
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

**Fiji Islands
September 2005**

**Report of the delegation from the Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**

© Commonwealth of Australia 2005

ISBN 0 642 78707 7

For further information about the Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association contact:

Parliamentary Relations Office

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Email: pro@aph.gov.au

Fax: +612 6277 2000

Printed by the Department of the House of Representatives



Contents

Membership of the Delegation.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Business of the conference	2
Opening ceremonies and speeches	2
Plenary and workshop sessions.....	4
General Assembly	6
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians	6
Meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments.....	7
Australian Delegation concluding comments	7
Appendix A—Address by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Hon Denis Marshall QSO, to the 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference	9
Appendix B—Address by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon Don McKinnon, to the 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference	23
Appendix C—Session details and workshop and plenary reports from the 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference	33
Appendix D—Agenda of the 2005 General Assembly of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.....	81



Membership of the Delegation

Leader of the Delegation

Senator the Hon Paul Calvert
President of the Senate
Senator for Tasmania

Deputy Leader of the Delegation

Mr Kelvin Thomson MP
Member for Wills (Victoria)

Delegation Members

Senator Trish Crossin
Senator for the Northern Territory

Mr Cameron Thompson MP
Member for Blair (Queensland)

Hon Danna Vale MP
Member for Hughes (New South Wales)

Delegation Secretary

Ms Robyn Webber
Department of the House of Representatives

CPA Regional Secretary

Mr Andres Lomp
Department of the House of Representatives

Accompanying the President of the Senate

Mr Vince Taskunas
Adviser, Office of the President

Introduction

- 1.1 The 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was held in Nadi in the Republic of the Fiji Islands from 1 to 10 September 2005. The conference was hosted by the Fiji Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and led by the Hon Ratu Epeli Nailatikau MP, Speaker of the Fiji House of Representatives and President of the CPA.
- 1.2 The CPA is an association of Commonwealth parliamentarians who, irrespective of gender, race, religion or culture, are united by community of interest, respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms and by pursuit of the positive ideals of parliamentary democracy. The aims of the Association are to promote knowledge of the constitutional, legislative, economic, social and cultural aspects of parliamentary democracy, particularly in the countries comprising the Commonwealth of Nations. The CPA provides a means of regular consultation between members of Commonwealth parliaments and seeks to improve understanding and cooperation among them and also to promote the study of, and respect for, parliamentary democracy. The annual conference is an important activity in the achievement of these aims.
- 1.3 There are some 170 CPA branches within parliaments at national, state, territory and provincial levels representing almost 15 000 members.¹ More than 700 delegates, observers and officials from these Parliaments attended the conference.

¹ www.cpaHQ.org/aboutus/default.aspx (accessed 20 September 2005).

- 1.4 The Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the CPA was represented by a parliamentary delegation comprising two Senators and three Members of the House of Representatives led by the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon Paul Calvert (see p. v for the membership of the delegation). As well 15 members attended from other Australian Parliaments.
- 1.5 The conference encompassed a number of components and associated activities. These were:
- two plenary sessions and six workshops;
 - the annual General Assembly of the CPA;
 - the 8th meeting of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee and the 17th meeting of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians;
 - meetings of regional groupings of the CPA;
 - the 25th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference of members from small countries;
 - meetings of the CPA Executive Committee; and
 - the 42nd General Meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table comprising parliamentary officials.

Business of the conference

Opening ceremonies and speeches

- 1.6 The official opening of the conference on Tuesday, 6 September 2005, featured traditional Fijian ceremonies of welcome embodying the warmth with which Fijian Chiefs and their people welcome their guests.
- 1.7 The theme of the conference was *Commonwealth Parliamentarians in Partnerships for Global Development*. The speeches from dignitaries participating in the opening ceremonies drew on the role of the Commonwealth in supporting and encouraging democratic development both in Fiji and the Pacific and more widely.
- 1.8 The President of the CPA and Speaker of the Fiji House of Representatives, the Hon Ratu Epeli Nailatikau MP, read a message of good wishes from the Patron of the Association, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth. He also referred to the

struggles which Fiji has experienced in maintaining its parliamentary democracy and suggested that the large numbers of delegates attending the conference were “a tangible sign that our endeavours towards establishing a culture of acceptance amongst our people of those noble principles of equality and freedom, whilst at the same time continuing to retain those traditions and cultures that are unique to all our peoples, is not in vain”. He thanked Fiji’s partners in the Commonwealth for their continuing support and encouragement which will greatly assist to further reinvigorate Fiji’s endeavours.

- 1.9 The guest of honour at the opening, the Acting President of Fiji, His Excellency Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, also marked the holding of the conference as a milestone in the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Fiji. He provided a frank assessment of Fiji’s struggles with democracy, commended the stability that had been achieved and the ongoing process of finding the right pathway for Fijians to move ahead. “The Commonwealth continues to remind us of the imperative to reach accommodations that are fair and equitable to all our communities”, he said.
- 1.10 The business of the conference commenced with addresses from the Secretary-General of the CPA, the Hon Denis Marshall QSO, and the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the Rt Hon Don McKinnon.
- 1.11 Denis Marshall said he had been impressed by the number of Presiding Officers and Members of Parliament who were striving to expand the democratic space in their own countries and committed the CPA to work to support MPs striving to buttress democracy in their own countries. He highlighted the need to gain greater independence for parliaments from direct government control, particularly in the area of administration and finance, as a recurring theme in the CPA’s activities and discussions on good governance and strengthening the institution of parliament. The text of Denis Marshall’s speech is at Appendix A.
- 1.12 Mr McKinnon drew on the theme of the conference “Commonwealth Parliamentarians in Partnership for Global Development”, reflecting that the Commonwealth itself consists of layer upon layer of partnerships and networks. He referred to the Millennium Development Goals which provided some of the framework for the conference discussions and summarised efforts by the Commonwealth to assist its member countries to work towards achieving the goals. The text of Don McKinnon’s speech is at Appendix B.

Plenary and workshop sessions

- 1.13 The principal part of the conference comprised six workshops and three plenary sessions with the following specific topics addressing the overall theme of Commonwealth Partnerships for Global Development:
- Workshop A: Millennium Development Goal 1 – Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
 - Workshop B: Millennium Development Goal 6 – Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
 - Workshop C: Millennium Development Goal 8 – Develop a global partnership for development;
 - Workshop D: The role of parliament in conflict-affected countries;
 - Workshop E: Debt relief and development aid delivery;
 - Workshop F: Fighting corruption – What can parliamentarians do?;
 - 1st plenary session: Millennium Development Goal 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women;
 - 2nd plenary session: Constitutional systems for parliamentary democratic government;
 - 3rd plenary session: Natural disasters – Effective early warning, relief and reconstruction.
- 1.14 The Millennium Development Goals were formulated collaboratively by the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The goals, targets and indicators were presented by the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to the UN General Assembly in September 2001 in the “Road Map Towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration”. The target year for achieving most of the goals is 2015.
- 1.15 There are eight Millennium Development Goals, four of which were selected for debate at the 2005 Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference with a particular focus on the role of legislatures and parliamentarians in achieving the goals. The CPA plans to use the deliberations at the conference to feed into a submission to a UN review of progress made so far in achieving the goals.²
-

² Commonwealth Parliamentarians to assess Millennium Development Goals – News release from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

- 1.16 The format of the workshops was designed to encourage interaction and spontaneous contributions. For each workshop three or four panellists spoke for 10 minutes each followed by contributions from the floor of 5 minutes each. The plenary sessions followed a similar format. A list of the key speakers in each workshop and plenary session is at Appendix C.
- 1.17 Workshops A, B and C were conducted simultaneously in the morning of 7 September and workshops D, E and F were conducted in the afternoon of the same day. Plenary sessions were held on 8 and 9 September. Members of the Commonwealth of Australia Branch delegation attended as many sessions as they could and participated actively in the discussions. Briefs prepared by AusAID and the Australian Parliamentary Library on the progress of Australia's contribution towards achieving the goals provided the delegates with some context for the expression of their views. Summary reports from each of the workshops and plenary sessions are also at Appendix C.
- 1.18 The Leader of the Australian delegation, Senator the Hon Paul Calvert, President of the Senate and delegate to the CPA Executive Committee, in a statement published in the daily conference bulletin, praised the opening address to the conference by the Fijian Acting President as frank and inspiring. Senator Calvert said that the signs of sure progress in Fiji's restoration witnessed during this conference are unmistakable. He also stated that Australia is committed to play its part to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, saying it is in all our interests to have a stable and fully developed Asia-Pacific. Senator Calvert claimed the 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference had been a great success.

One of the strengths of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association—as a multinational advocate for access to, and education about, the benefits of parliamentary democracy—is the unique opportunities it presents as a healing and rebuilding forum for states that are more fragile than others. The CPA is indeed an international organisation like few others, in terms of the breadth and nature of its membership and the significant issues discussed. It is, and must remain, a place of tolerance and diversity of views where states large and small, developed and developing, can have their single voices heard with clarity amongst the greater whole.

General Assembly

- 1.19 The 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference included the 2005 General Assembly of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the organisation's annual general meeting, held on 9 September 2005. The main business of the meeting was the consideration and adoption of the annual report and financial statements of the Association and the election of office bearers. A copy of the agenda for the General Assembly is at Appendix D.
- 1.20 A ballot was held for the position of Chairman of the Executive Committee. The Hon Hashim Abdul Halim MLA from West Bengal, India, was elected, defeating the Hon Sir Geoffrey Henry KBE from the Cook Islands.
- 1.21 A decision by the Executive Committee that the contract of the Secretary-General of the Association not be extended received considerable debate.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians

- 1.22 Two of the five member Australian Commonwealth delegation were women, Senator Trish Crossin and the Hon Danna Vale MP, who took the opportunity to participate in the breakfast meeting of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP).
- 1.23 The CWP began informally in 1989 with official recognition by the General Assembly of the CPA in 1992. Since then it has met regularly in association with the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. The activities of the CWP are managed by a steering committee with representation from each of the nine CPA regions and which meets prior to each conference.
- 1.24 The Strategic Plan for the CPA 2003-07 includes the commitment to improve representation for Commonwealth women in parliament and for women parliamentarians in the CPA. A core objective aims:
- to promote gender equality in the work of the CPA and across the Association and encourage women to stand for election to representative bodies by advocating the removal of barriers to their participation and to facilitate their professional contribution as Members.

The CWP is the principal agent in data collection and managing projects to achieve this objective.

- 1.25 Some of the issues raised at the CWP breakfast meeting held on 8 September 2005 were:
- more time to exchange strategies and ideas at CPA conferences such as an additional day or added workshops;
 - challenges for women to stand for parliament, within their political party and after election;
 - the possibility of using training courses and mentoring from countries where representation is high to encourage more women to stand for election to parliament; and
 - the setting of goals to deal with issues such as representation, domestic violence, maternal health and access to education.

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

- 1.26 Meetings of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table were held concurrently with sessions of the conference. Ms Robyn Webber, Clerk Assistant (Committees) in the House of Representatives, represented the Clerk of the House, who was unable to attend, at several sessions. The society aims to foster mutual interest among its members through the exchange of information, views and experience to assist them to exercise their professional duties in relation to their respective legislatures.

Australian Delegation concluding comments

- 1.27 The delegation extends its thanks to Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji, Mrs Mary Chapman, Secretary-General, Members and staff of the Parliament of Fiji for their excellent preparation and warm hospitality in the hosting of the 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.
- 1.28 The delegation was also grateful for the opportunity to hear at first hand of the lessons learned and the progress Fiji is making in its democratic development, and for the openness of the comments of the Speaker, the Acting President and others who spoke on this theme. Fiji's leaders are to be commended for their commitment to finding a peaceful and equitable way forward.

- 1.29 In relation to the conference proper, the Australian Delegation encourages the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to continue to develop the format and agenda of the conferences to encourage more active discussion sessions and stimulate spontaneous and robust information sharing and exchange of ideas between delegates.

PAUL CALVERT

President of the Senate

Leader of the Commonwealth of Australia Branch Delegation to the
51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference



Appendix A

**Address by the Secretary-General of the
Commonwealth Parliamentary
Association, Hon Denis Marshall QSO, to
the 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary
Conference**

**Speech by the CPA Secretary-General,
Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO,
51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference,
Fiji Islands
Tuesday September 6th, 2005**

Mr President of CPA, Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji

Mr Vice-President CPA, Hon. Albaji Aminu Bello Masari, Speaker of the Legislative
Assembly of Nigeria

Commonwealth Secretary-General, Your Excellency the Rt Hon Donald McKinnon,
Acting Chairman of the Executive Committee, Hon. Constance Simelane
Acting Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee, Senator Jean Le Maistre,
Treasurer, Mrs Cheryl Gillan, MP,

Members of the Executive Committee, Hon. Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference is the largest event on the CPA calendar
and it is a real pleasure to be here in beautiful Fiji for the 51st Plenary Conference.

Mr. President, you promised delegates last year a warm Pacific welcome and you have
certainly kept your word. On behalf of the Executive Committee, delegates and
observers, I would like to thank you for the arrangements put in place by the Parliament
and Government of Fiji for this conference and the programmes that preceded it. This has
been an extraordinarily busy time for our hosts who not only have made arrangements for
the Executive Committee Meeting, the Small Countries Conference, the meeting of the
CWP Steering Committee, and the Conference itself;

but you have also hosted a workshop for Government and Opposition members of parliament in the region, and a Freedom of Information Workshop as well. This is the first time we have undertaken such an ambitious programme of events ahead of those traditionally associated with the conference.

We do appreciate the cultural significance of the opening ceremony this morning and through it the high status you accorded all visitors to your beautiful country .

This session is an opportunity for me to brief delegates on the activities of the Association over the past year, and for the Commonwealth Secretary-General to address you. On past occasions delegates have appreciated the opportunity to discuss with the Commonwealth Secretary-General. HE Rt. Hon. Don McKinnon, the role and activities of the Commonwealth over the past year, and for many this forum is one of the highlights of our programme.

George Bernard Shaw once sent two tickets for the opening night of his new play to Winston Churchill. He included a message which read, "Bring a friend, if you have one." Churchill replied with a curt telegram, "Regret, cannot attend your play tonight. Will come to second performance if there is one". Well, as a friend and colleague, I am happy to share a platform with Don at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference for the third successive year. I feel like the warm-up act for the main event!

Mr President, in my first speech to delegates three years ago I made reference to the 2002 UNDP Human Development Report which warned that a growing number of newly democratic governments – and some longer-established ones – were slipping back into undemocratic practices. Recently, I have been encouraged by the dramatic increase in the number of newly elected MPs in Commonwealth countries. Also the trend is for Presidents to step down after their term has expired rather to remain in office for long periods. Although sadly there are some significant exceptions to this trend.

In my visits around the Commonwealth this year, I have been impressed at the number of Presiding Officers and Members who are striving to expand the democratic space in their countries. In some cases this has been successful, others not, but it is very important that the CPA works to support the efforts of these MPs striving to buttress democracy in their own countries.

For example at the beginning of May I was in Lilongwe, Malawi for a Post-Election Seminar that was attended by most of the 142 new Members of the 193-Member Parliament. It was a rewarding experience not only because of the high level and participation by the MPs but also because I had the opportunity to work alongside the late Speaker Hon. Rodwell Munyenembe. The Speaker exhibited a high degree of leadership and determination to push forward a recommendation of the business committee of his Parliament to give it greater independence from the Executive and also greater resources for the parliament to function effectively. Tragically, Mr Speaker died shortly afterwards after collapsing in the Chair while dealing with a difficult situation in

the House. His leadership and the example he set for the Commonwealth in working towards a truly independent Parliament free of executive domination will be long remembered – and it is an ideal we all should endeavour to achieve. And I understand the new Speaker and the parliament has taken up the challenge and called for reforms to give the parliament greater autonomy.

The CPA's role in this process is to support sustainable and effective democratic institutions. There is much to do. A recently published list of fragile states from the Department for International Development in the UK lists 46 countries, 10 of them from the Commonwealth: Cameroon, The Gambia, Guyana, Kenya, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The CPA has organised programmes in nine of these countries focusing on technical assistance, professional development or poverty reduction strategies.

The good news is that demand for CPA Programmes and Publications is at an all-time high. There will be over 50 CPA activities across the Commonwealth this year. There has been a 75% increase in the number of CPA activities over the last four years and funds obtained from external organisations have increased from £14,600 in 2000 to £197,000 in 2005.

CPA programmes are now delivered with partners such as the World Bank Institute, the Commonwealth Secretariat (for example consultancy work in Guyana and Government

and Opposition Workshops in the Caribbean and the Pacific), DfID (who have supported our West Africa Parliamentary Programme) and UNDP (Solomon Islands Technical Assistance programme). Just a few days ago, NZ AID co-funded a Freedom of Information Workshop for the Pacific Region – the first time that agency has supported a CPA programme. After this conference ends, we are joining up with UNIFEM-Pacific to organise a Gender Workshop in Tonga.

In my travels over the past year to developing countries, I am often surprised to note the number of parliamentary support programmes being undertaken by different organisations. The Secretariat is therefore putting greater attention to networking with key partner agencies so there is the best quality support possible. At the end of last year, we convened a meeting of agencies working with parliaments with a view to developing a consensus on benchmarks of parliamentary performance, and there were 18 different organisations represented at the meeting. I am pleased to report that the Executive Committee has approved a proposal to further develop this work next year.

Mr. President,

A wit once said there are two periods when Parliament does no business. One is before the summer holiday break – and the other is after it. This is of course not true, but it does sadden me when I see around the Commonwealth the institution of Parliament being continually undermined by the attitude and actions of governments. Too often Parliaments cannot even meet to fulfil their constitutional responsibilities.

There is one area of support for good governance and strengthening the institution of parliament that has emerged as a constant theme this year. That is the need to gain greater independence for parliament from direct government control. This is particularly important in the area of administration and financing for those parliaments.

Governments in many countries are reluctant to relinquish their Ministerial control of both the finances and staffing of the parliament and its schedule. In too many, particularly presidential systems of government, the parliament is simply used as a rubber stamp for the government programme, and is only called to sit at the whim of Ministerial authority. There are encouraging signs across the Commonwealth that the trend towards executive domination is over – or to put it another way, it is getting harder and harder for governments to use Parliament as a rubber stamp in the way to which they have become accustomed.

Delegates I commend to you the reports of a joint CPA/WBI Study Group on the Administration and Financing of Parliament and the recommendations from the Regional Workshop to Strengthen Legislatures in Commonwealth West Africa. The two reports focus on the independence and integrity of Parliament and include the following recommendations

- All Commonwealth Parliaments should implement The Commonwealth Principles on the Accountability of and Relationship Between the Three Branches of Government, especially those relating to the independence of the Legislature.

These principles were adopted by Heads of Government at the Abuja CHOGM in 2003.

- Parliamentarians must be able to carry out their legislative and constitutional functions in accordance with their Constitution, free from unlawful interference.
- Parliamentarians should maintain high standards of accountability, transparency and responsibility in the conduct of all public matters.

The results of a recent Commonwealth case study highlighted the following weaknesses that are typical of many parliaments:

- Lack of Independence of the parliament and its management from the control of the Executive;
- Members who are not sufficiently *au fait* with their role within the parliamentary framework;
- An Opposition which is angry and frustrated and therefore does not grasp the opportunities afforded it by the rules of procedure;
- Standing Orders in need of revision;
- A committee system which is not properly functioning;
- Insufficient qualified staff, with ill-defined roles and lack of procedural knowledge;

- No awareness of the parliament's responsibility to relate with civil society, the private sector and the wider public.

More specifically some of the key points for action included *inter alia*;

- There should be a settled parliamentary timetable with recognized opportunities for the Opposition and also for debates on Committee reports. Sittings of the parliament should not be at the whim of the government.
- The parliament should be given much greater control of its own budget and expenditure.
- The Clerk of the Parliament should become the employer of the staff of the parliament and have complete control over all aspects of their employment.

These weaknesses are typical of the current situation in the deficit of democracy in many developing and conflict affected countries. In these countries Parliaments must be strengthened to enable them to carry out their role as the principle institutions of democracy. Executives should follow the example of the Government of Malaysia which is seeking to return to Parliament the administration and management of its own affairs.

Let me now give some examples of other work undertaken by the CPA in 2005. Mr. President, as Special Representative for the Pacific on the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), you were very supportive of the Association's first in-depth study of the Role of Parliamentarians in Combating the HIV/AIDS Pandemic. The Study Group made a series of recommendations to help Parliaments, individual Parliamentarians and the CPA Branches develop successive strategies to deal with a global epidemic that is having a particularly devastating effect on Commonwealth countries. Although less than 30 per cent of the global population lives in Commonwealth countries, those countries now contain over 60 per cent of those affected by HIV/AIDS. In response to the escalating epidemic in South Asia, the Executive Committee has approved a first-time partnership with Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) next year in HIV/AIDS Workshops involving members of the Provincial Assemblies in Pakistan, in addition to members of the National Assembly and Senate.

Addressing the challenge of HIV/AIDS and its contribution to the perpetuation of poverty was one theme discussed at the Third Pan-Commonwealth Youth Parliament which sat in Brisbane this year. Over 70 young delegates took part in the initiative co-sponsored by the World Bank, the Commonwealth of Australia Parliament, the Parliament of Queensland and the Department of Communities in Queensland. The Youth Parliament expressed support for the Global Call to Action Against Poverty campaign which, in many countries has taken the working title of 'Make Poverty History'.

We all have an obligation to encourage young people to play a role in their democracies, and it is a sobering thought that many Members here today are from jurisdictions where a youth aged 20 may have already lived half of his/her average life expectancy. Youth delegates in Brisbane called for a holistic approach to development, recognising that poverty includes both social and structural elements as well as macro-economic and financial ones. Don will, no doubt, refer to the excellent assistance the Commonwealth Secretariat is giving member countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals and to promote the cause of global development.

The Executive Committee has agreed a wide variety of projects for 2006 designed to strengthen the capacity of Parliaments and enable them to be major contributors to development. These include further workshops on financial oversight of the Executive; seminars on the Administration and Funding of Parliament; a study group on benchmarks for parliaments; a sustained technical assistance package for the Parliament of Malawi; a Freedom of Information Workshop for the Caribbean Region; and further Regional Youth Parliaments. I urge you all to use the new CPA Website and our Publications – such as *The Parliamentarian* and *First Reading* to obtain further information on all CPA activities. These publications are a source of information and good practice, but we also maintain a Parliamentary Information and Resource Centre (PIRC) to assist Members who do not have the research facilities they need. This is your resource. Please use it.

Finally I would like to thank my staff for the work they put in to enable us to deliver the Association's programmes. Due to retirements we have two new staff members this year,

Arlene Bussette, who comes from Trinidad & Tobago and has experience working in the parliament there, and Musonda Mwila, from Zambia was formerly with the Commonwealth Secretariat. They have both rapidly become part of a hard-working team. While we have been able to deliver a dramatic increase in the number of programmes for members, we are doing it with the same number of staff in the office since I took up this post, I would like to thank all staff for their work during the year to achieve this.

The theme for this conference is **Commonwealth Parliamentarians in Partnership for Global Development**.

It is a focus on what we collectively should be doing – working together on development and poverty reduction. Unfortunately over the past few days this has not been the case.

The decision taken 2 days ago by the Executive Committee not to offer an extension to my contract has been very divisive.

It is time to put this and any other matters dividing the Exco behind us, and to move forward.

This Association is bigger than my position, or any other position – individually, at Branch level or regionally within the organisation. The CPA is a voluntary organisation of some 163 parliaments dedicated to the promotion of knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy. As I said when I was appointed, democracy is a fragile flower. It needs nurturing with a lot of care and attention. (TLC – some would say).

It is time for all of us to focus on that.

Over the past four years this association has built up a considerable reputation internationally in the parliamentary community as an organisation committed to;

The promotion and development of parliamentary democracy.

Good governance, and greater accountability

The reduction of poverty

To achieve these ideals through the wide range of programmes your Executive Committee has approved, and to maintain our own credibility as an association of Members of Parliament, we need to put personal and regional politics to one side, and work together as Commonwealth Parliamentarians in Partnership for Global Development.

The legacy I wish to leave to the CPA when I retire, is a strong united association, internationally recognized for the work it does to strengthen parliamentary democracy throughout the Commonwealth.

End

5th September 2005



Appendix B

**Address by the Commonwealth Secretary-
General, Rt Hon Don McKinnon, to the
51st Commonwealth Parliamentary
Conference**

Mr President, Mr Chairman, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Secretary-General, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to meet again with so many political friends, and to have the privilege of addressing the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference for the fifth time.

Some say that Secretaries-General are like buses or taxis. Whenever you need one you can't get one, especially when it rains. Then, when the sun comes out, several – well, at least two – turn up together.

As the second of the Secretaries-General in the queue or on the rank today, let me thank the first - my friend, compatriot and fellow All Blacks supporter, Denis Marshall. Denis has helped bring about changes in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) to meet the challenges and respond to the needs of this first decade of the twenty-first century. So thank you, Denis, and thanks to your hard-working team.

Let me also thank the CPA Fiji Islands branch for their hospitality. I very much enjoyed and appreciated this morning's warm welcome.

I want to express my appreciation to the Government of the Fiji Islands for its assistance both this week and last week when we had a Commonwealth workshop on the role of the government and opposition. The Fiji Government has continued to support our Commonwealth work in many ways.

The Fiji Islands are important to us. I hope no one in this country is in any doubt about the extent to which events here are followed, not only at our headquarters in London but across the Commonwealth's membership.

Life is about learning, and all of us from further afield have learnt something from witnessing developments in Fiji over the last two decades. We know that life has delivered some hard lessons to the people of the Fiji Islands.

The test, as my old teacher used to say, is whether any of the lessons have 'stuck'. With lessons it is always the same. One can all-too-easily opt not to learn, and remain static if not go backwards. Or one can absorb a lesson and grow from it.

We hope and believe that the people of Fiji Islands have absorbed the hard lessons of recent years. And we extend the hand of friendship and solidarity as you build a better future for all in this beautiful country. As the Vice President said so eloquently both sides must reach out. There must be inclusiveness and we in the Commonwealth can help.

Mr Chairman, your theme this year is 'Commonwealth Parliamentarians in partnership for global development'. You have heard me before on partnership. The Commonwealth itself consists precisely of layer upon layer of partnerships and networks.

But building and sustaining partnerships is not always easy. It requires a clear and shared vision, commitment by all concerned, and hard work. Certainly, 'easy' is not a word readily associated with the cause for which we are so often in partnership, the cause of global development in general and specifically the attainment of the 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs).

There are eight MDGs and it's worth reminding ourselves of them:

- To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- To achieve universal primary education
- To promote gender equality and empower women
- To reduce child mortality
- To improve maternal health
- To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- To ensure environmental sustainability, and
- To develop a global partnership for development

What a list. Frightening but not impossible. Let me take a moment to concentrate on the last of those – pursuing a global partnership for development.

Mr Chairman, we know that over one-third of the Commonwealth's two billion citizens live on less than US \$1 per day; that women constitute almost three quarters of all those living in poverty across the Commonwealth; that almost two thirds of HIV cases are in Commonwealth countries; and that half of the world's 115 million children without access to primary education live in the Commonwealth.

These are staggering statistics, and not ones which we should be proud of. They underline that we have work to do...work that cannot be done by any one person, country, or one organisation.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is doing what it can to help member countries attain the MDGs. We are doing it in two ways. First, we are doing it through our own efforts, directly, as the Commonwealth's core executive agency. We are working, for instance, to increase trade opportunities, which means strengthening the capacity of developing countries - particularly small states - to formulate, negotiate and implement trade policy at the national level.

The Pacific is one of five regions in which, with assistance from the Francophonie and the European Union, the Commonwealth Secretariat has set up a 'Hub and Spokes' project. We have placed senior trade experts (the 'Hubs') in regional organisations, and then combined them with trade policy analysts (the 'Spokes') in individual countries.

By October 2005, six regional trade policy advisers and 29 trade policy analysts will be deployed in the Pacific, the Caribbean, Pacific, Southern and Eastern Africa and with the African Union.

We are assisting member countries to attract investment and reduce debt. One of the ways we have been tackling the second of these is by helping to strengthen the capacity to manage debt, especially through the placement of regional debt advisers – again in the Pacific, we well as in the Eastern Caribbean and in Eastern, Southern and West Africa.

The Commonwealth is also helping member countries with public sector reform. In two weeks time the Commonwealth Finance Ministers have their annual meeting and will be considering guidelines for better planning, use, accounting and transparency of public finances. These guidelines should be finalised at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting later this year in Malta. As Parliamentarians with a responsibility in this area, I commend them to you.

We are endeavouring to ensure that economic, social and environmental concerns are addressed in a balanced way.

We are also working with the Commonwealth's thirty-two small states. We are doing so to tackle the issues which arise from their inherent vulnerability, and to find ways that build on their inherent resilience. No one visiting this part of the world – the island states of the Pacific – who scratches below the surface, could fail to see both of those factors very starkly: the vulnerabilities and challenging weaknesses on one hand, and the resilience and remarkable strengths on the other.

In the key field of education the Secretariat's work focuses on the six mutually supporting Action Areas identified by the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Edinburgh in 2003: achieving universal primary education; eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education; improving quality in education; using distance learning to overcome barriers; supporting education in difficult circumstances; mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS on education systems.

In health, while we are doing more on maternal and infant mortality the emphasis continues to be on HIV/AIDS.

The list goes on: there is considerable Commonwealth activity to promote development and combat poverty. At the same time, there is a great deal more to do, and we need to do it much more quickly. And I regret to say that the Commonwealth Secretariat is severely constrained by declining resources provided by member governments. We appreciate very much the £23 million that we get for the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation. However in both nominal and real terms the level of resources available to us 15 years ago was more. The CFTC fund had 40% more spending power.

Mr Chairman, CFTC's sorrow is to be constantly reminded of its potential. It is clear that the necessary commitment on the part of the developing countries is in place. For its part, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation can do the job. And it will continue to support the efforts of member states.

However, CFTC could do much more - and do it much more rapidly and effectively - if it had even a little more of the resources it needs.

Mr Chairman, I have described the Commonwealth's direct action on the ground. I also said we are working in two ways. The second is at a political level, through advocacy and pressure and the building of consensus.

I am reminded of the words of Herbert Asquith. "Power," he said, "power? You think you are going to get it, but you never do."

The Commonwealth knows its power is limited – some would call it, 'soft power' – but it can at times be just as effective if not more so than tougher versions. We have a network and influence and we have been trying to use both to secure some important international decisions. People forget, for instance, that the whole issue of writing off debt for Highly Indebted Poor Countries – the HIPC's – began as a Commonwealth initiative back in 1995. We worked away at it for years.

We haven't staked as much of a share of the publicity for recent developments as perhaps we should have. And let me not take anything away from the decisions taken by the G8 on debt, as they were the countries that needed to show leadership. But that significant Commonwealth contribution remains all the same.

This leads me to highlight several challenges that still need to be tackled and where the political action we saw on debt is needed now more than ever. These are the challenges of globalisation and justice in our international trading.

The Commonwealth recognises the opportunities offered by globalisation. But we are concerned that no one is left by the wayside and that the gains from technological advances and from the opening of markets are more equally distributed.

The central issue, as the Indian Nobel economics laureate Amartya Sen argued some years ago, is inequality. As he said, "What is needed is a fairer distribution of the fruits of globalisation." The answer is not to abandon or puncture the process: globalisation will not go away, nor should it. What is at issue is globalisation's management - how it is controlled, who benefits and how the rules are made. The challenge is to ensure that people benefit by globalisation and the negatives are diminished.

We will also continue to work for trade justice in international trade. The trade negotiations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will, rightly, be in the spotlight again soon. It is vital that this time the world takes the opportunity to open up the rich countries' markets to poor countries. Between now and the WTO Ministerial meeting in Hong Kong in December, I certainly will be amongst those pushing hard for a greater spirit of generosity from the wealthy nations.

The particular need for movement must come from developed countries. It is they and their leaders who now need to show again the sort of leadership they showed at Gleneagles. The European Union, the United States, and Japan especially must demonstrate the true hallmarks of leadership; their own future prosperity in fact depends upon it. As President Mandela said "if your neighbour is hungry you are challenged."

And that brings me full circle on that MDG I was highlighting – developing a global partnership for development. You will now have an insight into the breadth of work we are doing and the specific challenges we are tackling.

We work in partnership with those who count – be it the World Bank, the European Commission, the African Union, the Pacific Islands Forum, CARICOM, and the Indian Ocean Commission. We also work with any and all within our Commonwealth family circle including, of course, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. To attain the Millennium Development Goals, we need your help too.

On its own, development is not enough, so let me speak a little about the linkage between development and democracy.

As many here will know, a ten-person Commonwealth Expert Group under the leadership of Dr Manmohan Singh - now the Prime Minister of India - reported to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Abuja in 2003 on this very theme. Their report can be found on the Commonwealth Secretariat web-site.

There was a rich discussion of the report amongst Heads of Government at Abuja. Two weeks ago I attended the first in a series of follow-up colloquia in New Delhi. And I look forward to a further debate on this theme amongst Heads of Government at the Malta CHOGM later this year. It is an important debate and I want to encourage everyone here to engage in it.

This is not the place, and there certainly isn't the time, to attempt a summary of the Expert Group's Report. However, I do want to make a few points as my own contribution to the debate.

First, I want to endorse the Singh Report's emphasis on pro-poor development. Even more, I agree with its view that development must be seen in terms of expanding opportunities and strengthening human capabilities to lead creative and fulfilling lives.

The philosopher Marcel Proust said that the real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes. Well Prime Minister Singh and his colleagues have done us the service of helping us to see with 'new eyes'.

Development can no longer be thought of simply in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As the Singh Report puts it, 'development is about enabling people to have the capabilities to do and be the things that they have reason to value'. Development is about possibilities first and production second.

Mirroring that view of development, democracy too is about expanding opportunities and strengthening human capabilities. As the Singh Report makes clear, there has to be a core commitment to the central institutions of democracy. And those institutions are there to provide for the political freedom of the people.

Democracy must promote liberty not deny it, just as development must promote and not deny economic freedom. What is important, and here I go beyond the Singh Report are two qualities: openness and participation.

We know that development does not work if it is top down and excludes people. It thrives on participation. Democracy, too, needs to be 'participatory' – at national and local levels and at all intermediate stages. The days of excluding people from their own development and their own democracy are gone. If there are problems with the way either is conducted, the answer is to have more participation not less.

But participation without information is incomplete and ineffective. And that is why an 'ethic of openness' is vital. That is why I attach such importance to promoting and protecting a strong democratic culture.

It is only when there is such a culture that there are those ingredients of participation and openness. Only if democracy lives in the hearts of the people of a country and is real to them will that country's institutions work as they should. Only if their democratic culture is genuine and strong will it be capable of withstanding the threats and attacks launched by the enemies of liberty and freedom. Only if the democratic institutions are benefitting the people will they defend them.

That is why we must ensure that all citizens enjoy the full range of human rights.

There is a phrase in American politics: 'keep punching the bruise'. The idea is to keep repeating the key points again and again, for maximum effect. Mr Chairman, I intend to 'keep punching the bruise' about the importance of a healthy democratic culture and the 'determination to protect and promote basic human rights. These are fundamental if we are to achieve openness and participation. And they, in turn, are fundamental to our future wellbeing.

Let me say something about why this theme of 'democracy and development' matters.

It matters for development because there is so much poverty in our world today, denying so many of our people the fulfilment of their life chances. If there are ways in which we can - as the title of the Singh report puts it - 'make democracy work for pro-poor development' - then we must take them.

But the 'democracy and development' theme is also of the greatest importance for democracy itself. The world must know not only that democracy can be effective in combating poverty and promoting development but also that it is effective in combating poverty and promoting development.

The world must know not only that democracy can bring about change that improves the lives of ordinary people, but also have evidence that it does bring about such change.

The world must know not only that poverty - and so many of the other social and economic ills that disfigure our societies - can be tackled effectively by democratic means, but also that they are being tackled by democratic means.

For the sake of democracy as well as for the sake of development, if our case is that democratic politics can open up new possibilities and opportunities for individuals and for entire communities we must make sure that in practice it actually does so.

In short, democracy must deliver. And it must deliver in circumstances where freedom flourishes, human rights are upheld, gender equity is secured and where there is a culture of integrity.

If this does not occur, as we all know from so many examples - look for instance at what happened in Western Europe just 70 years ago - democracy will be in dire danger. Even today, there are many in those new democracies pointing to a lack of benefits and suggesting that it be discarded. That is the issue before us all. But if it is easy to state, we all know that it is less easy to tackle.

That is one of the reasons why, as I mentioned earlier, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the CPA last week held a workshop here in this very hotel for the Pacific region.

In co-operation with the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs we brought together representatives of governing parties, opposition parties and civil society from Commonwealth countries in the Pacific to discuss their relationship with each other and their contribution to the democratic process. We called the meeting 'Government and Opposition - roles, rights and responsibilities'.

We had a good discussion and there were some useful, practical proposals for future action. There will be a report. But I do not think I will be giving too much away if I tell you now that at the core of the discussion was the theme of how governing and opposition political parties relate to each other.

In a nutshell, there was a consensus that - as a matter of principle - the attitude of 'winner takes all', the failure to distinguish between the ruling party and the State, and the abuse of incumbency for party purposes, are not the way.

We also agreed that Government will not be effective in getting democracy to deliver unless it finds ways of working constructively together with the opposition parties and civil society and being open with the people.

Similarly, we came to the conclusion that opposition parties must act as constructive partners in the development of the democratic process.

Opposition parties have an equal responsibility with the ruling party to develop a shared commitment to the essentials of parliamentary democracy and to make parliament and all the other democratic institutions and processes work properly.

In short, Mr Chairman, at the core of our discussion were the twin convictions that the ruling and the opposition parties both need:

- to agree on a 'collaborative context' for their work and that – and here I come back to the theme of development and democracy - they both need:
- to recognise that they must work together in order to expand the capabilities and the possibilities of their people.

That is a challenging, important and, in some places, an urgent task. But we are democrats and democrats are invariably optimists. I know we have the ideas and that we can develop the necessary resolve.

It is on that note, Mr Chairman, that I want to conclude by once again commending you - the officers, members and staff of the CPA - for your tireless efforts to take forward our common belief in and commitment to parliamentary democracy, and the liberation and development opportunities it can bring.

Baudelaire said that the belief in progress was the ecstasy of fools. Well, the CPA and the Commonwealth itself was built on that 'foolish ecstasy', and our member countries and people are the better for it. Thank you for giving so much of your time, energy and enthusiasm to it.

I wish you well for a successful conference. And I wish you all the very best for your work back home, after this conference, to deepen democracy and promote development.

Thank you.



Appendix C

**Session details and workshop and
plenary reports from the 51st
Commonwealth Parliamentary
Conference**



51st COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
FIJI, 1-10 SEPTEMBER 2005

SESSION ARRANGEMENTS

P.M. TUESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER

REGIONAL GROUP MEETINGS

**ADDRESS BY COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION SECRETARY-GENERAL
HON. DENIS MARSHALL, QSO
ADDRESS BY COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL H.E. RT HON DONALD MCKINNON**

Chair: Hon. Ratu Epeli Naiatikau, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives
and President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Rapporteur: Mr Andrew Imlach, CPA Secretariat

Session Secretary: Ms Lily Faavae, Tuvalu
Mrs Ruth Blackman, Turks & Caicos

A.M. WEDNESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

WORKSHOPS

Workshop A Millennium Development Goal 1 - Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Moderator: Ms Sarmite Bulte, PC, MP, Canada

Lead Speakers : Hon Akanyang Magama, MP, Botswana
Mr Rick Stapenhurst, World Bank Institute
Smt. Sushma Swaraj, MP, India

Rapporteur: Mr David Williams, New Zealand

Session Secretary: Ms Christiana Solomonidou, Cyprus

CPA Secretariat: Mr Shem Baldeosingh

Workshop B Millennium Development Goal 6 - Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

Moderator: Mr Nigel Evans, MP, United Kingdom, MP

Lead Speakers : Dr Arvin Chaudhary
Hon. Judth Kapljimpanga, MP, Zambia
Dr Isabel Rocha Pimenta, World Bank Institute
Dr Jimmie Rodgers, South Pacific Community

Rapporteur: Mr Stephen Njenga, Kenya

Session Secretary: Mr Les Crellin, Isle of Man

CPA Secretariat: Ms Meenakshi Dhar

Workshop C	Millennium Development Goal 8 - Develop a Global Partnership for Development
-------------------	---

Moderator: Hon Somnath Chatterjee, MP, India

Lead Speakers : Ms Daisy Cooper, Institute of Commonwealth Studies
Mr Isikeli Matalotoga, Fiji
Dr Dorothy Rosenberg, UNDP

Rapporteur: Mr Nicholas Bouchet, CPA Secretariat

Session Secretary: Mr Aatsa Atogho, Cameroon

CPA Secretariat: Mr Nicholas Bouchet

P.M. WEDNESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

Workshop D	The Role of Parliament in Conflict-Affected Countries
-------------------	--

Moderator: Hon. Tupou Faireka, MP, Cook Islands

Lead Speakers : Mr. Bill Blaikie, MP, Canada
Mr K Scott Hubll, National Democratic Institute
Mr Rick Stapenhurst, World Bank Institute

Rapporteur: Mr Siow Han Pang, Singapore

Session Secretary: Mr Andrew Tuggey, United Kingdom

CPA Secretariat: Ms Meenakshi Dhar

Workshop E	Debt Relief and Development Aid Delivery
-------------------	---

Moderator: Mr Terry Sullivan, MLA, Queensland

Lead Speakers : Mr Carlos Comissal, Commonwealth Secretariat
Hon. Md. Alwi Che Ahmad, MP, Malaysia
Senator Kamil Ali Agha, MP, Pakistan

Rapporteur: Mr Todd Decker, Ontario

Session Secretary: Ms Carol Chafe, Canada

CPA Secretariat: Mr Shem Baldeosingh

Workshop F	Fighting Corruption - What Can Parliamentarians Do?
-------------------	--

Moderator: Hon Eudine Job-Davis, MP, Trinidad & Tobago

Lead Speakers : Hon Garry Breitkreuz, MLA
Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption
Hon Farouk Lawan MP, Nigeria
Mr Mosese Saitala, Pacific Forum Secretariat

Rapporteur: Mr Nicolas Bouchet, CPA Secretariat

Session Secretary: Mr Roy Devon, Scotland

CPA Secretariat: Mr Nicolas Bouchet

A.M. THURSDAY 3 SEPTEMBER

COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS BREAKFAST BUSINESS MEETING

Chair: Hon. Lindiwe Maseko, MPL
Chairperson, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians

Rapporteur: Ms Meenakshi Dhar, CPA Secretariat

PLENARY SESSION – MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL 3 - PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

Chair: Hon. Adi Teimumu Tuisawau Vuikab Kepa, MP, Fiji
Minister for Education &
President, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians

Lead Speakers: Ms Laisa Bale-Tulnamoala, UNIFEM
Mr Peter Kilfoyle, MP, United Kingdom
Hon Lindiwe Maseko, MPL, Chairperson,
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians
Hon. Dame Jennifer Smith, DBE, JP, MP, Bermuda

Rapporteur: Mr Andrew Imlach, CPA Secretariat

Session Secretaries: Mr David Forbes, Bahamas
Ms Priyane Wijesekera, Sri Lanka

P.M. THURSDAY 3 SEPTEMBER

**HOST BRANCH PLENARY SESSION –
DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF A CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT**

Chair: Hon. Ratu Epeli Naiatikau, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives
and President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Lead Speakers: Hon. Justice Michael Scott, Fiji
Mr Graham Leung, Fiji Law Society

Rapporteur: Mr Andrew Imlach, CPA Secretariat

Session Secretaries: Ms Sharonette Lewis, Jamaica
Ms Patricia Chaychuk, Manitoba

A.M. FRIDAY 9 SEPTEMBER

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Chair: Hon. Ratu Epeli Naiatikau, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives
and President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Rapporteur: Ms Tina Ngwira, CPA Secretariat

Session Secretaries: Mrs Mary Chapman, Fiji Islands
Mr Ken Tough, Guernsey

P.M. FRIDAY 9 SEPTEMBER

FINAL PLENARY SESSION
NATURAL DISASTERS - EFFECTIVE EARLY WARNING, RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION

Chair: Hon. Ratu Epeli Naiatikau, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives
and President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Lead Speakers: Mr William Erb, UNESCO
Mr Scott Hubli, National Democratic Institute
Mr Robin Yarrow, International Federation of Red Cross

Rapporteur: Mr Andrew Imlach, CPA Secretariat

Session Secretaries: Mr Russell Grove, New South Wales
Mr P D T Achary, India

CLOSING CEREMONY



Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference 2005 Summary of Workshops

Workshop A – Millennium Development Goal 1 – Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Moderator: Ms Samite Bulte, PC, MP, Canada
Lead Speakers: Mr Rick Stapenhurst, World Bank Institute
Hon Akanyang Magama, MP, Botswana
Smt. Sushma Swaraj, MP, India

Delegates from different regions of the CPA were unanimous in highlighting the role that parliamentarians can play in achieving the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

Rick Stapenhurst of the World Bank Institute lead off the discussion noting that world leaders had in 2000 set eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) covering a range of global development issues. A unique feature of these MDGs was the commitment from governments to work together and build a safer, more prosperous and equitable world. In effect a global partnership was formed with developing country governments committing to implement appropriate policies and reforms and developed country governments committing to increase aid resources.

He noted that we were here today to discuss MDG 1 – Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. This MDG, if achieved, would free more than a billion people from abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty.

These goals were being implemented though Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans (PRSPs), which were country driven and owned, results orientated and were driven by poverty priorities of individual countries. These provide a framework for countries to direct and coordinate poverty reduction programmes and donor support.

He also noted Parliaments had an important role in holding their governments to account in implementing these goals. Currently developing country parliaments were not engaged enough in providing an oversight function of the development of the PRSP process. Parliaments should be involved if the PRSP is to have meaningful country ownership, participation and genuine political support. The PRSP process creates obvious entry points for parliaments to become and remain involved. The World Bank and other donors have recognised this, and are providing support to sustain parliaments' involvement in the PRSP process.

The Hon Akanyang Magama, MP, Botswana dealt with how Africa has meeting the MDG to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. He began by noting that the post colonial period in Africa has been generally turbulent and disastrous in terms of economic development in Africa. The resultant situation has been growth in poverty, unemployment, income disparities and social decay, therefore Africa was far away from achieving the MDGs. Most African countries had not yet begun

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO
CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460 Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073 Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org



to develop institutional mechanisms to facilitate the accomplishment of these goals. What African needed was a development strategy which would result in qualitative and quantitative improvement in the lives of the majority of the people, the elimination of poverty, ignorance, disease, income disparities, unemployment, meaningful participation of people in decision making processes, and the ability to make critical political choices.

He noted that although one of the poorest countries in the world at independence (1966), Botswana has over the years transformed into one of the richest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, this has been growth with uneven development as exhibited by rising unemployment, persistent poverty and income disparities. The example of Botswana demonstrates that economic growth without a redistributive development agenda does not automatically translate into employment creation, poverty eradication and the general improvement of the material conditions of people.

He stated that the levels of poverty and inequalities are set to worsen as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Many of the limited achievements in the health sector have been dramatically reversed by this pandemic. However the HIV/AIDS pandemic should not be regarded as purely a medical problem. There is a link between the rates of infection and poverty and gender discrimination. Governments should come up with a comprehensive strategy that also addresses the issues of poverty and income disparities in the long term.

To achieve the MDGs, national, regional and global institutional reforms were necessary. At the national level a strong legislature is required to initiate and monitor implementation of policies geared towards poverty eradication. At the regional level, policies should be harmonised and issues of governance and accountability should not be comprised. Global institutions should be democratised and made more representative. Each of these institutions have specific and complementary roles in the fight against poverty and hunger.

The Smt. Sushma Swaraj, MP, India noted that it was ironical that on one hand, people are dying of poverty and hunger in some parts of the world, on the other, there was a conspicuous consumption by the affluent sections, in some pockets. Poverty is a complex issue, and needs to be addressed in an integrated manner. Poverty and hunger cannot be attributed to famine and drought alone. What was required is the creation of employment and durable assets to enable people to earn a livelihood. In the intervening period, we must also ensure that immediate deprivations are adequately addressed through targeted interventions.

India since its independence in 1947 has been engaged in this gigantic task of reduction and removal of poverty, which has been recognised in its constitution. In India, food security, which is closely linked with poverty alleviation, has been a consistent policy of the Government. They have a multi-sectoral approach to food security – availability of food, access to food, absorption and utilisation of food and reduction in vulnerabilities.

She also noted that from India's experience, they have learnt that there is an important difference between hunger and undernourishment and ignoring this distinction can lead to inappropriate interventions. Poverty reduction is one of the most important issues facing the elected representatives of the people, particularly in developing countries. Parliaments had a clear role to play in the fight against poverty and hunger. As resource mobilisers, parliamentarians should keep the removal of poverty and hunger high on our agenda and ensure that adequate allocation of funds are made available in our national budgets, and that these are properly utilised.

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO
CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460 Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073 Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org



In the discussion that ensued, G.R. Musafir, Speaker, (Himachal Pradesh) said that though various government assistance programmes India was making considerable progress towards the eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

Mr Christos Mavrokordatos, MP, (Cyprus) said that extreme poverty was, and would continue to be, a major issue for all parliaments. He noted that donor countries had recently faced financing issues relating to the increase of levels of ODA to 0.75 of GDP, and that governments needed to improve their efforts to meet this target.

Dr Eleni Theocharous, MP, (Cyprus) said that the use of oil revenues by developing countries in defence procurement needed to be addressed. These funds needed to be directed towards poverty reduction activities, not to purchase weapons.

Hon Moses Wetangula, (Kenya) said that the World Bank's previous Structural Adjustment Programmes had produced 10 years of non-achievement in the reduction of poverty in Africa. Also debt re-servicing and unfair international trade practices had not allowed African nations to deliver on reducing poverty and hunger in the region.

Hon Ibrahim Isa, Speaker, Kwara State, (Nigeria) noted that they had developed a programme to invite white farmers from Zimbabwe, to work and develop the farming industry. This was not only assisting in the development of food security in the country, but was also providing employment opportunities for local people.

Both the Hon Liow Lai, MP, (Malaysia) and Hon Datuk Talib Zulpilip (Malaysia) noted the achievement of effectively eradicating poverty in Malaysia, and that both the Government and Parliament had had important roles in this achievement. Redistribution of land and free education to the poor were important in enabling the development of the poor, and this would allow the opportunity for greater wealth distribution. They also noted that parliaments had an important role in the oversight of government and the fighting corruption.

Hon Chibuike Amaecmi, (River State, Nigeria) said that the economic growth of a country did not necessarily lead to food on the table for all. He also noted that multi-national companies in developing countries focused on profits, which were often taking out of the country, rather than assisting in poverty reduction.

Hon Afsatu Kabba, (Sierra Leone) said that education was a key in the reduction of poverty, as this empowered people to make considered decisions. The youth in developing countries also needed access to opportunity, or otherwise there was great potential that they would fall into a world of violence and drugs.

Dr George Mtafu, (Malawi) said that the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programmes were a mistake and had been over prescribed to the developing nations of the world, and called for a less prescriptive form of assistance from the Banks and donor nations. He noted that the financial burden of servicing loans was a major problem for debt-ridden nations, and this was not allowing for a focus on the immediate need to reduce poverty and hunger. He believed that MDG 8 was the most important of the MDGs, and called for donor countries and the World Bank and IMF to achieve this goal.



Margaret Ewing, (Scotland) said that parliaments and the CPA needed to consider how they would drive the discussion on poverty reduction with the G8, the United Nations and other international organisations. She also noted that parliaments had an important role to play in the oversight of poverty reduction and the delivery to the poor in each country.

Hon Ndye Cham, (Ghana) said that corruption was a major problem in developing countries and this needed to be tackled. Further development in the areas of good governance and participation by women were needed to assist in the reduction of poverty and hunger. He also noted developing countries needed to look at themselves first, not just point the fingers at donor countries on the lack of prosperity in developing countries.

Hon Andi Asenatha Thou Thou, (Fiji) said that Fiji does experience poverty, and had developed an integrated approach, which included cultural, political and spiritual considerations, in reducing poverty.

Hon Kato Metito, (Kenya) said that the developmental priority needs of developing countries were individually different, and that development donors needed to gain a greater appreciation of this. He also noted that developing countries needed justice and fairness from donors, not just generosity.

Senator K.L.K. Theko, (Lesotho) called for a strengthening of parliaments was needed to provide a greater scrutiny of government actions and work in eradicating poverty.

Hon McHenry Venaani, (Namibia) said that unfair international trade practices had contributed to a slower response to the reduction of poverty in developing countries, and called for a more fairer international trading environment for all countries.

Hon Franklin Khan, MP, (Trinidad and Tobago) said that it is impossible to have re-distribution of wealth, if there was no wealth. He noted that capitalism was the best way to develop wealth, but it did not cater for the redistribution of wealth. He suggested that governments should intervene and re-distribute wealth to reduce poverty, but that this should only be considered once an industry was fully developed.

Deputy Maurice Dubras, (Jersey) said that greater poverty reduction could be achieved in developing countries if national government funding was not directed towards the purchasing of weapons and corruption was tackled at all levels of government.

Kashmala Tariq, MP, (Pakistan) noted the effect of the WTO and unfair international trading policies had on the reduction of poverty in developing nations, and that parliaments had to do more to provide oversight of government decision-making and fight against corruption.

In conclusion delegates noted that great effort was being made to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and there were many challenges facing developing countries in meeting this target, and that Parliaments had an important role in providing an oversight of governments in delivering these strategies and programmes.

Report on Workshop B- Millennium Development Goal 6 on Combating HIV/Aids, Malaria and other diseases held in Frangipani Room- Sheraton Fiji Resort

Moderator- Mr. Nigel Evans, MP- United Kingdom

Lead Speakers:-

Dr. Arvin Chaudhary
Hon. Judith Kapijimpanga, MP Zambia
Dr. Isabel Rocha Pimenta, World Bank Institute
Dr. Jimmie Rodgers, South Pacific Community

The Workshop noted with concern that the HIV pandemic had exceeded all expectations since it was first diagnosed 24 years ago and the developing countries especially in the Commonwealth continued to bear the brunt of its spread.

Lead speaker, Dr. Arvin Chaudhary explained that it was as a result of this realization that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association convened a study group of Parliamentarians in New Delhi, India in January, 2005.

He added that the aim of the study group was to encourage Parliamentarians to develop understanding of HIV/Aids and its impact, identify key factors that facilitate its spread, define the role of the Parliaments and Parliamentarians and the CPA in addressing the pandemic and to develop a plan of action on the role of Parliamentarians, Legislatures and the CPA in combating the scourge.

While appreciating the attention paid to the epidemic by the United Nations and the CPA as exemplified by the creation of the study group and the adoption of the MDG 6 in 2000, the delegates affirmed that considering the impact of the scourge on the entire realm of human survival and development, it was important that all concerned must face the challenge posed by the virus as measures so far taken, although showing positive signs, have failed to stop the spread of the disease.

It was agreed that members of Parliament as leaders and shapers of public opinion have a crucial role to play in enhancing the fight against the scourge which has negated many development gains over the last 20 years.

These include:-

Talking openly about the virus at every opportunity; effectively utilizing available parliamentary processes in order to raise awareness in order to reduce stigma, among other benefits; starting multi- sectoral initiatives that improve the capacity of the people; and more importantly, empowerment of women.

Advocating for policies and initiatives to enhance accessibility of antiretroviral drugs to those who need them at an affordable price is a matter of priority.

The workshop noted that there was inadequate legal framework to protect the rights of those infected or affected against abuse and discrimination as well as protecting those at risk of infection.

It was generally agreed that there was a link between poverty and HIV/Aids with each causing or exacerbating the other and therefore for policies against the disease to be successful, address it from both fronts.

The delegates noted the positive role that the Abstinence, Being faithful, Condoms (ABC) of safe sex campaign has had on the reduction of prevalence rates in both Uganda and Zambia but however reiterated that as a generalized epidemic could not be eliminated by the use of condoms only as they were not readily available in certain areas. Change of behavior is very important in stifling the spread.

Hon. Judith Kapijimpanga (Zambia) observed that her country had made significant strides and appreciated the assistance advanced by the IMF and the World Bank under the structural adjustment program. She associated this success to the political leaders who have spearheaded the offensive against the virus and the intervention measures instituted by the government which had reduced the prevalence rates from 25 to 16%. These measures include education and have been expanded to encompass other diseases such as TB and malaria which is one of the top causes of

morbidity and mortality in the country. One practical step is the supply of treated nets to pregnant mothers. ARV program will soon be unveiled. She concluded that considering what has been achieved in Zambia, the disease can be defeated with proper commitment.

Isabel Pimenta (World Bank Institute) confirmed that at the global level, the scourge has showed no signs of slowing and instead is becoming more and more feminized with women accounting for 60% of those infected. She added that HIV was a development issue as it affects people's capacity to survive by killing them during their most productive age and will adversely affect the next generation as many children will not be raised by their parents.

The World Bank focuses on supporting countries to formulate and implement intervention measures, mainly through grants and is currently funding 70 projects worldwide with budget commitments of US \$ 2 billion. The HIV landscape is changing and the response needs to change as well specifically through scaling up the interventions and improving co-ordination of the various initiatives and Parliaments have a role in this regard.

Dr. Jimmie Rodgers (Solomon Islands) noted that due to inadequate resources, partnerships must be formed between the government, the civil society, the private sector and communities given the fact that HIV is no longer a purely health issue. The pacific region Parliamentarians had resolved to provide leadership which culminated into the signing of the Suva declaration in 2004. The region is on course to achieve MDG 6 by 2015.

Prof. Lord Ian McCall (United Kingdom) indicated that the successes achieved in Uganda had showed that there was hope in stopping the disease.

Ms. Loraine Braham (Northern Territory, Australia) indicated that HIV was not an epidemic in her area but there was need for vigilance in promoting education and communication with the young people to ensure that they are not infected.

Hon. Edward Ssekandi (Uganda) gave a review of the HIV situation and recalled that HIV was first diagnosed in Uganda in 1982 when it was seen as witchcraft and not a disease because it mainly affected young traders but later the government formulated policy interventions that led to a tremendous reduction in the prevalence rate from 31% in 1992 to 6.2% in

2002. Major pillars of Ugandan response included political will spearheaded by the President and Parliament which established a standing Committee to address the virus and policy responses.

Senator Isabella Katamzi (Swaziland) appraised the Workshop on the mobilization efforts especially from the top that have borne successful results but women need to be empowered to take positive action in avoiding infection.

Hon. Mwitila Shumina (Zambia) described HIV as a disaster in southern Africa like hurricane Katrina in the United States as burials for victims were being undertaken everyday and besides poverty, illiteracy was also impacting negatively on measures to curb the spread of the disease as it diminishes the capacity of the people to understand the magnitude of the crisis and transmission routes. The problem, he added is compounded by internecine conflicts perpetrated in the continent, at times by people who reside outside Africa.

Hon. Epli Nailatikau (Fiji) reiterated that political efforts were useful in reducing prevalence in Uganda and Thailand but family values in Fiji are considered the first line of defense but revert to condoms when that fails. He added that available data had showed that condoms save lives and hence people should be encouraged to use them.

Hon. Nancy Tembo (Malawi) reemphasized the role of awareness programs but conceded that some cultural practices such as polygamy and wife inheritance were undermining the gains made. She added that ARVs were working well but success was being impeded by poor infrastructure and inadequate health personnel to administer them due to brain drain.

Dr. Yusof Yacob (Malaysia) explained the significance of surveillance and screening programs particularly for IV drug users and commercial sex workers as a prevention measure and added that research efforts should be speeded up to find a vaccine or cure for the disease as ARVs are very expensive.

Commenting on the question of brain drain affecting African countries especially health workers, Hon. Alun Cairns (Wales) stated that there was a deliberate policy to stop the recruitment of health workers from developing countries but there was weakness in enforcing the policy.

In conclusion, delegates were in agreement that Parliamentarians have a critical role to play in disseminating information to the people to curb stigmatization which will in turn give them an opportunity to come up with practical solutions to combat the mammoth health, developmental and survival crisis that is facing them.

The issue of inadequacy of resources was also highlighted. The budget for HIV programs has more than doubled over the last few years and the challenge is to ensure that the available resources are utilized in a pragmatic, transparent and accountable manner.

In addition, there is a need to translate the multi-sectoral initiatives into action and this is a responsibility that must be borne by all at the individual and collective levels.

Nigel Evans (United Kingdom) concluded with the chilling statistics that during the 3 hours that the Workshop had been deliberating, over 8,000 people had died from Aids and that over 14,000 new infections of HIV had occurred.



Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference 2005 Summary of Workshops

Workshop C – Millennium Development Goal 8 – Developing a Global Partnership for Development

Chair: Hon. Somnath Chatterjee (India)

Presentations: Mr Isikeli Mataitoga (Government of the Fiji Islands)
Ms Daisy Cooper (Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit)

Delegates at the workshop discussed the international economic conditions that prevail and how these affect progress toward forging a true global partnership for development that is based on fairness to the needs and problems of developing countries. They also focused on how progress could be made on implementation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the role Parliamentarians could play in this process. Delegates agreed many of the central issues in the international development debate were not new and had been discussed for many years. Now the time has come to move the focus on implementation of measures and meeting commitments, capacity-building, monitoring progress and making the necessary intervention. Some questioned whether there was sincere commitment on the part of richer countries and bodies such as the G8 to making real progress on improving the development prospects of poorer countries.

Among the issues raised were:

Realizing aid targets – Delegates argued that any global partnership for development would need to be based on a relationship between rich and developing countries in which there was real effort on the part of rich countries to meeting commitments and promises such as the target of 0.7% of GDP to be used for international aid.

Fairness in the international economy – Delegates discussed the various ways in which the international system failed to protect the economic and social interests of small and developing countries, whether in bilateral or multilateral trade agreements. Despite a number of efforts and promises over many years, most developing countries still find themselves in a dependency relationship in matters of trade despite having substantial natural resources, especially if they are single-commodity economies. Their trading relationship with rich countries remain “one way” and the World Trade Organization has to address the very serious trading imbalances that persist in the international system. The point of regulation of international financial and currency markets was also raised developing countries find themselves at a serious economic disadvantage because of having to participate in the global economy with weak domestic currencies.

Many developing countries have made considerable efforts at adapting to the demands of the international trading system and at building an economy that is attractive to investors, yet they still face major economic threats to ongoing changes in the system such as the end of the multifibre

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II
CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460 Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073 Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org
Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO



agreement in textiles and the end of the agricultural trade protocols between the European Union and the ACP countries. This will lead to these countries facing serious unemployment problems despite their best efforts due to outside pressures.

Environmental concerns – The economic constraints faced by developing countries need to be seen in the perspective of environmental issues such as climate change and global warming that will have serious economic repercussions for them, threatening an increase in poverty levels. A global partnership between rich and developing countries will need to address how environmental are dealt with, e.g. in the search for renewable and sustainable sources of energy.

Debt cancellation and relief – There was recognition that there had been international efforts at cancelling the national debt of some developing countries, but whether this would be a panacea for their economic problems was uncertain. Some delegates argued that debt cancellation would not mean that large amounts of money would automatically become available to developing countries to spend on their economic and social priorities.

National ownership of programmes – Delegates agreed that there was a strong benefit to the state institutions and civil society having “ownership” of all programmes and efforts targeted at development. In most cases, there are many concurrent and competing international efforts to help development in many countries, which leads to unnecessary competition and duplication, waste of resources, and lack of coherence and focus. It is important therefore that these situations should be rationalized and Parliamentarians could help by designing overarching frameworks for such efforts. Parliamentarians would in this way facilitate a better relationship between international agencies, governments and civil society that would result in more effective programmes that are better suited to the specific needs and conditions of each country. MPs can also scrutinize Poverty Reduction Strategy Policies (PSRPs) as they are agreed with the IMF to make sure that the process does not dilute the national priorities in the PSRPs.

Improving governance – Parliamentarians also have an important role to play in supporting development by strengthening their role of oversight and guardians of accountability and transparency. Unfortunately, in many developing countries Parliament as an institution is not strong enough or independent enough from government, which limits its ability to promote development. By taking steps to strengthen participatory democracy, ensuring adequate separation of powers and building strong, stable and independent institutions, Parliamentarians can encourage more successful partnerships for development by making sure that their countries offer an attractive destination for foreign direct investment. Delegates said that in many developing countries there already are good laws that could achieve the above but their implementation and enforcement had been limited due to lack of resources and expertise. Furthermore, Parliamentarians need to ensure that the laws they enact should not be simply transplanted from other countries but instead foreign models should be adapted to suit local conditions.



Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference 2005 Summary of Workshops

Workshop D: The Role of Parliament in Conflict-Afflicted Countries

Moderator: Hon. Tupou Faireka, MP (Cook Islands)

Discussion Leaders: Hon. Bill Blaikie, MP (Canada)

Mr Scott Hubli, National Development Institute

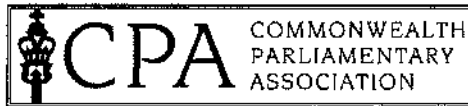
Mr Rick Stapenhurst, World Bank Institute

There was no doubt among the participants that parliaments can play a critical role in resolving conflicts within their borders. As a body that is lawfully elected and representing the collective voice of the people, parliaments are often in a position to shape their country's economic, social and political landscape. This is particularly so when it comes to preempting and preventing conflict before the situation deteriorates into violence and terrorism. The question is how do we structure a parliament with conventions, rules and sometimes power-sharing arrangements that are both legitimate to all conflicting parties as well as responsive to the needs of the whole nation, not just a particular party or group. It was obvious from the discussions that there are no simple and one-size-fits-all answers or solutions. Each participant shared their experience and unique set of challenges, often based on historical, racial, tribal, and religious divides that have torn or threatens to tear apart the fabric of nationhood. The problem may be complicated when the preconditions for the proper functioning of a parliamentary democracy are absent. Conflict-afflicted countries are characterized by the lack of democracy, mistrust of state institutions, the absence of a sizeable educated middle-class population, disrespect for the rule of law, weak civil societies and are often still struggling to achieve a national identity and a feeling of common destiny that is necessary to achieve national consensus in resolving differences.

Hon. Bill Blaikie, MP (Canada) shared with participants his views on the roots causes of conflict, the mechanisms in resolving such conflicts and building capacity within parliaments to do so. However, he concluded that the solution does not lie in capacity building alone because the problem is not only one of weak capacity. There is also a problem of missing political will and conviction. Parliaments sometimes become closed, self-serving institutions the members of which devote more energy in pursuing their own interests than acting as effective representatives of the people. When that happens, MPs can become one of the main sources of political anger and alienation that leads to violent conflict. Both MPs and governments need to put the institution ahead of their political agenda.

Mr Rick Stapenhurst (World Bank Institute) said that parliaments are natural forums which are uniquely designed to address contentious issues and relationship and thus can play a key role to contribute to peacebuilding. He highlighted the findings of the CPA Study Group on the Role of Parliament in Conflict-Afflicted Countries which was held in Sri Lanka in October 2004. The critical roles were participation and representation through the electoral process, reconciliation, oversight through transparent parliamentary debates, inclusive committee deliberations, legislative developments that promote freedom of information and human rights, and setting up institutional frameworks and oversight institutions. Other ways that parliament can contribute to peacebuilding

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO
CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460 Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073 Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org



include building relations with civil society and the media, enabling the role of the opposition, promoting socio-economic equality, decentralization of power, and participating in regional parliamentary peacebuilding.

Mr Scott Hubli (National Development Institute) reviewed five main categories of political governance challenges in conflict-affected countries. The first category of challenges involves building consensus on the rules of the post-conflict settlement. Although parliaments are typically not involved in negotiating a settlement, in some cases it is helpful to have parliamentary representation on the negotiating team. Foreign politicians and the international community can often play a helpful role in providing options and facilitating discussion constitutional design or reform and electoral system design. Second, he noted issues relating to inclusion. Parliaments are often the main vehicle for including all parties to the conflict in the formal political process; set asides for religious or ethnic minorities have sometimes been found appropriate. Parliaments also have a role in "selling the peace" and helping bridge the gap between political elites and citizens. Parliaments often have a role to play in including former combatants and in ensuring civilian oversight of the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) process, as well as post-conflict civilian oversight of the security sector. The third category of issues relates to competition and establishing healthy methods of political competition without resort to conflict. There is a variety among conflict-affected countries on this issue. In some conflicts where there has been an independence struggle (Palestine, East Timor), it is difficult to promote criticism of the government which is not viewed as unpatriotic. In other conflicts, government opposition divides in parliament may mirror the fault lines of the conflict, requiring greater work with parliament on managing majority-minority coalitions. Legitimate methods of financing political competition must also be found, or economic incentives relating to the conflict (e.g., blood diamonds, oil) may continue to fuel the conflict. The fourth category of issues deals with the legitimacy of the post-conflict government. There is also great variety here in the role of parliaments. In some post-conflict situations (Kosovo, Bosnia), the international community has maintained a strong role in governing, leaving little political space for parliaments to function. In others, formal sovereignty has passed to the parliament, although informal control is still exerted in other ways, leading to problems of legitimacy. The final category is effectiveness, or delivering the "peace dividend." This is a major issue in Iraq, where the government continues to struggle to restore services. Here parliament has a role to play both in managing public expectations regarding the pace of reform and the "peace dividend" and in conducting oversight to ensure that services are delivered.

Mr. Hubli concluded by noting the importance of finding a role for the international community in providing transparent financing for political parties in conflict-affected countries, situations where they may have little access to legitimate revenue. He mentioned the amount the international community spent on elections in Afghanistan may not be effective in reflecting the will of the people, without providing funding to parties to compete. This leads to elections being funded by warlords, the illegal narcotics trade or foreign countries. He mentioned the UN provision of funding to political parties in Mozambique in the post-transition, where the international community funded a system of public finance for the parties.

Role of International Organisations

Hon. Steve Pratt, MLA (Australian Capital Territory) shared his experience in the OACE and concluded that international intervention in conflict-afflicted countries presented daunting

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO
CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460 Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073 Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org



challenges but may be necessary in some cases. However, such international organizations must persevere to help build capacity and develop civil society in such countries. He suggested that CPA has a major role to play, especially in influencing CHOGM to be more effective in this area.

Hon. JJ Kamotho, MP (Kenya) commended the work of the United Nations (UN) for its efforts in maintaining world peace. National parliaments should adopt and where possible, legislate conventions passed by the UN. He also believed that regional institutions to ensure peace should be strengthened, especially in terms of capacity. On an individual level, parliamentarians can promote peace through negotiations.

Hon. Mwitila C. Shumina, MP (Zambia) shared an example of a regional organization where parliamentarians of a region address issues of conflict. The Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace or Amani Forum was set-up in 1998. Each member country has a local chapter which organizes meetings at both national and regional levels. Activities such as fact finding missions were organized where MPs went down to the ground, talked to the people and discussed possible solutions among themselves.

Hon. Mr Khondker Hossain, MP (Bangladesh) asked what can the international parliamentary organizations such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) realistically do and how they can provide practical help to parliamentarians in resolving conflicts? He said that such international organizations have not played a critical role in resolving conflicts.

Hon. Datuk Dr Haji Yusof Bin Haji Yaacob, MP (Malaysia) cautioned that before any form of international intervention is proposed, MPs should first try and understand the underlying causes or type of conflict in a country. This is important because the method of addressing the problem must depend on the nature of the conflict. In Malaysia, potential racial conflict is averted by a political power-sharing arrangement and by restricting the making and disseminating of inflammatory statements which may deepen racial divides.

Hon. Dr Neil W. McGill, MP (Jamaica) added that multinational and international organizations may themselves be a contributing factor or one of the causes of conflict within a country. Parliamentarians should be aware that not all conflict is caused internally, and, even if they are, may be exacerbated by external parties.

Hon. George M' Tafou, MP (Malawi) said that a common denominator of conflict was the struggle for power and authority. Such conflict may be fuelled by external parties, for example, by the provision of financial support. Parliaments should recognize this and not wait for too long and allow conflicts to degenerate.

Prevention is better than Cure

Smt. Sushma Swaraj, MP (India) said that conflict arises when a group of people feels left out, discriminated against or that their grievances were not heard. She suggested that parliamentarians nip the issue at the bud by taking up such matters and bring it to the negotiating table with the government. In India, parliament has made government accountable for its actions and, in this way, averted conflicts.



Hon. Speaker GR Mussafir, (Himachal Pradesh) said that parliament has a role in conflict management and resolution. He suggested that human rights clauses be protected by the Constitution, minorities be represented in parliament, a level playing field for all political players, freedom of information for the media, regular interaction between Mps and aggrieved groups in their constituencies, initiating, national campaigns, and provide opportunities for employment and education. He concluded by stating that poverty and conflict are closely inter-related. Therefore, poverty eradication programmes should be given priority by parliament.

Mr Mahinda Yapa, MP (Sri Lanka) observed that where a country has been torn apart by terrorism and where the lives of politicians themselves are in danger, there is very little that parliamentarians can realistically do in reducing such acts of terror. Mr Steve Pratt acknowledged the difficulties, but suggested that MPs can be proactive and contribute the most before terrorism sets in.

Democracy and Good Governance

Using Cyprus as a backdrop, Dr Eleni Theocharous, MP (Cyprus) believed that the preconditions for ending strife in conflict-afflicted countries are the restoration of human rights, establishing justice, encouraging democracy and allowing more freedom. If one of these factors are missing, conflict will occur.

Hon. Vincente Ulu, MP (Mozambique) said that one of the origins of conflict stems from the behaviour of government. Examples of such behaviour are lack of democracy, absence of good governance, violation of human rights, corruption and patronage and policies of discrimination and exclusion. He felt that one way of averting conflicts is by having an effective Committee of Petitions where people can raise their complaints and grievances and where MPs can keep in contact with the people and realities on the ground.

Deputy Maurice Dubras (Jersey) posed several questions to the floor and asked about the relationship between parliamentary democracy and the underlying causes of conflict, why conflict keeps breaking out in countries where there are already established representative institutions, real examples of what is to be done by parliament and other parties in resolving conflicts and whether the problem was that governments had become too powerful in certain countries and does not respect human rights.

Hon. Mr Andrew Rossindell, MP (UK) suggested that democracy is an important factor in resolving conflict. It gives people a voice during the election process. He felt that in resolving conflicts which manifest as terrorist acts it was important to uphold democracy, engage in dialogue with affected parties, support the government's measures to eradicate terrorism, work closely with the UN, and uphold justice when resolving such problems.

Individual Role of Parliamentarians

Hon. Alban Bagbin, MP (Ghana) said that most parliamentarians do know the reasons of conflict within a country. However, MPs must rise above their biasness and prejudices for the common good. He cautioned that MPs should ignore problems and allow them to fester till conflict breaks out. Hon Krishna Dutt, MP (Fiji) observed that the biggest stumbling block could be the MPs themselves and that parliamentarians could be one of many sources of conflict. In Fiji, the power-

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO
CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460 Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073 Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org



sharing arrangement between the majority and opposition parties is still a work in progress. New conventions such as the relationship between majority and opposition parties in Cabinet and in parliament need to be established. While the capacity for change is there, he believed that attitudes that uphold not just the letter, but also the spirit the power-sharing arrangements are not changing fast enough.

Hon. Senator Mitieli Bulanauca, (Fiji) explained that in Fiji the parliament is seeking reconciliation and moving from an attitude of retribution to one of restoration. It seeks to be inclusive in the law-making process, holding committee meetings for members of civil society to submit its views. However, he cautioned that civil society itself may become a source of conflict if they have a negative agenda that threatens to weaken the parliamentary institution and divide a country.

Hon. Senator Anand Singh, MP (Fiji) mentioned that certain legislation may create problems and widen rifts in society. Such Bills are a problem for parliament, especially for the opposition. The problem becomes more complex when the military threatens to be involved in the law-making process. Hon. Mataiba Ragigia, MP (Fiji) said that the all Bills brought to parliament undergo a process that allows for accountability by the government and representation by MPs. MPs should not boycott such avenues and deny the views of the community they represent. The issue in his country is how to solve the opposition's dilemma and get them to participate in the legitimate and democratic law-making process.

In his conclusion, Hon. Bill Blaikie admitted that MPs can be part of the problem. Their role was to find solutions not create problems. MPs must focus on this role. Building a strong parliament can be helpful not just in resolving conflicts, but also in debt management. International institutions want to be assured that the government can be monitored and be held to account by parliament.

Mr Scott Hubli agreed that it was difficult for parliamentarians to solve a conflict when it has degraded to terrorism. However, it is still possible as shown in the Northern Ireland conflict and more recently, the settlement in Aceh. The catalyst could be a change in leadership, death of a personality, or tragic national events as in the tsunami. However, the role of parliamentarians is more effective and crucial in preventing conflicts from arising.

Mr Rick Stapenhurst said that international conflicts can be greatly alleviated by regional groupings and exchanges among MPs, such as the Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace and bilateral friendship groups. These mechanisms can provide a bridge between countries. He also observed that in the tsunami affected countries, both the Indonesian government had made concessions and arrived at a win-win situation after the disaster. In Sri Lanka, the government had made some concessions, but it was still a win and see situation. In Thailand, parliament can play a greater role than they do at the moment by entering into dialogue with regional leaders in southern Thailand and surface the issues and problems at a national level.

Hon. Tupou Faireka, MP (Cook Islands) concluded by thanking the discussion leaders and all participants for their views. He said the solutions cannot be found at a single meeting, but hoped that the meeting had provided a platform for delegates to follow-up with discussion leaders and other Members in the journey towards conflict-resolution.



Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference 2005 Summary of Workshops

Workshop E – Debt Relief and Development Aid Delivery

Moderator: Mr. Terry Sullivan, MP, Queensland

Lead Speakers: Mr. Carlos Comissal, Commonwealth Secretariat
Hon. Md. Alwi Che Ahmad, MP, Malaysia
Senator Kamil Ali Agha, MP, Pakistan

Introduction

The Chair of the session, Mr. Terry Sullivan, MP (Queensland) led off with remarks setting the context of the foreign aid and debt relief issues. The chair noted that while the concept of helping people in need seems simple, and that there are many examples of success, it is also fraught with numerous barriers, including conflict among the aid deliverers, the conditionality of much aid, and whether organizations such as the IMF or World Bank may sometimes pose hindrances more than help. He invited the participants to explore these issues more fully.

Lead Speakers

Hon. Alwi Che Ahmad, MP (Malaysia) was the first panelist. He complimented the chair on nicely summarizing the issues.

Mr. Ahmad began by noting that it is a tenet of all religions, of all denominations, that the rich should help the poor, the strong help the weak, and this is the core of development aid. He remarked upon the recent G8 initiative to forgive US\$50 billion of foreign debt, but asked the question, will it really happen?

He noted that aid can come in many forms, not just money, and that Malaysia sees the value of providing aid in the forms of technology transfer and training, citing the example of the Malaysian Training Corporation Program.

Mr. Ahmad said that a big problem is that most people think that “aid” equals “money”, and that the expectations of poorer nations are to receive aid (money) without pre-conditions.

Mr. Ahmad again emphasized the duty of all to help those who need it, but that it is also the responsibility of poor nations to ensure that they deserve being helped. He completed by noting that “if you make your neighbors rich, you do not have to help them.”

The second panelist was Mr. Carlos Comissal, Representative of the Chairperson of the Commonwealth HIPC Ministerial Forum. He noted that the Commonwealth Secretariat has been at the forefront of pressing for more aid and development relief. He referred to the recent Commonwealth HIPC Ministerial Forum in Maputo, Mozambique at which important recommendations were made concerning steps that could be taken to improve debt relief mechanisms, ensure the long-term sustainability of the debt, and finance the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). Among the recommendations was a call for even deeper and



wider debt relief (and note was made of the subsequent G8 initiative); legal assistance to countries facing debt-related litigation; and initiatives to mobilize funding for PPP's in post-conflict countries.

The third panelist was Senator Kamil Ali Agha, MP, (Pakistan) who noted that the poorest countries of the world have a combined net aid debt to the rich countries of US\$523 billion, representing fully 50% of their combined gross national products. He said that this burden is unsustainable and that most very poor countries will require complete debt cancellation in order for them to meet the MDG's. He noted that Pakistan has huge difficulties addressing its foreign debt, made worse by fluctuating commodity prices and foreign currency exchange rates. Nevertheless, Pakistan has managed to reduce its external debt (from \$37.9 billion in the 1990's to \$33.1 billion by March, 2005) at a faster rate than expected due to a concerted effort and principled debt-reduction strategy. Nevertheless, Pakistan's remaining debt still represents 457% of total annual revenues as at end of March, 2005.

The final panelist was Mr. Hugh Bayley, MP, (UK) who noted that the UK has put a major focus over the last few years on development in Africa, and that the G8 has committed to double aid throughout the world. Mr. Bayley observed that many countries are on track to meet the MDG's, but that many countries in Africa are moving away from attaining them. Specifically, he noted that poverty reduction in African countries must be sustained in order to maintain the help of rich countries. He also remarked that debt is a millstone around the necks of the poor, and that interest payments on debt are negative aid, noting that the poorest countries received \$27 billion in aid but had \$39 billion in interest payments. Therefore, writing off debt is crucial. The recent G8 debt relief initiative was again noted and Mr. Bayley said that the UK and Canada had both wanted to extend even more debt relief to non-HIPC countries, but that this was not accepted by the G8.

Finally, Mr. Bayley discussed the report of the Commission for Africa (full text of report available at <http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/report/introduction.html>). He urged all to read it, but expressed the view that even if its recommendations were implemented, they would still be insufficient to achieve the MDG's.

Interventions/Contributions

Ms Margaret Ewing, MSP (Scotland) noted that while her country is wealthy, foreign aid is a national responsibility. Still, Scotland has budgeted £3 million for the delivery of aid to grassroots organizations to assist specific organizations. She said that there is a sense that money often disappears and so targeting it directly is helpful. People are generous and want to help but with corruption being an issue people want to know their aid money is being spent wisely.

Hon Fatima Hajaig, MP, (South Africa), began by thanking donor nations for their aid, and drew attention to Africa's "by-Africans-for-Africans" NEPAD program and noted that African countries want to have a successful partnership with donor nations to make it work. She noted that many recipient countries are setting out their own development goals that are gaining respect in donor nations. Finally, though, Ms. Hajaig expressed disappointment at the outcome of the Gleneagles G8 summit.

Hon. Felix Owusu-Adjapong (Ghana) identified the problem that successful development often brings the unwanted side effect of inflation and higher cost of living, actually making the poor poorer.

Hon. Ntlhohi Motsamai (Lesotho) noted that Lesotho, which might be considered one of the most eligible countries for aid, was not eligible for NEPAD. As a result, for many African, such as those in Lesotho, debt cancellation is an abstract notion.



Hon. Judith Kapyimpanga (Zambia) remarked that the pre-conditions that often go with aid are suffocating, and Africans question whether aid further colonizes, rather than assists, many nations.

Hon. Gabriel Suswan (Nigeria) raised the view that debt is a vicious cycle and that conditions on aid are stifling. He believes aid should come with no conditions, as it does not seem that many countries can get out of debt, including most NEPAD countries, who live on aid.

Hon. Eleni Bakapanos, MP, (Canada) made the point that rich countries also have debt, and that surpluses in Canada in recent years have been used, in part, to pay off Canada's own high debt, which was accumulated over generations. She advised that many Canadian parliamentarians do not agree with Canada's decision not to commit to the 0.7% aid goal at this time, and said that she believes the target should be even higher, 1% at least. She noted that Canada has targeted aid to 20 countries based on various priorities, including education, gender equality and health. Ms. Bakapanos also raised the notion that clean, safe drinking water is at the essence of everything and that Canada possesses unique expertise in this field and ought to offer it at no cost to recipient poor nations. Finally, she raised the growing importance of micro-credit as a means to assist small businesses and grow underdeveloped economies.

Hon. Moses Wetangula (Kenya) said that in his country, 30% of GDP goes to service debt, and noted this is similar in many African countries. He raised the idea that we always talk about debt relief, but the issue should be debt consolidation. The G8 summit picked and chose which countries to help but it ignored the notion that all humans are equal and that poverty in Kenya is no less painful to Kenyans than it is elsewhere. We need a uniform approach. He also discussed serious barriers related to aid, including that most aid money is repaid to donor nations in interest, and that much aid comes with pre-conditions that prevent recipient countries from purchasing products and services from the lowest-cost provider, tying the spending of the aid to suppliers from the donor country/block.

Hon. Dorothy Motubatse (South Africa) in some ways echoed the statements of Mr. Owusu, noting that the success of South Africa has produced a fast-growing economy which, in the absence of aid, has presented many challenges to the government with respect to the resources it has at hand for important services like education and health.

Hon. Lesego Motsumi (Botswana) said that a lot of debt is very old and some developed countries share a responsibility for how it was accumulated. As well, he noted that Botswana needs to import many goods and that in Botswana HIV/AIDS is an extremely serious issue. The cost of medications to treat it are very high, but there is no aid for Botswana. Further, thousands of economic refugees from neighbouring Zimbabwe flooding into Botswana further strains resources.

Hon. Mahader Shivankar, (India) also said that aid can come in forms other than money, including technology transfer and trade promotion. In his view, India's debt of US\$123.3 billion is manageable.

Hon. Syed Shah, (Pakistan) said that the world is engulfed in a state of terrorism whose primary root cause is abject poverty. He believes that the CPA, the IPU and the UN are the correct forums for the expressions of political will needed to address the imbalance in the world economic order and called upon his colleagues to act now.

Hon. Rajiv Ranjan Singh (India) said that there is a growing willingness in developed countries to address debt relief, but that more than debt relief must be considered in order to achieve the MDG's, and that debt



relief must be extended beyond HIPC's to LIC's. He is of the view that good government, democracy and transparency are the keys to growth.

Hon. Ibrahim Isa (Kwara) reiterated the theme that so much of poor countries' GDP goes to debt service, and that this erodes the resources needed for development. As well, much of the debt accrued in Nigeria in the 1970's was pilfered by unaccountable leaders and sent to offshore bank accounts.

Hon. Mohamed Ozfia Nassar (Sarawak) said that debt relief in itself is not a solution, but that it is important that national budgets of recipient countries dedicate a fixed amount for development (he prefers 60%) and that there must be no borrowing for administrative costs of government. He also noted the issue that aid is borrowed in domestic currency but must be repaid in the donor's currency.

Hon. Peter Jiya, (Nigeria) questioned the sincerity of western nations. For instance, they say their goal is transparency and good government in debtor nations, yet they accept looted funds from developing countries. He noted that Nigeria's debt of \$5 billion has grown to \$33 billion, despite \$40 billion having been paid over the years.

Hon. L.D. Chimango, (Malawi) commended the Gleneagles G8 process, and noted it would have been unheard-of 5 years ago. However, poverty is glaring and people are dying from disease and hunger. He urged parliamentarians to be responsive and responsible in designing programs.

Sen. Philip Ozouf (Jersey) said that small states also have a responsibility, and noted that banking jurisdictions like his can help when it comes to misappropriation of funds. Jersey measures its aid as a percentage of overall tax revenue (which currently does not generate 0.7%). Jersey's aid is delivered by a parliamentary committee, not the executive, and only NGO's are funded. There is no direct aid to governments. Mr. Ozouf said that people in Jersey are convinced of the need to provide foreign aid and it is viewed as very important. Jersey's contribution may be small, but Mr. Ozouf said his country can try to lead by example.

Hon. Aminee Masari, (Nigeria) supported panelist Alwi Che Ahmad, MP Malaysia, and said it is not about aid, but about justice. It was pointed out that interest rates on loans are exorbitant, and noted that while Nigeria had borrowed \$8 billion and repaid over \$40 billion, it still owes \$32.5 billion.

Hon. Fatima Hajaig, MP, (South Africa) raised the question of why many poor countries even have to ask for aid. She said many countries may have an edge in many commodities but that they cannot compete fairly in the EU or other markets. For instance, the EU subsidizes its cows at \$3 while many Africans subsist on \$1. She said that a level playing field is all that is being asked and she questioned the sincerity of the north in wanting to see the south get developed.

Hon. Eleni Bakapanos, (Canada) noted that the international trade system sometimes works against developed countries as well.

Summary

In summing up the session, Mr Che Ahmad again emphasized his view that not only money is important, but that other things like technology transfer are part of the answer. He paraphrased the saying, 'give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.' Mr Bayley summarized by noting that the G8 has now made real progress, but that more is needed. He said it was a political battle to get buy-in from people. In addressing the conditionality of some aid, he said that he would



not want to give a single £ of aid on terms not wanted by the recipient, and he urged parliamentarians from recipient countries to press their governments to disclose the terms of aid, and to reject it if it is not acceptable. Once the aid is accepted, though, the recipient country must accept the responsibility to accomplish the specific goal of the aid.

On the issue of stolen money held abroad, he noted that it is held in private banking accounts, and not by foreign governments, so the solution to repatriate it is through the courts. He also accepted that aid should be untied and that recipient countries should be able to buy goods where they wish, not just from the donor country. He also does not agree that conditions such as privatization should accompany aid. Again, he said that ties and conditions should be disclosed to the parliament and parliamentarians should decide if the loans are acceptable, not just the executive. He finished by saying that aid is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end – development. He quoted the saying “with shoes, one can walk through thorns”, observing that aid is a shoe to assist developing countries to navigate the thorns along the way to successful development, good governance, transparency, and democracy.

Conclusion

The Chair thanked the lead speakers, those who gave administrative support and all the delegates who contributed to the discussion.



Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference 2005 Summary of Workshops

Workshop F – Fighting Corruption – What Can Parliamentarians Do?

Chair: Hon. Eudine Job-Davis (Trinidad and Tobago)
Presentations: Hon. Garry Breitzkreuz (Saskatchewan)
Hon. Farouk Lawan (Nigeria)
Mr Mosese Saitala (Pacific Forum Secretariat)

The Workshop discussed the different ways in which corruption paralyzes their societies and damages their economies, and exchanged ideas on how Parliamentarians could take action at the national and international level. Throughout the discussions delegates agreed that corruption could be found at the root of a number of problems and behind its various aspects corruptions boils down to governments and institutions not being accountable for money given to them. Accountability was described as basically being the forces beyond one's control that forces us to act in a certain way. It was also pointed out that corruption is about more than just the misuse of money, it is about misuse of power. Although corruption is present in both rich and poor countries, it is clear that it has a deeper impact in poor countries and greatly hinders efforts to reduce poverty. One delegate argued that the extent of corruption in any country was an indicator of the strength of its institutions that are responsible for governance.

Delegates were told of the work carried out by groups such as the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) and the African Parliamentary Network Against Corruption (APNAC), which were created to offer an opportunity for Members to become engaged in a network that helps them fight corruption with each other's support. All delegates were in agreement that nothing could be done to combat the spread of corruption and roll back practices that have become entrenched unless there is complete political will at all levels of the state, and especially from the most senior levels. Different institutions such as government, political parties, the judiciary and civil society need to work better together in rooting out corruption, rather than compete or become paralyzed by infighting. Should the political will be absent in these institutions, even the best legislative provisions and anti-corruption mechanisms will not be very useful.

As far as the behaviour of MPs is concerned, delegates debated how the introduction of codes of ethics could be used to prevent corrupt behaviour and whether it was desirable to have a system in which there was at least a degree of immunity for MPs and senior public figures. In some countries, the issue of corrupt and criminal individuals seeking political office or influence to protect themselves from prosecution was raised as being dangerous. Delegates also argued the merits of regulating (including through legislation) the conduct of leaders and how to build proper mechanisms to enforce any such regulations. Another point raised was the introduction of rules to prevent departing senior public figures such as Ministers and high-ranking civil servants from immediately taking up employment in certain capacities where there is a conflict of interest based on their previous public responsibilities.

Delegates also put forward the point that laws and regulations should be in place to prevent certain individuals from achieving undue influence on the political process through the use of campaign donations or through their ownership of media businesses. (Delegates also raised the point of whether it is desirable for media corporations to have a number of other commercial interests.)

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO
CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460 Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073 Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org



The institution of Parliament has two fundamental roles to play in fighting corruption: (1) by exercising fully its oversight role, and (2) to ensure punishment of wrongdoers. In all its actions Parliament should aim to strengthen the demand for greater accountability and for clear laws against corruption. Laws enacted should aim to strengthen all institutions of governance and especially their independence so that any efforts on their part to fight corruption could not be stymied.

Parliament can only operate properly, especially in regard to the fight against corruption, if its operational and constitutional independence is guaranteed and if it has the autonomy and resources to perform its duties. Parliamentarians should become champions of their institution and help in securing adequate resources and its independence from the other branches of government. Parliamentary committees should be constitutionally empowered to conduct investigations, some delegates said. It is vital that parliamentary committees are given the time and resources to carry out such investigations, and are given the ability to compel the appearance of witnesses and the deposition of documents.

Parliament could also help defeating the entrenchment of a culture of corruption by organizing public awareness campaigns, especially targeting children and young people. Delegates agreed that since corruption can only thrive in a certain social environment, it was of great importance to engage with children and young people before they became caught up in existing practices. Similarly it was argued that in any parliamentary effort against corruption, new and young MPs should be targeted so that they do not become influenced by established corrupt practices. In order to reinforce these efforts, Parliamentarians should strive to involve civil society in meaningful consultation as part of the legislative process and seek their input before drafting Bills, e.g. for Access to Information Bills that would foster greater transparency in governance by allowing members of the public to be fully informed of what public institution do.

Parliaments and MPs should also take a proactive stance in disclosing such things as Members' interests or political donations, it was put forward, rather than wait to comply with any eventual legislation requesting them to do so.

The idea that Parliaments should enact public finance management legislation was mooted. It was also argued that in the case of corruption in the public sector, governments should make every possible effort to ensure that civil servants are properly remunerated and are able to operate in a good working environment so as to make them less vulnerable to corrupt offers.

Delegates warned against using partisan politics in cases of corruption and letting this lead to a situation where MPs are "defending the indefensible" simply because of political sympathy or expediency. Political reasons should also not be used to slow down any process for the prosecution and punishment of those accused and convicted of corruption. The operation of Parliament and parliamentary committees should not be hindered by political competition and a good relationship between the majority and the opposition is more conducive to a climate where the fight against corruption can be politically neutral. Delegates argued that the fight against corruption should be a matter for Parliament as a whole, for all parties and Members, rather than leaving it to the action of the Public Accounts Committee or the scrutiny of the opposition.

Ultimately, delegates agreed that it was of the utmost importance that Parliamentarians and public figures should conduct themselves publicly and privately in a blameless way, so that they can fully play a leadership role by providing an example to other members of society. In too many instances, some delegates said, the public stance some leaders take against corruption is undermined by their private behaviour that is known to members of the public.



**51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
Nadi, Fiji Islands**

Gender Plenary – 8 September 2005

Millennium Development Goal 3 — Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Education is key to the social, economic and political empowerment of women, agreed many Members at the 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference's plenary discussion of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on gender.

While delegates at the 8 September meeting in the Fiji Islands also advocated economic assistance programmes for women, the passage of anti-discrimination legislation and the provision of institutional support such as gender equality commissions, the improvement of educational opportunities was most commonly cited as critical to the achievement of the MDG of gender equality.

African Members in particular joined opening speaker Ms Laisa Bale-Tuinamoala of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in arguing that all eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals are linked so the empowerment of women will contribute to the achievement of the other goals. But there was pan-Commonwealth agreement that educating women will enable them to take their rightful place in all sectors of society.

Two other leading speakers, Hon. Dame Jennifer Smith, MP, (Bermuda) and Mr Peter Kilfoyle, MP, (United Kingdom) joined Malaysian and Fijian Members in noting that women in many countries are already moving ahead in education, especially at the tertiary level. But the session's other leading speaker, Hon. Lindiwe Maseko, MPL, (Gauteng) and parliamentary colleagues from Swaziland, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Gambia, India and the South African province of Limpopo indicated women in many other countries still lack educational opportunities equal to men.

They cited statistics showing that education empowers women by improving their economic prospects, their own health and the health of their families and their chances of advancing into key decision-making positions, including holding parliamentary seats.

Members from Fiji Islands, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Gambia, India, the Indian state of Karnataka and Australia's Northern Territory spoke of the benefits to women and to society as a whole which are derived from economic assistance programmes, especially those helping women to set up their own businesses.

Support for women's rights through the establishment of gender ministries, commissions and agencies was advocated by Ms Maseko and Members from India, Pakistan, Malaysia and South Africa's Western Cape province. Members from Pakistan, the Northern Territory, Zambia, Malawi and Cameroon stressed the merits of a legislative approach so that Parliamentarians pass anti-discrimination laws and laws against such gender-based offences as sexual harassment and domestic violence.

In the political arena, Members from Wales, the Northern Territory, Canada, Lesotho and Limpopo said political parties can play an effective role in increasing the numbers of women holding elected office.

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II

CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom

Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460

Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073

Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org



While admitting that gender targets have not been reached, including the Commonwealth target of having one-third of decision-making positions and parliamentary seats held by women by 2005, Dame Jennifer and Members from the Fiji Islands, Mozambique, Wales, Lesotho, Ghana and India said progress is being made. A Kenyan, a Tongan and a Gambian, however, provided less optimistic assessments of progress in their countries.

Linking development goals

Ms Bale-Tuinamoala, UNIFEM's Co-ordinator for the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), said the empowerment of women would help the world to reach not just the gender MDG but all of them.

In addition to the goals that directly relate to women — Goal 3 to promote gender equality and Goal 5 to improve maternal health — she noted that Goal 1 to eradicate poverty and hunger directly affects women, who constitute the majority of the world's poor. Goal 6, combating diseases including HIV/AIDS, affects women as she said half of the world's AIDS sufferers are women. Goal 8 to develop a global partnership for development often leaves women out.

She listed indicators to show whether women are being disadvantaged. Members could monitor the ratio of boys to girls in primary education as in some countries many girls are not sent to school. National literacy rates could similarly be monitored to determine if women are able to progress at the same rate as men.

At the political level, Ms Bale-Tuinamoala said Mozambique reached this year's Commonwealth target of 30 per cent of parliamentary seats being held by women and other countries such as New Zealand, South Africa and The Bahamas are close. Legislation or affirmative action is being used in some countries to improve the gender balance, she added.

The UNIFEM official said the MDGs continue CEDAW and the United Nation's Beijing Platform of Action for the empowerment of women. However, she added there is currently insufficient gender-segregated development data available to accurately determine how programmes are impacting on women.

The parliamentary target

While the initial Commonwealth target of having women in 30 per cent of parliamentary seats and other decision-making positions by 2005 had not been reached, Dame Jennifer said women have made progress. She cited statistics indicating that in 1995 women occupied a global average of 11 per cent of parliamentary seats, an average that has risen to 15.8 per cent today. Of the more than 43,000 Parliamentarians worldwide, just over 6,700 are women, she said.

However, she said the rate of increase must increase as the 30 per cent target will be reached by 2025, not by the new Commonwealth deadline of 2015, and gender parity will not come until 2040.

Dame Jennifer noted the Caribbean is leading the way in having women in visible, high-ranking positions. Many Commonwealth Caribbean Presiding Officers are women, Bahamas and Barbados have female Deputy Prime Ministers and many other women hold senior ministerial and party positions. A former Bermudian Senator, Dr Norma Cox Astwood, was instrumental in establishing the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians.

But despite constituting more than half the population, Dame Jennifer said women are still under-represented in Commonwealth Parliaments although in the Caribbean there are more women in advanced education than men.



She encouraged serving women Parliamentarians to urge more young women to get involved in politics and to lobby for reviews of working hours and the whole culture of Parliament. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association booklet on *Gender Sensitizing Commonwealth Parliaments* could help.

The provision of childcare and training programmes, the sharing of practices and mentoring of women with parliamentary potential by current MPs would help to improve the parliamentary gender balance. Women are not afraid to seek power, she concluded.

Political will

Mr Kilfoyle told delegates that achieving the MDGs and implementing gender equality policies, including positive discrimination where necessary, will contribute to the empowerment of women, based on the United Kingdom experience.

The relegation of women to subordinate roles began to decline in the U.K. in the 1970s and great strides have been made toward gender equality, said Mr Kilfoyle.

He said the British government has a women's unit, which was set up despite resistance from men and women. The rules governing the selection of parliamentary candidates were changed to enable parties to use positive discrimination to increase the number of women in Parliament. The rules were changed after the Labour Party's internal positive discrimination policy was successfully challenged in an industrial tribunal. He said this was necessary as there were not enough women being elected even though the U.K.'s Head of State and a notable former Prime Minister were women.

British girls are performing better than boys in examinations and many university faculties, including law, teaching and medicine, are dominated by women although women do not yet hold enough top positions.

Mr Kilfoyle said gender issues affect everyone and all aspects of social development. Women have long done the bulk of the physical work in developing countries where they have traditionally maintained the home but have not occupied senior positions. Support for the empowerment of women will help societies to tap an underused resource and thus expedite their development.

The British MP warned that the United States is trying to water down the MDGs, so governments — and all men in every society — will have to maintain the political will so the MDGs are met.

Prioritize education

Arguing that empowering women will contribute to the development of the entire country, Ms Maseko, Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, insisted that the most effective route to empowerment is through education.

The Gauteng Parliamentarian said educated women are 50 per cent more likely to immunize their children than are uneducated women. Statistics should show that educated women and their children do better than uneducated women and their children in many social indicators, such as longer life expectancy rates and lower incidence of disease.

Two educational indicators, the ratio of girls to boys in education and literacy rates of people aged 15 to 24, are also indicators of the level of a country's development, along with the ratio of men to women in employment and the numbers of Parliamentarians, she added.

But while Ms Maseko emphasized the value of the right to universal access to education, she pointed out that this right alone will not empower women or their societies. Only half of African children actually have access to schools and in some cases the quality of education is poor, so government spending plans must prioritize education spending.

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II
CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460

Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO
London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073
Email: hg.sec@cpahq.org



Social programmes are also needed so women and girls are free to find employment or go to school instead of having to care for AIDS sufferers or for the orphans of AIDS victims. Carers, clean water and other social improvements will free children, especially girls, to go to school rather than having to stay home to care for their own families. Adult education courses should also be available to offer girls a wider employment choice beyond becoming farming. Ms Maseko noted 80 per cent of African farmers are women working in a sector that is handicapped by low productivity and high transportation costs.

At the political level, Ms Maseko supported affirmative action to get more women into elected office where they can promote women's rights, including by establishing ombudsman offices for gender issues. It is especially important to get more women into local government so they have the greatest impact on the development of their own communities. She noted that in some political parties in South Africa and Namibia candidates lists are drafted in gender order, two men followed by one woman. With the political will, especially by parties, more women will be elected to Parliament.

She agreed with other speakers that gender equality and empowering women will contribute to the attainment of all eight MDGs and to the development of Commonwealth societies.

Learning to develop

Members from Swaziland and Fiji Islands were also among the speakers who supported the educational route to development for women, while a Kenyan noted education is also needed for the men who occupy positions of power.

Hon. Constance Simelane, MP, (Swaziland) said all countries should offer girls the same educational opportunities as boys. She agreed with Ms Maseko that social, healthcare and political barriers must be overcome so girls are free to go to school.

Education is one of the key factors in achieving gender equality and empowering women, she said.

Hon. Adi Asenaca Caucau, MP, (Fiji Islands) said her country has made great strides in the education of women and in achieving other MDGs. She said the majority of students in university are women and programmes and seminars are starting to improve the skills of rural women. The Internet is being used to help Fijian women to sell products online, she added.

Maternal health is improving, child mortality rates are declining and successful programmes are being instituted to treat HIV/AIDS.

At the political level, six of Fiji's 71 elected Parliamentarians in the House of Representatives are women: three of them are Ministers and three are Assistant Ministers.

Kenyan Parliamentarian Hon. Moses Wetangula, MP, agreed that a lack of educational opportunities for women is a roadblock to empowerment. But he added that men who occupy positions of authority also need education so they appreciate gender issues.

Mr Wetangula recalled that gender issues have dominated meetings since the United Nations 1995 women's conference in Beijing; but he said little progress has been made. Women have agitated to get into Parliament, although women are needed in all areas of society.

The Kenyan urged women to exchange ideas to identify successful ways to advance gender issues; but the exchanges should include men as women should not segregate themselves and then complain about a lack of opportunities. They should be pro-active and seek out policies which have worked well elsewhere.



Institutional support

Opposing views were heard on the value of creating government institutions to support women's rights.

Hon. John Edzerza, MLA, (Yukon) said traditional belief in his northern Canadian territory emphasizes changing individual attitudes to change society. Only individuals can change how women are treated in society. Respect for the rights of women and for the concept of gender equality cannot come from governments, organizations or association. All men should lead with an open heart and an open mind to treat women as equals, he said.

Indian MP Smt. Sushma Swaraj, however, said attitudes toward women and the issue of gender equality are changing thanks in part to the work of national and state commissions for women's rights. Parliaments and Legislatures are also leading the way with laws to protect women and advance their rights.

She called for more women to be involved in state and national governance in India, noting that legislation to reserve for women one-third of seats in local government meant there are now millions of women in local elected politics. Nine years of agitating for a similar reservation for parliamentary and state legislative seats has not yet succeeded in extending the provision to those institutions because she said men are refusing to pass the enabling legislation in order to protect their own seats. She urged Members to extend the one-third reservation concept to India's national Parliament and state Legislatures.

Hon. Pono P.P. Moatlhodi, MP, (Botswana) admitted that it is not easy to enter Parliament and the job is a tedious one. Women therefore have to be encouraged to get involved.

Key to development

South African MP Ms Fatima Hajaig said gender should be considered as an integral part of all MDGs and governments should initiate programmes to promote gender for each Goal. She agreed with Ms Bale-Tuinamoala that governments should also generate gender-based statistics to determine progress in all eight Goals.

She lamented that only 14 countries are reaching the UN's gender Goal. In South Africa, half the national cabinet is female.

Women are rising in the labour market where they juggle work and family responsibilities. They must also be mainstreamed in all areas of government. She called on countries to cease using cultural norms and religious interpretations to hold women back.

Women have been integral to development in Malaysia from the government's Sixth Development Plan to the current Ninth Plan, reported Hon. Rozaidah Talib, MP. The government saw the potential in mobilizing women for development.

A women's ministry, local development officers charged with empowering women and a commission to mainstream women have helped to advance gender issues, she said. These operate under a cabinet committee chaired by the Prime Minister, a demonstration of Malaysia's commitment to equality, she added.

Ms Talib noted Malaysia adopted a national policy to promote women's rights in 1989 and a plan of action in 1997. It has signed CEDAW and it actively supports the Beijing goals. But Malaysia is still working to cope with the impact of globalization on its economy, she said.

Family friendly

The issue of family-friendly parliamentary practices was raised by two Members.

Hon. Sue Barnes, PC, MP, (Canada) agreed that exchanges of views are valuable in the campaign to change the parliamentary culture.



The CPA brought her and other Members and officials together in Malaysia in 2001 to consider ways to sensitize Parliaments to gender issues. The handbook that resulted from that meeting is an effective guide for Parliaments seeking to modify their procedures so they are more conducive to women, she said

Progress in this field is a matter of mustering the political will. Ms Barnes said party structures, processes for attracting candidates and campaign financing to help women standing in elections must become gender-sensitive.

Men and women working together can to achieve progress in this area. She pointed to the decision taken earlier in the year by the Canadian Region of the CPA to include the Canadian Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians in its constitution. This decision was taken by the Region's Presiding Officers, all of whom unusually happened to be men.

Mr Alun Cairns, AM, reported that the Welsh Assembly, which has an equal number of male and female Members and a majority of women in its cabinet, has family-friendly hours. He told delegates that this is not as beneficial as it sounds, but it does encourage women to serve in the Assembly.

Gender equality was achieved in the Assembly's second election for the current House. The political parties took positive action including active encouragement, selection rules requiring gender equality among candidates in winnable seats and putting women high up in party lists.

Gender legislation

Ms Kashmala Tariq, MP, (Pakistan) called on Parliamentarians to focus on their legislative role in the empowerment of women. Laws against sexual harassment in the workplace and domestic violence are still not in place in many developing countries, she said, leaving many women in vulnerable and insecure positions.

And it is not simply enough to legislate; she added the laws have to be enforced. Pakistan has ministries and a commission charged with promoting the rights of women, but still she said the full implementation of the relevant laws is lacking. The differences between Islamic and secular laws can also cause confusion, added Ms Tariq.

In addition to legislative protection, women need economic empowerment, especially rural women who must be given an equal chance to market their produce, she said.

Economic and legislative empowerment will give women the confidence to play an equal role in all walks of life, said Ms Tariq. In Pakistan, 22 per cent of parliamentary seats and 23 per cent of local government seats are occupied by women, she said.

Hon. Loraine Braham, MLA, (Northern Territory) supported the passage of gender legislation, particularly anti-discrimination laws. Legislation, gender-sensitive party pre-selection rules and social and economic empowerment programmes will enable women to have an equal chance in society.

It is time to stop talking about empowerment and start acting, she argued.

Hon. Levy Ngoma, MP, (Zambia) agreed, challenging all Parliamentarians to fight for legal and constitutional gender equality and the establishment of a framework to give women their proper place in society.

The Zambian government had established a gender and development office; but workshops and discussions are not enough. Positive programmes are needed to advance the positions of women and young people, such as a programme to enable girls to return to school after having a baby.

Despite all its well-publicized problems, Mr Ngoma said Rwanda has a Parliament in which more than half its seats are occupied by women.

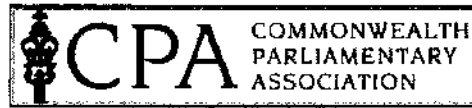
Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II

CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom

Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460

Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073

Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org



Some progress

Over a quarter of Ministers and Deputy Ministers and more than one-third of Parliamentarians are women in Mozambique, reported Hon. Antonio Hama Thay, MP.

He said many provincial government and other top posts are now held by women; but there is still more to do to empower women in the southern African nation.

A similar position was reported to exist in Tonga. Mrs Lepolo Taunisilia, MP, said women have made some progress, but Tonga's different system of government and what she described as an old constitution mean many forms of discrimination still exist. For example, she said women cannot own land in the South Pacific nation.

She said the King of Tonga still appoints all Ministers and has yet to appoint a woman. The island's Parliament has had only three women Members so far, she said, adding that Tongan women are under-represented in the political process.

From the Cook Islands, Mrs Ngamau Munoko, MP, reported that two of nine female candidates won seats in the 1999 election and two of five won in 2004. She said women are not pushing themselves forward, many being scared to stand for office.

However, she acknowledged that the men in her party support her in standing for election and serving the people.

Effective leadership

The effectiveness of positive political leadership was demonstrated by Hon. Ntlhoi Motsamai, MP, (Lesotho). Her country signed the Southern African Development Community's declaration on gender and development and so the ruling party had to bring women into Parliament. The first-past-the-post electoral system had been seen as unfriendly to women, so it was replaced by the mixed-Member proportional system in the 2003 election. This did not bring in more women, however, as the parties included few women in their lists and those they did name were not highly ranked.

However, she said Lesotho has its first woman police commissioner and women occupy more than 30 per cent of cabinet, judicial, election commission and other public service posts.

If Parliaments and governments have the political will to lead society in changing attitudes toward women, gender equality is possible, she said.

However, a West African colleague, Hon. Ndey Njie, MP, (The Gambia) called for fresh approaches as she argued political leadership has not been that successful. African Parliaments have ratified various international conventions but women still lag behind men because they are seen as being responsible for the household, she said.

In education, boys are free to continue in school while girls are often forced to marry. Women are often discriminated against in employment because they are eligible for maternity leave — employers do not have to give men paternity leave so they prefer to hire men.

In Ghana, however, Ms Josephine Hilda Addoh, MP, reported that political prospects for women are improving.

She said there was a 20 per cent increase in women elected to the last Parliament and an 80 per cent increase in female candidates. The majority of female MPs are Ministers or Deputy Ministers, she said.

Ms Addoh said women must support female candidates, a sentiment similar to a view expressed by Sen. the Hon. Abdul Karim Ghani (Malaysia) who said women tend to bring down women in power. He said Malaysian women have empowered themselves and are willing to show women elsewhere how they have asserted themselves. More than 60 per cent of Malaysian university students are women, the Governor of the country's central bank is female and women also hold senior ministerial portfolios, he said.

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II

Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO

CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom

Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460

Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073

Email: hg.sec@cpahq.org



Interlinkages among MDGs

Members from South Africa, Sierra Leone and Malawi were among those who insisted that gender equality and the MDGs are interlinked.

Hon. Shaun Byneveldt, MPL, (Western Cape) said no society can eradicate hunger or disease or develop its country unless its women achieve equity with men. All MDGs are linked to gender equity, he insisted. No society is free if its women are not.

Mr Byneveldt said the struggle for gender equality needs the political will to implement an enabling environment composed of a constitutional framework, government structures and anti-discrimination legislation. Institutional support and capacity-building is necessary to mainstream gender issues.

He also favoured implementing gender-sensitive practices to re-organize parliamentary business.

The link between the MDGs was also made by Hon. Afsatu Kabba, MP, (Sierra Leone) who urged all MPs to prepared the way for their daughters' generation. The MDGs are the latest step in an international gender commitment which started with CEDAW and continued in Beijing.

She supported the use of affirmative action to improve education, reproductive health facilities and economic opportunities for women.

Hon. Nancy Tembo, MP, (Malawi) however, shifted the emphasis by maintaining that if men and women work together to implement all eight Millennium Development Goals, this will produce gender equity. She urged MPs to return to their Parliaments and push to get existing programmes working effectively. They should also legislate to enhance the rights of women.

Share equally

In Nigeria's first election after the end of military rule in 1999, Hon. Jumoke Okoya-Thomas said, eight per cent of Members were women. That figure has now risen to 12 per cent but more Nigerian women are needed in Parliament to help correct the imbalances that she said still exist between men and women in her West African nation. In particular, she said more funds are needed for the education of women as a lack of education is the main stumbling block facing Nigerian women. She also favoured co-operation between men and women to develop the country.

Hon. Abu Sayeed Md. Shahadat Hossain, MP, (Bangladesh) indicated many women in his country are in Parliament and in other top posts. He gave priority to ensuring women have full rights and access to education and health care.

Hon. V.R. Sudarshan, MLC, (Karnataka) said women still face discrimination in India. However the country's current economic plan aims to empower women so they enjoy the full fruits of their labours. Many women are in local government and he added that all state Presiding Officers support affirmative action to bring more women into parliamentary seats.

Shrimati Jaya Prada Nahata, MP, (India) agreed women still face poverty and discrimination although female literacy rates are increasing and training and support programmes are in place for women in employment. Gender equality for all women will come through education, employment and the full participation of women in the political decision-making process.

Labelling discrimination as a disease, Dr the Hon. Tshenuwani Farisani, MPL, (Limpopo) said it is up to political parties and governments to lead in changing attitudes toward women. They should monitor progress and force change on those who are unwilling.

He favoured setting minimum standards of education to promote the right to gender equality.

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II

CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom

Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460

Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073

Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org



Equality already exists in the Fiji Islands, said Sen. the Hon. Kiniviliame Taukeinikoro. Compulsory education is provided for all children up to class 7 and gender equality is required throughout the education system and in the workplace. Opportunities in Fiji Islands are open equally to all regardless of gender or race, he said.

Concluding the discussion, Hon. Joseph Mbah-Ndam, MP, (Cameroon) said it is time to move from promoting gender equality to implementing it. Women, who constitute the majority of society, need to be free to move into the workplace and Parliaments should amend legislation such as laws on inheritance and succession to remove gender inequities.

* * * * *



**51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
Nadi, Fiji Islands**

Host Branch Plenary – 8 September 2005

Democratic parliamentary systems of constitutional government

Delegates from a cross-section of Commonwealth nations, including several with past experiences of racial and political divisions similar to those in the Fiji Islands, applauded Fijians for talking openly about their divisions and urged them to continue talking to achieve consensus on a new widely accepted and understood democratic system of government.

After hearing overviews from a senior judge and a leading lawyer on Fiji's political history and current constitutional and political situation, delegates put forward experiences from their own countries' political development to help Fiji Islanders chart a new path to a stable, inclusive and democratic future.

Members from Mauritius, Malaysia, Guyana and Namibia, four Commonwealth countries where racially based political divisions featured as part of their constitutional histories, urged Fijians to continue the dialogue to develop an inclusive political system. A New Zealander, a South African and a Bermudian joined with a Fijian Parliamentarian to recommend public education programmes so all people, including all Parliamentarians, fully understand the benefits of democratic governance.

Constitutional reviews, coalition governments and an emphasis on the things that unite Fijians of all races were also suggested as Parliamentarians supported senior Members from India, South Africa and Malaysia in urging Fijians to uphold the Commonwealth's democratic tradition and move beyond the coups and attempted coups which have marked the Pacific nation's recent history.

Racially based politics

Hon. Justice Michael Scott, a Justice of the Fiji Court of Appeal, said Fiji's current system of government, including its electoral system, is not well understood and contains power-sharing provisions that are both unworkable and inconsistent with other clauses of the current constitution. The constitution was rewritten in 1997 after a series of coups and decades of political development marked by ethnic divisions between Fijians of Melanesian and Indian descent.

Tensions had existed since independence in 1970 when Fijians descended from imported Indian labourers outnumbered the indigenous Melanesian population. Justice Scott recalled that Fijian politics was then dominated by two main parties which were ethnically based. Coups in 1987 by elements in the Fijian military led to a 1990 constitution which was biased in favour of ethnic Melanesians.

Amendments passed in 1997 replaced the ethnic bias with a power-sharing government in which all parties with 10 per cent or more of the vote have to be represented in cabinet on a proportionate basis. Compulsory voting using the alternative vote was introduced.

Justice Scott said the first election held under the amended constitution produced a government in 1999 under the Fiji Labour Party, which is a party predominately supported by Fiji's ethnic Indian population. A year later, an attempted coup was followed by a military intervention and coup, which the courts declared illegal in a repeat of the first 1987 coup when judges advised the then Governor General that swearing in a new government would be unconstitutional.

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II

CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom

Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460

Fax: (+44-20) 7222-8073

Email: hg.sec@cpahg.org

Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO



The Great Council of Chiefs, which had been recognized in the 1990 constitution, then appointed a civilian President and an interim government was formed. Those responsible for the attempted coup received heavy sentences in the courts, meaning that a future coup would not be likely, he said.

However, Justice Scott said the power-sharing provisions remain unworkable for practical and theoretic reasons, and are inconsistent with other provisions. The alternative voting system is so poorly understood that turnout is very low and the number of spoiled ballots high. The cost of prosecuting the hundreds of thousands of people who do not vote would be prohibitive. He added that constitution change requires a two-thirds majority in Parliament, which is unlikely.

Additionally, he noted that English, Hindustani and Fijian are the official languages but the constitution and all laws are only in English. This has contributed to the meaning and effect of the constitution not being well understood or therefore consented to by the people. Furthermore, the trend has been to excessive legislation modelled on foreign laws that he said are passed without local consultation or application, meaning they too are not well understood.

On the positive side, he said relations between the judiciary, the executive and Parliament are good; but he suggested the judiciary should be more involved in various processes.

Reconciling customs and democracy

Mr Graham Everett Leung, a former Solicitor General and senior civil servant who is now President of the Fiji Law Society, said Fiji's leaders are now trying to reconcile the strong Fijian sense of community with democracy, the rule of law and human rights. These concepts are not well understood or accepted among indigenous Fijians, many of whom fear they will undermine Fijian community values.

Mr Leung said there is not much integration in Fijian society and indigenous Fijians will not support a political party based in Fiji's Indian community. Melanesian Fijians accept other communities living and working in the country, but not running the government, he said. The independence constitution tacitly allowed indigenous Fijians to rule, which continued as long as the Melanesian community remained politically united.

A new paradigm is necessary to accommodate democratic norms and Fijian culture; but Mr Leung noted that the Fijian leadership is trying to find one at the same time as indigenous Fijian popular opinion is becoming more hard-line. At the same time, Fijians of Indian descent are leaving the country so Melanesians now constitute a majority of the population for the first time since the 1930s. Indian Fijians have also deserted the party that had supported the concept of a multiracial coalition.

Mr Leung expressed hope for the future based on the continuation of discussions about new democratic arrangements and on new perspectives being introduced into the country by education, travel and mass communications. There is, for example, a growing if reluctant acceptance of the rule of law, he said.

The Commonwealth can help Fijians to develop a new democratic system by offering the country encouragement, friendship and frank counsel, said Mr Leung.

Divergent views

Three Fijian Parliamentarians, two from the Melanesian community and one from the Indo-Fijian community, contributed different assessments of the situation to the subsequent discussion.

Sen. the Hon. Mitieli Bulanauca argued that the rights of indigenous people must be recognized and they should not be forced to accept what he called foreign views.



The current constitution is not suitable for Fiji, he said, calling for a review of the document. He supported including all Fijians in a multi-ethnic system rather than in a multiparty system.

Sen. the Hon. Kiniviliame Taukeinikoro called for affirmative action to reduce economic, political and social inequalities between indigenous Fijians and others. Although 80 per cent of the country's land is owned by indigenous Fijians, he said Indo-Fijians and people of other ethnic backgrounds control the economy. If the country's resources are used for the benefit of all Fijians, peaceful development is possible, he added.

The Indian and Chinese cultures are very old so their people have long experience in social development, said the Senator.

Hon. Krishna Datt, MP, disagreed with the view that Fiji's political problems are racially based. He called for further investigation of past coups to reveal their real causes and speculated that Parliamentarians were involved. The institution of Parliament and democratic values are not well understood by Members.

Mr Datt accused both sides of lacking the will to make power sharing work. He acknowledged that some problems exist with the current constitution; but he maintained that it is working even though the rules for a multiparty cabinet have not been fully developed and the parliamentary roles of Backbenchers and the opposition are not well defined.

Turning to the voter turnout figures, the Member insisted low turnouts are a feature of by-elections rather than general elections and suggested that dissatisfaction with the ruling party is the real reason for people not voting.

However, he joined Members from other countries in advocating enhanced voter education programmes, especially programmes emphasizing the need to participate.

The democratic way

In opening the debate from the floor, Hon. Somnath Chatterjee, MP, (India) urged the Fiji Islands to develop a democratic system emphasizing unity rather than continuing to promote sectional interests. Democratic governance is the only way for a society to develop in accordance with the will of the people, he said, describing his advice as a friendly suggestion from a friendly country that does not wish to interfere in Fijian affairs.

He recommended that separate ethnically based electorates and the allocation of parliamentary seats on an ethnic basis should be abolished as the emphasis should be on what unites Fijians, not what divides them. Governments must act for the greatest good of the greatest number of people, not for sectional interests, he said. Elections should be fought on policies and principles, not on ethnicity. People should be shown the benefits of democracy so they will exercise the sovereign will of the people in choosing the country's government.

Shri Chatterjee noted that Indo-Fijians had contributed significantly to the development of Fiji since they arrived as indentured labourers. India will continue to support efforts to establish appropriate democratic systems, he said.

Seeking unity

Members from South Africa described some of the processes their country had used to move on from its racially divided past.

Hon. Shaun Byneveldt, MPL, (Western Cape) said South Africans are now united to develop the country for the benefit of all after decades of the benefits being channelled to a small minority. Dealing frankly and honestly through its Truth and Reconciliation Commission has helped the country deal with its past with an emphasis on reconciliation.



He asked whether there is an active commitment on the part of the Fijian government and Parliament to reconcile past differences, celebrate the diversity of the country and promote social cohesion.

Hon. Dorothy Motubatse, MP, (South Africa) asked if Fiji has supporting institutions such as the office of the Ombudsman to foster democracy and help the people to take issues affecting them to a higher authority, which she noted is fundamental to constitutional democracy.

She also emphasized the need for the executive, Parliament and the judiciary to be able to exercise their respective authorities separately.

A fellow national Parliamentarian, Mr Edward Trent, MP, recalled South Africa spent four years drafting a constitution and made sure that all interest groups were included. This helped the constitution to be accepted by the country's 11 main ethnic groups and its strong traditional leadership. As a representative of one of the country's minorities, he said he is secure and happy in the new South Africa.

Mr Trent listed six factors which he said contributed to South Africa's successful transition: an inclusive using proportional representation electoral system that has put 10 parties in Parliament where all can speak and all are listened to; a Bill of individual rights; a constitutionally entrenched separation of powers; decentralized power among local, provincial and national governments; broad acceptance of the constitution, and patience with the process of consensus-building.

Dr the Hon. Tshenuwani Farisani, MPL, (Limpopo) said that historically all countries have had problems in their development. South Africans of all languages and racial groups are able to work together to build the country. He suggested Fiji Islands could seek help from the Commonwealth and beyond as the country builds a new future.

Democracy through consultation

Members from two other countries with histories of ethnic divisions, Mauritius and Malaysia, both recommended dialogue as the key to developing a fully democratic and inclusive society.

Hon. Rajkeswur Purryag, MP, (Mauritius) said his country is similar to the Fiji Islands historically, economically and socially, with similar parliamentary and judicial systems. A solution to Fiji's problems can only be found through dialogue on policies that are inclusive as no society can develop or attract foreign investment if serious divisions persist.

Hon. Dato' Y.B. Zulhasnan bin Rafique, MP, (Malaysia) applauded the frank exchange of views at the session, which he said demonstrates that democracy is alive in Fiji and the country's people are ready to hear the views of others. In addition to an open dialogue, he said democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights are essential for development.

Malaysia has successfully united Malays, Chinese and Indians in a multi-ethnic society governed by a 16-party coalition including all three racial groups. Malaysia is willing to share with Fiji its experiences in multi-ethnic constitutional government, he said.

Questioning the Westminster model

Members from the Cook Islands and Guyana questioned whether the Westminster-style of adversarial politics is suitable for Fijian society.

Hon. Sir Geoffrey Henry, MP, (Cook Islands) said his Pacific nation has continued to develop peacefully despite changes in the fortunes of various political parties and leaders. But he said that the divisions between parties and between government and opposition in a parliamentary democracy can further polarize an already-polarized society if political divisions spill over into other aspects of society.



Fijians are divided racially, culturally and geographically, so he advocated the revival of the mandatory constitutional review process which had been a part of the 1990 Fijian constitution.

Guyanese Parliamentarian Hon. Shaik Baksh, MP, said his South American country has also experienced racial divisions but has avoided the coups of Fiji's recent history because Guyana's army and police have remained neutral.

In questioning the appropriateness of the Westminster model, he said Guyana has made some progress in constitutional reform but there is continued pressure for more modifications to its parliamentary process. Parliament's role has been strengthened through the introduction of committees, independent commissions have been established to prevent any group from feeling marginalized and proportional representation has been introduced so all governments must have in excess of 50 per cent of the votes, he said.

But he admitted that some parties feel they are denied power because of demographics rather than policies and the opposition has been pressing for some form of power-sharing. The government, however, feels that more inclusive governance is a better option than power-sharing at the moment. He asked if Fiji had tried any form of power sharing.

Constitutional reform

Members from Cameroon and Namibia recommended Fiji focus on reviewing its constitution as the way forward.

Hon. Joseph Mbah-Ndam, MP, (Cameroon) argued that a country's fundamental law must reflect the views of all its people. He questioned whether the government listened to the people in adopting a constitution and whether the resulting government system is really free and fair to all. He suggested a complete review of the constitution to ensure it reflects the fundamental views of all Fijians.

Hon. McHenry Venaani, MP, (Namibia) suggested Fiji form a government of national unity to draft a new constitution. The involvement of all parties would ensure that all Fijians feel a sense of ownership of the new system. A parliamentary commission could assist the process and ensure that all parties see the process as being conducted fairly.

Mr Venaani applauded the valuable peacekeeping role he said Fiji Islands has played internationally. Domestically, the political parties must take a leadership role in including all Fijians in the determination of the country's future.

Commonwealth support

Members from five very different Commonwealth jurisdictions expressed their support for Fiji's attempts to develop a new democratic system.

Hon. Constance Simelane, MP, (Swaziland) agreed with others that open discussions show great hope for Fiji's democratic future.

Hon. Datuk Talib Zulpilip, MLA, (Sarawak) said the conscious effort to change things in Fiji will succeed if the people are able to see that the future will be better for them.

Dr Talalelei Leao, MP, (Samoa) acknowledged that since independence in 1962 his country has not experienced the divisions that Fiji has had because Samoans are one people with one language. But he argued that Fiji Islands is a young nation and is making progress in developing its society.



Hon. Richard Prebble, MP, (New Zealand) suggested the Commonwealth and the CPA might be able to help Fiji improve its voter turnout figures. He recalled that New Zealand undertook an extensive voter education programme when it switched to an electoral system combining first-past-the-post and proportional representation. CPA assistance in developing a similar voter education programme for Fiji could help to increase voter turnout.

Dialogue and open debate were employed in Bermuda when it changed its electoral system, recalled Hon. Paula Cox, MP. There were concerns about changing the island's residence rules and converting its parliamentary constituencies to single-Member seats from dual-Member representation. Discussion helped to reconcile all sections of Bermudian society to the changes, she said, congratulating the Fijians for the frank nature of the presentations to the conference.

Reaching both communities

Justice Scott and Mr Leung concluded the discussion by insisting that the current constitution, despite certain difficult provisions, is not responsible for Fiji's political problems.

Justice Scott said the constitution is very good in many ways, such as providing for a constitutional court, human rights, an ombudsman and other positive features. But the constitution was used to try to create leadership in a country that has fundamental differences. He said, for example, that Melanesians are royalists who do not see all people as equal, a concept fundamentally at odds with republicanism.

While the Queen was the head of state, she was a unifying factor. Now, however, the President is appointed by the Great Council of Chiefs which is not recognized by Indo-Fijians.

He said all races work well together in business, the civil service and in day-to-day life. But Parliament is dominated by the politics of race, thus exacerbating racial tensions. Fiji's task is to find a way of choosing its leadership which is acceptable to both communities.

Mr Leung also advised against searching for the perfect constitution as any fundamental document will only be as good as the people who are working in its institutions.

Many parts of the current constitution work well, although he said the power-sharing cabinet is a difficult system to use and the alternative vote should be replaced by something simpler.

He warned that the Fiji Islands will be left behind in the world if it follows an undemocratic path. Fijians must all learn to celebrate the country's cultural diversity at all levels, he said.

In closing the discussion, Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, MP, (Fiji Islands) the President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, said all Fijians appreciated the Commonwealth views presented.

* * * * *



**51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
Nadi, Fiji Islands**

Final Plenary - 9 September 2005

Natural Disasters: Effective Early Warning, Relief and Reconstruction

Governments and Parliaments must give priority to preparing and maintaining current disaster management plans, including development and environmental programmes that minimize the effect of catastrophic phenomena that delegates at the final plenary session noted are now occurring with increasing regularity.

Opening speakers Mr Scott Hubli, Director of Governance Programmes of the National Democratic Institute, Mr Robin Yarrow of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and Hon. Aaron Moses, MP, (Grenada) all stressed the importance of preparing for disasters long before they occur. Acknowledging that diverting time and money away from existing problems in order to plan for a potential disaster is politically difficult, the speakers and Members who followed them in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference session argued that governments have to respond quickly and effectively to disasters such as hurricanes, seismic activity, flooding and forest fires. This is only possible if both governments and Parliaments are well prepared well in advance.

Preparations for disasters also include building and development policies that take the potential for disasters into account and avoid exacerbating them, said Mr Hubli and Mr Yarrow. Delegates from Bangladesh, the Canadian territory of Yukon and Australia and the Australian Capital Territory criticized such practices as building in known flood plains or seismically sensitive areas, deforestation, damaging natural drainage systems and contributing to global warming as man-made contributions to "natural" disasters.

Delegates argued that Parliaments have several key roles to play in the event of disasters, and they too should be ready to play them. These include passing the necessary emergency response legislation and approving budgets, preparing communications strategies to Members, as opinion leaders, can provide information to the public to curb rumours, and scrutinizing executive readiness so emergency relief can be provided as soon as it is needed.

Members from Bangladesh and India stressed the value of involving local communities in preparations so the people play their roles in recovery. Mr Yarrow in particular stressed the valuable work that volunteers play in relief measures provided by his organization. He added that individuals can also mitigate the effects of disasters by keeping their own property clean and free from debris which can become hazards and can block escape and drainage routes.

Preparing for the worst

Mr Hubli said recent events, including the effects of hurricane Katrina a few days before on the southern United States, demonstrated the need for Parliamentarians to be proactive instead of reactive. The political will to keep disasters on the agenda must be maintained, he said.

Governments should have mandatory and regular reviews of disaster preparedness, including regular reports so Parliaments know what is being done and which professionals to turn to in the event of a disaster, he said. Resolutions to declare states of emergency and procedures to pass supplementary budgets to cope with disasters should be ready to pass when required.

Patron: HM Queen Elizabeth II
CPA Secretariat, Suite 700, Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA, United Kingdom
Tel.: (+44-20) 7799-1460

Secretary-General: Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO
Fax: (+44-20) 7222-6073
Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org



Mr Hubli added that Parliaments also must have communications strategies ready to use so Members, as opinion leaders, can provide vital information and reduce the effect of rumours.

In scrutinizing the executive's use of extra emergency authority, Parliaments need to be constructive and ready to re-assert its leadership role after the disaster has passed. Parliamentary involvement in disaster responses will help to ensure the executive's extra authority is kept to the necessary minimum. He told delegates that Sri Lanka's Parliament had played a major role in that country's response to the Indian Ocean tsunami by setting up a select committee on natural disasters.

In normal development programmes, he urged Members to ensure building is not approved for seismically dangerous areas, flood plains and other danger zones. Wetland buffers should be maintained and forests protected where they in turn prevent mudslides or serious erosion which clogs rivers, causing flooding and reducing drainage.

Parliaments should support the training of emergency professionals and should ensure governments both plan for all possible disasters, not just the last disaster, and keep planning up to date.

Community involvement

Mr Yarrow said the Red Cross had responded quickly to the Katrina disaster in the U.S. and the Red Cross and Red Crescent had run a highly effective recovery programme and appeal for assistance following the Indian Ocean tsunami on 26 December 2004.

To minimize the effects of future disasters, he said programmes need to be well planned, including not building homes where they should not be or people do not want to live. His organization is committed to building better than the structures destroyed; but it also insists on involving the local people, especially the women, so new homes and facilities actually meet local needs. Roads, schools, health clinics, water and food supplies need to be planned in conjunction with the community if they are to be self-sustaining, he said.

He said warning systems must be directly linked to the communities under threat. Red Cross volunteers should be involved as they are trained in how to respond and to give warnings and advice to local people.

Failed development and poor land use practices contribute to the effects of natural disasters and climate change is increasing the frequency of disastrous events, he said. Achieving the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals would strengthen societies so they are better able to cope with the elements and withstand shocks. Governments and Parliaments should ensure disaster preparedness is a part of all development planning, said the Fijian.

Overwhelming small states

Mr Moses, whose Caribbean island nation was devastated by two hurricanes in the last year, said natural disasters are worse for small developing states whose economies can't afford to prepare for future disasters. They also lack the resources to keep informed on disaster management.

The Minister told the conference that natural disasters can overwhelm entire economies. Hurricane Ivan in September 2004 devastated 80 per cent of Grenada's nutmeg crop, its leading export product, and severely damaged its other main economic activity, tourism. A second hurricane later ripped through the only part of the country not seriously damaged by Ivan. The damage was estimated at \$2.4 billion, two and times the size of the country's total economy. The Bahamas was also hit by a hurricane which caused damage worth in excess of 10 per cent of its gross domestic product.



Mr Moses called on governments and international agencies to focus not just on disaster relief but on disaster mitigation, advance planning and early warnings. Parliamentarians should press Commonwealth Heads of Government to create a disaster response fund specially to assist small states. The Commonwealth could also help by providing a framework for disaster mitigation and individual nations could appeal to insurance companies to respond appropriately when disasters strike.

Small countries could help themselves by sharing competences and resources.

Interdependence

Governments were advised by delegates from Bangladesh and the Australian Capital Territory to consider their neighbours when preparing for disasters.

Hon. Akhter Hamid Siddiqui, MP, (Bangladesh) said his country is vulnerable to flooding after the monsoon season. Deforestation in the foothills of the Himalayas leads to rapid run-off, silting and the blockage of natural drainage systems. He said countries upstream then face flooding so open their barrages to release excess water into the rivers that drain down through his country to the Indian Ocean. Bangladesh then floods, he said, recalling one such recent disaster claimed 120,000 lives.

Mr Siddiqui said Bangladesh learned from this disaster and has since managed its river systems more effectively itself. In the last flood, no one died, he said.

But the Bangladeshi said his country still remains prone to flood disasters and called for steps to control global warming to mitigate this disaster. While the Millennium Development Goals do not specifically mention them, disasters directly affect the ability of nations to achieve all eight Goals.

Mr Steve Pratt, MLA, (Australian Capital Territory) said his jurisdiction shares forests and a border with the surrounding state of New South Wales but has no role in the state's forest management and planning. Recently, a bush fire destroyed sections of Canberra so he recommended that small areas work with their larger neighbours to try to minimize disaster vulnerability. Large neighbours will have to respond to help small states if disasters do occur, so it would be in everyone's best interests if they worked together to try to prevent them. Caribbean islands could do the same with United States in hurricane warnings and assistance, he suggested.

Mr Pratt also advocated small states networking amongst themselves to help plan disaster responses and mitigation.

Expert management

Indian Members put forward technical approaches to disaster management, noting that their country is vulnerable to a wide range of types of catastrophe from cyclones and flooding to droughts and tsunamis.

Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, MP, said that following the Indian Ocean tsunami India is looking at a new approach involving the passage of legislation to establish a disaster management authority in the office of the Prime Minister. The authority would be responsible for all aspects of disaster management, from mitigating vulnerability and advance planning right through to relief and reconstruction. The authority would co-ordinate its own national work with those of authorities under the control of the Chief Ministers in each state and with management groups at the local and district level.

Funds are also being established to respond to disasters and to help prevent future occurrences. A national disaster response force is also being established so professionally trained teams can be mobilized when disasters strike.



Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh, MP, recalled some of the disasters that had beset different parts of India in recent years. Early warning systems were being established.

He said the scientific knowledge of Parliamentarians should be increased in this field so they can contribute more effectively to policy debates in the House and so they can raise public awareness.

Parliamentary leadership

Fijian Parliamentarian Hon. Poseci Bune, MP, focused on the role of Members, arguing that the issue is too important to be left to bureaucrats. He said he strongly recommends that all Parliaments set up select committees to oversee the work of disaster management offices.

He agreed with Mr Moses that small countries often lack the resources to deal with disasters and so need international help to prepare and to respond. He recalled that the Fiji Islands were hit by two cyclones within 24 hours. Thousands of people were left homeless on Fiji's more than 300 scattered islands but the country only had two helicopters to deal with the emergency.

Mr Terry Sullivan, MP, (Queensland) also argued for Parliaments to play a major role in disaster management. Governments are used to responding to disasters so MPs should press them to devote resources to preventive measures as well.

He also proposed that countries specialize in certain aspects of disaster responses and then cooperate to share their experts and their expertise.

Natural issues

Mr Kelvin Thomson, MP, (Australia) maintained that many so-called natural disasters are at least partly man-made. He blamed the increase in storms, fires, droughts and other disasters on greenhouse gas emissions. Raising water temperatures, for example, fuel hurricanes. Cutting emissions urgently is therefore an important part of disaster mitigation, he said.

Hon. John Edzerza, MLA, (Yukon) also called for greater protection for the natural environment, describing disasters such as fires and floods as nature's way of cleansing itself. He agreed with other speakers that housing construction projects should not be approved if they will leave people vulnerable to disasters.

Mr Edzerza joined Mr Moses in reminding Members disaster recovery should also address the issue of the psychological damage caused to individuals directly affected by what for them are cataclysmic events.

He criticized the media for showing graphic scenes of dead bodies in the wake of Katrina, saying such sights further scar not just those who have lost loved ones but all people who are emotionally and spiritually disturbed by such troubling sights.

A joint response

Concluding the discussion, the opening speakers repeated calls for a greater sharing of resources and information so regional and global responses can be mobilized rapidly and effectively when disasters strike. Some international co-operation is already in place, such as Caribbean nations benefiting from the U.S. meteorological service's hurricane monitoring system; but more sharing of information and expertise of this kind is still needed.

While stressing the need for advance planning for disaster relief measures, the opening speakers stressed that Parliaments, non-governmental organizations and all individuals have to be involved in mitigation, relief and reconstruction as natural disasters of the magnitude seen recently far surpass the capacity of governments to deal with on their own.

* * * * *



Appendix D

Agenda of the 2005 General Assembly of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Document GA Agenda



GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

**SHERATON FIJI BALLROOM
NADI, FIJI ISLANDS
9 SEPTEMBER 2005**

AGENDA

Documents numbered to match agenda items

1. Welcome and opening remarks by the President
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Minutes of the Last Meeting GA3
4. Matters arising from the Minutes
5. Reports of the Executive Committee – to receive
 - i) Annual Report for 2004 (as printed) GA5(i)
 - ii) Interim Report for the period 1 January to 30 June 2005 GA5(ii)
6. Membership Report GA6
7. Audited Accounts and Balance Sheets for year ended 31 December 2004
- to receive
 - i) CPA Secretariat Accounts GA7(i)
 - ii) CPA Working Capital Fund Accounts GA7(ii)
 - iii) CPA Conference Assistance Fund Accounts GA7(iii)
8. Membership Fees for 2007 GA8
9. Budgets, Estimates and Projections for 2005-2007 – to note
 - i) CPA Secretariat Income and Expenditure Accounts:
2005 (budgeted); 2006 (estimated) and 2007 (projected) GA9(i)

ii)	CPA Working Capital Fund Income and Expenditure Accounts: 2005 (budgeted); 2006 (estimated) and 2007 (projected)	GA9(ii)
iii)	CPA Conference Assistance Fund Income and Expenditure Accounts: 2005 (budgeted); 2006 (estimated) and 2007 (projected)	GA9(iii)
10.	Appointment of External Auditors for 2005	GA10
11.	Election of the Chairman	GA11
12.	Matters Submitted by Branches:	
	(i) Proposal from the Isle of Man Branch	12(i)
13.	Report of the 25 th Conference of Members from Small Countries	Oral
14.	Report of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians	Oral
15.	Election of Officers and Regional Representatives	GA15
16.	Recommendations from the Executive Committee to the General Assembly	Tabled
17.	Future Venues	GA17
18.	Any Other Business	