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**REPORT OF THE 67TH COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY
CONFERENCE
HELD IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
3RD TO 8TH NOVEMBER, 2024**

 THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PAPERS LAID	
DATE: 25 JUN 2025	DAY: WED
TABLED BY:	Hon. JOHN PAUL MUKIRAGE MP MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION
CLERK-AT THE-TABLE:	MERRI CHUMO

Clerks' Chambers
Parliament Buildings
NAIROBI

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
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PREFACE

Honourable Speakers,

1. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is an organization established in 1911 with the overarching objective of bringing Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff together to exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields, to identify benchmarks of good practices and new policy options that can be adopted in the governance of the people.
2. The CPA Africa Region is one of the nine (9) regional associations of the CPA International comprising of sixty-three (63) national and subnational legislatures. It is made up of National Parliaments and Provincial/State/Territorial Legislatures of member countries of the Commonwealth in Africa. The CPA Africa Region aims to promote and protect interests of African Parliaments and Countries in the Commonwealth, and to promote, irrespective of gender, race, and religion, the democratic ideals of the CPA including women empowerment, respect for human rights and freedoms, representative government and good governance. The region undertakes a number of programmes including its Annual Regional Conference geared towards deliberating and arriving at a consensus on pertinent issues.
3. The 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) took place from 3rd November to 8th November, 2024 in Sydney, Australia. The conference was held *under the conference theme of “Engage, Empower, Sustain: Charting the Course for Resilient Democracy.”*
4. The 67th CPC inaugural ceremony took place at the International Conference Centre, Sydney on Wednesday, 6th November 2024 at 9.00am presided over by the Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Her Excellency Honourable Margaret Beazley, AC KC, the Governor of New South Wales. The ceremony was attend by CPA President (2023-2024), Hon. Ben Franklin, MLC,

President of the New South Wales Legislative Council; Penny Sharpe MLC, Leader of the Government in the New South Wales Legislative Council, and delegates from across the Commonwealth. Also in attendance were Professor Luis Franceschi, Assistant Secretary General, Hon. Greg Piper, MP, Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Hon. Chris Minns, MP, the Premier of New South Wales, and Hon. Courtney Houssos, MLC, New South Wales Minister for Finance and Natural Resources.

5. In her remarks, the Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Her Excellency Honourable Margaret Beazley, AC KC, the Governor of New South Wales, urged Commonwealth Parliamentarians to work together to uphold the values of the Commonwealth as she opened the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Sydney, New South Wales. A message to conference delegates from HM King Charles III, Head of the Commonwealth and Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was also read out by the CPA Vice-Patron.
6. The CPA President (2023-2024), Hon. Ben Franklin, MLC, President of the New South Wales Legislative Council, welcomed the delegates to the 67th CPC. During the opening ceremony, he stated that as they marked the bicentenary of the New South Wales Legislative Council that year, one of their most significant celebrations would be the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) and CPA General Assembly, which the CPA New South Wales Branch was honored to host. He added that the conference would provide an opportunity for participants to envision the future of democracy and ensure its resilience against current and future threats.
7. The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg, welcomed delegates to the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in New South Wales. He expressed gratitude to the Parliament of New South Wales for their

generosity in hosting the conference as they celebrated the bicentenary of the New South Wales Legislative Council. He noted that the conference provided an invaluable opportunity for delegates to come together, share best practices in addressing common issues, and strengthen Commonwealth values. He further emphasized that the gathering allowed participants to review the progress of the Commonwealth and its principles. He highlighted that commitments to democracy, human rights, and good governance were fundamental to the CPA's work and stated that these commitments would be a key focus of discussions throughout the week.

Honourable Speakers,

8. The conference brought together Speakers, Members of Parliament and Parliamentary staff representing the nine regions of the CPA – Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic; India; Pacific; and South East Asia.

Honourable Speakers,

9. The Kenya delegation to the 67th CPC comprised—

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Rt. Hon. (Dr) Moses Wetang'ula, Joint President, CPA Kenya EGH, MP - Speaker of the National Assembly (2) The Hon. John Paul Mwirigi, MP (3) The Hon. (Dr) Beatrice Adagala, MP (4) The Hon. Timothy Wanyonyi, MP (5) Sen. Jackson Mandago, EGH, MP (6) Sen. Beth Kalunda Mutunga, MP (7) The Hon. Zaheer Jhanda, MP (8) The Hon. Samuel Gonzi Rai, MP (9) The Hon. Elijah Njore Kururia, MP (10) Mr. Samuel Njoroge, CBS (11) Mr. Ruge Stephen Njenga, OGW | <p>Joint President, CPA Kenya Branch/Leader of Delegation;</p> <p>CPA Kenya Branch Representative/Delegate;</p> <p>CWP Kenya/Delegate;</p> <p>CPwD Regional Champion/ Delegate;</p> <p>Delegate;</p> <p>Delegate;</p> <p>Observer;</p> <p>Observer;</p> <p>Observer;</p> <p>Clerk of the National Assembly SoCATT Delegate; and</p> <p>Director, Legislative & Procedural Services/SoCATT Delegate.</p> |
|--|--|

10. The delegation was accompanied and supported by the following parliamentary staff –

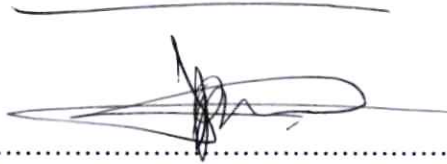
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|--------------------------|--|
| (1) Mr. Stephen Apopo | Director, Speaker's Office; |
| (2) Mr. Japhet Muthomi | Deputy Director, Speaker's Office; |
| (3) Mr. Mainah Wanjiku | Senior Clerk Assistant/Delegation Secretary; |
| (4) Ms. Sylvia Ocharo | Senior Research Officer/Assisting Secretary |
| (5) Ms. Abigael Nabalayo | Clerk Assistant III/Assisting Secretary |

Honourable Speakers,

11. On behalf of the delegation, I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for your support in ensuring that Kenya was well represented during the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

Honourable Speakers,

12. It is my pleasure and humble duty to submit this report, highlighting the proceedings and recommendations of the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference to Parliament for noting and necessary action.



.....
THE HON. JOHN PAUL MWIRIGI, MP
CPA KENYA BRANCH REPRESENTATIVE
FOR: LEADER OF THE DELEGATION

DATED... 23rd June 2025

**REPORT OF THE 67TH COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY
CONFERENCE HELD IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA FROM 3RD NOVEMBER TO
8TH NOVEMBER, 2024**

A. ABOUT THE CPA

1. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is an organization established in 1911 with the overarching objective of bringing Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff together to exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields, to identify benchmarks of good practices and new policy options that can be adopted in the governance of the people.

2. The CPA Africa Region is one of the nine (9) regional associations of the CPA International comprising sixty-three (63) national and subnational legislatures. The Association is made up of National Parliaments and Provincial/State/Territorial Legislatures of member countries of the Commonwealth in Africa. The CPA Africa Region aims to promote and protect interests of African Parliaments and Countries in the Commonwealth, and to promote, irrespective of gender, race, and religion, the democratic ideals of the CPA including women empowerment, respect for human rights and freedoms, representative government and good governance. The region undertakes a number of programmes including its Annual Regional Conference geared towards deliberating and arriving at a consensus on pertinent issues.

B. INTRODUCTION: THE 67TH CPC

3. The 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) took place in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia from 3rd to 8th November 2024, hosted by the Parliament of New South Wales and CPA New South Wales Branch. The conference was held under the theme of *“Engage, Empower, Sustain: Charting the Course for Resilient Democracy”*.

4. The conference brought together parliamentarians, government officials, experts, and stakeholders from Commonwealth member countries, fostering a diverse and inclusive dialogue. Further, the conference provided a platform for parliamentarians to discuss and deliberate on issues related to democracy, governance, and the rule of law in Commonwealth countries. Workshops and sessions aimed at enhancing the capacity of parliamentarians in the suggested areas were also held during the conference.

C. AGENDA OF THE 67TH CPC

5. The Agenda of the 67th CPC was as follows—

- (i) 67th CPA General Assembly
- (ii) Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities meetings
- (iii) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Meetings
- (iv) Workshops held during the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
- (v) 58th General Meeting Of The Society-Of-Clerks-At-The-Table (SoCATT) in Commonwealth Parliaments
- (vi) 2nd Lifaka Lecture
- (vii) CPA Election of Officers
- (viii) Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year Awards for 2024

D. 67TH CPC GENERAL ASSEMBLY & RESOLUTIONS

6. Commonwealth Parliamentarians participated in the 2024 CPA General Assembly on 7th November 2024, as part of the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in New South Wales. The CPA General Assembly was chaired by CPA President (2023-2024), Hon. Ben Franklin, MLC, President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, and attended by members from 128 CPA branches.

7. The CPA General Assembly, the association's governing body, comprises delegates to the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. This year's General Assembly also included a thematic debate on the role of

Parliament in strengthening democratic resilience in the era of fake news and synthetic media.



The Rt. Hon. Speaker of the National Assembly with Members of CPA Kenya Branch Delegation during the General Assembly

Key Decisions and Outcomes

8. The following are the key decisions and outcomes of the 67th General Assembly:

(i) Ending Charitable Status

An update was provided on the progress made in achieving a new international, inter-parliamentary status for the CPA. It was further reported that work was ongoing to create a new organization akin to an international, inter-parliamentary organization including the passage of the CPA Status Bill in the UK Parliament.

In making the resolution, delegates noted that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association exists to connect, develop, promote and support parliaments and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance, and implement the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The members of the CPA (charity) therefore resolved

that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association should be reconstituted as a non-charitable international inter-parliamentary organization with functional privileges and immunities. The UK Government agreed to introduce legislation to confer functional privileges and immunities on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and International Committee of the Red Cross (Status) Bill was already at an advanced stage in the UK Parliament.

The envisaged new CPA (non-charity) to be established will have functional privileges and immunities upon operationalization—

- (a) the CPA (non-charity) will assume the operational role of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; and
- (b) the assets and liabilities of the CPA (charity) are to be transferred to the CPA (non-charity).

(ii) Annual Report for the period January to December, 2023:

The CPA President gave an update on the annual report for the period between January to December, 2023. The report detailed the activities undertaken by the Trustees in pursuance of the Associations' constitutional mandate of promoting knowledge of the constitutional, legislative, economic, social and cultural aspects of parliamentary democracy, with particular reference to the countries and territories of the Commonwealth. The report also contained the CPA's audited financial statements for the year 2023, the CPA Membership Report, the CPA Budgets and Financial Management Reports. The Assembly noted and approved the Annual Report for the period January to December, 2023.

In the matter of the CPA Membership Report, the General Assembly noted the suspended Branches, and encouraged Regional Representatives and Secretaries to engage with defaulting Branches in respective regions to settle outstanding Branch fees or agree to a

payment plan as soon as possible. The Assembly also noted the outstanding fees and agreed to the proposals for handling those Branches with arrears and for support to be provided to the branches as required. The progress made to date in respect to reinstating previously suspended branches together with further action was outlined.

Delegates endorsed reports from the three CPA networks namely- the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) and the CPA Small Branches.

(iii) Membership Subscriptions

An update on the proposals for the membership fees for the forthcoming years and suggestions for the future was provided. It was noted that membership fees continue to be CPA's primary source of funding. The figure in the budget reflects an increase, as agreed, of 4% for 2025 and no increase is currently proposed for 2026 but this will be kept under review. All income has been eliminated from branches suspended as at the date of the meeting but income for all other Branches is included. There is, however, a general debtor provision provided as noted below.

Recommendations: The General Assembly noted as follows: the current financial position as the CPA moves towards 2025; the risks to future financial well-being as CPA moves into the medium term; Set levels of overall spending consistent with current priorities whilst maintaining reserves at levels that will help ensure CPA's financial sustainability; the updated 2024 forecast; Reviewed, discussed and approved the updated approved budget for 2025; and updated provisional budget for 2026.

(iv) The proposal on Special Observer Status

9. Following the presentation of this item at the Executive Committee Meeting in Ghana, in 2023 the Secretary-General committed to conducting a

consultation within the CPA membership on creating a “Special Observer” status for the CPA. Currently, there is no such a status. There is a provision for Observer Status at CPCs, but such applications are not automatically granted to non-CPA Parliaments and are specifically related to attendance of that particular conference.

10. CPA’s relationships with Parliaments outside the Commonwealth are significant, both at a regional level and globally. Creating a new “Special Observer” status could strengthen these relationships, whilst making a clear distinction between members and observers. It would also provide the CPA with a model closer to that of international, inter-parliamentary counterparts such as the IPU, APF and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, who all have a Special Observer status similar to the one proposed.
11. It was recommended that a Special Observer status would be offered only to non-Commonwealth national, sub-national and regional Parliaments who share the principles and values of the CPA and the Commonwealth. The Executive Committee would review applications from said Parliaments and, to ensure there is consensus on the granting of the status, if any member of the Executive Committee objects, then the application will be refused.
12. The proposed cost to approved applicants is an annual fee of **£5000 GBP per Parliament**. This would entitle the Special Observers to:
 - (1) The attendance of two representatives to the annual CPC without paying the additional CPC Observer fee – this could include attendance at the CPA’s learning and development workshops and the General Assembly.
 - (2) Access to the CPA’s communications (including online issues of The Parliamentarian) and parliamentary toolkits, handbooks and guides.
 - (3) Access to the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Small Branches and Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities

network workshops (where appropriate and capacity-permitting) and invitations to webinars and virtual conferences.

- (4) Access to the online CPA Parliamentary Academy (for no additional fee) and the right to apply to send one representative to each Parliamentary Academy Residency Course.

(v) Election of the Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee:

- 13.** At the 2024 CPA General Assembly, the election for the Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee took place. The CPA Chairperson serves a three-year term and collaborates with the CPA Secretary-General and the CPA Secretariat to guide the Association and preside over the CPA Executive Committee. According to CPA electoral regulations, only delegates who were present at the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference were eligible to vote in the election for a new CPA Chairperson. There were three contenders for the position of Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee during this election: Hon. Dr. Zainab Gimba, MP from Nigeria; Hon. Arthur E. Holder, MP, SC, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Barbados; and Hon. Dr. Christopher Kalila, MP from Zambia. The Hon. Dr. Christopher Kalila was elected as the chairperson after a majority vote in the second round. He is the fifth CPA Chairperson from the CPA Africa Region and the second from Zambia, following Hon. Lavu Mulimba, MCC, MP, who served from 1987 to 1990, since the chairperson role was established in 1967.

(vi) Election of CPA Vice-Chairperson

- 14.** At the end of the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in New South Wales, the CPA Executive Committee met under the leadership of the newly elected Chairperson, Hon. Dr. Christopher Kalila, MP. During the meeting, Hon. Carmel Sepuloni, MP (New Zealand), the Regional Representative for the CPA Pacific Region, was elected as the Vice-Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee. The Vice-Chairperson serves for one year tenure.

(vii) Recognition for 67th CPC host Branch and outgoing CPA Executive Committee Members

15. As part of the acknowledgement of the hosting of the 67th CPC, the CPA President (2023-2024), Hon. Ben Franklin, MLC, President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales was presented with a commemorative silver salver in recognition of the CPA New South Wales Branch for hosting of the conference. The CPA noted the seamless organisation undertaken by the branch, the CPC being one of the largest gatherings of Commonwealth Parliamentarians and staff. The 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference brought together over 700 Parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and decision makers from across the Commonwealth. It was further noted that the 67th CPC marked the first time the CPA New South Wales Branch was organising the event, as well as the first time an Australian State or Territory had held the CPC.

(viii) Audited Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2023:

16. The Audited report and financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2023 were presented for approval. The Assembly was informed that the accounts had been audited, approved and signed off in April 2024 by the Trustees at the Executive Committee. Notably, the accounts had been consolidated to incorporate the financial accounts of CPA Headquarters Secretariat and the two associated Trusts - the Conference Assistance Fund (CAF) and Working Capital Fund (WCF). Having considered the Annual report and financial statements, the Assembly approved CPA Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31st December 2023.

(ix) Budgets and Financial Management Reports:

17. The meeting was taken through the financial performance for the period January 2024 to June 2024 together with the forecast for the year and a commentary on major variances from the budget. With regard to the Conference Assistance Fund, the meeting also noted the increased endowments for 2025 onwards. The Assembly received and approved the

result for the period and the forecast financial result for the year and the year-end financial position at 31st December 2024 in respect of the following reports and budgets—

- (a) CPA Secretariat Financial Report for the period ended 30th June 2024;
- (b) CPA Secretariat Forecast 2024, Budget 2025 and Projection for 2026;
- (c) Working Capital Fund Financial Report for the period ended 30th June 2024, Forecast 2024 and Budget 2025;
- (d) Conference Assistance Fund Financial Report for the period ended 30th June 2024, Forecast 2024 and Budget 2025; and
- (e) 2025 CPA Headquarters Budget and provisional budget for 2025.
- (f) CPA Secretariat Forecast 2024, Budget 2025 and Projection for 2026.

18. The General Assembly received and endorsed the results for the period and the forecast financial result for the year ending December 2024. It was proposed that level for overall spending be set with current priorities whilst maintaining reserves at levels that will help ensure CPA's financial sustainability. Also noted and approved were the updated provisional budget for 2025 and 2026.

19. It was recommended that the following major issues be considered and resolved in the years ahead—

- (i) *Increase in the membership fees: Bearing in mind recent events, **an increase in membership fee rates was included in both the 2024 and 2025 at a rate of 4%.** However, no increase has been incorporated in the proposed 2026 budget.*
- (ii) ***Non-payment of subscriptions** by branches continues to be a concern. The total budgeted provision for bad debts is £150k as at the end of 2025. Due to continued financial difficulties that some branches still suffer from various global economic factors, the £150k provision continues to be included in the budgets moving forward.*

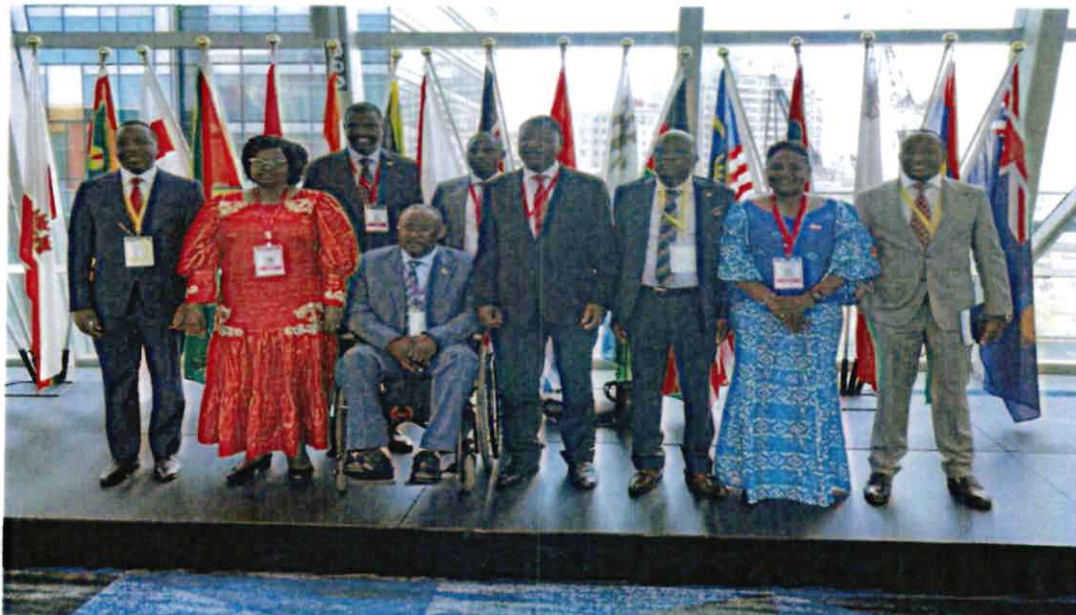
(iii) *Diversification of income via **Partnership and Engagement** is a major initiative that continues to be pursued. Notably, the FCDO had awarded a grant in respect of Benchmark projects amounting to £196k for the period 1st April to 31st March 2025. The Assembly however noted that to ensure the sustainability of the CPA and its programmes, a more diverse range of income is required.*

(x) Future CPC Conferences:

20. The Assembly was apprised on venues and dates for future CPA governance meetings which included the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences and Mid-Year meetings of the Executive Committee. Branches were encouraged to put forward offers to host future Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences in 2025 and subsequent years. To this end, the Assembly was informed that 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference would be hosted by the CPA Barbados Branch. The General Assembly approved the recommendation of the Executive Committee for CPA Barbados Branch to host the 68th CPC in 2025.

(xi) Topic for General Assembly Debate:

21. The CPA General Assembly included a topical debate under the subject – *‘Votes vs Likes – the Role of Parliament in Strengthening Democratic Resilience in an Age of Fake News and Synthetic Media.’* The topic sought to deliberate on the role of Parliaments in strengthening democratic resilience in an age of fake news and synthetic media. Presenters were drawn from different CPA Branches including Australia Federal, Punjab (Pakistan), the Maldives, Wales, Canada Federal, New Zealand, Trinidad and Tobago, and Northern Ireland.



The Speaker of the National Assembly with the CPA Kenya Branch Delegation: From left: Hon. Beatrice Adagala, MP, Sen. Jackson Mandago, EGH, MP, Hon. Tim Wanyonyi, MP, Hon. John Paul Mwirigi MP, Hon. Gonzi Rai, MP, Sen. Beth Syengo, MP, and Hon. Elijah Kururia, MP

22. At the conclusion of the deliberation of the General Assembly, the key decisions and outcomes were—

- (i) Delegates welcomed the work undertaken to enable the CPA to create a new non-charitable organisation and the passage of the CPA Status Bill in the UK Parliament to legislate to recognise the CPA as an international, inter-parliamentary organisation’.
- (ii) Delegates approved the 2023 CPA Annual Report (including the audited Financial Statements), the CPA Membership Report, the CPA Budgets and Financial Management Reports.
- (iii) Delegates endorsed reports from the three CPA networks - the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) and the CPA Small Branches.

E. COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES (CPwD Network)

- 23.** The Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network, led by the CPwD Chairperson, Hon. Laura Kanushu, MP (Uganda), highlighted the work of a local rehabilitation centre working with persons living with disabilities. The CPwD Chairperson, accompanied by the Regional Champions of the network, went to the Royal Rehab Ryde, a rehabilitation hospital, in Sydney to see their work and tour the Brain and Spine Injury Units and the Royal Rehab Lifeworks Unit. The CPwD delegates also participated in an interactive demonstration on Wheelchair Basketball and Tennis.
- 24.** During the 67th CPC, the CPwD Regional Champions held the network's annual governance meeting to set the agenda of the network for the year ahead and to also review the CPwD activities including the Capital Investment Fund supporting Commonwealth Parliaments to become more accessible.



The Hon. Tim Wanyonyi, MP (right) with Regional Champions following a governance meeting of the CPwD Network at the Parliament of New South Wales – Photo: CPA

- 25.** Delegates at the 67th CPC also joined a workshop on creating inclusive elections for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) which examined practical

examples of inclusion during election campaigns and processes and featured CPwD Regional Champions as guest panellists. The CPA Kenya Branch was actively represented by the **Hon. Tim Wanyonyi, MP** who also serves as the CPwD Network for Africa Region.

F. COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP)

Steering Committee

26. Prior to the 8th CWP Conference, the CWP Steering Committee convened during the 67th CPC representing seven of the nine CPA Regions: Africa; Asia; Australia; British Isles and the Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic; and Pacific, to deliberate on ongoing activities and key themes for future conferences and meetings.
27. The CPA Kenya Branch was represented by the **Hon. (Dr.) Beatrice Adagala, MP**, the CWP Kenya Convener and who was also serving as the Alternate for the CWP Africa Region during the 67th CPC.
28. During the meeting, the committee re-elected Hon. Kate Doust, MLC from the Parliament of Western Australia, as the CWP Vice-Chairperson for another one-year term. Previously held every three years, the CWP Conference transitioned to an annual event in 2023, following an agreement among CWP Members to align it with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC).
29. During this meeting, delegates discussed the timing and format of future CWP Business meetings and conferences, along with the approaches for reporting CWP activities through the Regional Secretariats. Their debate was guided by a motion that included recommendations for the CWP Steering Committee, which was subsequently approved by the delegates.

8th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference

30. The 8th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference was held under the theme – “*Engaging, Promoting and Retaining Women in Power.*” The

conference was officially opened by the CWP Chairperson, the Hon. Dr. Zainab Gimba, MP (Nigeria) and was also attended by the CWP President (2024), Ms. Lynda Voltz, MP (New South Wales).



The Hon. Beatrice Adagala, MP (3rd Right) at the opening ceremony of 8th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference

31. The conference featured leading figures from Commonwealth Parliaments who engaged participants in four sessions. Delegates delved into a wide range of topics, including women's representation in Parliaments, gender sensitization, and quotas.
32. The conference provided a platform for Members of Parliament to explore ways of achieving equal representation through a series of governance meetings and dedicated learning and development workshops.
33. The workshops under the CWP were as follows—

(a) CWP Workshop A: Promoting the Political Participation of Young Women and Girls

The workshop sought to respond to the question '*why are there so few young women in political leadership?*' by highlighting some of the current challenges that girls and young women face when trying to engage with, and participate in politics. Key challenges identified in

the deliberations include the perception of a woman's role, a lack of visible representation of women in Parliament, and inadequate access to education and training.

Panelists from Pakistan, Canada, India and Australia shared examples of current initiatives and strategies in their jurisdictions which seek to increase the participation and representation of girls and young women in political leadership. Many of these programmes provide future leaders with training to build confidence, attain skills and cultivate networks.

The panel discussion also emphasized the importance of retention, noting that while entering the field of politics may be one particular challenge, creating an environment which encourages women to stay is another.

At the end of the session, workshop participants noted the recommendation **that Parliaments should have effective strategies in place to promote the political participation of girls and young women, including collaboration with civil society organizations.**

(b) Joint Workshop: CWP Workshop B & CPA Small Branches Workshop D: Gender and National Climate Planning: moving from commitment to scalable

This workshop examined the intersection of gender equality and climate change, recognizing that while climate change affects everyone, its impacts vary based on gender and social vulnerabilities. Specifically, women face disproportionate consequences, which exacerbate existing gender inequalities.

Panelists discussed how gender inequality increases exposure to climate crises and natural hazards but cautioned against viewing

women solely as victims. Instead, the gathering emphasized that women can be powerful agents of change in climate action.

It was noted that across many Commonwealth jurisdictions, the crucial role of women in driving climate action is widely acknowledged. Representatives from small island nations shared how gender considerations are integrated into their National Climate Plans and policies, underscoring the need for greater participation and representation of women in decision-making processes.

Participants also highlighted the disproportionate climate change effects on small island nations. Despite contributing the least to the climate crisis, these nations are experiencing its most severe impacts. Panelists shared examples of programs and projects developed under their National Climate Plans and stressed the importance of continuing advocacy for global climate action while advancing national efforts.

Delegates proposed amending the recommendation to clarify that Parliamentarians do not directly control access to climate financing or gender mainstreaming in climate plans but are responsible for advocating to the Executive for action. Additionally, it was recognized that gender mainstreaming is already in progress but should be further strengthened. Both amendments were agreed upon.

At the conclusion of the session, workshop participants endorsed the recommendation **that Parliaments should advocate for the further integration of gender considerations into National Climate Plans.**

(c) CWP Workshop C: Future-Proofing Democracy: Innovations in Security and Support for Women Parliamentarians

This workshop explored the physical and psychological safety challenges faced by women Parliamentarians and examined potential

innovations and reforms to address these concerns. Panelists highlighted the growing impact of social media and viral misinformation, noting that since 2017, there has been a significant rise in threats and physical assaults against women Parliamentarians, partly attributed to increasing violent online behavior.

Discussions centered on strategies to mitigate these risks, including the use of Artificial Intelligence to trace the origins of harmful content and the enforcement of stricter regulations requiring social media firms to remove threatening language or posts. Additionally, panelists shared insights into measures adopted by various jurisdictions to enhance the physical safety of women in politics, such as conducting security assessments, implementing duress alarms, and establishing escape rooms. However, challenges remain in balancing these precautions with the need for Parliamentarians to remain accessible to their constituents.

The workshop also examined ways of improving parliamentary culture, particularly within the Westminster system, advocating for a shift from an adversarial, conflict-driven approach to a more collaborative and values-based model. Panelists further discussed how existing legislation and parliamentary processes could be leveraged to enhance protections for women in political leadership. At the conclusion of the session, workshop participants endorsed the recommendation **that Commonwealth Parliaments, with the support of experts, should implement protective measures to address the complex security challenges faced by women Parliamentarians.**

(d) CWP Workshop D: The Retention of Women in Parliaments: How to Keep Women in Politics?

This workshop explored the challenges that impact the retention of women Parliamentarians and how these factors influence their decision to remain in politics. The sessions observed that while much attention has been given to encouraging women to enter politics, there is need to also focus on initiatives that ensure their continued participation, as this is essential for achieving near-equal representation.

Discussions highlighted key reasons why women Parliamentarians leave office. Some of the reasons noted were—

- (i) toxic and abusive political cultures;*
- (ii) inadequate support for caregiving responsibilities, particularly for parents of young children;*
- (iii) the increasing prevalence of deep fakes, cyberbullying, and the nonconsensual distribution of intimate images.*

Suggested strategies to support the retention of women in Parliament included—

- (i) enabling hybrid participation in parliamentary activities to allow for better work-life balance, particularly for those with caregiving responsibilities;*
- (ii) implementation of anti-harassment policies;*
- (iii) provision of proxy voting options;*
- (iv) establishing on-site childcare facilities; and*
- (v) addressing online harm through referring cases of online abuse to the relevant authorities whenever possible.*

While politics remains a competitive field, participants agreed that women Parliamentarians must **collaborate across party lines** to support and uplift one another. Strengthening solidarity and addressing barriers collectively were seen as crucial steps toward fostering a more inclusive political environment.

At the conclusion of the session, workshop participants endorsed the recommendation that **Parliaments should actively explore and implement all necessary measures and support systems to enable Parliamentarians to effectively complete their term in office.**

G. WORKSHOPS HELD DURING THE 67TH COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

34. As part of the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, delegates participated in eight learning and development workshops. These sessions offered a platform for Parliamentarians to exchange experiences and discuss key issues, including the integration of artificial intelligence and technology, the security of Members of Parliament, ending of human trafficking, combating discriminatory legislation, promoting the inclusion of LGBT+ individuals and people with disabilities in Parliaments, and fostering engagement with Indigenous Peoples.

35. Delegates from the CPA Kenya Branch participated in the following main conference workshops—

(i) Workshop A: Building Bridges: Parliamentary Frameworks for Meaningfully Engaging with Indigenous Peoples

36. This workshop explored how Parliamentarians and society can develop and implement frameworks to facilitate meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples. Panelists from Australia, New Zealand, and Vanuatu shared their experiences and professional insights on establishing such frameworks. Discussions covered key initiatives, including *The Voice* referendum in Australia, the focus on Indigenous women in Vanuatu, and New Zealand's approach to embedding Māori rights within its Constitution and broader society.

37. Panelists highlighted the challenges and barriers they have encountered in advocating for the recognition of Indigenous peoples and their rights. These challenges were particularly evident in jurisdictions lacking a foundational document, such as a constitution, that explicitly acknowledges indigenous

communities. The Australian panelists reflected on their efforts to establish *The Voice* and achieve constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, **an initiative that ultimately failed** despite extensive community engagement and consultation.

38. In contrast, the New Zealand experience demonstrated successful initiatives, such as the establishment of a Māori health authority, the introduction of a National Māori holiday, and the creation of dedicated Māori local government seats. However, delegates cautioned against relying solely on legislative changes, as these reforms could be reversed by future governments with differing political agendas. Additional challenges discussed included navigating societal and cultural norms, as well as resistance from some community members who perceived the extension of rights and benefits to indigenous peoples as ‘racism.’
39. At the conclusion of the session, workshop participants endorsed the recommendation **that Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth are responsible for developing and implementing parliamentary frameworks that facilitate active and meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples.**



The Speaker of the National Assembly and Members of the Delegation during a workshop

(ii) Workshop B: The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Parliamentary Processes and Practices - Opportunities and Challenges

40. This workshop examined how Parliaments are integrating **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** into their processes and practices, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges it presents. It was observed that several jurisdictions have begun incorporating AI into various parliamentary functions such as transcribing debates and streamlining administrative tasks to enhance efficiency. These efforts however are in the early stages of development.
41. Panelists acknowledged the significant potential AI offers to Parliaments but emphasized the need for safeguards to prevent harmful or unintended consequences. Key concerns noted include—
- (i) the risk of bias and misinformation in AI-generated analysis;*
 - (ii) potential leaks of sensitive information; and*
 - (iii) the vulnerability of AI systems to hacking by malicious actors.*
42. It was agreed that Parliaments and jurisdictions must build the necessary capabilities to harness AI's benefits while mitigating associated risks. Given the complexity of the issue, panelists noted that responses would need to be tailored to the specific context of each jurisdiction. Participants in the workshop highlighted the role of parliamentary committees in scrutinizing AI-related matters, referencing inquiries conducted by the UK House of Lords and the Canadian Senate as examples.
43. The workshop also featured a presentation on the AI initiatives of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, **showcasing AI-powered analysis of public opinions on Bills**, as well as AI-driven **summarization of Bills and parliamentary speeches**. Participants acknowledged the risks associated with AI use in parliamentary processes and expressed support for a proposal to establish a **CPA Steering Committee** dedicated to examining the role of AI in Parliaments.

44. At the conclusion of the session, workshop participants endorsed the recommendation **that Parliaments should promote the exchange of best practices and insights gained from incorporating Artificial Intelligence into parliamentary processes. Additionally, they should consider establishing a CPA Steering Committee to oversee the use of Artificial Intelligence in Parliaments.**

(iii) Workshop C: Violence and Abuse of Parliamentarians: Case Studies from the Commonwealth

45. Parliamentarians play a vital role in democracy, and threats to their safety not only affect their physical and mental well-being but also hinder their ability to express themselves freely within democratic systems. This workshop explored the issue of violence and abuse directed at Parliamentarians, shifting trends in such behavior, its impact on individual welfare and society at large, and the groups most vulnerable to these threats. Panelists from Pakistan, **Kenya**, the United Kingdom, and Compassion in Politics shared their perspectives on the topic.

46. The discussion emphasized how combative political environments, along with the rise of online platforms and social media, have contributed to modern forms of abusive behavior towards Parliamentarians. Threats in the digital space—such as social media harassment, ‘fake news,’ Artificial Intelligence, and cyberbullying—were identified as major concerns. These not only affect the mental health of those targeted but can also escalate into physical threats, creating a climate of fear and distrust that discourages open discourse in public and democratic institutions.

47. The workshop also examined the heightened vulnerability of certain groups, particularly women and marginalized communities. One panelist highlighted that discussions on threats against Members of Parliament are inherently linked to gendered violence. Women, who have historically been silenced, may continue to feel unsafe speaking out even after being elected to public office.

To address these issues, panelists suggested measures such as stricter social media regulations, legislation promoting truth in politics, fostering less confrontational parliamentary debates, and implementing policies specifically targeting misogyny.



Speaker of the National Assembly making his presentation as a panelist at the Workshop on Violence and Abuse of Parliamentarians on Wednesday, 6th November 2024

- 48.** In his presentation as a Panelist, the Leader of Delegation, the Rt. Hon. Speaker of the National Assembly observed that parliamentarians are sometimes exposed to abuse owing to their political affiliations. The Speaker noted that the Constitution of Kenya provides for the political rights of every person including that the political regime, political system, political order and ideology ought to be free from threats, prejudice, subversion and destruction.
- 49.** Further, it was observed that violence against politicians is fueled by numerous factors including public uproar by aggrieved persons regarding decisions made or likely to be made by MPs in the discharge of their duties and politically instigated incitement, and manifests in various ways including—
- (a) online bullying including threats and abuse to MPs and their family members;*

(b) unauthorized disclosure of parliamentarians' private information;

(c) physical attacks on MPs; and

(d) destruction of parliamentarians' property.

50. At the end of the session, participants endorsed the final recommendation **that Commonwealth Parliaments should commit to ensuring robust security measures for Members and their staff. These measures should be adaptable to evolving political landscapes and supported by adequate and accessible medical, physical, mental health, and legal assistance.**

(iv) Workshop D: How can Legislatures Best Support and Promote LGBT+ Participation?

51. The workshop explored how Legislatures can foster a positive environment for the political engagement of LGBT+ voices in the democratic process. Panelists from Belize, Victoria (Australia), the Cook Islands, and UNDP emphasized the significance of diverse representation within Legislatures and the perspectives brought forward through political engagement. The discussion underscored the importance of recognizing different LGBT+ experiences and ensuring inclusive participation in legislative processes.

52. Panelists highlighted that without LGBT+ involvement, legislation and policies risk overlooking essential social perspectives. The workshop also addressed the challenges some jurisdictions face in promoting LGBT+ participation, particularly in societies where cultural and societal norms may be less accepting. This creates political difficulties for some Legislatures in openly supporting the LGBT+ community.

53. In their participation in the deliberation, the CPA Kenya Branch noted that every individual has a right to be protected by the law, as provided for in the Constitution, LGBT+ issues are not a matter that the country has put a priority on. It is noted that this debate has previously split the CPA fraternity especially with opposition from the CPA Africa Region. The delegation was

therefore of the view that the CPC should seek to avoid divisive topics in future events.

54. At the conclusion of the session which was boycotted mid-way by majority of the CPA Africa Region delegates, workshop participants endorsed the recommendation **that political leaders across the Commonwealth have a duty to listen to LGBT+ voices and actively support their meaningful participation in the democratic process.**

(v) Workshop E: Human Trafficking, Refugees and Immigration across the Commonwealth: Open Doors or Building Walls?

55. This workshop examined the complex opportunities and challenges arising from immigration, displacement, and global population movement, with a particular focus on human trafficking and the unprecedented number of refugees.

56. Panelists discussed how various countries have responded to these challenges in distinct ways and emphasized the vital role of Parliamentarians in driving change at the local level. Experts from Canada (Ontario), Kiribati, Kenya, and Australia shared insights on key issues, including the specific challenges of human trafficking, the impact of climate change on low-lying nations and the resulting migration pressures, diverse national approaches to refugee management, and Africa's free movement protocols.

57. The discussion highlighted strategies implemented by different countries, such as "*migration with dignity*" policies and the elimination of forced or fraudulent debt incurred through trafficking. Panelists also explored the distinctions between migration and refugee processes, examining both the challenges and benefits of each system and identifying areas where reforms may be necessary to address contemporary migration issues effectively.

58. At the conclusion of the session, workshop participants endorsed the recommendation **that all movements of people within the Commonwealth should be protected from exploitation, in accordance with the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration, and aligned**

with the commitment to universal human rights outlined in the Commonwealth Charter.

(vi) Workshop F: Benchmarking, Standards and Guidelines: Strengthening the Institution of Parliaments through the Adoption of Best Practice

59. This workshop focused on exploring how the Commonwealth can develop benchmarking tools, standards, and guidelines to enhance good governance and strengthen parliamentary institutions.

60. Panelists from India, Guyana, KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa), Deakin University, and the Rule of Law Section at the Commonwealth Secretariat emphasized the significance of benchmarking in fostering effective and resilient institutions capable of navigating the complexities of modern governance. They highlighted that benchmarks serve as a demonstration of commitment to democratic values, enhance transparency in parliamentary processes, and ultimately build public trust.

61. Since 2006, the CPA has developed 132 benchmarks under the *CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures*, with updates made in 2018. To date, 30 Legislatures, including **Kenya**, have undertaken assessments using these benchmarks. Panelists shared insights into supported self-assessment processes conducted in various Parliaments worldwide. Participants noted that while the CPA Secretariat produces reports with recommendations, implementation remains the responsibility of each individual Parliament. These recommendations provide opportunities for self-reflection and institutional growth, regardless of whether they are formally adopted.

62. The discussion also underscored the importance of establishing codes of conduct that complement the benchmarks by setting ethical standards and clear accountability measures. Panelists emphasized that such frameworks

should be adaptable to accommodate the unique contexts of different Legislatures.

63. At the conclusion of the session, workshop participants endorsed the recommendation **that Commonwealth Parliaments should commit to examining and adopting relevant benchmarking tools, standards, and guidelines including but not limited to the CPA Democratic Benchmarks that can be tailored to their respective institutions to enhance governance and parliamentary effectiveness.**

(vii) Workshop G: Combatting Discriminatory Legislation: 365 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence *(CWP Topic)*

64. This workshop explored the role of Parliamentarians and Governments in addressing discriminatory legislation, particularly laws that disproportionately affect women and girls. Discussions focused on the persistent challenges in achieving gender equality and enacting gender-responsive laws, as well as the diverse approaches countries have taken to tackle these issues. The session also examined how CPA members and international organizations, such as UN Women, can contribute to the development of best practices.
65. Panelists from New Zealand, The Maldives, Australia, and UN Women shared insights into the current state of women's and girls' rights in their jurisdictions. They provided specific examples of initiatives aimed at reforming discriminatory laws on marriage and divorce, inheritance, welfare benefits, gender-based violence, and the gender pay gap. These efforts included legislative measures such as the passage of Bills and resolutions, the establishment of specialized Committees, and conducting unannounced visits to relevant agencies to assess compliance with human rights principles.
66. Despite notable progress, all panelists acknowledged that significant work remains. Key barriers to swift legal reform include inadequate data collection due to weak reporting mechanisms, limited public awareness and education

on the issues, ineffective communication of legislative changes, and the financial and logistical challenges associated with implementing reforms.

67. Workshop participants concluded the session by endorsing a recommendation **that legislatures across the Commonwealth adopt and enforce policies and legislation in alignment with CEDAW. This commitment aims to ensure the effective prevention and response to all forms of harassment, discrimination, and abuse, fostering a more inclusive and equitable legal framework.**

(viii) Workshop H: Creating Inclusive Elections for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) (CPwD Topic)

68. This workshop emphasized the urgent need for inclusivity in the electoral process, examining the barriers faced by various groups in society and proposing practical strategies to ensure full participation for persons with disabilities. With 2024 recognized as the 'Year of Elections' due to the unprecedented number of elections taking place, many Commonwealth jurisdictions have recently encountered these challenges. Panelists from Uganda, Malaysia, and Scotland shared insights from their respective Parliaments on how they had addressed these issues and suggested inclusive processes to enhance accessibility. Additionally, a virtual panelist from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) provided examples from election monitoring and technical assistance initiatives across North America, Europe, and Central Asia.
69. The discussion underscored the principle that electoral accessibility is essential for all, ensuring that no member of society feels excluded from the democratic process. Through presentations, discussions, and shared experiences, the workshop fostered awareness, generated solutions, and encouraged collaboration among stakeholders dedicated to improving accessibility in elections for persons with disabilities. Participants observed that while elections serve as a fundamental pillar of democracy within the

Commonwealth and beyond, individuals with disabilities frequently encounter substantial obstacles that impede their ability to participate equally in the electoral process.

70. At the conclusion of the session, workshop participants endorsed a recommendation **that Commonwealth Parliaments to prioritize the integration of technological solutions and necessary adjustments to ensure inclusive participation in electoral processes and practices for all individuals with disabilities.**

H. OTHER MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN THE OCCASION OF THE 67TH CPC

(a) World Café Session: Solving Contemporary Challenges in the Commonwealth

71. The World Café at the 67th CPC provided a platform for in-depth discussions on contemporary challenges facing the Commonwealth, centered around five key topics—

- (i) global stability challenges;*
- (ii) addressing the colonial past;*
- (iii) the Sustainable Development Goals;*
- (iv) corporate lobbying against climate change; and*
- (v) assisted dying in relation to human rights.*

72. Attendees had the opportunity to rotate between topics in small groups, sharing insights from their respective jurisdictions and exploring the potential for common goals.

73. A key theme that emerged was the importance of Parliamentarians working collaboratively toward shared objectives, particularly in addressing conflicts and threats to global stability.

74. Discussions focused on the ongoing impact of colonialism that saw participants emphasizing the need to acknowledge its continued presence

before engaging in conversations about reparations. This recognition should be accompanied by comprehensive education on colonial legacies.

75. Participants highlighted the CPA's potential role as a catalyst for change. By serving as a platform for exchange of ideas and best practices, the CPA can support Parliamentarians in advocating for innovative solutions within their own jurisdictions, ultimately enhancing their ability to address contemporary challenges effectively.

(b) 58th General Meeting of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) in Commonwealth Parliaments

76. The Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments was founded in 1932 to primarily provide a means by which parliamentary officials could share knowledge of the practices and procedures of parliaments across the Commonwealth. Over the years, it continues to, among others-

- a) provide a forum by which the parliamentary practice of legislatures may be made more accessible to Clerks-at-the-Table as well as other persons involved or interested in legislative work;
- b) foster among the officers of legislatures a mutual interest in their duties, rights and privileges; and
- c) a forum for networking of officers and building lasting professional relationships that lead to the development of parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth and across the globe.

77. The 58th meeting of Society of Clerks in the Commonwealth took place in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia in the sidelines of the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. It brought together close to seventy Clerks and parliamentary officers from the Commonwealth to discuss the latest legislative developments and share best practices.

78. The meeting was jointly chaired by Mr. David Blunt, Clerk of the Legislative Council/Clerk of the Parliament of New South Wales and Ms. Helen Minnican, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales. Presentations were made during the two-day meeting by officers and consultants on a wide range of topics, including –

- (i) citizen participation in parliament;
- (ii) parliamentary oversight of Executive undertakings;
- (iii) parliamentary reform;
- (iv) initiatives to promote transparency;
- (v) digital democracy;
- (vi) the impact of legislators in managing natural disasters;
- (vii) reconciliation with indigenous peoples and Legislative Assemblies;
- (viii) the development of relations between parliaments; and
- (ix) the CPA’s work on Standards for Codes of Conduct in the parliamentary workplace.

79. Comments by presenters are summarized below—

(i) Citizen participation in Parliament

80. Mr. David McGill, Clerk/Chief Executive of the Scottish Parliament, presented a brief history of citizen participation, and recent developments in the Scottish Parliament. The meeting noted efforts towards citizen participation in Scotland began in 1988 with the establishment of the Consultative Steering Group (CSG). Later in 2016, a Commission on Parliamentary Reform recommended the establishment of the Committee Engagement Unit.

81. In 2021, a new Committee was created whose mandate included “citizen participation,” a concept that was embedded in the Parliament’s Strategic Plan. The Committee launched an inquiry on how parliament should embed citizen participation that, among others, entailed evidence gathering and included Citizens’ Panel that made recommendations which reviewed them before publication of the final report in 2023.

82. The final report recommended that parliament should use citizen's panel more often and lessons learnt would inform blueprint for deliberative democracy. The Committee noted that deliberative democracy was part of the solution to falling trust in institutions, that scrutiny can be better informed, engagements would have a positive impact on citizens as well as a positive institutional impact but also recognized the difficult task of making citizen participation work. The Committee further noted that the initiative needed significant investment in time and resources.

(ii) Parliamentary oversight of executive undertakings

83. The Secretary of the Western Cape Provincial Legislature, Mr. Romeo Adams, shared perspectives on the subject of *parliamentary oversight and executive undertakings*. The meeting noted the various oversight mechanisms to ensure that executive undertakings are fulfilled which include—

- *Parliamentary scrutiny;*
- *Public reporting;*
- *Audits and reviews; and*
- *Media and civil society.*

84. A defined framework for tracking of executive undertakings was observed as a crucial tool for strengthening public trust in government institutions and would include, *inter alia*—

- *establishing a commitment registry;*
- *developing a system for regular monitoring of progress;*
- *defining clear performance indicators;*
- *stakeholder engagements that involved MPs, Civil Society Organizations and the public; and*
- *regularly reviewing and evaluating the undertakings.*

(iii) Preparations for a New Parliament and steps towards parliamentary reform

85. The Strategic Director of Chamber Business Team, UK House of Commons, Dr. Farrah Bhatti, shared the approach taken by the House of Commons in planning for a general election, the support of new Members of Parliament,

and early work on parliamentary reforms initiated by the newly established Modernization Committee.

86. The meeting observed that the General Election Planning Group comprised about twenty-five (25) officers representing a range of roles and functions within the House. The tasks are broken down into multiple work streams covering areas such as security, communications, departing Members provision, people and culture with a special focus on induction of Members. Notably, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) **Handbook for Parliaments in Election Planning** provides useful perspectives on planning ahead and case studies from different jurisdictions. For the 2024 UK Elections—

- 300 MPs were re-elected;
- 335 were elected as first time MPs; and
- 15 returned as MPs after a gap in service.

87. Upon arrival, there were eight (8) stages for various services including **ID check, registration and buddy allocation in the Westminster Hall, security pass issue, Members' HR, Digital, Members' security, IPSA and tour**. These stages are followed by Chamber briefing and inductions covering the entire spectrum of parliamentary work including **office manager inductions, MPs staff inductions, use of the library, introduction to procedure, table office training on parliamentary questions and oral questions, vote office, Big Ben tours, education and engagement services and select committee inductions** for Members and their staff.

88. On **parliamentary reforms and modernization**, it was noted that the programme seeks to reform the House of Commons procedures, drive up standards and improve working practices.

89. Ch. Amer Habib, the Secretary General of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab presented a paper titled "*A legacy of democratic governance and reform*" that explained recent developments in the Provincial Assembly. The paper noted

that the Assembly undertook amendments to the standing orders to strengthen parliamentary processes, enhance transparency, and empower committees. Having been established in 1897, the Provincial Assembly is one of the oldest legislative bodies in South Asia and is the largest in Pakistan representing 110 million constituents.

90. Committees can now address issues without Speakers' prior permission and can take up any matter under its mandate and that membership and chair allocations reflects party strength and they may invite experts and conduct public hearings. In addition, the changes extended session hours removing the 5-hour limit besides making live broadcasts mandatory, making committee reports available on the Assembly's website and introduction of a code of conduct for members. He concluded that these reforms mark a significant stride towards a more open, inclusive and accountable Provincial Assembly.

91. The Secretary of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, Mr. Rajit Punhani, shared his experience on digital transformation of legislative processes. He noted that the Rajya Sabha Secretariat provides assistance to the Council operations including all legislative processes, member services, committee proceedings, Ministry communications and proceedings of the House. He further explained that the Secretariat uses software applications and multiple notification services to issue e-summons to the members and detailed session calendar and that all daily business documents are published in real time, in 11 languages. He added that daily proceedings are paperless and are conducted by the Chair through special software and hardware designed for the purpose.

92. In particular, tablet devices have been installed in the chamber for members to see business documents, participate in the proceedings and cast their vote. Further, he noted that members' services included a unified web portal for members to submit e-notices for parliamentary participation, raise service

requests and track status. The objective is to transform member participation through technology. Some of the Digital Transformation Initiatives (DTI) include AI based language translation, video library project, digitisation of records, digital *Sansad* project and digital transformation project.

93. The meeting was apprised of the decision of the Court of Appeal in Tonga that reaffirmed **parliamentary privilege and the doctrine of separation of powers** following a petition. The Court recognised the importance of preserving the independence of the Legislative Assembly, **cautioning against judicial interference in matters that the Assembly is mandated to manage.**

94. The forum also considered a paper from the Parliament of Victoria in Australia on standards for **Codes of Conduct for Members of Parliament.** The main objective of the Code is to establish ethical standards and expectations for parliamentarians, promoting honesty, objectivity, and acting in the public interest.

95. Assam Provincial Legislative Assembly in India illustrated the steps taken to make the Assembly's proceedings and operations transparent. These include ensuring fair and accurate reporting of proceedings to the press and strengthening the quality of legislative drafting.

96. The meeting considered a paper presented on digital democracy and e-parliament initiative being undertaken by the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly in India. In the digitisation programme, MLAs use electronic tablets installed on their desks to continually update them on the proceedings, the questions undertaken and their answers, agenda of the day and notices.

97. The meeting was updated on reconciliation with indigenous peoples and Legislative Assemblies in the North West Territories (NWT) of Canada. The presentation focused on the experience on the action plans at reconciliation

and particularly on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, noting that NWT was celebrating almost 50 years of responsible government.

98. The meeting also considered and approved the accounts of the Society, and subsequently adjourned until the next Annual General Meeting that will be held in Barbados in October, 2025.

(c) The 2nd LIFAKA Lecture

99. The 2nd CPA Emilia Monjowa Lifaka Lecture was held on 5th November 2024 on the sidelines of the 67th CPC. The lecture underscored the vital role of Commonwealth Parliamentarians in safeguarding and advancing human rights and explored pressing human rights challenges across Commonwealth jurisdictions. It also emphasized the unique role of Parliamentarians as both lawmakers and representatives of the people and their ability to influence policy, enact legislation, and hold governments accountable.
100. The keynote address was delivered by Hon. Michael Kirby, AC CMG, a distinguished international jurist, educator, and former Australian judge.
101. Established in 2023, the CPA Lifaka Lecture honours the legacy of Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, the late Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee and Deputy Speaker of Cameroon. A dedicated advocate for the CPA, she served as Chairperson from November 2017 until her passing in April 2021. The lecture serves as a lasting tribute to her contributions and commitment to the Commonwealth Parliamentary community.

(d) Election of CPA Chairperson

102. During the 2024 CPA General Assembly, Hon. Dr. Christopher Kalila, MP (Zambia), was elected as the Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee for a three-year term on 7th November 2024. The other candidates for the position were Hon. Dr. Zainab Gimba, MP (Nigeria), and Hon. Arthur E. Holder, MP, SC, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Barbados.

103. In the first round, no candidate garnered the requisite threshold of a majority of the votes cast. The results were as follows:—

	Candidate	Votes garnered
(i)	Hon. Dr. Zainab Gimba, MP (Nigeria)	71
(ii)	Hon. Arthur E. Holder, MP, SC (Barbados)	93
(iii)	Hon. Dr. Christopher Kalila, MP (Zambia)	77

104. The two candidates with the highest number of votes proceeded for the second round of election. In the second round, the Hon. Dr. Kalila garnered 109 votes against the Hon. Holder who garnered 108 votes. The Hon. Kalila was therefore declared the new Chairperson of the CPA International executive Committee.

105. In this role, he will collaborate with the CPA Secretary-General and the CPA Secretariat to lead the Association and preside over the CPA Executive Committee.

106. Following the CPA General Assembly, the newly convened CPA Executive Committee elected Hon. Carmel Sepuloni, MP, from the Parliament of New Zealand and Regional Representative for the CPA Pacific Region, as the Vice-Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee. This position is held for a one-year term, and the Vice-Chairperson serves as a Member of the CPA coordinating Committee.

(e) Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year Awards 2024

107. At the 67th CPC in New South Wales, Parliamentarians from Pakistan, Jersey, Guyana, and New South Wales were honored with the Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year 2024 Awards as follows—

- (i) Hon. Khurram Ijaz Chattha, MPA (Punjab, Pakistan) received the 2024 **Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year Award** in recognition of his dedication to parliamentary service and the promotion of good governance.

- (ii) Hon. Gail Teixeira, MP (Guyana) was awarded the 2024 **Parliamentarian Lifetime Achievement Award** for her remarkable 32 years of parliamentary service.
- (iii) Deputy Raluca Kovacs (Jersey) was recognized with the 2024 **New Parliamentarian Award** for her significant contributions to promoting parliamentary democracy, despite having been elected only two years ago.
- (iv) Hon. Alex Greenwich, MP (New South Wales) received the 2024 **Parliamentary Equality and Diversity Award** for his steadfast advocacy for LGBT+ rights, reproductive rights, and marriage equality in Australia.

RECOMENDATIONS BY THE CPA KENYA BRANCH DELEGATION TO THE 67th CPC

- 108.** The Kenya Parliament Delegation to the 67th CPC urges the two Houses of Parliament to note this Report.
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ANNEXURES

1. 67th General Assembly Agenda
2. General Assembly Paper on Ending Charitable Status
3. General Assembly Paper on Proposed Special Observer Status



CPA 67TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**International Convention Centre
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia**

7 November 2024

9.00am

AGENDA

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Welcome and Opening Remarks by the President | Oral |
| 2. Apologies for Absence | Oral |
| 3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Accra, 5 October 2023) | GA3 |
| 4. Matters Arising | GA4 |
| 5. Ending Charitable Status | GA5 |
| (i) Adoption of constitution for CPA Charitable Funds | GA5(i) |
| (ii) Transfer of functions and assets to non-charitable CPA | GA5(ii) |
| 6. Election of the Chairperson of the Executive Committee | GA6 |
| 7. Adoption of non-charitable constitution for the CPA | GA7 |
| 8. Reports of the Executive Committee | |
| (i) Recommendations from the Executive Committee (to be tabled)
the General Assembly | GA8(i) |
| (ii) Annual Report for 2023 | GA8(ii) |
| 9. CPA Membership Report | GA9 |
| 10. Audited Report and Financial Statements: year ends 31 December | |

Note: In order to facilitate the re-establishment of the CPA without charitable status, agenda items 1-6 constitute a General Assembly of the CPA (charity) and agenda items 7 to 20 constitute a General Assembly of the CPA (non-charity)

2023 – to receive	GA10
11. Budgets and Financial Management Reports – to receive	
(i) CPA Secretariat Financial Report: period ended 31 August 2024	GA11(i)
(ii) CPA Secretariat Forecast 2024, Budget 2025 and Projection for 2026	GA11(ii)
(iii) Working Capital Fund Financial Report: period ended 30 September 2024, Forecast 2024 and Budget 2025	GA11(iii)
(iv) Conference Assistance Fund Financial Report: period ended 30 September 2024, Forecast 2024 and Budget 2025	GA11(iv)
12. Report on Programme Delivery	Oral
13. Report of the CWP Conference	Oral
14. Report of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities	Oral
15. Report of the Small Branches Conference	Oral
16. Future Venues for Governance Meetings	GA16
17. Election of Regional Representatives	GA17
18. Presentation of plaques to the host branch and to outgoing Executive Committee Members	Oral
19. Presentation of the Parliamentarian of the Year Award	Oral
20. Topical Debate – Votes vs Likes- the Role of Parliament in Strengthening Democratic Resilience in an Age of Fake News and Synthetic Media	Oral
21. Any Other Business	

Note: In order to facilitate the re-establishment of the CPA without charitable status, agenda items 1-6 constitute a General Assembly of the CPA (charity) and agenda items 7 to 20 constitute a General Assembly of the CPA (non-charity)

CPA 67TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

International Convention Centre
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
7 November 2024

(i) Background

This report sets out the proposal for the creation of a Special Observer Status, which was approved for recommendation to the General Assembly by the CPA Executive Committee at its Mid-Year meeting on 8 May 2024.

Recommendation:

That the General Assembly:

1) Approves the proposal on Special Observer Status

Creation of a Special Observer Status

Following the presentation of this item at the Executive Committee Meeting in Ghana, the Secretary-General committed to conducting a consultation within the CPA membership on the creation of a “Special Observer” status for the CPA. Currently, we do not have such a status. We do have provision for Observer Status at CPCs, but such applications are not automatically granted to non-CPA Parliaments and are specifically related to attendance of that particular conference.

CPA’s relationships with Parliaments outside the Commonwealth are very important, both at a regional level and globally. The creation of a new “Special Observer” status could strengthen these relationships, whilst making a very clear distinction between members and observers. It would also provide the CPA with a model closer to that of our international, inter-parliamentary counterparts such as the IPU, APF and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, who all have a Special Observer status similar to the one proposed.

The proposal in Annex A recommends that a Special Observer status would be offered only to non-Commonwealth national, sub-national and regional Parliaments who share the principles and values of the CPA and the Commonwealth. The Executive Committee would review applications from said Parliaments and, to ensure there is consensus on the granting of the status, if any member of the Executive Committee objects, then the application will be refused.

The proposed cost to approved applicants is an annual fee of £5000 GBP per Parliament. This would entitle those Special Observers to:

1. The attendance of two representatives to the annual CPC without payment of the additional CPC Observer fee – this could include attendance at the CPA’s learning and development workshops and the General Assembly.

2. Access to the CPA's communications (including online issues of The Parliamentarian) and parliamentary toolkits, handbooks and guides.
3. Access to the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Small Branches and Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities network workshops (where appropriate and capacity-permitting) and invitations to webinars and virtual conferences.
4. Access to the online CPA Parliamentary Academy (for no additional fee) and the right to apply to send one representative to each Parliamentary Academy Residency Course.

This would enable the CPA to further its reach outside the Commonwealth, sharing and embedding our values in neighbouring Parliaments and strengthening good governance across our Regions.

The Secretariat opened the consultation on the Special Observer Status in January 2024 with a deadline of 31st March 2024. All responses received were supportive of the proposal but also highlighted the potential inequity of a Special Observer being entitled to send two representatives to a CPC within their annual fee, when some smaller or sub-national member Parliaments were only entitled to send one delegate to a CPC, with any additional participants incurring fees.

The consultation feedback was presented to the Mid-Year Executive Committee meeting in May 2024 and the meeting agreed to recommend to the General Assembly that this proposal should be approved.

The full proposed modalities of the status are set out in Annex A.

CPA 67th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Ending Charitable Status

(i) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper outlines the CPA Secretariat's plans to end the organisation's Charitable status following the passage of the Status Bill in the UK Parliament.

Recommendation:

That the 67th General Assembly:

1. Welcomes the significant progress made since the 66th CPC in Accra towards ending the CPA's charitable status and achieving legislation in the United Kingdom.
2. Endorses the transfer agreement (Annex A), which transfers assets from the charity to the new CPA.
3. Adopts the Constitution for CPA Charitable Funds (Annex B).

1. Background

At the General Assembly, in October 2023, the CPA's legal status was discussed, and the below recommendations were agreed:

That the General Assembly:

1. Notes and welcomes the progress made by the Governance Working Group and CPA Secretariat to implement the General Assembly recommendations on CPA status.
2. Notes and welcomes the legal and financial advice and work undertaken so far to enable the CPA to be able to create a new non-charitable organisation later in 2023.
3. Agrees to create a new non-charitable organisation at the 66th General Assembly.

4. Agrees to the establishment of an Interim Executive Board to oversee the new non-charitable organisation.

5. Approves the proposed Constitution for the new non-charitable organisation.

6. Welcomes and supports the renewed efforts to persuade the UK Government to agree to legislate to recognise the CPA as an international, interparliamentary organisation.

Since this meeting, the Working Group on Governance (chaired by Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of Trinidad and Tobago), the Interim Executive Board, and the CPA Secretariat have undertaken substantial efforts to make progress in achieving a change of the organisation's legal status.

2. Ending Charitable Status

At the 66th CPC in Ghana, delegates agreed to establish a new, non-charitable CPA that would operate alongside the existing CPA for a transition year before becoming fully operational. During this period, an interim Executive Board has overseen the non-charity's work. An interim Constitution was also adopted at the 66th CPC.

In its meeting on 25 June, the Interim Executive Board approved a draft of a non-charitable CPA Constitution for circulation and consultation with the membership of the existing CPA. On 18 September, the CPA Secretariat hosted an online consultation meeting where CPA Branches could provide feedback and comments regarding the document. On 25 September, the Secretariat issued a notice to its membership featuring a recording of the Secretary-General outlining what proposed changes are made to the Constitution, for the General Assembly's agreement at the 67th CPC. To clarify the changes, a further notice was issued on 8 October, with the Constitution, featuring tracked changes illustrating what amendments are being made to the document and comments describing the reasoning behind the proposed changes.

The Interim Executive Board met twice in 2024 and will meet during the 67th CPC. The transition year has allowed the organisation to complete practical and financial preparations for the new CPA to be fully operational by early 2025. It also ensured that CPA member parliaments have paid their 2024 membership fees to the non-charitable CPA. A new bank account was created, and membership fees have been received there.

This has created a healthy financial reserve for the new CPA and has reduced significantly the funds held by the CPA charity. As a result, we are now able to transfer a wide range of assets from the charity to the non-charity.

A transfer agreement has been drawn up and is attached as Annex A.

The remaining charitable funds are mostly in the Working Capital Fund and Conference Assistance Fund. Extensive legal and financial advice has been taken to ensure that these funds are protected once the main CPA ceases to be a charity. A proposed new Constitution for these funds is set out in Annex B.