



# News Release

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

ST HELIER, JERSEY — Increasing the involvement of Parliaments in resolving three of today's most serious global challenges – preventing environmental degradation, promoting sustainable development and reducing threats to security – will be debated by Commonwealth Parliamentarians in August in Malaysia.

This agenda for the 2008 meeting of the more than 350 Members of the Commonwealth's parliamentary leadership, the 54<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, was set at a mid-April meeting in St Helier, Jersey, of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Executive Committee. The meeting was hosted by the States of Jersey, the Parliament of the English Channel island. The Committee agreed that the Conference will discuss issues under the theme: "Expanding the Role of Parliament in Global Society: Environment, Development and Security". The full agenda is attached.

The conference, to be in Kuala Lumpur from 1 to 10 August, will also include:

- The 28<sup>th</sup> Small Branches Conference for MPs from the Commonwealth's microstates, the agenda for which was also set by the Committee in Jersey;
- A Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians meeting including discussions on gender issues and CPA programmes for women Parliamentarians, and
- Discussions on parliamentary practice and administration for Assembly officials organized by the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table.

The conference is part of an extensive collection of CPA conferences, seminars, workshops and communications to promote the evolution of the institution of Parliament and the professional development of the Members and staff of the Commonwealth's 172 Parliaments and Legislatures. Members and senior staff representing the Parliaments and Legislatures of the nations, states, provinces and territories of 52 Commonwealth nations this year will participate in: a parliamentary practice and procedure seminar in Canada, a Caribbean seminar on the international trading system, workshops on the roles and responsibilities of government and opposition for East and West Africa, a workshop on relations between Parliament and the media in Tonga and the production of paper, electronic and video publications on the advancement of parliamentary democracy.

Executive Committee Chairperson Hon. Hashim Abdul Halim, MLA, Speaker of India's West Bengal Legislative Assembly, congratulated the States of Jersey and the island's government and people for supporting the Commonwealth and parliamentary democracy through facilitating the CPA Executive meeting. "Jersey provides Commonwealth leadership through its distinctive approach to parliamentary democracy. The States embodies another way of practising politics which is an important part of the diversity of the Commonwealth and parliamentary democracy," he told Members of the Committee and of the States of Jersey at the meeting's official opening held in the Chamber of the States. Jersey has recently introduced a ministerial form of government to operate in its non-party parliamentary system.

The Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Philip Bailhache, officially opened the meeting at a ceremony in the presence of: the Lieutenant-Governor of Jersey, H.E. Gen. Andrew Ridgway, CBE, CB; Deputy Bailiff Mr Michael Birt; Chief Minister of Jersey Sen. Frank Walker, Jersey's Education Minister Sen. Mike Vibert and Members of the States of Jersey.

Among the issues to be discussed in Malaysia are workshops for all delegates on gender budgeting and on collaboration on climate change issues between large nations and the Commonwealth's small states, which include many of the world's smallest countries. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference will also hear addresses by the new Commonwealth Secretary General, H.E. Shri Kamlesh Sharma, and CPA Secretary-General Dr William F. Shija. The conference will be opened by the Prime Minister of Malaysia and presided over by the Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat, Malaysia's lower House.

The Small Branches Conference will be attended by approximately 70 Parliamentarians from more than 30 nations, states, provinces and territories with populations of up to 500,000 people. They will discuss water and waste management issues from environmental and developmental perspectives and three other issues over two days prior to the plenary conference.

During its Jersey meeting, Dr Shija said the CPA Executive Committee welcomed the invitation from the Parliament of Tanzania to host the Association's 2009 annual conference and elected its Speaker, Hon. Samuel John Sitta, MP, as CPA Vice-President. The Secretary-General said CPA Commonwealth and regional conferences and its parliamentary seminars, publications and workshops on governance issues enable Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures, their Members and staff to function more effectively. They also help to deepen the commitment of all Commonwealth nations to democratic government, he said.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE CPA, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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# **54<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference Malaysia 1 – 10 August 2008**

## **Theme:**

Expanding the Role of Parliament in Global Society: Environment, Development and Security

## **Opening Plenary:**

Addresses by the CPA Secretary-General and the Commonwealth Secretary-General

## **Workshops:**

- A. Democracy and Global Peace – An International Order
- B. Sustainable Development in the Context of Rapid Urbanization and Rural Decline
- C. Credible Elections for a more Representative Parliament, Free and Fair Participation, Greater Diversity and Access to a Free Media
- D. Mechanisms to Ensure Adequate Recognition of Women's Issues in Budgetary Processes
- E. Collaboration among Large and Small States through International Organizations to Respond to Climate Change
- F. Parliament and Civil Society Engagement for Better Policy-Making
- G. The Role of Parliament in Conflict Prevention and Resolution
- H. Reforming the Budget Process: Parliamentary Budget Offices and Effective Parliamentary Oversight

## **Plenary:**

The Global Food Crisis

## **Final Plenary:**

The Communications Challenge for Parliament: Meeting the Information Needs of Members and the Public

# **28<sup>th</sup> Small Branches Conference Malaysia 3 – 4 August 2008**

## **1<sup>st</sup> Plenary**

Protecting the Environment: Water and Waste Management in Sustainable Development

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary**

Dealing with Conflicts of Interest and Corruption in Small States

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary**

Meeting the Challenges to the Holding of Democratic Elections

## **4<sup>th</sup> Plenary**

Promoting the Interests of Small States in International Institutions