laws in many Commonwealth countries. However, the increasing rate of poverty and lack of shelter (homelessness) compromises women's access to basic human rights.

A large number of women are suffering from the burden of extreme property, where some are extremely vulnerable to injury or death as a result of among others, domestic violence, breakdown of family relationships and gender-based violence.

However, the majority of women who tried to be entrepreneurs failed to succeed due to a lack of education and skills, low social status and the lack of role models in their areas of activity. As a result more women become vulnerable and victims of poverty and homelessness.

Recommendations from Session 4 were:

- The distinct of poverty and homelessness experienced by women must be a priority for action by women Parliamentarians in the CPA and Commonwealth governments.
- The post-2015 global development agenda must address women's access to resources and opportunities, including land and equal pay to enable women to become economic citizens.

All recommendations from Session 4 were endorsed.

Monday 2 September 2013

Official Opening Ceremony

13. The Opening Ceremony took place on the morning of 2 September in the Santon Convention Centre.
14. Please refer to the links below for key points and verbatim accounts of speeches at the Official Opening Ceremony by:

President of the 59th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference,
Honourable **Mninwa Johannes Mahlangu**

http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/content.php?Item_ID=4140

And His Excellency the President of the Republic of South Africa and
Vice-Patron of the CPA: **President Jacob Zuma**:

http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/content.php?Item_ID=4228

British Islands and Mediterranean Regional meeting

15. In the afternoon, CPA Wales delegates attended the British Islands and Mediterranean Regional (BIMR) meeting. A copy of the Agenda for that meeting is attached at **Annex A**.
16. The meeting was Chaired by Dr Pambos Papageorgiou MP (CPA Cyprus Branch) who was accompanied by BIMR regional representatives, CPA Chair Rt. Hon Sir Alan Haselhurst MP, Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP, Patricia Ferguson MSP, Deputy Mike O'Hara and the Regional Secretary Andrew Tuggey DL.

CPA Status

17. Sir Alan Haselhurst MP gave an update on the on-going issue of the CPA's status and said that that the matter was far from being resolved. Despite efforts to seek an acceptable compromise status for the Association which was neither Diplomatic nor Charitable, Sir Alan stated that the African Regions of the CPA seemed determined to pursue Diplomatic status for the Association; and were not deterred by the consequences of the CPA losing its Charitable status. This included the possibility of having to move its HQ away from the present secretariat offices in London.
18. Sir Alan noted that there had been accusations from the African ExCo Representatives that it was only our own (BIM) Region which was opposed to the Association gaining diplomatic status; however this was simply untrue with other Branches in several different Regions having expressed opposition to this.

Internal Audit

19. Delegates were informed that both David Broom and Andrew Imlach had both now left the CPA Secretariat as Directors of Finance & Administration and Communications respectively. Concern was expressed over the controversial nature of the recruitment to fill these very senior positions with accounts that the Secretary General was in the process of appointing two new members of staff without having gone through appropriate recruitment processes. Delegates discussed that it might be appropriate for the Region to write to the SG to express its concern over this matter, which it considered reflected poor internal employment practices within this CPA Secretariat.
20. Sir Alan also notified the Region that the SG had written, without any consultation, to the Kenya County Assemblies to invite them to join the CPA- all of which had accepted. This threw up a number of questions including the status of the relationships with Kenya's Federal and Provincial Branches and also possible implications on other Small Branches etc.
21. On the more general issue of progress in persuading for the need of the CPA to implement internal audit measures, Deputy Mike O'Hara suggested that the debate on this matter had initially been lost at the ExCo level due to a general lack of understanding of what Internal Audit was and a perceived threat by the scrutiny that this would entail.
22. Despite concern over these matters there was optimism in moving forward with the CPA's recently approved business plan noted as a positive development.

CWP

23. BIMR CWP Steering Committee Chair, Patricia Ferguson MSP, also noted the positive development of the CPA's business plan in relation to the CWP with the plan making specific reference to encouraging its work.
24. It was noted to be disappointing that there had been no formal opportunity for Women within the Region to hear addresses and participate in a Q&A session with the two CWP Chair candidates at this year's conference, and whether this could be addressed in time for the 2016 CWP election.
25. It was agreed that the Region would write to the CPA Secretariat to request a more formal structure and clerking support to both the CWP and the Small Branches Conferences within the CPC.

Future Conferences

26. Ann Jones AM, on behalf of the CPA Wales Branch, confirmed that next year's BIMR would take place in the Senedd in Cardiff Bay between 27-

30 May and that the Branch very much looked forward to welcoming delegates to Wales.

27. The 2015 and 2016 BIMR conferences would be hosted by the CPA Cyprus and Jersey Branches respectively. There were at present no further offers to host conferences from 2017 onwards.
28. As part of EU-Commonwealth Activities and Issues, CPA Malta raised the matter of illegal immigration and asked that this be highlighted on the EU agenda; sentiments echoed by the CPA Cyprus Branch.

Dates of Next BIMR Meetings:

29. The Dates of the next BIMR AGM would take place at the 44th Regional Conference in Cardiff in May of next year and a meeting of the Region at the 60th CPC in Yaoundé, Cameroon.
30. A formal Minute of the BIMR meeting will be circulated by the CPA UK/BIMR Secretary in due course.

Opening Plenary

31. Dr William Shija, Secretary General of the CPA and Hon. Kamallesh Sharma, Secretary General of the Commonwealth, addressed the opening plenary.
32. The Secretary General welcomed all delegates to the conference and wished, on behalf of all within the CPC, to send his best wishes to Mr Mandela.
33. The Secretary General's address also made reference to:
 - The new Commonwealth Charter and how it needed to be used to reaffirm the Commonwealth's core values of tolerance and respect.
 - The CPA's 2015-17 Business Plan which would allow the Secretariat to deliver its Strategy
 - The success of recent CPA Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP) conferences in promoting and nurturing young talent as the future leaders of the Commonwealth.
 - The important role of the CPA in promoting Women in Democracy and the CWP would now benefit from additional funding.
34. The SG expressed disappointment and concern over the lack of bids to host the 2015 CPC or any following next year's conference in Cameroon.
35. The Commonwealth Secretary Mr Kamallesh Sharma's address focussed on the importance of the "Respect for Diversity" and made reference to

Article 2 of the Commonwealth Charter committing to equality without discrimination on any grounds. Mr Sharma spoke of the Commonwealth as a unique global family with an enduring relationship. He said that democracy was enhanced when economic growth benefitted all and left no one behind.

Tuesday 3 September 2013

36. Delegates attended various official Conference Tours organised by the host Branch.

Wednesday 4 September

Business Meeting of the CWP and Election of the CWP Chairperson

37. Joyce Watson AM and Ann Jones AM attended the meeting of the CWP.
38. This year's Conference included the election of a new CWP Chair and there were 2 candidates for this position:
 - i. The Hon. Rebecca Kadaga (Uganda)
 - ii. Lisa Baker MLA (Western Australia)

Rebecca Kadaga was elected to serve a 3 year term from 2013-16.

39. Ann Jones AM noted that the process for electing the new CWP Chair appeared to be undertaken without any formal opportunity to meet the nominees, though Women of the BIMR Region had been afforded the chance to meet them informally before the ballot was conducted.
40. Ann Jones AM added that the process was open to challenge. It appeared that delegates who clearly had not filled in the correct registration sought to have the electoral roll altered and there were several challenges, additions, removals and substitutions to the list before the ballot was finally conducted. This, Ann commented, should have been clearly sorted out before papers were sent out to delegates and not on the morning of the event.
41. Branch Chair Joyce Watson AM said that the conference had been valuable in learning about the situation of Women elsewhere and it was clear that Women had a long way to go to gain equality in a number of Commonwealth countries with an important role for the CPA / CWP to facilitate this.

42. The CPA Wales Branch would like to offer congratulations to Patricia Ferguson MSP for her election to the position of the CWP Vice-Chair.

Workshops

43. There were 8 separate workshops, a summary of which are noted below. Official Data papers presented at the workshops (as well as at CWP sessions) can be accessed [here](#).
44. Some delegates noted disappointment with the Workshops and the way in which they had been organised. Issues highlighted included:
 - i) Due to the overrunning of the business meeting of the CWP, very few women were able to attend the first of the workshop sessions.
 - ii) In some of the workshops there was no opportunity for an open Q&A session or engagement with the panellists as so many delegates had pre requested the right to ask questions.

Simon Thomas AM commented that there were few speakers of real note, which would perhaps have been acceptable if the workshops had been genuine workshops but they were too large and dominated by people who had come prepared to make highly political, but often incoherent and rambling, statements. These were clearly read into the record for the benefit of their home parliaments but to the detriment of the conference. This was not only allowed but in one workshop positively encouraged. He noted that for future consideration, the CPA Wales Branch may need also table written statements to be included in conference record.

Workshop A: Land access and ownership: progress and challenges experienced by rural communities in accessing land. What could be the role and intervention of Parliamentarians?

The role of women and traditional leaders was acknowledged in accessing land, as was the balance between economic efficiency, social justice and the sub-division of land. Pre- and post-settlement support, training, credit, market access, equipment, pricing strategy, infrastructure and land tenure security were important factors to helping rural communities achieve this.

In some communities, land is an integral part of individual and collective identity. Land allocated for food should be protected to minimize the risk of conflict.

Participants cited solutions to progressing land reform in South Africa, and these included: using land as collateral; engaging traditional

leaders; and classifying co operatives as legal entities.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- Governments must understand the needs of rural communities by creating effective platforms for discussion and Parliamentarians must pass responsive legislation to correct imbalances.
- Communities needing access to land are largely poor and marginalized, mostly women, which raises the need for Parliament to engage in regular outreach programmes to rural communities.

While the first recommendation from the Workshop was endorsed, the second was noted by participants.

Workshop B: Should there be parliamentary intervention in the informal economy and entrepreneurship sectors?

Parliamentary intervention in the informal economy and entrepreneurship sectors is a necessity. With laws being in place, an integrated approach for sustainable businesses should be implemented where the market and not the individual enterprise is the point of departure. A people-centred framework, in which the market system is constituted by people, along with working through organizations that represent their aligned interest, should be initiated. The framework should recognize three different operational levels, namely: the micro, the macro and the meta level.

Globalisation and economic liberalisation at the turn of the millennium saw the informal economy emerge as an expansive feature of the contemporary global economy. It impacted mostly on women as they are the majority in the informal sector. Parliamentarians therefore have to play an effective role taking account of the difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs in this sector. This could be achieved through legislative and policy measures that equip women-led entrepreneurship with socio-economic protection and enhance the limited bargaining power.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- As cannabis has gained acceptance as a very effective drug for many medical conditions, should Parliament legislate strict conditions under which it can be grown for export?
- Parliament may effectuate change in informal economy sector dynamic through legislative and policy measures to equip women-led entrepreneurship with socio-economic protection, enhancing limited bargaining power.
- Forge closer linkages between Parliament, civil society, and the

private sector in order to facilitate the promotion of women entrepreneurship in an integrated approach.

All three recommendations from the Workshop were noted.

Workshop C: The challenges of attaining the Millennium Development Goals

There was general agreement from the speakers that progress had been made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but in hindsight there was more work to be done. Progress had been slow on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. It was emphasised that the introduction of the quota system had helped in certain countries to fast forward progress and there had since been tremendous improvement in this regard. A challenge still remained with regard to funding and ensuring that there was proper equality and not just numbers.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- People everywhere need to be conscious of their responsibilities and should press governments and international developmental partners to augment, not deduct, resources dedicated to the MDG effort.
- Parliamentarians must ensure all interventions are framed in the context of national development strategies that define appropriate actions to ensure the long-term sustainability of results.
- That the challenges in meeting the MDGs by 2015 show why Parliamentarians must play a central role in ensuring a robust post-2015 development environment.
- There is a need for the Research and Development budget to be prioritised towards a comprehensive human development strategy.

All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Workshop D: Inequitable resource-sharing: a threat to democratic governance

Many challenges emerged threatening democratic governance when access to revenue generated from the exploitation of resources was not equitably shared. Parliamentarians therefore had to ensure that transparency, accountability; knowledge-sharing, good governance and effective leadership were the principles by which a nation managed its resource wealth.

Policies had to be developed to ensure that resource wealth benefited resource owners. Resource extractive industries have to operate with consideration for social and ecological issues, while legislation has to

address corruption issues.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- The CPA should continue to build the capacity of Parliamentarians for effective and responsive representation to mitigate the effect of inequitable distribution of resources.
- Natural resource extraction lies at the core of economic and social development, so Parliamentarians must address the critical issue of inequitable sharing of resource wealth.
- “People-centric” must be the core of Parliamentarians who must lead the political will to transform the democratic fundamentals of their nations without fear or favour.
- Ensure transparency to foster proper natural resource revenue use through clearly defined responsibilities, an open budget process, public availability of information and assurances of integrity

All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Workshop E: Role of Parliamentarians in transfer of technology and research to boost agricultural productivity

Parliaments have to ensure that technology and the knowledge available from research and development is appropriately disseminated and implemented to increase sustainable agricultural production. Appropriate policies benefiting farmers have to be developed and implemented, ensuring that the existing infrastructure and capacity safeguards food security. Parliaments must be at the forefront of debates regarding the ethics of food production and the implications of new technology, and research and development in this regard.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- Parliament may ensure the value of democratic governance, rooted with meaningful coordination and understanding amongst Legislature, bureaucracy and implementing agencies to foster agriculture development process.
- Parliamentarians must encourage the creation of collaboratively funded research and development organizations and promote new technology through specialist commercialization units that work directly with farmers.
- National Agriculture Committees should investigate with companies such as Microsoft, Apple and Vodafone how their Digital Revolution can most effectively promote our Green Revolution.

All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Workshop F: Governing democratically in a tech-empowered world: deepening partnerships between Parliaments and Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations (PMOs)

The speakers discussed the use of technology in the dissemination of information to the public and the role played by Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations (PMO) in this regard. While there was scepticism around the protection of information bills being passed in many countries, the adoption of the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness by all PMOs with regard to the setting of benchmarks and standards was considered a step in the right direction in monitoring the work of Parliaments. The role of PMOs should also cascade down to state Legislatures in order to increase their role of increasing public participation and dissemination of information. Public education around the role of Parliaments is a crucial component and technology could be employed to assist.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- Democratic governance has assumed global significance roles; Parliaments and Parliament Monitoring Organisations play complementary roles in governance processes. ICT should provide an interface for such processes.
- Enhancing public participation and education about Parliament involves more than using technology to provide information; Parliaments must ensure information is explained and put into context.
- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association endorses the principles of the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness and should develop recommended benchmarks for democratic parliamentary conduct.
- The role of Parliamentary Monitoring Organisations should be enhanced to make Parliamentarians, especially young Parliamentarians, performance up to mark and make the Parliament Committees effective.

All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Workshop G: Separation of powers and good governance

Participants made reference to the origins and development of the doctrine and the importance of good governance which stemmed from the World Bank. Discussions centred on the differences between developed and developing countries, those with written and unwritten constitutions and in particular the difficulties experienced by small states regarding the implementation of the doctrine.

It was suggested that if Legislatures wanted to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, they needed to be financially and administratively independent. Parliamentarians were also advised to view the Civil Servant as their friend, recognize their skills and treat them with respect.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- The concepts of the separation of powers and good governance must take into account the need for rapid political, social and economic development.
- Parliamentarians must be able to operate independently of the Executive through scrutiny mechanisms that are invested with significant powers and provided with adequate resources.
- Commonwealth Parliaments should ensure the promotion of awareness of the Latimer House Principles and enact legislation to preserve Judicial Independence and Judicial Accountability.
- Radical constitutional reform is necessary to ensure the successful existence of the doctrine of the separation of powers and by extension, continued good governance.

All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Simon Thomas AM, who attended and contributed towards this workshop, stated:

“My contribution to this workshop consisted mainly of setting out the importance of independent research support for members not in the executive, both in terms of scrutiny of government and good legislation.

Experience of others represented was very mixed, but the example of NAW, with our research service; committee support etc. was well received.

I emphasised:

- The support for non-executive/government members should not only be independent but also under purview of parliamentarians. I gave the example of the Assembly Commission as completely independent of government and the ability of members to commission or request information free from government influence. Certainly not true in all Commonwealth countries, especially in terms of resources available to such services free from government control or allocation.

- The need for clarity on constitutional settlements. There was discussion on federal/regional vs. national responsibilities, e.g. as evidenced by resources being sometimes under "federal" control,

sometimes more regional or local. I pointed out difficulties of having a Welsh written "constitution" (ie GoWA) but unwritten UK constitution and the conflicts that can arise – I gave Agricultural Wages Board as an example and emphasised then the need for body to settle differences - Supreme Court in UK.”

Workshop H: Policy solutions for caring of an ageing population

With the increase of life expectancy, the quality of life of ageing citizens could be improved through advanced directives and supported decision-making. Parliamentarians have to foster a society where seniors can age within their homes and in the community through proper legislative framework.

Though countries cannot be equally resourced, it is important that policy makers develop programmes and policies that ensure the quality of life and dignity in retirement for senior populations.

In the context of rural areas in African countries, participants spoke of the initiation of an African agricultural revolution that could revive, modernize and increase productivity in African villages. These initiatives could strengthen the collective nature and philosophy of African villages respecting the role of the elderly in the community.

Recommendations from the Workshop were:

- Parliament should empower citizens to decide their care and treatment as they age and at life’s natural end, and protect professionals who respect those decisions.
- Commonwealth countries are facing a population that will live longer so governments and Parliaments must investigate all options in establishing care systems for ageing populations.
- Parliamentarians should foster a society where seniors can age in place within their homes and the community.

All recommendations from the Workshop were endorsed.

Thursday 5 September 2013

General Assembly

45. All delegates and observers from the devolved legislatures attended the CPA General Assembly. A copy of the Agenda can be seen [here](#).

All reports, audited accounts and the Strategic Plan were adopted.

46. Future CPA meeting locations and dates (where known) were stated as:
2014

May/June – CPA Parliamentary Seminar: Dar Es Salam, Tanzania
2-10 October – 60th CPC, Cameroon
Mid-Year ExCo: Maldives

2015: Mid-Year ExCo - Perth, Western Australia

Closing plenary: A parliamentary response to the Commonwealth Charter

47. An official note of the Final Plenary is included below. It is worth, however, noting that this plenary, the focus of which was dominated by a discussion on the rights of sexual orientation, proved to be highly contentious and very divisive.
48. Delegates from within the BIMR, as well as many other Regions, were clearly shocked and appalled by some of the rhetoric used by some speakers from within the plenary audience to justify the lack of equality and human rights extended to gay, lesbian and bisexual citizens. These included suggestions that rights for those of difference sexual orientation had nothing to do with democracy.
49. Joyce Watson AM, as part of this debate, addressed the plenary to state her opinion that it was fundamentally wrong to suggest that anyone was less human than anyone else because they are of a difference creed, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation and that to do was to deny them their human rights.
50. Examples of countries with notable poor records of rights for those of differing sexual orientation were given, and of concern was that this included Cameroon – the host country for next year’s CPC and some delegates subsequently questioned whether it would be safe for delegates of all sexual orientation to attend the conference.

Final Plenary: A parliamentary response to the Commonwealth Charter

The Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of the Parliament of South Africa outlined the development of the Commonwealth Charter, reminding participants of the principles enshrined. These included democracy, human rights, international peace and security, tolerance, respect and understanding and freedom of expression. The charter was important for the Commonwealth as an instrument to uphold and enforce commitment to the Commonwealth principles and to deal with any violations. She reinforced the need to define the mission (Commonwealth) and bestow it upon future generations.

Hon. McCarthy from the U.K. touched upon the omissions in the charter such as women's rights, education, economic inequalities, HIV, the advancement of the Millennium Development Goals and capital punishment. Though she championed the accomplishments made so far, she warned not to become complacent or conceal the violation of human rights.

Ambassador Ayebare spoke about the commitment of countries to uphold the values and that the document was a milestone in the development and prosperity of the Commonwealth. This could be achieved through integration and domestication of the Charter, as well as passing resolutions and legislation that reflected and guarded the Charter.

The South Africa Branch requested a greater emphasis on the engagement of citizens, help vs. capacitation and economic development.

The discussion moved to the right of sexual orientation, where the debate included supporters and those opposed to the freedom to choose their orientation. This debate concluded with pleas not to detract from the importance of the Charter by focussing on a single issue but to see it in its totality.

Recommendations from the Final Plenary were:

- CPA Member Parliaments must integrate the provision of the Charter in their work. Parliaments should popularize, monitor and exercise oversight on the Executive for compliance.
- Commonwealth Parliamentarians and Parliaments have a duty to hold their governments to account if they fail to uphold the values set out in the Charter.
- Parliaments are the heart of democratic society and indispensable for popularizing, implementing and enhancing the fundamental principles and values of the Commonwealth Charter.

Other activities

51. Ann Jones AM and Joyce Watson AM visited Welsh Expats living in Johannesburg who had formed a Welsh Society Choir and Members of which had previously toured in Ann Jones's constituency of the Vale of Clwyd.

Further Observations & Conclusion

52. It was noted that the CPA UK delegation had attended the CPA Small Branches conference as observers. As small branches seems very relevant to Wales (albeit we are not a "small branch" with a population

of under 500,000) it might be very worthwhile trying to attend any future small branches conferences/seminars as observers and working at those links which are likely to be more fruitful.

53. Delegates considered the Plenary sessions to be far too big to be meaningful and suggested that there must be a better way of dealing with this. It was good to hear the keynote speakers but as for trying to pass resolutions at this big gathering it was difficult. Delegates noted that the briefing papers on the workshop sessions from the Assembly's Research Service had been helpful. However, the lack of official timely information from the conference had been disappointing.
54. Overall the Conference was useful in terms of gaining knowledge, learning of new ideas and exchanging best practices as well as providing an insight into different cultures of Branches within the wider Association. The chance to meet with other delegates in an informal setting was also valuable
55. The 2014 Commonwealth Plenary Conference will be hosted by the Cameroon Branch.
56. The CPA Wales Branch would like to put on record our acknowledgement and appreciation to the host CPA South Africa Branch for their kind hospitality during our time in Johannesburg.

**Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
Wales Branch**



Photo: Representative of the CPA South Africa Host Branch presented with a gift of the Senedd book.

**CPA BRITISH ISLES & MEDITERRANEAN REGION MEETING – CPC 2013
1100 MONDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2013 – JOHANNESBURG**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks (*Regional Rep CPA Cyprus*).
3. Commonwealth and CPA Matters, and outcomes from ExCo meetings and General Assembly issues (*Regional Reps, and CPA Chairperson (if available)*).
4. CWP Matters, including outcomes from CWP Steering Committee and CWP Chairperson Election issues (*CPA BIMR CWP Rep*).
5. Outcomes from Small Branches' Conference (*Regional Rep Guernsey*).
6. 6th CYP in October in Hyderabad.
7. Regional Secretary's Report.
8. Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences (CPC) and Regional Conferences:
 - 60th in 2014 (Cameroon)
 - 44th Cardiff 27-30 May 2014 (CPA Wales)
 - 46th in 2016 (CPA Jersey?)
 - 61st in 2015 (tbc)
 - 45th in 2015 (CPA Cyprus?)
 - 47th in 2017 (tbc)
9. EU – Commonwealth Activities and Issues (*CPA Malta*)
10. Reports from Branches – in addition to e-reports received by CPA BIMR Secretariat.
11. Dates of Next Meetings:
 - BIMR AGM at 44th Regional Conference
 - September 2014 Meeting at 60th CPC in Yaoundé
12. Any other business