



**REPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION –  
UNITED KINGDOM BRANCH (CPA – UK) BILATERAL VISIT TO THE  
PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA ON 22 – 23  
MARCH 2023**

## **1.Purpose of the Report**

To report on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – United Kingdom Branch (CPA-UK) Bilateral Visit to the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa on 22 – 23 March 2023.

## **2.Background**

The CPA – UK Branch initiated the visit.

## **3.Objectives of the visit**

The primary objective of the visit was to deepen and strengthen relations between the Parliament of the United Kingdom and the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa .

**The CPA – UK delegation:** Mr David Mundell, MP; Ms Lyn Brown, MP Ms Karin Smith, MP and Lord Oates, MP accompanied by Mr J Loose and Ms Z Zondi (CPA Officials)

### **The delegation held meetings with the following Members of Parliament:**

Mr L Tsenoli, MP- the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly; Adv S Swart, MP – Chief Whip of the ACDP; Mr X George – the Secretary to Parliament; Mr N Singh, MP – Chief Whip of the IFP; Mr J Steenhuissen, MP – Leader of DA; Mr S Luzipho, MP – Chairperson of the PC on Minerals and Energy; Ms Bilankulu, MP – the Chairperson of the Multi-Party Women’s Caucus.

Ms N Sonjica – the Section Manager: Bilaterals and Multilaterals (IRPD) and Mr Z Cawe, the International Relations Officer: Bilaterals supported the meetings.

#### **4. Day1: Wednesday, 22 March 2023 : Meeting discussions .**

The visiting delegation held its first meeting with Mr Tsenoli, MP – the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

In his welcoming remarks, the Deputy Speaker welcomed the delegation and thanked them for visiting the Parliament of the South Africa RSA. He gave an update on the fire that gutted Parliament buildings in early January 2022, the court case in process and the R2 Billion provided to rebuild the buildings which will take two years to complete and expressed a hope that as part of the rebuilding, Parliament will have enough space. He further informed the delegation that the City Hall in Cape Town is used as interim Parliament and has exhibitions on Nelson Mandela. During the struggle had an opportunity to meet Bishop Hurley and thanked the Westminster Foundation for its support.

The leader of the CPA – UK delegation, Mr David Mundell, MP expressed his appreciation for the meeting. They have been in the country for the past two days and had an opportunity to meet some Civic Organisations and Trade Unions. Very keen to observe Parliament in action that afternoon. He explained the purpose of their visit which is to deepen and strengthen relations between the Parliament of UK and the Parliament of the RSA.

The Deputy Speaker tendered an apology on behalf of certain MPs who were expected to be part of the meeting. He shared interesting innovation about the Constitution of the RSA including the recent developments regarding the Judiciary Day which is the way to hold Judiciary accountable. The Judiciary submit a report where they explain their challenges, backlog in their Courts, certain Courts that require additional Judges, etc. The Deputy Speaker made an undertaking to share the copy of the Report.

In conclusion, the Deputy Speaker shared information on Electoral Act Amendments to allow independent candidates to stand as MPs during National and Provincial Elections, Speakers Forum where Speakers of legislatures coordinate the work of the legislative Sector, Institutions supporting democracy called Chapter 9 Institutions and commended the Electoral Commission for running successful elections which were all since

1994 had been declared free and fair. He cited poverty, inequality, unemployment as major challenges facing the country at the moment. He called for the reform of the CPA and that the Parliament of the RSA has been lobbying successfully other Parliaments in the continent of Africa that adopted the SA position on reform of the CPA and other institutions like the World Bank, IMF and the United Nations Organisation.

The leader of the delegation, Mr Mundell, MP indicated that such a reform of the CPA would need a vote in the UK Parliament. He extended an informal invitation to the Deputy Speaker, Mr L Tsenoli, MP to lead a delegation to UK Parliament in order to engage UK MPs on the matter of the reform of the CPA and other related matters of mutual interest.

It was agreed that the formal invitation would be addressed to both the Speaker of the NA, Ms NN Mapisa-Nqakula, MP and the Chairperson of the NCOP, Mr NA Maseko, MP.

The leader of the delegation thanked the Deputy Speaker for availing himself to meet with the delegation and informed the Deputy Speaker about the UK-SA Parliamentary Friendship Group which has been established in the Parliament of UK and urged the Parliament of the South Africa to establish one. He proceeded to sign the distinguished guest book and exchanged gifts with the Deputy Speaker.

#### **5.Meeting with Adv S Swart, MP – the Chief Whip of the ACDP**

The leader of the CPA – UK delegation, Mr David Mundell, MP explained the purpose of their visit which is to deepen and strengthen relations between the Parliament of UK and the Parliament of the RSA. He asked whether any possibility of a coalition government and whether Parliament could expect major changes after 2024 elections.

In his remarks Adv Swart, MP expressed appreciation to have an opportunity to meet the delegation. He stated that the ACDP was modelled from the German Christian Democratic Party. He is serving in the Finance; Public Enterprises and the Justice and Correctional Affairs Committees. He highlighted the State Capture and Eskom investigations as highlights of his

political career as an MP. He informed the delegation of their study visit to Germany to learn about the issue of coalition government. All political parties represented in Parliament except the EFF were part of the trip.

He cited the recent experiences on coalition government in Pretoria and Johannesburg Metro Council that ended disastrously. At national level, they would have to be cautious because the concept of coalition government is a new concept in the politics of South Africa and not yet understood by voters. He further mentioned the issue of gay rights and abortion, and the ACDP call for referendum on death penalty, land reform to be done in progressive manner and that the issue of independent candidates which resulted in the Electoral Law amendment, floor crossing legislation which is still in force in the UK Parliament whereas is no longer in place in the RSA because people vote for the party and not the constituency candidate.

The meeting deliberated and agreed as follows:

- Land reform is a very emotive matter and need to be handled with care. It should be supported and done in a progressive way;
- The issue of independent candidate. Argument against: Not accountable to anyone; Argument in support: they are accountable to the public /voters in their respective constituencies;
- The delegation urged to read the Kgalema Motlanthe High Level Panel (HLP) on leading an investigation on land reform and its recommendations.

The delegation proceeded to City Hall to observe the Sitting of that afternoon.

End of Day One

## **6. Day 2: Thursday, 23 March : Meeting discussions.**

On day two, the delegation held its first meeting with Xolile George – the Secretary to Parliament accompanied by Ms R Begg – the Division Manager: Core Business Support.

In his address to the meeting, the Secretary to Parliament, express his honour for meeting the delegation. He informed them that he joined Parliament in June 2022 and never had an opportunity to attend a CPA meeting. He briefly shared his view on the programme of the previous day at the City Hall and expressed a wish to deepen the relationship and called for further collaboration between the staff of the UK Parliament and the Parliament of the RSA especially on issues of public participation, exchange programmes to improve oversight and law-making process.

In his remarks, Mr Mundell – the leader of the delegation commended staff of Parliament for the way they handled the sitting at the City Hall the previous day. He explained the purpose of their visit which was to strengthen and deepen parliament to parliament relations. He asked the challenges encountered by staff and MPs after the fire that ravaged Parliament buildings in January 2022.

In her response, Ms Begg's input was more on virtual engagements with UK Parliament at staff level especially during COVID19 and after the fire that gutted parliament's building. She commended staff of Parliament for handling transition very well. It took only two weeks to adapt to technology. The COVID19 covid 19 pandemic forced MPs and staff to understand and get on board on how things have to be done.

The meeting deliberated and agreed as follows:

- Staff of both Parliaments should collaborate and share information on matters of common interest such as lessons learnt during Covid 19

pandemic: law making process and other related matters. These engagements could be held via virtual platform,

- The Secretary to Parliament expressed eagerness for staff of Parliament to learn how UK Parliament works.

The other meetings were held with Mr N Singh, – the Chief Whip of the IFP; Mr J Steenhuisen, MP – the Leader of the DA. The delegation concluded their visit with a working lunch with the Chairperson of the PC on Minerals and Energy Mr S Luzipho, MP and the Chairperson of the Multi-Party Women’s Caucus, Ms N Bilankulu, MP.

The focus of the meetings with Mr Singh, MP, and Mr Steenhuisen MP among other things, were on upcoming elections in 2024 and the possibility of a coalition government and other matters of importance. In response to these matters both Mr Singh, MP and Mr Steenhuisen, MP indicated the following:

- coalition government is a new concept in the politics of South Africa and not yet understood by voters.
- cited the recent experiences on coalition governments in Gqeberha, Pretoria and Johannesburg Metro Councils that ended disastrously.

In the working lunch with the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Minerals and Energy Mr S Luzipho, MP and the Chairperson of the Multi-Party Women’s Caucus, Ms N Bilankulu, MP the CPA – UK delegation learnt about the 16 Days of Activism programme and how the current challenges call for continuous awareness rather than the observation during the 16 Days period. She expressed concerns around issues of human trafficking and the contribution of undocumented foreign nationals on this matter. She also stressed the issues around policing and irregularities in the justice system that discourages reporting of GBV and sexual offences.

The Chair for Mineral Resources and Energy, Mr S Luzipho, MP shared information about the management of mines in South Africa and how the RSA government strives to regulate mining for economic growth.

## **7. General outcomes of the meetings**

The deliberations and outcome of the meetings were as follows:

- 1) CPA – UK extended an invitation to Deputy Speaker, Mr L Tsenoli, MP to lead a multi-party delegation the UK Parliament in order to strengthen and deepen relations between the Parliament of UK and the Parliament of the RSA. The formal invitation will be addressed to Speaker and the NCOP Chairperson.
- 2) Staff of both Parliaments should collaborate and share information on matters of common interest such as lessons learnt during Covid 19 pandemic, oversight, law making process and other related matters. Such engagements could be held via virtual platform led by the Secretary to Parliament -Xolile George.
- 3) Visit was a success.

## **8. Recommendations and/or Action by Parliament**

None