



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND PROTOCOL DIVISION

PO Box 15 Cape Town 8000 Republic of South Africa

Tel: 27 (21) 403 2911

www.parliament.gov.za

DELEGATION REPORT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION 66TH

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (CPC) IN ACCRA GHANA , 30

SEPTEMBER TO 6 OCTOBER 2023

1. Introduction

The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa and the Provincial Legislatures participated in the proceedings of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association organized by the Parliament of Ghana, Accra from the 30 September to the 06 October 2023. The conference was organized under the theme “ ***The Commonwealth Charter 10 years on: Values and Principles for Parliaments to Uphold***”. 2023 marked the 10th anniversary of the Commonwealth Charter which outlines the principles and values of the Commonwealth.

The conference was hosted by the Parliament of Ghana from n Accra, Ghana was attended by over 600 Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Clerks representing Parliaments and Legislatures from across the Commonwealth.

The South African delegation was led by the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Hon A Masondo and the Speaker of the National Assembly Hon N Mapisa-Nqakula as well as the Speakers of the Provincial Legislatures which included the following. Equally, the administrative component of the South African delegation was led by the Secretary to Parliament, Mr Xolile George and the various Secretaries to the following Provincial Legislatures;

- **Parliament of the Republic of South Africa**
- **Limpopo Provincial Legislature**
- **Free State Provincial Legislature**
- **Gauteng Provincial Legislature**
- **Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature**
- **North West Provincial Legislature**
- **Northern Cape Provincial Legislature**
- **Western Cape Provincial Legislature**
- **Kwazulu Natal Provincial Legislature**
- **Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature**

2. Messages of Solidarity Arising from the Official Opening Ceremony

The 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was officially opened by the President of the Republic of Ghana. The Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), His Excellency Nana Akufo-Addo, the President of Ghana, urged Commonwealth Parliamentarians to work together to uphold democratic principles and the values of the Commonwealth as he opened the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (66th CPC) for over 600 delegates in Accra, Ghana. The CPA Vice-Patron and President of Ghana said: “The world is still experiencing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which compelled us to work together to survive.

As countries exit the doldrums of the pandemic, the world has been hit again with a series of geo-political crises, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the recent coup d'états in some parts of Africa. These crises are a threat to the foundation of democratic values and institutions, and a clarion call for leaders to work together to address this new challenge. It is a call on all Parliaments to act. He urged Commonwealth Parliamentarians to reflect deeply on the goal of the values and principles in the Commonwealth Charter and focus discussions on the goal of attaining and maintaining the democratic ethos of this noble community. He further commended the Commonwealth for its commitment to the rule of law, open and tolerant societies, equality for all and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms.”

Delegates to the 66th CPC were also welcomed by the CPA President (2022-2023), Rt Hon. Alban Bagbin, MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana who said at the opening ceremony: He welcomed all Commonwealth Parliamentarians to Accra for the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference which brings together delegates on a single platform to share their experiences and good practices as well as promoting the values of the Commonwealth. This includes a commitment to the highest standards and principles of democratic governance and parliamentary practice. Democracy will remain elusive if leaders are not deliberate in efforts to ensure the independence of Parliaments. He further argued that Parliaments can be strengthened if we empower oversight Committees to effectively review government actions, budgets and policies. These can

strengthen Parliaments through civic education programs that inform citizens about their rights and the need to protect parliamentary democracy.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg also welcomed delegates to the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, in Accra, and thank the CPA Ghana Branch and Parliament of Ghana, and in particular the CPA President and CPA Vice-Chairperson for their generosity in hosting this year's conference. He appreciated the fact that conference offers an invaluable opportunity to come together and share best practice in addressing common issues and strengthening Commonwealth values, as the theme on the Commonwealth Charter attests. The values within the Charter, and the vital role the CPA has in sustaining and reinforcing them, are as relevant today as they were when they were originally signed in 2013. Converging on the tenth anniversary of the Commonwealth Charter, provides delegates with an opportunity to review the relevance of its values and principles, as well as assessing how the Commonwealth is progressing against these pledges. Commitments to democracy, human rights and good governance are cornerstones of the CPA's work, and these Charter principles play a part in everything parliamentarians do as an Association

3. Discussion and Analysis from Workshops

The conference deliberated on various thematic areas which included the following topics;

- Workshop A: The threat of terrorism to statehood: the role of Parliament
- Gender Quotas in Parliament - a means to an end?
- What does sustainable trade and economic development mean for small jurisdictions?
- Youth Roundtable: Role of the Commonwealth in international security and peacebuilding
- Environmental approaches in tackling energy poverty
- 20 Years of the Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers: Is it working?
- The Commonwealth Charter: A Charter for all Human Rights, or just some?

- E-Parliaments: An effective mechanism for intersectional diversity and equitable public engagement?

During the deliberations of workshops at conference participants on various recommendations that encouraged Parliaments to collaborate with stakeholders to improve governance architecture and ensure equitable distribution of resources; benchmark best practices for the involvement of Parliaments in combatting terrorism; perform their oversight responsibilities to ensure accountability; make appropriate legislation to combat cross-border terrorism; and address the root cause of terrorism.

Equally on gender related topics it was reiterated that Parliaments of the Commonwealth, with less than 30% women Members, should implement a percentage of gender quotas through legislative means or via political party candidate selections.

Delegates also encouraged Commonwealth's Parliaments in the smallest jurisdictions should collaborate to promote fair and sustainable international trade.

4. REPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP) BUSINESS MEETING

The CWP held its business meeting on the 2nd of October 2023. The meeting was opened by the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Hon. Dr Zainab Gimba, MP, Member of the House of Representatives, National Assembly of Nigeria who welcomed delegates and updated on the CWP activities delivered since the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada in August 2022. The CWP Chairperson also pledged to renew the effort to increase women's representation and political participation in Parliaments across the Commonwealth.

Delegates debated the time and format of future CWP Business meetings and conferences as well as the methods for reporting of CWP activities through the Regional Secretariats, with a motion passed by delegates containing further recommendations for

the CWP Steering Committee. (more time to be allocated for CWP Business meetings, CWP reports be distributed to Members prior to Business meetings, themes are developed to guide annual activities of the CWP, and new Members receive an induction into the CWP).

The CWP Steering Committee met in Ghana representing the seven of the nine CPA Regions: Africa; Asia; Australia; British Isles and the Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic; and Pacific.

The CWP Steering Committee elected Hon. Kate Doust, MLC from the Parliament of Western Australia as the new CWP Vice-Chairperson for a one-year term and agreed on the establishment of a new Subcommittee to examine a future work programme for the network.

Members were encouraged to register for courses offered by the CPA in order to enhance their capacity.

It was also reported that a Memorandum of Understanding had been entered into between the CPA and UN Women and the UN Women was in attendance at the conference.

It further reported that the CWP Work Programme and Budget for 2024 was £90000 budget with each region allocated £10000 for one programme. This was reported to be inadequate and regions were encouraged to lobby for funds with partner organisations to supplement amount made available. It was also reported that regions had not claimed for the utilization of the funds made available for the CWP programmes.

It was also reported that there were two activities dedicated to women in the conference programme.

The first was a discussion on “Ending discriminatory laws: celebrating the gains” which was held after the CWP Business meeting with UN Women. Secondly it was reported that one of the workshops was dedicated to the gender equalities and thirdly, a report of the CWP would also be tabled in the General Assembly on 5 October 2023.

During the deliberations, the delegates expressed their unhappiness in the manner in which the report was tabled as it did not cover the work of all the branches and sub-branches of the CWP. It was further proposed that reports should not be limited to issues of gender parity, but all the work done. In addition, it was recommended that regional representatives must submit information to the CWP Executive, and report of the CWP must be packaged and shared in advance and not just be reported verbally.

It was further recommended that there needed to be a review of the manner in which the CWP does its work. Proposals were tabled for the business meeting to take three hours and to direct the Secretariat to implement such a decision should it be agreed to.

It was also recommended that there must be an induction of CWP on rules or procedure of the parliaments and for the CWP to track resolutions of the conference.

A motion was tabled for the CWP report to be submitted to the CWP regions two weeks prior to the CPC Conference. Regional secretariat must be held to account for the work of the region. The report of regions must feed into the report of the CWP. Prior to coming to the CPC information must be circulated on the report of the CWP.

It was also agreed that small branches must be given an adequate amount of time to discuss women issues.

It was also recommended that the CWP must develop a theme that will put the regions together for each year on the work that must be done.

The meeting decided that there must be a meeting of the regions with the steering committee and inform them of the process going forward.

4.1 Workshop A: The threat of terrorism to statehood: the role of Parliament (CPA Ghana Branch Host Topic)

The workshop explored the threats of terrorist extremism to democracies and statehood, shedding light on the multifaceted challenges it poses across West Africa and their

implications for security and stability. It further delved into the role that Parliaments must assume in combatting this menace to safeguard the security and integrity of states.

Panellists including the Ghana Minister for National Security and a Commandant from the Ghana Defence College underscored the role that Parliaments must play in combatting these threats: promoting good governance; ensuring accountability; sensitising the public through awareness campaigns and education; fostering national cohesion and unity; improving the quality of investigative mechanisms by funding security institutions; enacting laws to protect citizens; promoting collaborative endeavours between governments and civil society organisations (CSOs); allocating adequate resources to security organisations to counter terrorism; and driving accountability by ensuring efficient use of resources by security agencies.

At the end of the session, participants recommended that:

Parliaments should collaborate with stakeholders to improve governance architecture and ensure equitable distribution of resources; benchmark best practices for the involvement of Parliaments in combatting terrorism; perform their oversight responsibilities to ensure accountability; make appropriate legislation to combat cross-border terrorism; and address the root cause of terrorism.

4.1.1 Workshop B: Gender Quotas in Parliament - a means to an end? (Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians topic)

The workshop evaluated the effectiveness of gender quotas in Parliaments. Despite progress made in many areas, women's representation in Parliaments remains inadequate. Gender quotas have emerged as a promising strategy to address this disparity for an equitable distribution of power and influence.

Two Members from Bangladesh and Sierra Leone outlined the efforts in their Parliaments to achieve gender equality including constitutional amendments and proportional representation as well as some of the barrier facing women such as generational issues. The journey to achieving gender equality requires dedication, funding, legislative support and political will. The UN Women representative noted that women's representation is far

from equal and intimated that there are several instances where a quota system may be passed, yet not implemented due to certain barriers. At the current rate of progress, gender parity in Parliaments would not be reached in national Legislatures before 2063 globally if further action was not taken.

The recommendation was unanimously endorsed by workshop delegates that: Parliaments of the Commonwealth, with less than 30% women Members, should implement a percentage of gender quotas through legislative means or via political party candidate selections.

4.1.2 Workshop C: What does sustainable trade and economic development mean for small jurisdictions? (CPA Small Branches topic)

The workshop explored what sustainable trade and economic development means for small jurisdictions as well as the challenges and opportunities they face in promoting sustainable economic growth through international trade. It was discussed that most small jurisdictions vary in size and population thereby presenting unique challenges faced by each in terms of global markets, infrastructure, market access and regulatory barriers.

Members from Jamaica, Malta, The Gambia and Fiji outlined their experiences of sustainable trade and development and emphasised that economic development requires a multi-faceted approach that meets the needs of small jurisdictions and finding innovative ways to use their strength and ability to be agile. The concept of sustainable trade was also seen as a critical feature in minimizing poverty in small jurisdictions, and sometimes smaller jurisdictions are barred from entering international markets due low volumes of production.

Lowering trade barriers to promote economic development, promoting gender equality, an active private sector, developing transportation links of small jurisdictions to the international market, balancing economic growth and environmental diversification as well as social equity were also discussed as some of the factors to promote and improve sustainable trade and economic development.

The delegates at the workshop unanimously endorsed that the Commonwealth's Parliaments in the smallest jurisdictions should collaborate to promote fair and sustainable international trade.

4.1.3 Workshop D: Youth Roundtable: Role of the Commonwealth in international security and peacebuilding (Youth topic)

This workshop took the form of a youth roundtable with youth participants invited from a number of Ghanaian youth organisations. The workshop focused on how the Commonwealth can address the issue of international security and peacebuilding and Members of Parliament from Australia Federal, the United Kingdom and Guyana provided insight into their experiences. With 1.2 billion of the world's population made up of youth aged between 15 and 24 years, it was acknowledged that the youth are often ignored in decision-making and policy formulation, yet they bear the brunt of the effects of climate change and insecurity. It was also recognised that the growth of information technology in the world coupled with more people turning to social media platforms, many young people need more protection online and measures should be in place to tackle cyberbullying. The representative from the Ghana National Peace Council explained that Ghana has a peacebuilding mechanism that helps resolve conflict and encouraged its adoption by other countries.

During the Q&A session, many young people expressed frustration with youth unemployment levels and the sidelining of youth in decision making, however, the panellists encouraged youth participants to go through the appropriate channels for redress.

The workshop delegates unanimously endorsed the following recommendation:

Commonwealth Parliamentarians should champion peacebuilding initiatives, actively involve youth and collaborate across the Commonwealth network, in order to bolster the Commonwealth's role in international security for a more peaceful, secure future.

4.1.4 Workshop E: Environmental approaches in tackling energy poverty

The workshop heard from presenters from Kenya, India Union and a UK Government agency, the Crown Agents on the implementation of clean energy and facilitating the adoption of biofuels. Commonwealth Parliamentarians have a key role to play as legislators, scrutineers and representatives to help drive this agenda.

It was outlined that India is developing policies based on five key enablers: energy availability, accessibility, affordability, sustainability and efficiency. India has developed schemes in tackling energy poverty, such as Saubhagya and Ujjwala, and boasts of the largest solar park in the world. However, the presenter from Kenya remarked that it is the responsibility of both government and citizens to tackle energy poverty. A major challenge remains the unwillingness of communities in rural areas to transition from fossil fuel to clean energy as charcoal continues to be a cheaper option. Some solutions that have been initiated are rural electrification, diversification of electricity sources, creation of a National Energy Policy, compulsory use of solar for water heating systems, and community sensitisation.

The following recommendation was endorsed unanimously by workshop delegates that: Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth must seek to ensure there is secure, reliable, efficient, affordable and environmentally sustainable energy provision available to all.

4.1.5 Workshop F: 20 Years of the Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers: Is it working?

This workshop recognised the role of the CPA in drafting the original ‘Commonwealth Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers’ along with other Commonwealth organisations, but also outlined that all Commonwealth jurisdictions have a role in implementing them.

Panellists from Trinidad and Tobago, Malaysia and Australia outlined how their Parliaments implement the separation of powers and the challenges that it can bring. It was recognised that during the COVID-19 pandemic, some Parliaments enacted

procedures in contravention of the separation of powers. It was suggested that a Parliamentary Service Act could be introduced as had been proposed in Malaysia. The presenter from Derby University spoke about the principle of veto powers by the Executive that operates in several Commonwealth jurisdictions and whether this promotes democracy or is antithetical to it.

4.1.5 Workshop G: The Commonwealth Charter: A Charter for all Human Rights, or just some?

The workshop deliberated how Parliamentarians and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) could promote and uphold human rights values in the Commonwealth. Discussions led by Members from KwaZulu-Natal, Turks and Caicos Islands, Scotland, the Commonwealth Equality Network and the Ghana Human Rights and Justice Commission highlighted gender equality, protection of the rights of LGBT+ persons, capacity-building, disability and refugees' rights. CPA Members were encouraged to promote human rights legislation and policies in their respective jurisdictions. The need to respect cultural rights were, however, expressed by some participants.

The workshop endorsed the following recommendation:

The Commonwealth Charter should apply to all Commonwealth citizens irrespective of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or political views and Parliaments should be actively working to promote the human rights of all.

4.1.7 Workshop H: E-Parliaments: An effective mechanism for intersectional diversity and equitable public engagement?

The workshop focused on how effective e-Parliaments would promote public engagement, enhance Parliaments' legitimacy, transparency and accountability, and how to best include marginalised groups. Parliamentarians from Trinidad and Tobago, New South Wales and Malaysia outlined the need for making Parliaments more accessible, particularly to persons with disabilities, and the need to mitigate the risk involved in integrating technology into the work of Parliament. During the COVID-19 pandemic, E-Parliaments helped to enhance public engagement in parliamentary processes through

digital methods. However, there continues to be a number of challenges for Parliaments regarding the best way to engage the public and in measuring and evaluating these activities. The workshop intimated that, although the role of technology is essential in promoting democracy, there are notable challenges such as the digital divide in society and data protection and privacy rights.

The workshop delegates unanimously endorsed the following recommendation: Parliaments should embrace their representative function, both in the diversity of its membership and through engaging with the public, including via appropriate and innovative approaches.

5. 66th CPA General Assembly: Key Decisions

The CPA General Assembly, the Association's supreme authority, was constituted by delegates to the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

The General Assembly also included a topical debate on food security and sustainability in the Commonwealth, with presenters from CPA Branches including Queensland, Tanzania, Canada, Isle of Man and Turks and Caicos Islands.

The key decisions and outcomes consisted of the following :

- CPA Status - Welcomed 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. Noted 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. Agreed to create a new non-charitable organisation at the 66th CPA General Assembly. Welcomed and supported the renewed efforts to persuade the UK Government to agree to legislate to recognise the CPA as an international, interparliamentary organisation. Agreed to the pre-assessment stage of the benchmarks and instructs the CPA Secretariat to write out to all CPA Branches as soon as the 66th CPC has concluded. The communication from the CPA Secretariat should seek potential expressions of interest from Branches and include the assessment framework and methodology, and a series

of FAQs. A decision on the next stage will be made at the Mid-Year CPA Executive Committee in 2024.

- Annual Report - Noted the CPA Annual Report for the reporting period of January to December 2022.
- CPA Secretary-General's annual appraisal and application for a second and final term - Approved the recommendation of the CPA Executive Committee that the CPA Secretary-General is appointed for a second and final term, with this commencing on 1 August 2024, and ending on 1 August 2028.
- CPA Membership Report - Noted the suspended CPA Branches, and that Regional Representatives and CPA Branch and Regional Secretaries continue to be encouraged to engage with defaulting Branches in their respective Regions to settle outstanding Branch fees or to agree a payment plan as soon as possible. Noted the outstanding fees and agreed to the proposals for handling those Branches with arrears and for support to be provided to Branches as required. Acknowledged progress made to date in respect of reinstating previously suspended CPA Branches together with further action outlined during the meeting.
- CPA Future Membership Subscriptions - Agreed the proposal for membership fees to increase in line with the revised budget and the recommendation from the CPA Executive Committee, by 4% for both 2024 and 2025.
- Audited Report and Financial Statements: year end 31 December 2022 - Received the approved and signed CPA Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 December 2022.

- Budgets and Financial Management Reports - Received and approved the result for the period and the forecast financial result for the year and the year-end financial position at 31 December 2023 in respect of the following reports and budgets:
 - (i) CPA Secretariat Financial Report: period ended 30 June 2023.
 - (ii) CPA Secretariat Forecast 2023, Budget 2024 and Projection for 2025.

(iii) Working Capital Fund Financial Report: period ended 30 June 2023, Forecast 2023 and Budget 2024.

(iv) Conference Assistance Fund Financial Report: period ended 30 June 2023, Forecast 2023 and Budget 2024.

(v) 2024 CPA Headquarters Budget and provisional budget for 2025.

With regard to the Conference Assistance Fund, the meeting also noted the increased subventions for 2025 onwards.

- Internal Auditors - Agreed to reappoint internal auditors Sayer Vincent Auditors.
- Report of the Working Group on CPC Modalities - Approved and adopted the recommendations of the CPA Working Group on CPC Modalities as endorsed by the CPA Executive Committee in April 2023.
- Matters Submitted by CPA Branches to the 66th CPA General Assembly - Endorsed the motion submitted by the CPA Isle of Man Branch noting the work of the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC) and calling for strong and independent Public Accounts or equivalent Committees to sustain and promote the highest standards of public financial oversight, and encouraging Public Accounts Committees in the CPA to avail themselves of free membership of CAPAC in order to pursue these aims and to share best practice.
- Network Reports - Received and endorsed reports of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson, Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) Chairperson and the CPA Small Branches Chairperson.
- Future CPC Conferences - Encouraged CPA Branches to put forward offers to host future Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences in 2025 and subsequent years.
- Election of new Regional Representatives on the CPA Executive Committee - Elected, on valid nomination from CPA Regions, the prescribed number of incoming Regional Representatives on the CPA Executive Committee for each Region of the Association as submitted by CPA Regions.