



# The Parliamentarian

Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth

2021 | Volume 102 | Issue One | Price £14

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CPA

COMMONWEALTH  
PARLIAMENTARY  
ASSOCIATION

## EMPOWERING SMALL PARLIAMENTS TO TACKLE BIG CHALLENGES IN THE COMMONWEALTH

Marking the CPA Small Branches network's  
40<sup>th</sup> anniversary

PAGES 20-56

### IN THIS ISSUE ►

Why halving  
malaria across the  
Commonwealth is  
vital to a healthy future

PAGE 58

Socially distant  
but democratically  
together: Towards a  
Virtual Parliament

PAGE 62

Lessons from  
the Virtual  
Commonwealth  
Youth Parliament

PAGE 75

An innovative  
programme  
engaging young  
women in politics

PAGE 82



CPA

SMALL BRANCHES  
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association



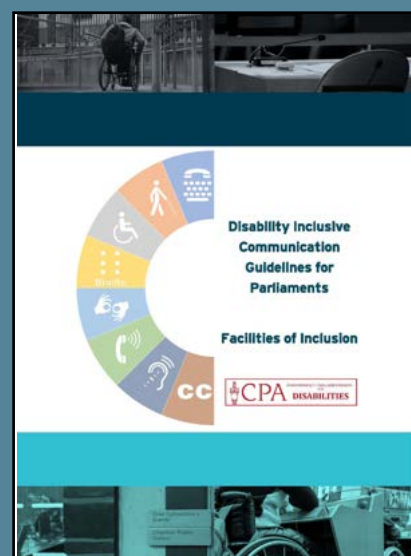
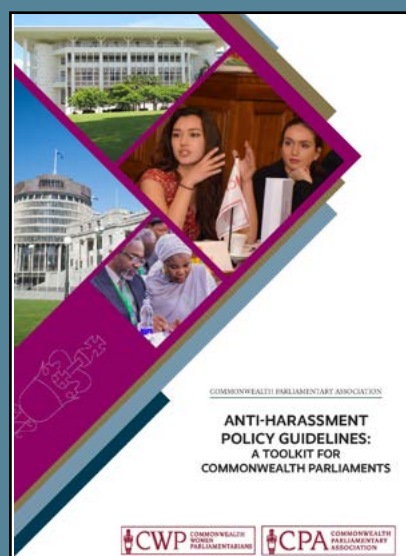
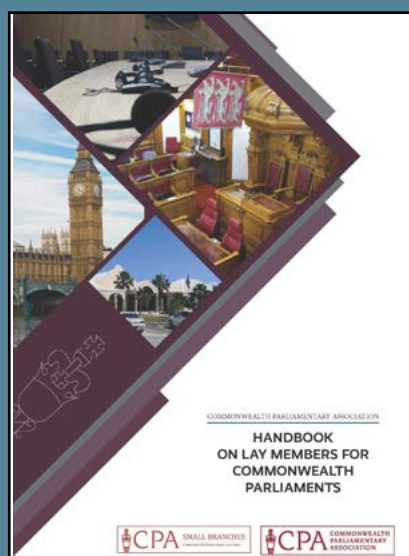




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## Calendar of Forthcoming Events

Updated as at 1 March 2021

Please note that due to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) global pandemic, many CPA events, conferences and activities have been postponed or cancelled.

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### 2021

#### March

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 8 March 2021        | Commonwealth Day 2021 and International Women's Day 2021                                  |
| 8 March 2021        | Virtual CPC workshops: <i>Youthquakes and Rising Youth Activism in the Commonwealth</i> . |
| 23 to 27 March 2021 | Mid-Year meeting of the CPA Executive Committee, Gibraltar/online                         |

#### April

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 15 April 2021          | CPA webinar: <i>COVID-19: The pandemic's impact on health in the Commonwealth</i> .  |
| 27 April 2021<br>(held | CPA and CLA webinar: <i>Lawyers, Parliamentarians and the Rule of Law</i> in partnership with the Commonwealth Lawyers Association). |

#### June

- |              |                      |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 30 June 2021 | World Parliament Day |
|--------------|----------------------|

#### July

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 5-9 July 2021 | CPA Virtual Conference: The 4 <sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution |
|---------------|---|

#### September

- |                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 15 September 2021 | International Day of Democracy |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|

The CPA calendar fosters the exchange of events and activities between CPA Regions and Branches. For further information on any events, please contact the CPA Branch concerned or the CPA Headquarters Secretariat. CPA Branch Secretaries are asked to send notices of CPA events to [hq.sec@cpahq.org](mailto:hq.sec@cpahq.org) in advance of the publication deadline to ensure the calendar is accurate.

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## CONTENTS

### THE PARLIAMENTARIAN: 2021 ISSUE ONE

#### IEWS & COMMENT

##### Editor's Note

Empowering small Parliaments to tackle big challenges

Page 4

##### View from the CPA Chairperson

The CPA Small Branches network after four decades of existence

Page 6

##### View from the CPA Small Branches Chairperson

Parliamentary democracy in the smallest Parliaments and Legislatures in the Commonwealth

Page 8

##### View from the CPA Secretary-General

The Commonwealth can learn vital lessons from the unique challenges faced by the CPA Small Branches

Page 10

#### NEWS & PHOTOS

##### CPA News

News reports include:

- CPA Post-Election Seminar Bermuda
- Commonwealth Speakers webinar on COVID-19
- CPA Uganda Branch visit to Kenya
- International Day of Education
- Launch of the CPA Small Branches Strategic Plan
- Preventing political violence workshop for the CPA Zambia Branch
- International Persons with Disabilities Day & CPwD's new Regional Champions

Pages 12-19

##### Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians News and Events

Reports from CWP activities around the Commonwealth including two speeches from the CWP Roundtables on Gender Sensitive Parliaments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century from the Cook Islands and Nigeria

Pages 78-81

#### PARLIAMENTARY REPORTS

##### Parliamentary Report

Featuring legislative reports from Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, Uganda and India

Pages 86-105

##### Book Review

Pages 106

#### CPA DIRECTORY

##### CPA Organisational Structure

CPA Executive Committee, CWP and CPA Small Branches Steering Committees, CPwD Regional Champions and CPA Regional Secretaries

Pages 108



PAGE 20



PAGE 30



PAGE 82



PAGE 100





## SPECIAL 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ISSUE: PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN THE SMALLEST PARLIAMENTS AND LEGISLATURES IN THE COMMONWEALTH

### Multilateral Cooperation for Small Island States

The United Nations High Representative for Small Island Developing States  
Page 20

### Building Resilience in the CPA Small Branches Network

The Speaker of the Parliament of Malta  
Page 22

### Charting the Procedural Evolution of a Small Legislature

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Australian Capital Territory  
Page 26

### Seychelles takes climate change fight seriously

The Deputy Speaker of Seychelles National Assembly  
Page 30

### How Parliamentary Procedures can be constrained by the size of the Legislature

The Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Page 33

### Guernsey goes green on global stage

A Member from Guernsey  
Page 36

### A year in the life of a CPA Small Branch

The Speaker of the Isle of Man  
Page 38

### Importance of Parliament in 21<sup>st</sup> century

A view from Jersey  
Page 40

### Democracy during a pandemic in one of the world's remotest islands

A view from Tristan da Cunha  
Page 42

### Collaboration on global response to COVID-19

The UK Overseas Territories' unique links  
Page 44

### Importance of academic research in studying islands and small states

The Islands and Small States Institute at the University of Malta  
Page 48

### The legal issues facing the world's small states

The Centre for Small States at Queen Mary University of London  
Page 52

### What can island studies show us about sustainable development and public policy?

The Institute of Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island  
Page 54

## FEATURE ARTICLES

### Honouring our commitments: Why halving malaria across the Commonwealth is vital to a healthy future for all

MPs from the UK and Kenya  
Page 58

### Socially distant but democratically together: Towards a Virtual Parliament

The Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly  
Page 62

### Judaism in the Commonwealth

The work of the Commonwealth Jewish Council  
Page 68

### Sharing knowledge in unprecedented times

Developing a Commonwealth Parliamentary Communications Network  
Page 71

### Lessons from the Commonwealth Youth Parliament

A view from Jamaica  
Page 75

### An innovative programme at the Scottish Parliament engaging young women in politics

The Deputy Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament  
Page 82

### Gender Sensitising Parliaments: A democratic imperative in crisis as well as good times

Professor of Politics and Gender at Royal Holloway, University of London  
Page 84

### The Parliamentarian:

Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth  
Volume 102 | 2021: Issue One  
The Parliamentarian  
ISSN 0031-2282

Issued and published by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, CPA Headquarters Secretariat, Richmond House, Houses of Parliament, London, SW1A 0AA, United Kingdom.

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7799 1460

Email: [hq.sec@cpahq.org](mailto:hq.sec@cpahq.org)

[www.cpahq.org](http://www.cpahq.org)

Twitter @CPA\_Secretariat

Facebook.com/CPAHQ

Stephen Twigg

CPA Secretary-General

Mr Jeffrey Hyland

Editor, *The Parliamentarian*

[editor@cpahq.org](mailto:editor@cpahq.org)

Main images: CPA Headquarters Secretariat. Additional images: CPA Branches and Shutterstock.

**Annual subscription:** Four issues including supplements: UK: £44 inc. postage. | Worldwide: £46 surface post and £52 airmail

**Price per issue:** UK: £14 cover price plus UK or worldwide postage.

**Disclaimer:** Opinions and comments expressed in articles and reviews published in *The Parliamentarian* are those of the individual contributors and should not be attributed to the Secretariat of the Association.

**Contributors:** Thank you to all contributors for this issue.

**Printed in:** United Kingdom by Warners Midlands, PLC; and Times Printers, Singapore.

Limited print run - contact [editor@cpahq.org](mailto:editor@cpahq.org) for details of print copies for CPA Branches.





Mr Jeffrey Hyland, Editor  
*The Parliamentarian*,  
Commonwealth Parliamentary  
Association

# MARKING THE CPA SMALL BRANCHES NETWORK'S 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY: EMPOWERING SMALL PARLIAMENTS TO TACKLE BIG CHALLENGES



The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Small Branches network represents the smallest jurisdictions in all regions of the CPA and the network identifies their particular needs and requirements in parliamentary strengthening, development and cooperation. The representation of small jurisdictions through the CPA is one of the unique functions of the Association, bringing together many Parliaments and Legislatures that are not represented in other inter-parliamentary organisations.

Since 1981, the CPA Small Branches network uniquely brings together small national and sub-national jurisdictions across the Commonwealth. The demands of the network have evolved over this 40-year period, although many of the unique challenges faced by the CPA Small Branches remain the same.

The CPA Small Branches network's mission is: *To empower small Parliaments to overcome national and global challenges through cooperation, advocacy and the strengthening of parliamentary democracy and good governance.*

The work of the CPA Small Branches is guided by its focus on three thematic priorities: Climate Change and Environmental Governance; Connectivity, Technology and Innovation; and Human Rights; and these priorities and many other key themes are examined in this issue of *The Parliamentarian* which marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CPA Small Branches.

**“The representation of small jurisdictions through the CPA is one of the unique functions of the Association, bringing together many Parliaments and Legislatures that are not represented in other inter-parliamentary organisations. The demands of the network have evolved over this 40-year period, although many of the unique challenges faced by the CPA Small Branches remain the same.”**

The **Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Executive Committee, Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP** (Cameroon) in her *View* article congratulates the CPA Small Branches network on its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and looks at its progress over its last four decades of existence.

The outgoing **CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Niki Rattle**, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands writes about the positive role of the CPA Small Branches and the recent launch of the CPA Small Branches Strategic Plan 2021 – 2023. The **Acting CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Joy Burch, MLA**, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory writes about the Legislature's evolution as a CPA Small Branch.

Marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CPA Small Branches network, **Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP**, the Speaker of the Parliament of Malta and the Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches network from 2016-2019 outlines measures to build resilience for the network in recent years and the work of the Maltese Parliament during the pandemic.

The **CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg** in his *View* article for *The Parliamentarian* looks at how the Commonwealth as a whole can learn vital lessons from the unique challenges faced by the CPA Small Branches.

The **United Nations High Representative for Small Island Developing States, Ms Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu** outlines how building Small Island Developing States (SIDS) strategies and increasing cooperation between states can secure key outcomes and development for small jurisdictions.

**Hon. Gervais Henrie, MNA** is the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of the Seychelles and his article for *The Parliamentarian* focuses on one of the most pressing issues for the CPA Small Branches – climate change - as he reports on the Seychelles efforts in this area.

The smallest Legislatures in the Commonwealth often face resourcing issues due to their size and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Yukon, **Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA** writes about the influence of his Assembly's small size on the exercise of parliamentary democracy.

**Deputy Lyndon Trott** has written about the leading role that Guernsey is playing in 'green finance' and **Hon. Juan Watterson, SHK**, Speaker of the House of Keys in the Isle of Man writes about a year in the life of a CPA Small Branch.

**Deputy Kirsten Morel** from Jersey asks the question 'What is





*the nature of being a Commonwealth Parliamentarian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the importance of Parliament being reflective and responsive to the needs of society?*

'Remote working' has a special meaning in the world's most isolated council chamber. Chief Islander of Tristan da Cunha, **Councillor James Glass** reflects on a momentous time and delivering democracy during a pandemic in one of the world's remotest islands.

Collaboration on the global response to COVID-19 has demonstrated the UK Overseas Territories' unique links and a special report by the **United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA)** provides readers with a unique insight into these relationships.

The importance of academic research in studying islands and small states is vital for the CPA Small Branches network and our understanding of the unique challenges they face. Readers will hear from three academic leaders in the field. The **Islands and Small States Institute at the University of Malta** promotes research on the economic, social, cultural, ecological and geographical aspects of islands and small states – we hear from three of its leading academics – Stefano Moncada, Godfrey Baldacchino and Lino Briguglio.

The work of the **Centre for Small States at Queen Mary University of London** in the UK focuses on many of the legal issues facing the world's small states and Dr Caroline Morris outlines their work.

Dr Laurie Brinklow writes about the work of the **Institute of Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island** in Canada and asks readers '*What can island studies show us about sustainable development and public policy today?*'

In addition to looking at parliamentary democracy in small jurisdictions, this issue of *The Parliamentarian* also examines other current issues in the Commonwealth and the CPA.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2018, Commonwealth leaders pledged to halve malaria by 2023 in a landmark commitment for the Commonwealth – however progress has been slow. Two Commonwealth Parliamentarians, **Hon. Pauline Latham, OBE, MP** (United Kingdom) and **Dr Hon. Otiende Omollo, SC, MP** (Kenya) ask '*What is the role of Parliamentarians in overcoming one of the world's oldest and deadliest diseases?*'

**Hon. Jonathan O'Dea MP**, the Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly writes about the introduction of a Virtual Parliament in New South Wales during the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on democracy.

**Clive Lawton, OBE** writes about the work of the Commonwealth Jewish Council and their aims to reach beyond their traditional audience.

**Mr Alasdair Rendall** is the Head of Media Relations for the UK House of Commons and he writes in this issue of *The Parliamentarian* about an exciting new project developing a Commonwealth Parliamentary Communications Network for parliamentary staff and the importance of sharing knowledge in these unprecedented times.

The CPA hosted a week-long Virtual Commonwealth Youth Parliament in December 2020 with young citizens from across the Commonwealth, giving them the opportunity to experience parliamentary democracy, to meet other young leaders and discuss urgent global issues. This issue of *The Parliamentarian* reports on this youth event and **David Salmon**, youth participant from Jamaica, shares his impressions of the event as well.

This issue also features news and reports of Commonwealth

Women Parliamentarians (CWP) activities including the CWP Chairperson speaking at a special session on the important role of women's economic empowerment at a Pakistan/Afghanistan seminar; a virtual meeting of the CWP Canadian Steering Committee to focus on strategic plan and future activities; and the CWP Australia Chair at 2020 Reykjavik Global Forum for Women Leaders. This issue features two short speeches from the CWP Roundtables on Gender Sensitive Parliaments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – **Hon. Selina Napa, MP** (Cook Islands) spoke about her own jurisdiction and the wider Pacific Region and the **CWP Vice-Chairperson, Hon. Dr Zainab Gimba, MP** (Nigeria), spoke about the wider Africa Region.

The Deputy Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, **Hon. Linda Fabiani, MSP** writes about an innovative programme that is addressing the under-representation of young women in politics in Scotland.

**Professor Sarah Childs** (Royal Holloway, University of London) writes about the new 2020 CWP Gender Sensitive Parliaments Guidelines and how Gender Sensitising Parliaments is a democratic imperative in crisis as well as good times.

CPA news reports in this issue include: CPA Post-Election Seminar for the Parliament of Bermuda; the second Commonwealth Speakers webinar on COVID-19 responses; a visit by the CPA Uganda Branch to Kenya; Commonwealth Parliamentarians marking International Day of Education; the launch of the CPA Small Branches Strategic Plan 2021-2023; the CPA Secretary-General addressing a peace and preventing political violence workshop for the CPA Zambia Branch; Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities marking International Persons with Disabilities Day as well as announcing the CPwD network's new Regional Champions; as well as many other news reports.

The *Parliamentary Report* and *Third Reading* section in this issue includes parliamentary and legislative news from Canada Federal; British Columbia; Trinidad and Tobago; India; New Zealand; the United Kingdom; Uganda; and Australia Federal.

In *The Parliamentarian: Book Review* in this issue, **Rt Hon. Lord Lamont of Lerwick** (United Kingdom) writes about a new book about a former Prime Minister of Pakistan and her university friend from England that brings a unique perspective about one of the Commonwealth's enduring historical figures.

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat would also like to thank **Mr Neil Iddawala**, until recently the Deputy Secretary-General at the Parliament of Sri Lanka, for his dedication and commitment as the parliamentary correspondent for *The Parliamentarian* for many years. His parliamentary reports and articles about the Parliament of Sri Lanka over many years have provided a record of events for future generations and a source of interest for other Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures who want to share their experiences of parliamentary democracy. We congratulate him on his new role as a Judge of the High Court in Sri Lanka.

We look forward to hearing your feedback and comments on this issue of *The Parliamentarian*, on the issues affecting Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth and to receiving your future contributions to this publication.

Jeffrey Hyland  
Editor, *The Parliamentarian*  
editor@cpahq.org



Chairperson of the CPA  
Executive Committee, Hon.  
Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP,  
Deputy Speaker of the National  
Assembly of Cameroon

# THE CPA SMALL BRANCHES NETWORK AFTER FOUR DECADES OF EXISTENCE

Marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CPA Small Branches network.



The CPA Small Branches network, an offshoot of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), was created in 1981. This vibrant network, which seeks to boost cooperation between jurisdictions within the CPA, currently has over 40 Legislatures and over 1,000 Parliamentarians. Governed by a Chairperson elected every three years for a non-renewable one term of office and a Steering Committee of representatives from each of the CPA Regions, the CPA Small Branches network currently represents Commonwealth jurisdictions with populations under 500,000 and operates within the framework of the CPA.

With its original mission being to empower small Parliaments to overcome national and global challenges through cooperation, advocacy and the strengthening of parliamentary democracy and good governance, the CPA Small Branches network has now become a force to reckon with within the CPA. Its role cannot be underestimated within the CPA and the world at large. Seven out of the nine CPA Regions are represented in this network.

**“With its original mission being to empower small Parliaments to overcome national and global challenges through cooperation, advocacy and the strengthening of parliamentary democracy and good governance, the CPA Small Branches network has now become a force to reckon with within the CPA. Its role cannot be underestimated within the CPA and the world at large. Seven out of the nine CPA Regions are represented in this network.”**

2021 marks 40 years of the existence of this network. The network now goes beyond its original purpose to deliver a number of programmes in parliamentary strengthening and a range of relevant thematic areas, all geared towards strengthening the development and resilience in small jurisdictions across the Commonwealth.

The CPA Small Branches network usually meets in prelude to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC). Its contribution to global issues is increasingly remarkable. These include climate change, sustainable economic development, the development of the tourism sector, education, integration and equality, renewable energy, energy independence, ocean management, food security, world trade issues, biodiversity, and connecting knowledge with decision-making.

Evidently, the *CPA Small Branches Climate Change Toolkit* launched in 2020 now serves as a guide for Parliamentarians within Small Branches on how to become more effective actors in addressing climate change. As those jurisdictions are at the front line of the climate change crisis, it is essential that Parliamentarians are best equipped to face this urgent and complex issue. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has posted the toolkit on its library thereby justifying its importance. The draft toolkit has also been used as a justification towards the development of Climate Change Policy for the Cayman Islands.

Regarding sustainable economic development, over 20 senior Parliamentarians from jurisdictions across the Commonwealth were able to meet in Malta in January 2020 to discuss sustainable ways of boosting their economies. The building of sound economies in the smallest jurisdictions in the Commonwealth, with many examples in the CPA Small Branches network, will obviously contribute to a better world economy.

Concerning webinars, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat, through the CPA Small Branches and in partnership with UNESCO, has been able to conduct the first series of webinars for Commonwealth Parliamentarians. This first webinar focused





specifically on biodiversity and the concept of connecting knowledge with decision-making. The importance of this webinar was evident in the massive attendance of Parliamentarians from the CPA Small Branches' seven regions, with a particular emphasis on the Caribbean and Pacific Regions. A high-calibre panel included presentations from leading experts from international organisations engaged in biodiversity and sustainable development for small jurisdictions. Preparations between UNESCO and the CPA Headquarters Secretariat for the next webinar in the series are now underway. It is our hope that this second series will be an even more successful one and that its impact will be felt across the Commonwealth. The area of focus will be on ocean management and will draw on the expertise of specialists, senior negotiators and public officials from member Branches and leading international organisations and bodies including the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. This will be an event not to miss.

The network constantly explores new ground. It has now published a CPA *Handbook on Lay Members*, an indispensable tool. This booklet, which serves as an information source for Commonwealth Parliamentarians, especially those of the CPA Small Branches, supports the adoption of lay members into a parliamentary system. It had been noted that small legislatures often have the challenge of having fewer Members than are required to form Parliamentary Committees, boards and commissions. This toolkit therefore provides clarity into what a lay member is, in the parliamentary context, and also explores the various motivations behind the adoption of lay members into parliamentary systems, as well as considers how to combat challenges that may arise during the process of deliberations when moving motions to adopt lay members.

In spite of the negative impact of COVID-19, the CPA Small Branches network has envisaged a number of activities for this year 2021. These include the 38<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference, which should take place in August 2021, in Halifax, Canada, in prelude to the main CPA Annual Conference. A number of interesting themes have been envisaged for discussion during this CPA Small Branches' event. These themes are *inter alia*: *Resilience and Preparedness of CPA Small Branches to adversities*; *Promoting gender equality within and beyond Parliamentarians*; *Building sustainable economies in CPA Small Branches*; *Financial scrutiny and oversight: How can Small Parliaments ensure effective accountability?*; and *Wellbeing indicators for CPA Small Branches*.



Above: The CPA Chairperson, Hon. Emilia Lifaka, MP addresses the 37<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference held in Uganda in September 2019.

Regarding the forthcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and given that climate change remains a topical issue for CPA Small Branches and a key thematic focus for the network, and as the network seeks to become more outward-facing and proactive at the international level, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat had begun preparations to send the CPA Small Branches Chairperson to COP26. Originally due to be held in November 2020 in Glasgow in Scotland, the event was postponed for one year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The CPA will do all that is possible for the CPA Small Branches network to be present at this all-important event due to take place later this year.

On the whole, for its 40 years of existence and given its achievements so far, there is no gainsaying that the creation of the CPA Small Branches network was an absolute necessity. I join the entire CPA membership in thanking the CPA Small Branches for these groundbreaking achievements. It is our hope that the network should grow from strength to strength and continues to be the pride of the CPA.

Congratulations to the CPA Small Branches network on its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches, Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands\*

# PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN THE SMALLEST PARLIAMENTS AND LEGISLATURES IN THE COMMONWEALTH

Marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CPA Small Branches network.



During the year of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I am delighted that the achievements of the CPA Small Branches network and its diverse membership can be celebrated in this special edition of *The Parliamentarian*. The small jurisdictions and legislatures of the Commonwealth have formed a central part in the CPA's history and since 1981 have found a collective voice through the CPA Small Branches network. Initially as a means to boost cooperation between small jurisdictions within the CPA, the network has continued to grow over the years. In addition to its original remit, the network now delivers a number of programmes in parliamentary strengthening and a range of relevant thematic areas, all towards strengthening the development and resilience in small jurisdictions across the Commonwealth.

The progress made by the CPA Small Branches network within the CPA highlights the value and necessity of small jurisdictions working together to tackle common challenges. A cursory scan of the international landscape will reveal the extent to which small jurisdictions are finding voice across a range of fora.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992 first recognised and defined Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The Barbados Programme of Action was then produced in 1994 in order to assist the SIDS in their sustainable development efforts, recognising a range of unique characteristics and vulnerabilities. These include small but growing populations, limited resources, remoteness, susceptibility to natural disasters, vulnerability to external shocks, excessive dependence on international trade, and fragile environments. Their development is also constrained further by high communication, energy and transportation costs, disproportionately expensive public administration and infrastructure and little to no opportunity to create economies of

scale. New and evolving global trends and events, such as climate change and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic have brought these factors into even more sharp relief.

Other international bodies have since recognised the distinctiveness of small jurisdictions by forming similar groupings as that of the United Nations' SIDS. These include the Commonwealth Secretariat's Small States, the World Bank's Small States Forum and a host of NGOs, civil society, academic and grassroots organisations engaged in helping these territories address structural and external challenges and make progress on sustainable development.

And of course, there is the CPA's very own CPA Small Branches network, the focus of this special edition of *The Parliamentarian*. The CPA Small Branches network, does however, represent much more than national level jurisdictions. It also encompasses Crown Dependencies, Overseas Territories and Federal Territories, making it amongst the most diverse grouping of small jurisdictions in the Commonwealth.

Since becoming Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches network in September 2019, I have been proud to see the network grow from strength to strength. One highlight was to participate in and chair the CPA Small Branches Sustainable Economic Development Workshop at the Parliament of Malta in January 2020. Hearing from Small Branch Parliamentarians, it is encouraging to see that such engagements have since influenced progress on policy, legislation and reform within different CPA Small Branches. This is testament to the value of mutual learning, knowledge sharing and connecting Parliamentarians to expertise, such that these initiatives offer.

Not only has the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges that small jurisdictions face but it has impacted on the functioning of the CPA Small Branches network. The in-person engagements that have proven so fruitful in facilitating the exchange of experiences, have been postponed or cancelled. The network however, with the support of the CPA Headquarters Secretariat, has shown dexterity in adapting to this new environment. Since last year, the CPA Small Branches Steering Committee was able to meet virtually and pass important business including approving the new CPA Small Branches Strategic Plan 2021 – 2023, among others. New virtual modalities have also

**“The progress made by the CPA Small Branches network within the CPA highlights the value and necessity of small jurisdictions working together to tackle common challenges.”**





Right and below right: Commonwealth Parliamentarians join the CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Niki Rattle at the CPA Small Branches Workshop on Sustainable Economic Development in Malta in January 2020.

included the SIDS dialogues and capacity building webinar series with UNESCO, focusing on connecting science with decision-making across different areas of sustainable development.

As we also look ahead, and as the world looks to initiate a global recovery from the pandemic, the CPA Small Branches network will continue to engage with its membership and address important themes. The forthcoming international United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP26, in Glasgow, Scotland in November will be one such opportunity. In my capacity as CPA Small Branches Chairperson, I hope to be able to increase the voice and visibility of the network and its member legislatures at this important conference.

### CPA Small Branches Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023

As Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches network, I am also proud to present the Strategic Plan for the period 2021 – 2023, that was launched in January 2021. This Strategic Plan continues the tremendous growth of the CPA Small Branches network over recent years. Building on the progress made over the last three-year period and guided by the inaugural CPA Small Branches Strategic Plan 2018 – 2020, this new Strategic Plan certainly sets the most ambitious path forward in the network's history. The work achieved by my predecessor and the first CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Angelo Farrugia MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malta, has laid the foundation for this growth.

The Strategic Plan places at its centre the issues that small Parliaments and jurisdictions across the Commonwealth face in what is a rapidly changing world. The priorities contained within the Strategic Plan reflect both the diversity of the CPA Small Branches' membership and the common challenges shared between them. Through a clear strategic framework, the Strategic Plan holds true to the broader values of the CPA in addressing the needs of Parliaments and Parliamentarians, whilst focusing on a range of thematic issues relevant across small jurisdictions.

My own jurisdiction of the Cook Islands shares many commonalities with other small territories. Vulnerability to external shocks and the physical consequences of a warming planet are just some of the structural challenges that jointly threaten our progress on sustainable development. The leadership that the Cook Islands has shown in tackling these issues, however, has produced positive results. As one example, a recent index for baselining climate change adaptations in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) shows the Cook Islands tied with Tonga for third largest number of actions across the SIDS.<sup>1</sup> Despite our small size,



therefore, we have shown that small jurisdictions can take the initiative on important areas and showcase to larger jurisdictions just what can be achieved at the national level.

I hope the Strategic Plan will be a valuable guide for the network in working towards these ends. I am excited, in my capacity as CPA Small Branches Chairperson to support the collective efforts in fulfilling the Strategic Plan. I look forward to working alongside member Parliaments and Parliamentarians, the wider CPA membership, colleagues at the CPA Headquarters Secretariat and international partners as we make progress over the next three years and beyond, embracing the challenges and charting a common way forward.

### References:

<sup>1</sup> Stacy-Ann Robinson, A richness index for baselining climate change adaptations in small island developing states, *Environmental and Sustainability Indicators*, Volume 8, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indic.2020.100065>.

\*Please note that this article was approved for publication in *The Parliamentarian* before the CPA Small Branches Chairperson stepped down from the role in February 2021.



Secretary-General of the  
Commonwealth Parliamentary  
Association, Stephen Twigg

# THE COMMONWEALTH CAN LEARN VITAL LESSONS FROM THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE CPA SMALL BRANCHES AS THE NETWORK MARKS ITS 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



2021 marks the fortieth anniversary of the CPA Small Branches network. As we reflect on the progress and achievements of the CPA Small Branches over the past four decades, let us consider the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

I am grateful to everyone who took the time to participate in the consultation on the CPA's next Strategic Plan. We heard from Members of the CPA and from external organisations. An evident strength of the CPA is our diversity – we represent Branches both large and small in all parts of the Commonwealth and, importantly, we include sub-national legislatures as well as national ones.

The CPA Small Branches network embodies our shared commitment to diversity both in providing a voice for smaller jurisdictions within the CPA and in engaging the full range of voices within the network itself. This is reflected in the network's own Strategic Plan which is a powerful and ambitious document from which the wider CPA can learn as we take forward our planning for the future.

Last summer, the CPA Small Branches network held two online webinars jointly with UNESCO to explore the role of legislators and decision-makers in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) on Agenda 2030 and sustainable development with a particular focus on biodiversity. One webinar was for the Pacific Region and the other for the Caribbean and Indian Ocean.

These webinars were organised with UNESCO's Small Islands and Indigenous Knowledge Section. They provide an excellent example of how the CPA works with other international organisations to promote our shared values and commitments. There is huge scope for us to do more in partnership with global bodies both within the Commonwealth family and more widely, including other parts of the United Nations.

Many SIDS find themselves in the frontline of the battle against climate change. They are often the most powerful advocates of urgent action to protect the environment and to promote sustainable development. The CPA Small Branches network brings many of the SIDS together with other small jurisdictions to share knowledge and promote best practice. With COP26 being held in Glasgow later this year, there is an opportunity to give a renewed sense of urgency to tackling the climate crisis.

In 2019, the Commonwealth recognised good practice with their first ever Awards for Excellence in SDG Implementation in Small States. Malta received the Award in recognition of its whole-of-government approach to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In January 2020, Malta hosted the CPA Small Branches Workshop on Sustainable Economic Development. Also awarded were Namibia for its alignment of policy at the local level and The Bahamas for creating institutional mechanisms that focus on education, energy reform and improving infrastructure.

Parliamentarians have an important role to play in securing the implementation of the Global Goals. Of course, this responsibility is universally held but I think that many of the CPA's Small Branches have shown leadership here from which we all have an opportunity to learn. In particular, let me thank Hon. Niki Rattle and Hon. Angelo Farrugia, both have held the position of CPA Small Branches Chairperson and both are the Speakers of their respective Parliaments in the Cook Islands and in Malta. Both are powerful advocates for the CPA Small Branches network both within the CPA and externally.

The past year has been dominated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. First and foremost, there is the health impact with the tragic loss of so many lives. It is vitally important that vaccination programmes are available throughout the world. As Anne Gallagher, Director-General of the Commonwealth Foundation has rightly said, the Commonwealth should act as a champion for Small States to ensure that they are not left behind as the vaccines roll out. It is both a question of justice and mutual interest that we address this with seriousness and urgency.

The economic and fiscal effects of the pandemic are being felt globally – in high, medium and low-income countries and by both large and small jurisdictions. Vulnerable communities face the greatest challenges. Many SIDS are highly reliant on income from tourism, so they have been especially hard hit. The CPA will work with other organisations to support Parliamentarians to play a full and productive part in delivering sustainable and equitable development in the difficult months and years ahead.

2021 is also the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CPA itself. To mark this milestone, we are planning a range of webinars over the coming





**“Parliamentarians have an important role to play in securing the implementation of the Global Goals. Of course, this responsibility is universally held but I think that many of the CPA’s Small Branches have shown leadership here from which we all have an opportunity to learn.”**

months addressing key challenges including Global Health and the Rule of Law. In July, we will hold an online conference looking at the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its implications for Parliaments. The past twelve months have demonstrated the importance of technology and innovation to the work of the CPA itself and to our Members. They have also reminded us that we need to address the digital divide if the benefits of new technology are to be shared widely and be truly accessible to all.

In the coming months, we will launch the new CPA website and our new CPA Parliamentary Academy. The purpose of both is to ensure that we are supporting our Members, meeting their needs and enabling us all to learn from one another. It is this spirit which drives CPA’s work at every level including our Branches, Regions, Networks, General Assembly, Executive Committee and the Secretariat.

I look forward to meeting CPA Members in person once it becomes safe to travel internationally again. In the meantime, we will continue to adapt. In March, we will hold our CPA Executive Committee meeting virtually for the second time following the success of the first virtual Executive Committee last August. Our Programmes Team will continue to adapt their work building upon the successful virtual Post Election Seminars already conducted and the broad range of other online events held over the past year.

In December 2020, we held the Commonwealth Youth Parliament online for the first time. It was a hugely successful meeting bringing together young people from across the Commonwealth. It is so important that the voices of young people are heard, especially when we consider the impact of the past year on education. Empowering young people is an important priority not just for the CPA but for the Commonwealth as a whole. We will support Parliaments as they engage with young citizens and we will support young Parliamentarians in their work.

Our three CPA networks continue to demonstrate their strength and relevance. I have focussed on the CPA Small Branches network in this article but let me also thank the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and the Commonwealth Parliamentarians



with Disabilities (CPwD) networks and their respective Chairs, Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA (Pakistan) and Hon. Kevin Murphy MLA, Speaker of the House of Assembly in Nova Scotia. I am confident that all three networks will play increasingly influential roles as the CPA plans ahead for 2025 and beyond.

As we move forward together, it will be important that we do so in a spirit of collaboration and partnership with an emphasis on mutual learning. Our CPA Small Branches provide some powerful examples of innovation from which we can learn wider lessons. I am delighted to have this opportunity to wish the CPA Small Branches network a very happy 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. May they continue to go from strength to strength.

#### UPDATE: CPA SMALL BRANCHES CHAIRPERSON

Further to the articles contained in this special issue of *The Parliamentarian* marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CPA Small Branches network, the CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Niki Rattle, has stepped down from her role as Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands and therefore her role as Small Branches Chairperson. On behalf of the entire CPA membership, I would like to thank Niki Rattle for her tireless work on behalf of the CPA Small Branches network in recent years and as a member of the CPA Coordinating Committee and previously as a Pacific Regional Representative on the CPA Executive Committee in supporting the governance of the Association. We wish her all the best for the future. The CPA also welcomes the CPA Small Branches Vice-Chairperson, Joy Burch, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory who assumes the role of Acting CPA Small Branches Chairperson until the next CPA Small Branches Conference.

## 'ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL' AGREE BERMUDIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS AT CPA POST-ELECTION SEMINAR



Bermudian Parliamentarians came together to discuss their responsibilities as representatives and learn from others across the Commonwealth at a three-day Post-Election Seminar organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). The seminar, held virtually from 1-3 December 2020, was designed to provide Bermudian Parliamentarians with an overview of their role and to explore the different parliamentary processes that they will participate in.

Attendees were addressed by a resource team of 18 Parliamentarians, Presiding Officers and Clerks from different Commonwealth jurisdictions including St Lucia, Jersey, Pakistan, United Kingdom, Isle of Man, Canada, Cayman Islands, Guyana, Seychelles and Bermuda, brought together by the CPA to share their experiences, ideas and strategies. Several key themes emerged as common priorities and chief amongst these themes was the importance of remaining attentive to constituents at a local level whilst working in the arena of national politics.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg, congratulated Bermuda MPs on their recent election success, particularly in the context of COVID-19, and

highlighted the importance of strong and independent Parliaments in the Commonwealth. He also emphasised the Members' crucial role as the voices of the citizens of Bermuda and drew upon his own experiences as a former UK MP to outline the challenges facing Parliamentarians.

The Speaker of the Bermuda House of Assembly, Hon. Dennis Lister, JP, MP, said that learning from different Commonwealth Parliaments is crucial for newly elected MPs and that the CPA provides a vital network for Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth. The Speaker also reflected on the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bermuda Parliament in 2020 and said that the newly elected MPs would have a unique opportunity to influence the start of the next 400 years in the history of Bermuda's Parliament.

## CPA AND CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE LAUNCH INDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT MINISTERS

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the Civil Service College are launching a new professional development programme aimed at new Government Ministers. The 'From Backbencher to Minister' programme is designed to equip new Ministers with the skills and tools to perform their roles more effectively. The new five-day programme combines classroom engagements with experiential learning and will walk new Ministers through their responsibilities, identifying the skills necessary for effective leadership of government departments. Topics covered by the programme will include 'Communicating a Minister's Priorities', 'Managing a Minister's Private Office' and 'The Role of Special Advisers'. Attendees will have the opportunity to visit the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the UK Parliament and the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg said: "This new programme, that the CPA is supporting in partnership with the Civil Service College, will provide a unique opportunity for professional development for Government Ministers and bring new skills and tools to the role. As a former UK Government Minister myself, I know the effectiveness of individual Ministers can depend on their skills and so this programme is likely to have a significant impact on their effectiveness."

Led by ex-Ministers, Parliamentarians and civil servants, the comprehensive introduction to the role of Government Minister provided by this programme will provide new Ministers with the best possible foundation to ensure a smooth and fast transition into their position. For further details please email [hq.sec@cpahq.org](mailto:hq.sec@cpahq.org).



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## CPA UGANDA BRANCH MEMBERS VISIT KENYA PARLIAMENT



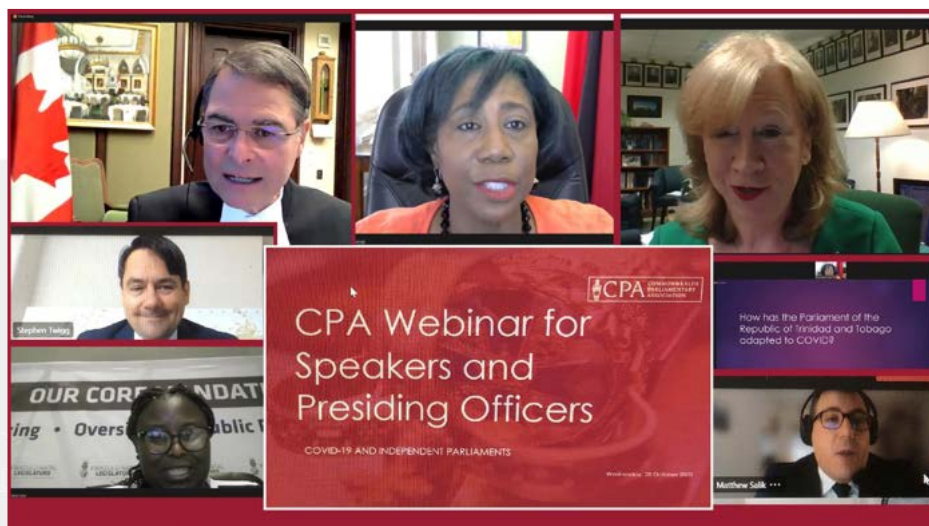
A parliamentary exchange visit has taken place between two Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Branches in the CPA Africa Region. The Parliament of Kenya welcomed a delegation of MPs from the Parliament of Uganda, led by Hon. Bintu Lukumu Ngozi, MP. The delegation visited Kenya on a five-day study visit of the Parliament and to share procedural experiences with the local CPA Kenya Branch.

The Uganda delegation were welcomed to the National Assembly of Kenya by the Speaker, Hon. Justin B. Muturi, MP, who is also the CPA Africa Region Chairperson. The Speaker highlighted the recent successes of Kenya in a recent benchmarking exercise against the CPA *Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures* where the Kenya Parliament ranked highly showing an indicator of good performance for the legislature. The CPA Uganda Branch Members also met with Hon. Kenneth Lusaka, Speaker of the Kenya Senate.

The Uganda delegation met with Members of the Kenya Parliament to discuss a number of issues including the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) Regional Champion for the CPA Africa Region and Member of the National Assembly of Kenya, Hon. Dennitah Ghati MP also highlighted the importance of inclusive democracy and disability representation to the visiting Ugandan MPs.



## MAINTAINING INDEPENDENT AND EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS UNDERLINED BY COMMONWEALTH SPEAKERS



Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers emphasised the importance of independent Parliaments and Legislatures and the adaptations that have been made, especially during the current COVID-19 global pandemic, during the second webinar on this topic organised by the CPA.

The webinar for Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth provided a timely and unique opportunity to examine the nature of Parliaments as independent institutions in the context of COVID-19. CPA President, Hon. Anthony Rota, MP, Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada; Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Trinidad and Tobago; Rt Hon. Dame Eleanor Laing, MP, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, United Kingdom; Hon. Nontembeko 'Ntobeko' Boyce, MPL, Speaker of the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature; and Matthew Salik of the CPA Headquarters Secretariat were panellists. The webinar also sought to promote the CPA's *Model Law for Independent Parliaments* and the CPA's work with Commonwealth Legislatures on establishing Parliamentary Service Commissions to ensure that Parliaments can remain robust, effective and independent institutions.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg highlighted how Parliaments in the long-term can establish policies, strategies and powers to give them the necessary resources to function independently and effectively.

Speakers and Presiding Officers attended the CPA webinar from many Commonwealth Parliaments including Uganda, Mauritius, South Africa, Zambia, Malta, Alberta, Bermuda, Sierra Leone, Ontario, Lesotho, St Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Yukon, Saint Lucia, Cayman Islands, Guyana, Malawi, Seychelles, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Falkland Islands, Jersey, Western Cape and Gauteng.

## CPA AND NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY DISCUSS COOPERATION ON PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg met with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's Secretary-General, Ruxandra Popa and Deputy Secretary General, Henrik Bliddal to discuss closer cooperation on parliamentary democracy, global security and development with their respective memberships.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association represents 180 Parliaments and Legislatures across the Commonwealth and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly is made up of 266 delegates from the 30 NATO member countries.





## COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS MARK INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION TO HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION DURING AND AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Images: Commonwealth Secretariat



Commonwealth Parliamentarians marked International Day of Education on 24 January on a day that celebrated the vital role of education for peace, development and democracy. This year, the third International Day of Education highlighted the theme of *'Recover and Revitalise Education for the COVID-19 Generation'*, recognising the importance of continuing education both during and after the current COVID-19 pandemic.

According to UNESCO data\*, 258 million children and youth still do not attend school; 617 million children and adolescents cannot read and do basic maths; fewer than 40% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa complete lower secondary school and some four million children and youth refugees are out of school. This situation has only been accelerated under the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg, a former Education Minister, said: *"Commonwealth Parliamentarians recognise the importance of education for global development and democracy and these values are enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter and 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 4). Many*

*Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures are playing their role by providing resources and activities for schools and educators which are needed more than ever."* The CPA has previously published a Teachers' Resource Pack on the *'Commonwealth, Parliament and Democracy'* designed for teachers to assist their students aged 7-14 in learning and thinking critically about the Commonwealth, parliaments and democracy more broadly. The Parliament of New Zealand's Education team recently launched a new toolkit for secondary schools on *'Democracy's Response in a Crisis'* examining the powers that were brought in by the New Zealand Government last year to combat COVID-19. A further resource for Parliamentarians has been launched by the International Parliamentary Network for Education who published a briefing which advocates for the vital importance of education as countries respond to COVID-19.

\*UNESCO data source: <https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/educationday>

## EMPOWERING SMALL PARLIAMENTS TO TACKLE BIG CHALLENGES: CPA SMALL BRANCHES NETWORK LAUNCHES NEW THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The CPA Small Branches network has officially launched its new Strategic Plan for 2021–2023, charting an ambitious path for the network over the next three-year period. The Strategic Plan sets out the CPA Small Branches network's priorities, contained within a strategic framework of outcomes, outputs and thematic priorities and is guided by a clear and powerful statement of intent. The outgoing CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Niki Rattle, Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands, said: *"Through a clear strategic framework, the Strategic Plan holds true to the broader values of the CPA in addressing the needs of Parliaments and Parliamentarians, whilst focusing on a range of thematic issues relevant across small jurisdictions."*

Central to the Strategic Plan are the issues that small parliaments and jurisdictions across the Commonwealth face in what is a rapidly changing world. The new and revised thematic priorities, that include environmental governance, technology and innovation, and human rights, aim to reflect both the diversity and commonalities between the CPA Small Branches' membership.

The launch of the Strategic Plan also coincides with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CPA Small Branches network. Since 1981, the CPA Small Branches have held their annual conference as part of the global Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. Initially as a means to boost cooperation and unity between small jurisdictions within the CPA, the network now also delivers a number of initiatives towards strengthening the development and resilience of small jurisdictions across the Commonwealth. It is hoped the Strategic Plan can guide the network as it broadens its commitments to its members.



For the latest CPA and Commonwealth news please visit [www.cpahq.org](http://www.cpahq.org) or follow the CPA on social media - Twitter @CPA\_Secretariat | Facebook.com/CPAHQ | LinkedIn | Instagram @cpa\_secretariat



## WESTMINSTER SEMINAR 2020: PREPARING MPs FOR A CHANGING WORLD



Over 150 delegates from more than 30 Commonwealth countries and all nine CPA Regions attended the 69<sup>th</sup> Westminster Seminar from 23 to 25 November 2020 on the theme of *'Preparing Parliamentarians for a Changing World'*, with discussions centred on the challenges of adapting to COVID-19.

The three-day annual event brings together Commonwealth Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to share knowledge and consider opportunities to strengthen democracy and this was the first to be held virtually, using an innovative platform which allowed delegates a conference-like experience involving keynote speeches on the 'Main Stage', separate rooms for tailored sessions and a virtual networking space. Delegates from every Commonwealth region attended the Seminar and embraced the new virtual format, participating in live polls, one-to-one randomised networking and even a mass breathing exercise during the Communications session.

39 presenters from The Gambia, St Kitts and Nevis, Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, the Maldives, Barbados, Pakistan, Jamaica, Turks and Caicos and the United Kingdom shared their expertise with the delegates in sessions on topics such as *'States of Emergency and Democracy'*, *'Public Outreach'* and *'Holding the Prime Minister to Account'*. The seminar provided insights into the various approaches taken to solve common issues faced by Commonwealth Parliaments.

The Westminster Seminar was hosted by the CPA UK Branch and delegates were welcomed by Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP, Speaker of the UK House of Commons and CPA UK Joint Branch President, with the seminar's closing remarks from Rt Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg, MP, Leader of the UK House of Commons.

## CPA HIGHLIGHTS ROLE OF MPs IN PREVENTING POLITICAL VIOLENCE AT CPA ZAMBIA WORKSHOP



The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg spoke via video link at a workshop organised by the CPA Zambia Branch and the Parliament of Zambia and held in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The workshop was held ahead of the Zambia General Election due to take place in August 2021 and its aim was to equip Parliamentarians to contribute towards preserving peace and preventing political violence during this important and sensitive time.

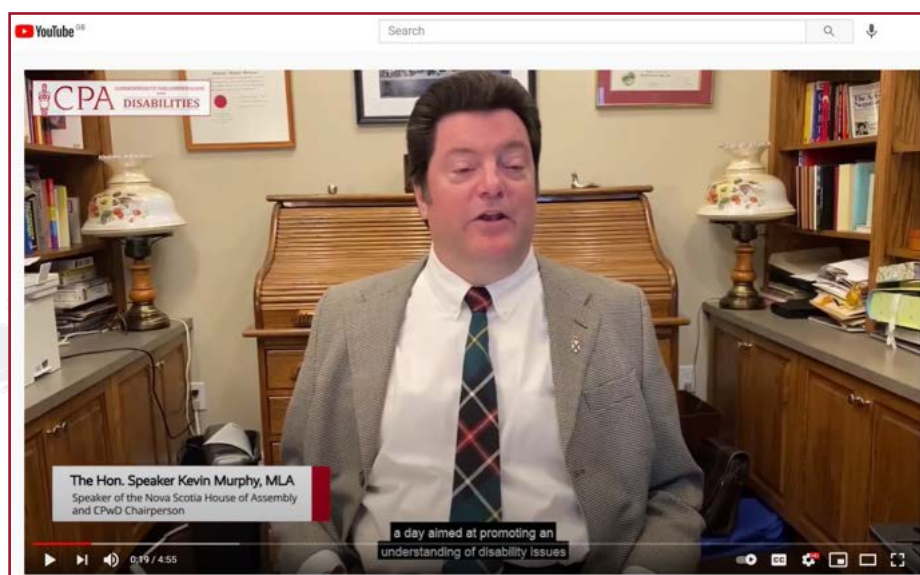
The Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia, Rt Hon. Dr Patrick Matibini, MP, highlighted the key role that Parliamentarians can play as preservers of peace before, during and after an election period and in their contribution towards the prevention of political violence.

The CPA Secretary-General spoke about the key role of Parliamentarians in society and their influence on citizens particularly during an election period. Parliamentarians adherence to, and the promotion of the key tenets of peace and good governance as demonstrated in the Commonwealth Charter can help to provide stability and peace.



Prior to the workshop, the CPA Zambia Branch launched a new project to 'Plant a CPC Forest' with a tree planting ceremony at the Parliament Buildings in Lusaka with the first tree being planted by parliamentary staff on behalf of the CPA Secretary-General. The project was an outcome of the 64<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) workshop on climate change held in Kampala, Uganda in September 2019 and the CPA Zambia Branch is the first CPA Branch to undertake this initiative.

## COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES NETWORK CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 2020



The Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network joined together virtually to mark International Persons with Disabilities Day 2020 with a series of messages and videos. International Day of Persons with Disabilities is marked by people, organisations, agencies, charities, places of learning and Parliaments on 3 December each year - all of whom have a vital role to play in identifying and addressing discrimination, marginalization, exclusion and inaccessibility that many people living with disabilities face.

The Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network, Hon. Kevin Murphy MLA, Speaker of the Nova Scotia Legislature released a video message to Commonwealth Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in which he highlighted the 2020 theme of 'Not all Disabilities are Visible' that focuses on spreading awareness

and understanding of disabilities that are not immediately apparent, such as mental illness, chronic pain or fatigue, sight or hearing impairments, diabetes, brain injuries, neurological disorders, learning differences and cognitive dysfunctions, among others. The CPwD Chairperson also highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on persons with disabilities and the isolation, disconnect, disrupted routines and diminished services that have greatly impacted the lives and mental well-being of people with disabilities right around the world.

## NEW REGIONAL CHAMPIONS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES NETWORK



The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) has announced nine new Regional Champions, selected to lead and champion the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network. The CPwD Regional Champions, who held their first virtual meeting in November 2020, have been chosen to represent each of the CPA's Regions and will promote the rights of Commonwealth Parliamentarians with disabilities in their respective Region and represent disability interests within the CPA.

The new CPwD Regional Champions are:

- CPA Africa Region: Hon. Dennitah Ghati, MP, Member of the National Assembly of Kenya
- CPA Asia Region: Hon. Zill-E-Huma, MNA, Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan
- CPA Australia Region: Hon. Gareth Ward, MP, Member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly and Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services
- CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region: Hon. Ann Jones, MS, Deputy Presiding Officer of the National Assembly of Wales
- CPA Canada Region: Hon. Kevin Murphy, MLA, Speaker of the House of Assembly, Nova Scotia
- CPA Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Region: Sen. Paul Richards, Member of the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago
- CPA India Region: Smt. Supriya Sule, MP, Member of the Parliament of India
- CPA Pacific Region: Hon. Viam Pillay, MP, Member of the Parliament of Fiji and Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment
- CPA South East Asia Region: Sen. Ras Adiba Mohd Radzi, Member of the Senate of Malaysia

The CPwD network has been established by the CPA to support Parliamentarians with disabilities to be more effective in their roles and to help improve awareness of disability issues amongst all Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff. During their three-year term, the CPwD Regional Champions will be a leading voice for persons with disabilities both within the CPA and in Parliaments across the Commonwealth, meeting regularly to co-ordinate the activities of the network and discuss issues affecting disability representation in Parliaments.

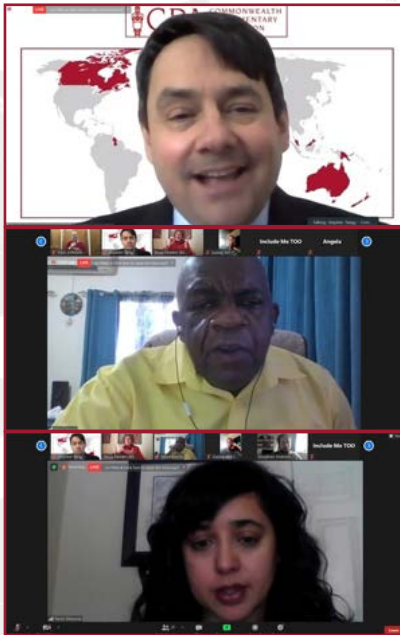
At their first meeting, the CPwD Regional Champions elected Hon. Kevin Murphy MLA, as the Chairperson of the network. Speaker Murphy, who was elected unanimously thanked the Regional Champions for their vote of confidence in him and emphasised the importance of increasing disability representation in Parliaments. He stated that *"what inspired [him], as a person with a disability, to stand for election in Nova Scotia was to ensure that disabled persons could see themselves reflected in their Parliament."* Speaker Murphy, who is also a member of the CPA Executive Committee, will lead the network's engagement with the CPA Headquarters Secretariat.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg, welcomed the announcement of the CPwD Regional Champions and praised their commitment to combatting the lack of disabled representation in Commonwealth Parliaments.

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## CPA SECRETARY-GENERAL HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF RULE OF LAW IN PROTECTING DISABILITY RIGHTS



The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg has spoken of the importance of the rule of law and governance in protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. He was speaking at an online IDEAS Masterclass organised by the Commonwealth Children and Youth Disability Network (CCYDN) alongside Senator Dr Floyd Morris (Jamaica), United Nations Committee Member on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Parmi Dheensa, CEO of Include Me Too and Co-Chair of CCYDN.

The CPA is working with over 180 Parliaments and Legislatures across the Commonwealth to enhance the representation and rights for persons with disabilities through its network for Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD).

The IDEAS Masterclasses Series with the CCYDN brings together presentations from disability activists, changemakers and game-changers. To find out more about the Commonwealth Children and Youth Disability Network visit <https://includemetoo.org.uk/>

## NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT ESTABLISHES ACCESSIBILITY REFERENCE GROUP FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION

On International Day for Persons with Disabilities (3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020), the Speaker of New Zealand's House of Representatives, Rt Hon. Trevor Mallard, MP; the Chief Executive of the Parliamentary Service, Rafael Gonzalez-Montero; and the Clerk of the House of Representatives, David Wilson signed the accessibility charter.

The Accessibility Charter is an initiative launched by New Zealand's Ministry of Social Development. Signing the charter indicates an organisation's commitment to ensuring that accessibility is a high priority for their work including adhering to certain accessibility standards. These standards fall in line with Article 9 – Accessibility of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

This five-year pledge from New Zealand's government to its public, promises communication, services and information is available to all Members in a way that both meets individual need and promotes their independence and dignity. Approximately, 33 government agencies have signed up to the charter.

The Speaker of the New Zealand Parliament, Rt Hon Trevor Mallard said: *"Throughout my time as Speaker, it's been a mission of mine to make Parliament more accessible for those who work here, for those who visit, and for Kiwis right across the country. Parliament belongs to the people of New Zealand. It's imperative that everyone feels welcome in these buildings and that we're all able to participate equally in the important work that takes place here. Together with the agencies that support Parliament, I am looking forward to the establishment of the accessibility reference group and to collaborating more closely with people who have lived experience of disability as we work to address any barriers to participation. The experience, unique perspective and knowledge that the disability community possess will guide us on our journey and ensure that our good ideas and intentions are well executed."*

To ensure they fulfill their obligations laid out in the charter, the Parliament of New Zealand is forming an accessibility reference group consisting of people with lived experience of disability. The reference group's purpose is to advise the Parliament of New Zealand on the accessibility of its spaces, communications, and processes.

Through consultation with members of the disability community within New Zealand, it was discovered that in order to achieve buy-in while avoiding tokenism the Parliament of New Zealand would need to establish an internal working group of staff to meet with the accessibility reference group. The working group's purpose is to attend meetings, discuss, and most importantly implement recommendations made by the accessibility reference group.

Having working group members who have the authority to make changes was something the disability community emphasised as being of utmost importance. To ensure this advice is followed, the constructed accessibility working group only consists of managers and people with the authority to make changes where appropriate.

Expressions of interest for the accessibility reference group closed in January 2021. During this recruitment process, consideration will be given to ensuring that reference group members represent a diverse range of people and accessibility needs. The first meeting of the accessibility reference and working groups is envisioned to take place in the first quarter of 2021 and the Parliament of New Zealand is looking forward to making

its spaces and processes more accessible for all through this initiative.



Image: Parliament of New Zealand.

Left (from left to right): Rafael Gonzalez-Montero, Chief Executive of the New Zealand Parliamentary Service; David Wilson, Clerk of the New Zealand House of Representatives; and Rt Hon. Trevor Mallard, Speaker of the New Zealand Parliament.



## CPA SECRETARY-GENERAL JOINS COMMITTEE REVIEWING THE FUTURE OF COMMONWEALTH STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg has been announced as a member of a new 'Committee on the Future of Commonwealth Studies' at the University of London. The creation of the Committee, to be chaired by Sir Malcolm Rifkind, the former UK Foreign Secretary, was announced late last year following consultation about the future of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University's School of Advanced Study. The CPA Secretary-General also commented: *"I am very pleased to have the opportunity to serve on this new Committee and I look forward to its work. In particular, I hope that we will receive representations from a wide and diverse range of stakeholders across the Commonwealth which will assist us in developing our recommendations."*

The Committee will consider future provision at the University of London for Commonwealth Studies; recommend partnerships to support scholarship in this area and ensure its relevance and impact; and identify potential viable sources of sustainable funding beyond the University and short-term research grants. The Committee hopes to conclude its work by the end of June 2021.

In October 2020, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association joined with 25 Commonwealth organisations, as well as many other supporters, to send a joint letter to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, urging further consultation on the future of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICwS) and Commonwealth studies at the University. The CPA Secretary-General also led a delegation from this group of Commonwealth organisations for a series of consultative meetings with the University.



Image: University of London

## MALTA APPOINTS FIRST AMBASSADOR FOR SMALL STATES HIGHLIGHTING IMPORTANCE OF SIDS DEVELOPMENT

The Maltese Foreign Ministry have appointed a new small states and islands ambassador. The appointment was amongst three new 'thematic' ambassadors to 'address new realities'. Godfrey Baldacchino has been appointed as Ambassador for Islands and Small States and will focus on strengthening Malta's role



Image: Malta Foreign Ministry

in this important area as well as leading efforts to promote the interests of small states in the international arena. He will work closely with the University's Institute of Islands and Small States, as well as with the Malta-based Commonwealth Small States Centre of Excellence to promote, among other things, scholarship opportunities in this field. The role will also advise the government on how to promote the interests of small states, with an increase in Malta's allocation from the Overseas Development Fund to these states.

In addition, Cecilia Attard Pirotta was appointed as Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security with a mandate to advise the government on domestic and foreign policy in relation to women, peace and security and strengthening the national dimension of the UN agenda in these areas. André Xuereb was appointed Ambassador for Digital Affairs and will work with the government to support Maltese companies that want to expand their operations beyond national borders as well as supporting Malta's national and foreign policy in cyber and critical technology.

Malta's Foreign Minister, Evarist Bartolo met the three new ambassadors and said that through their appointment, the Ministry *"aims to address new realities and keep pace with the continued transition and development in international relations."* The ambassadors are expected to encourage and influence the debate around current issues and challenges, he said.

## COMMONWEALTH ANNOUNCES FOUR SPECIAL ENVOYS AND CHAMPIONS

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC has announced the names of four special envoys and champions who will promote the Commonwealth's values and principles around the world. The four roles will be responsible for portfolio areas covering key issues designed to support and assist the Commonwealth's 54 countries and 2.5 billion people. The four individuals taking on these new roles are:

- Former director of The Prince of Wales's International Sustainability Unit, Justin Munday, as the Commonwealth Special Envoy on Climate Change, Environment and Socio-Economic Affairs.
- The Commonwealth Special Envoy for Health and Education is Rwandan medical doctor, diplomat and politician, Richard Sezibera.
- Prof Praja Trevedi, former economic adviser to the Government of India, has been named the Commonwealth Special Envoy for SDG Implementation. His focus will be on implementing the UN Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
- Finally, the Commonwealth Champion for Equality in Sports is British Paralympic athlete, Anne Wafula Strike whose role involves connecting sporting initiatives and supporting the implementation of SDGs relating to sport, peace and development and improving equality in sport.

For the latest CPA and Commonwealth news please visit [www.cpahq.org](http://www.cpahq.org) or follow the CPA on social media - Twitter @CPA\_Secretariat | Facebook.com/CPAHQ | LinkedIn | Instagram @cpa\_secretariat





## HISTORIC ROLE FOR NIGERIAN AS NEW HEAD OF THE WTO



Image: WTO/Jay Lawton

Former Nigerian Finance Minister, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has been appointed to head the World Trade Organization, the first woman and representative of the African continent to do so in a historic appointment that was welcomed by Commonwealth leaders. Okonjo-Iweala has previously held positions with the World Bank and as Chairperson of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance's board. She said: *"Trade is important for the 21st century. It is important for prosperity; it is important for resilience and it is important for sustainable growth. And the WTO is right at the heart of this. We want to rejuvenate and reform the WTO to be the organisation that it needs to be for the 21st century."*

On her appointment, Dr Okonjo-Iweala said: *"Choosing a WTO Director-General should be on merit. If that person happens to be a woman, great. If she happens to be African, great. I hope it's a sign not only to women and girls in my country, but to women and girls worldwide, that the world is ready, and women can do it."*

Dr Okonjo-Iweala has a distinct understanding of the Commonwealth and its trade and development links. The 54 countries of the Commonwealth account for 15% of global trade, and trade among Commonwealth countries was worth US\$673 billion in 2019 following a significant contraction in world trade which has fallen significantly in 2020 given the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Okonjo-Iweala was a member of the Commonwealth's seven-member High Level Group in 2015, which conducted a review of the governance arrangements of the Commonwealth Secretariat and also chaired the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in October 2013.

## FORMER COOK ISLANDS PRIME MINISTER BECOMES PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARY-GENERAL

The former Prime Minister of the Cook Islands (2010-2020), Henry Puna has been confirmed as the Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum following a specially convened meeting of 17 Pacific Leaders, the first-ever meeting of Forum Leaders held virtually, a consequence of the ongoing COVID-19-related travel restrictions. Mr Puna was nominated by the Cook Islands Government for the Secretary-General post and supported by his successor as Prime Minister, Mark Brown.



Image: Cook Islands Government

Above: Newly appointed Secretary General of PIFS Henry Puna (left) and Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Mark Brown (right).

Chaired by the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Hon. Kausea Natano, the Pacific Forum Leaders meeting reviewed the disastrous impact of COVID-19 on the region since their last meeting in 2019. Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen regional coordination and collaboration to overcome the challenges caused by the pandemic, including through the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway for COVID-19. They also acknowledged with appreciation the efforts of Australia and New Zealand to secure safe and effective vaccines for the region.

## NEW ONLINE EXHIBITION CELEBRATES CULTURAL LINKS ACROSS THE CPA PACIFIC REGION

The 'Tai a Kiwa' online exhibition at the Parliament of New Zealand celebrates the relationships between the different Parliaments across the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Pacific Region. Highlighting many cultural links and gifts exchanged between them, the exhibition celebrates New Zealand Parliament's longstanding friendship and diplomacy with its Pacific neighbours.

The exhibition showcases gifts from Pacific nations from the New Zealand Parliamentary Collection, dating from 1925 to today and it also includes photographs from the New Zealand Parliament's most recent delegations to the Pacific, to the Kingdom of Tonga and the Republic of Fiji in 2019 and to Niue in 2020.

Visit the New Zealand Parliament's website for further information: <https://www.parliament.nz/en/get-involved/features/tai-a-kiwa-stronger-pacific-parliaments-online-exhibition/>



Image: Parliament of New Zealand

## COMMONWEALTH COLLABORATION ON COVID-19 VACCINES

With the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, many countries and territories in the Commonwealth have joined COVAX, a global partnership working towards accelerating the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines and to guarantee fair and equitable access for every country in the world. In the Commonwealth, collaboration on the provision of COVID-19 vaccines is already taking place. The Government of India has provided two consignments of Covishield COVID-19 vaccines to the countries of Barbados and Dominica, under the Vaccine Maitri initiative.

The India External Affairs Minister, Hon. S. Jaishankar said that the vaccines had been provided as a 'gesture of goodwill' to Barbados and Dominica. The consignments of vaccines were manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII). India has also supplied vaccines to other countries including Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Barbados Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Mia Mottley said that they had been provided with COVID-19 vaccines from India and expressed her country's gratitude to the India Government. The first supply of 50,000 vaccines (comprising 100,000 doses) will be targeted towards frontline workers, police and security forces, essential services, hotel workers and supermarket employees as well as the elderly.

# MULTILATERAL SYSTEMS OF COOPERATION ARE ESSENTIAL FOR SMALL ISLAND STATES TO DEVELOP FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

To mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CPA Small Branches network, the United Nations High Representative for Small Island Developing States outlines how building SIDS strategies and increasing cooperation between states can secure key outcomes for small jurisdictions.



Being a small state does by no means imply that you face small problems. It is quite the opposite. Small states face complex and intricate challenges but have more limited human and financial resources to meet them. Their very geographies and demographics force them to manage evolving and ever-more interlinked challenges. Just as elsewhere, Parliaments in small states have a key role in delivering on a sustainable and inclusive development for all, grounded in the hopes of their citizens.

Parliaments' primary role is to directly represent people. They are critical actors if we, as a global community, are to hold true to our promises for an inclusive and sustainable development for all. For that, Parliaments need to be equipped with access to the latest and best in knowledge, expertise and experience. Strengthening parliamentary capacity must be at the core of meeting current and future challenges.

*What are some of the most salient and pressing challenges small states are confronted with and what does this mean for the work of Parliaments?*

My Office, UN-OHRLS was established in 2001 and is a global advocate for three groups of vulnerable states that represent well over one billion people. These are the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Our role is to respond to the needs and issues of these member states. For example, we work closely with SIDS delegations and catalyse support through an Inter-Agency Consultative Group that spans the UN system. The goal is to facilitate responsive, coherent and effective support to SIDS within the frameworks of the SAMOA Pathway (Small

Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action – a development plan agreed by SIDS and their development partners in 2014), the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The SAMOA pathway places democracy and human rights at its centre of action. It affirms the *"importance of freedom, peace and security, respect for all human rights, including the right to development and the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to food, the rule of law, gender equality, women's empowerment, reducing inequalities and the overall commitment to just and democratic societies for development."*

At a meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union General Assembly in 2017, SIDS governments re-asserted their commitment to action on *"sustainable human development and climate change at local, national, regional and global levels while remaining committed to human rights and better governance with more effective, democratic and accountable institutions."*

In this framework, the challenge is to deliver on the right policy mix to tackle climate change while building human capital and strengthening the economic and financial fabric of small states. The strong political will to move forward on this agenda already exists. The general frameworks for policy and action are agreed upon and in place - the pressing issue is how best to deliver both from the policy and the operational perspectives. Needless to say, the advent of a pandemic few of us saw coming further complicates this already difficult task.

SIDS have been alerting us to the effects of climate change impacts on their land and vast ocean resources for decades. The



**Ms Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu** is the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS). She assumed her role in May 2017. Prior to joining the United Nations, she held senior roles in the Ministry of Tourism of Tonga, the University of the South Pacific, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community as well as diplomatic roles representing the Kingdom of Tonga in the USA, Cuba, Venezuela and Canada.





experience of this crisis as it impacts island lives and livelihoods cannot be overstated. Take, as an example, rising sea levels and more frequent and more intense natural disasters. Internal displacement is already common in small islands and we are approaching a crisis of livability that will force external displacement and increased instability.

SIDS are remote, very often composed of scattered island groupings, have small population bases and economies of scale are difficult to achieve. This means high costs in trade, underdeveloped infrastructure, limited clean energy access, and insufficient digital connectivity. Since the pandemic struck, digital connectivity has become central to health service provision, education, maintaining economic activity and even social connectivity under confinement measures. For the citizens of too many SIDS these basics have become unattainable luxuries.

SIDS economies very often are driven by a limited mix of economic sectors. Many families rely on remittances. Tourism provides foreign exchange earnings and employment. But the pandemic has brought the tourism sector almost to standstill and remittances are also dropping off. At the same time, heavy debt burdens that pre-date the pandemic have exploded, meaning that the same level of social safety nets that helped other countries cope simply haven't been available. These debt levels are increasingly unsustainable and put peoples' lives and livelihoods at stake.

Finding appropriate and workable answers to this triangular challenge is what Parliaments and the executive branches of governments have to live up to. They must deliver for people. Let there be no doubt, the complexities can only be overcome with an all-hands-on-deck approach. Small island governments must also attain the capacity to access state of the art information, knowledge and experience. For this critical need the international community must accelerate and strengthen the financial ability to achieve this through building on multilateral cooperation.

The task is indeed urgent. OHRLLS currently builds coalitions within the UN system and beyond to devise short, medium and long-term strategies with SIDS to increase access to finance in the form of grants, concessional loans and debt relief. We also work on



the capacity building front, including through strengthening south-south cooperation and cooperation with the private sector and academic institutions.

Accessing development finance remains a challenge for SIDS. This greatly owes, for example, to the complex and bureaucratic processes of funding agencies. We work with those agencies to streamline application and disbursement processes.

OHRLLS also coordinates the work of the UN on developing a Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) which aims to capture the special vulnerabilities of countries, including SIDS. The ambition behind the proposed index is to better define eligibility for financing for sustainable development in SIDS. All this is a must to facilitate not just the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic but to build back better.

Parliaments need to ensure that policies and action reflect input of all citizens, in particular groups traditionally excluded including women, youth, ethnic minorities and people living with disabilities. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, four democracies in the world have no female Parliamentarians - and three are Pacific SIDS: Papua New Guinea, Micronesia and Vanuatu. This is of concern.

SIDS cannot go it alone. None of us can, as the pandemic knows no borders. Multilateralism will more than ever be important to small states. Access to global fora is invaluable for small nations to be heard, to address their unique social, economic, and environmental challenges and to find solutions together.

With urgency we must resolve the unsustainable debt crisis and find the ways and means to invest in people and their economies. We cannot afford to leave the most vulnerable behind. The capacity to do so exists. We must put the multilateral systems of cooperation to use, especially for our youth and future generations by listening to what they have to say.

And we need to invest in Parliaments, share regional and global experiences and solutions and give them the hand to be an effective and representative voice for all people. Doing so, is our guarantee for ensuring a relevant, sustainable democracy capable of listening and delivering a sustainable future for all.

Change is the hallmark of humanity, and it is how we manage in the face of change that sets the course for humanity. Let's have the will to just do it together.

For more information please visit [www.un.org/ohrls](http://www.un.org/ohrls)

***“SIDS cannot go it alone. None of us can, as the pandemic knows no borders. Multilateralism will more than ever be important to small states. Access to global fora is invaluable for small nations to be heard, to address their unique social, economic, and environmental challenges and to find solutions together.”***



# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE CPA SMALL BRANCHES NETWORK: A VIEW FROM MALTA

Marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CPA Small Branches network, the Speaker of the Parliament of Malta outlines measures to build resilience for the network.



The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) has a long and respected history of supporting small Parliaments and Legislatures in the Commonwealth. There are more than 40 CPA Branches out of the over 180 Branches of the CPA which are classified as 'Small Branches', currently defined as jurisdictions having a population below 500,000. 2016 saw one of the most notable developments in relation to the CPA's Small Branches: the establishment of the role of a CPA Small Branches Chairperson. At the 35<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference held in London, UK, in which 47 Commonwealth Parliamentarians participated, held as part of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, I had the honour to be elected as the first CPA Small Branches Chairperson. In this role, I sat on the CPA Coordinating Committee as well as the CPA International Executive Committee with the aim of bringing a voice for Small Branches to the governing body of the CPA for the three years to follow.

Throughout my tenure, the CPA Small Branches engaged in a wide range of activities to promote parliamentary development and cooperation, including the publication of quarterly articles in this journal. Two webinars were also hosted by the CPA Secretariat with the aim of connecting the newly elected Chairperson with other CPA Small Branches members, offering the opportunity to discuss their priorities and challenges. The webinars provided the opportunity to communicate my vision for CPA Small Branches and allowed Members to provide recommendations to feed into the new Strategic Plan which was being formulated for the purposes of supporting smaller jurisdictions.

In fact, one of the first milestones was the launch of the CPA Small Branches Strategic Plan 2018-2020, which I presented during the 36<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference in 2017, held in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The aim of the Plan was to bring a strengthened and renewed focus to assisting CPA Small Branches and their jurisdictions in addressing their unique common challenges and strengths. One of the major challenges identified was the issue of climate change which affects the smallest nations much more adversely, as small jurisdictions in the Commonwealth face increased logistical, financial and infrastructural demands.

Climate change was also on the agenda of the 36<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference, where during the launch of the new strategy, Parliamentarians met to examine the unique challenges they face. The Strategic Plan identified five strategic outcomes for the CPA Small Branches network and set out a roadmap to achieve them. The smallest members of the CPA noted that they strive to meet the same expectations of service delivery as larger legislatures and in so doing, they recognise the importance of constantly innovating in the face of the emerging fiscal and human resource constraints. The new strategy focused on key thematic areas and development activities with measurable outcomes to build parliamentary capacity for the CPA Small Branches members while creating greater opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, strengthening Parliaments and parliamentary cooperation.

Climate change is of great concern to the 54 Commonwealth countries, especially its 31 small and developing states which are often the least polluting but the first casualties of climate change.



**Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP** is the Speaker of the House of Representatives in the Parliament of Malta. He was first elected to the Parliament of Malta in 1996 and he has held many positions including Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Chairman of the Standing Committee for the Consideration of Bills and Member of the Privileges Committee before being elected as Speaker in 2013. He was the first elected Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches network from 2016-2019.





Above: Commonwealth Parliamentarians from the CPA Small Branches network at the 37<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference in September 2019, held in Kampala, Uganda.

Parliamentarians from eight CPA Small Branches representing five CPA Regions met in Kenya in 2018 for the CPA Small Branches Climate Change Workshop organised together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The first CPA Small Branches workshop under my tenure examined the role of Parliamentarians and the global implications of climate change and its unique impact on the smallest nations and territories in the world. Parliamentarians also examined the specific challenges of smaller jurisdictions in overseeing the implementation of the 2015

***“Setting aside the current pandemic, climate change remains the most pervasive and threatening crisis of our time. That is why during my tenure I focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies to empower small legislatures to boost their resilience in tackling this problem. The launch of the CPA Climate Change Toolkit for CPA Small Branches is built on this understanding.”***

Paris Agreement and in the development of appropriate national legislation dealing with the prevention and impact of climate change.

Setting aside the current pandemic, climate change remains the most pervasive and threatening crisis of our time. That is why during my tenure I focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies to empower small legislatures to boost their resilience in tackling this problem. The launch of the *CPA Climate Change Toolkit for CPA Small Branches* is built on this understanding. The development of the toolkit began in 2018 during the CPA Small Branches Climate Change Workshop in Kenya. Parliamentarians engaged with top-tier experts from the United Nations and formulated policy recommendations for legislators across the Commonwealth.

Given the recent momentum that the climate change agenda has gained globally, I had suggested the creation of an up-to-date, practical guide for legislators featuring the latest climate science, and with practical guidance for small state Parliamentarians embarking upon effective climate change action. The toolkit was also supported by contributions from CPA Small Branch Parliamentarians at the climate change workshop session during the 37<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference, held in September 2019, in Kampala, Uganda, and later officially launched in January 2020 during the CPA Small Branches Workshop on Sustainable Economic Development hosted by the Maltese Parliament.

Another milestone in 2018, which one could say was in response to a pressing need, was the update on the *CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures*. These benchmarks provide a framework for excellence in Commonwealth parliamentary and legislative practice. This took the form of a practical field guide is available to assist Parliaments and Legislatures in completing their self-assessment against the CPA Benchmarks. During this exercise I am proud to have represented both the Parliament of Malta, which is part of the CPA Small Branches network, as well as the CPA Small



## BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE CPA SMALL BRANCHES NETWORK

Branches network overall. My role was twofold as I could give my input both as a Speaker of a Small Branch myself and also as a representative of other CPA Small Branches.

Over the past years the idea of a more sustainable economy has also been gaining global traction because it results in improved human well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. On this note, over 20 senior Parliamentarians from jurisdictions across the Commonwealth met in Malta last year to discuss sustainable ways of boosting their economies. The CPA programme was hosted by the Parliament of Malta and delivered by the CPA Secretariat in partnership with the Commonwealth Small States Centre of Excellence, which is also hosted in Malta.

Trade opportunities for small states, the development of the tourism sector, education, integration and equality, renewable energy and energy independence, ocean management and climate change and food security were discussed. In addition to the participation of senior Parliamentarians, international organisations such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Oxfam and the Small States Network for Economic Development also participated in the workshop. Participants present in Malta represented the CPA Branches of Alderney, Australian Capital Territory, Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, Isle of Man, Jersey, Malta, Northern Territory, Perlis, Seychelles, St Helena, St Lucia, and Turks and Caicos.

The idea of a workshop on sustainable economic development arose in early 2019, and I was delighted that this activity came to fruition in less than a year.

As I stated in my speech when taking on the role of CPA Small Branches Chairperson in 2016, within our smallness, we must come together to address common difficulties and strengths and share experiences, as we face the same challenges that larger branches experience. As small states and legislatures within the CPA, we must learn to appreciate the strengths of this factor by showing that whilst being able to keep up with larger counterparts through flexibility and in spite of limited resources, we are big enough to be influential.



### The Maltese Experience

On this note I would like to highlight some of the recent work the Maltese Parliament has done which I hope can serve as inspiration to the other CPA Small Branches. I feel that a relatively recent milestone in 2017 was the long overdue enactment of legislation that made the Maltese Parliament an administratively autonomous and independent institution from the Executive. This seemingly simple step was the next natural step for our legislature, and I am sure that without this step the institution would not have been as flexible to respond in an adaptive manner to the more recent challenges it has been facing.

In reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of measures were implemented to ensure that whilst the safety of all MPs and staff is observed, parliamentary work could continue without interruption. Hybrid proceedings were introduced in the Committees together with telework arrangements for non-critical staff; incoming and outgoing visits were stopped; sanitary measures and better use of technologies to support hybrid proceedings and teleworking were also implemented. These measures allowed for a seamless continuation of our work, including passing urgent Bills and Motions relating to the pandemic, namely:

- the Public Health (Amendment) Bill aimed at clarifying the powers of the Superintendent of Health to issue orders for the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases in the context of a health-related emergency;
- the Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2002 (Amendment) Bill aimed to provide additional funds that are consequential to the measures ordered by the Superintendent of Public Health in order to guard and protect against the spread of COVID-19 infectious disease;
- Legal and Other Time Periods (Suspension and Interruption) Bill aimed at providing the Minister of Justice with specific power to issue regulations relating to the suspension or interruption of legal times when the Superintendent of Public Health issues an order for the closure of certain premises under the *Public Health Act*; and
- a resolution on increasing the amount of government treasury Bills to be issued intended to fund government expenditure related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

***“As small states and legislatures within the CPA, we must learn to appreciate the strengths of this factor by showing that whilst being able to keep up with larger counterparts through flexibility and in spite of limited resources, we are big enough to be influential.”***





Above: Hon. Angelo Farrugia, MP, during his term as CPA Small Branches Chairperson, briefs the media about the launch of the CPA Small Branches Strategic Plan 2018-2020 at the 36<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference in November 2017, held in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

In addition to this urgent work, in the past few months Parliament also approved the 2021 Budget, and enacted important rule of law legislation moved by the Minister for Justice including on the appointment of the President of Malta, the appointment and removal of judges and magistrates, appointments to the Permanent Commission Against Corruption, and reforms in the offices of the Ombudsman and the National Audit Office, amongst others.

The Maltese Parliament is currently debating proposed legislation which is high on the government's agenda and of direct relevance to our legislature, i.e. that of a gender balance mechanism, aimed at introducing *'temporary positive measures necessary and reasonable in a democratic society to ensure de facto equality between men and women in politics'*. This amendment to the Constitution is intended to correct the persistent low proportion of females elected to the House of Representatives, currently standing at just over 13%, in a way as to guarantee that 40% of our elected representatives come from the under-represented sex. The Bill has gone through its Second Reading in the House and is awaiting debate and amendments at Committee Stage. There has been, and there remains, a wide national debate on these proposals with arguments being made on either side. Whilst it is not my place to say whether I am in favour or against the Bill as proposed, I strongly believe that further postponing debate and action is no longer an option.

### CPA Small Branches definition

I would also like to make a few remarks about the proposal which is currently being discussed in the CPA concerning whether to extend the definition of CPA Small Branches to include those CPA Branches with populations of up to one million. I strongly support this step as I believe that changing demographics of certain jurisdictions will not materially impact their specificities as small jurisdictions and the CPA Small Branches network would be losing out on invaluable experience should certain jurisdictions lose their place simply because the 500,000 limit is exceeded; a few extra hundred persons on board should not stand in the way for the learning experience the CPA Small Branches network brings with it.

This experience as Chair of the Small Branches of the CPA has been incredibly enriching, and I will cherish all the friendships that I have formed during the past years during my tenure. In September 2019, the Members of the CPA attending the 37<sup>th</sup> CPA Small Branches Conference elected the Speaker of the Cook Islands, Hon. Niki Rattle as the next Chairperson of Small Branches and I extend my congratulations and support to Hon. Rattle for the work that she has undertaken since then. I wish the whole network every success in increasing the resilience of the CPA Small Branches and their jurisdictions.

# TWISTS AND TURNS - CHARTING THE PROCEDURAL EVOLUTION OF A SMALL LEGISLATURE

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory writes about the Legislature's evolution.



## Introduction

In 1988, the Australian Commonwealth Parliament passed legislation providing for the grant of self-government, at the state/territory level, to the people of the Australian Capital Territory (the ACT).

The *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988 (Cth)*, made the ACT a 'body politic' under the Crown and granted the ACT Legislative Assembly power to 'make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Territory'.

With the passage of the Act and the first sitting of the Assembly on 10 May 1989, the residents of the ACT enjoyed, for the first time, similar democratic rights, to those residents living in the Australian states and in the Northern Territory - the right to have a say about state/territory functions such as health, education, criminal justice, and local municipal or local functions such as roads, garbage collection and public libraries.

Yet the road to self-government was not smooth. Residents were sceptical of the proposal, as the territory had been governed by the federal government since 1911. This scepticism was confirmed in 1978, when 63.75% of ACT residents voted to maintain the political *status quo* in an advisory on self-government. Only 30% voted for self-government.

In its original form, the Assembly comprised 17 Members and represented approximately 280,000 residents (approximately 2% of Australia's population) coming from an area of 814 square kilometres.

The first ACT election in 1989 took over eight weeks to count due to the complexity of the electoral system. Somewhat paradoxically, four Members were elected on no self-government platforms. In the first Assembly, the government changed two times

following successful no confidence motions moved against the Chief Minister.

However, since those early days, the Assembly has grown more confident and the people of the ACT have developed greater acceptance of the important role that the Assembly plays in passing laws that affect their daily lives.

The Assembly and its Members also forged deep links within parliamentary community - both learning from and contributing to the ongoing dialogue about strengthening Parliaments and the development of procedures and practices that facilitate the institution's representative, accountability, and legislative function.

Over the years, Speakers, Members and parliamentary staff of the Assembly have been keen contributors to *The Parliamentary* with a dozen or so articles having appeared addressing various innovations and reforms that have been adopted and some of the features of the ACT system that make it unique.

It is therefore timely, on this the 40<sup>th</sup> birthday of the CPA Small Branches network, and 32 years after the Assembly's first sitting, that I reflect on the twists and turns of our evolution from turbulent young Parliament into a stable, best-practice driven institution.

## Elections

Territory governance was significantly enhanced by the entrenchment of our proportional representation electoral system. In 1992, 65.3% of electors voted to adopt the proportional Hare-Clark electoral system, which uses a *single transferable vote* method.

The electoral system chosen usually means that no party gets enough seats to govern alone, and so parties usually need to come to an agreement with other parties or independent Members to



**Joy Burch, MLA** is the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory and the Vice-Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches network.\* She was first elected to the Legislature in 2008 and has served on a number of Committees including Administration and Procedure; Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services; and Justice and Community; and has held several Ministerial positions. She served as Deputy Speaker becoming Speaker in October 2016.

\*Since the approval of this publication, Joy Burch, MLA has assumed the role of Acting CPA Small Branches Chairperson.



# TWISTS AND TURNS - CHARTING THE PROCEDURAL EVOLUTION OF A SMALL LEGISLATURE



Assembly	No of Government MLAs elected	No of Opposition MLAs elected	No of Crossbench / Independent MLAs elected	Type of Government	Independent minor party Ministries
First Assembly	5	4	8	Minority	
Second Assembly	8	6	3	Minority	-
Third Assembly	7	6	4	Minority	
Fourth Assembly	7	6	4	Minority	1
Fifth Assembly	8	7	2	Minority	
Sixth Assembly	9	7	1	Majority	
Seventh Assembly	7	6	4	Minority – Parliamentary Agreement	
Eighth Assembly	8	8	1	Minority – Parliamentary Agreement	1
Ninth Assembly*	12	11	2	Minority – Parliamentary Agreement	11
Tenth Assembly	10	9	6	Minority – Parliamentary and Government Agreement	3

TABLE 1: Membership of the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory.

\*Membership of the Assembly increased from 17 Members to 25 from the beginning of the Ninth Assembly

Assembly	Percentage of women MLAs elected
First Assembly	23.5%
Second Assembly	35%
Third Assembly	29%
Fourth Assembly	12%
Fifth Assembly	41%
Sixth Assembly	35%
Seventh Assembly	41%
Eighth Assembly	35%
Ninth Assembly*	52%
Tenth Assembly	56%

form government or pass budgets/legislation. As can be seen below, there has been only one majority government (that is, where a majority of Members from a single party formed government). The need for governments to negotiate with the opposition and the crossbench has been a key driver of procedural reform.

**Table 1** details the number of government/opposition/crossbench members elected over the ten Assemblies so far, with the type of government formed.

## Representative diversity

I have previously argued (see *The Parliamentarian*, 2018, Issue 3) that the electoral system that gives voters a substantial choice within multi-member electorates -not only between candidates representing particular political parties but also between candidates within parties - can result in a more diverse and accurate reflection of the composition of the community in the legislature.

As can be seen from **Table 2**, the representation of women in the Assembly has improved considerably over time with a majority of women having been elected in both the Ninth and Tenth Assemblies.

## Legislative diversity

In many Australian Parliaments, it is rare for non-executive Members to see their policy ideas legislated. However, the predominance of minority governments and thus the need to compromise and consider proposals from across the political spectrum, has meant that Private Members' Bills are regularly passed - often with amendments - into law. **Table 3** shows the number of Private Members' Bills passed into law

TABLE 2: The representation of women in the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory. Additionally, the current Assembly has four MLAs (16%) who identify as LGBT+. The Chief Minister, Andrew Barr MLA, is also the first openly LGBT+ head of government in Australian history.



## TWISTS AND TURNS - CHARTING THE PROCEDURAL EVOLUTION OF A SMALL LEGISLATURE

Assembly	No of Private Members Bills passed	Type of Government
First Assembly	13	Minority
Second Assembly	25	Minority
Third Assembly	35	Minority
Fourth Assembly	58	Minority
Fifth Assembly	20	Minority
Sixth Assembly	9	Majority
Seventh Assembly	26	Minority – Parliamentary Agreement
Eighth Assembly	0	Minority – Parliamentary Agreement
Ninth Assembly*	10	Minority – Parliamentary Agreement
Tenth Assembly		Minority – Parliamentary and Government Agreement

### Measures for guiding ethical conduct

Since 1989, the Assembly has significantly progressed arrangements which encourage elected Members to act ethically and hold them to account where behaviour falls below expected standards. **Table 4** lays out some of the integrity assurance measures we have introduced since then.

### Executive accountability in the ACT

Executive accountability to the Parliament is a fundamental part of legitimate, responsible government, and the ACT has taken great

**“It can be tough for young, often small, Parliaments to know how to develop legislative best practice from scratch. The CPA Small Branches provides an invaluable network to support those Parliaments while they take their first steps, just as we did in the 1990s.”**

TABLE 3: The number of Private Members Bills passed into law.

\*Membership of the Assembly increased from 17 Members to 25 from the beginning of the Ninth Assembly

strides on this front. **Table 5** outlines some of the enhancements made over the years.

### CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures

The ACT Assembly was the first Parliament in the Commonwealth to measure itself against the CPA's *Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures*. Through that assessment, published in *The Parliamentarian* in 2008, it was found to have met 80 of the 87 CPA Benchmarks.

In 2018, the CPA Benchmarks were updated following the work of a cross-Commonwealth CPA study group. The group was organised by the CPA Headquarters Secretariat and Westminster Foundation for Democracy. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Tom Duncan, and I represented the CPA Australia Region. It added a further 47 criteria to the existing 87, bringing the total to 132 CPA Benchmarks.

Following this, the Assembly's support organisation, the Office of the Legislative Assembly, commissioned a new report to assess it and compare its findings to the 2008 assessment.

In this second assessment, the Assembly scored 225 marks against a possible score of 246, (91.5% vs 91.9% in 2008). Of the 132 CPA Benchmarks, the Assembly did not meet three, and partially met 14 measures. We have used these benchmarks to identify where we can improve our procedures and through that create a better legislature.

### Conclusion

When the ACT Assembly was admitted as a CPA Small Branch in 1990, there were three other Small Branches in the CPA Australia Region - Tasmania, Northern Territory and Norfolk Island. Now almost 32 years later there are only two – Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. The Assembly has been a strong participant in CPA activities since it joined in 1990. It provided a representative for the CPA Australia Region on the CPA Executive Committee - Ms Kerrie Tucker, MLA from March 2002-2005, and Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA from 2014-2017. Mrs Vicki Dunne also served as CPA Treasurer from 2016-2019 and now myself as CPA Small Branches Vice-Chairperson. I also participated in the working group on the CPA Small Branches strategy in October 2017 in Malta.

It can be tough for young, often small, Parliaments to know how to develop legislative best practice from scratch. The CPA Small Branches provides an invaluable network to support those Parliaments while they take their first steps, just as we did in the 1990s. As this article has shown, that support and shared experience helped guide us to be an example of best practice. It is this knowledge and experience that I hope we will be able to share with small Parliaments through the CPA Small Branches network into the future.

I thank and acknowledge the assistance of the Clerk of the ACT Assembly, Tom Duncan, in the preparation of this article for *The Parliamentarian*.





TABLE 4: Measures for guiding ethical conduct in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Year adopted	Measures	Details
1992	Declaration of Members' Interests	A resolution of continuing effect adopted by the Assembly on 7 April 1992. Since 2009, all declarations are placed on the Assembly website <a href="http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/members/declarations-of-interest">http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/members/declarations-of-interest</a>
2005	Code of Conduct for MLAs	Adopted 25 August 2005
2008	Establishment of Ethics and Integrity Adviser	A resolution of continuing effect adopted by the Assembly on 10 April 2008. The Adviser's role is to advise MLAs, when asked to do so, on ethical issues concerning the exercise of his or her role as a Member (including the use of entitlements and potential conflicts of interest). The Adviser is appointed by the Speaker following consultation with party leaders.
2013	Establishment of Commissioner for Standards	A resolution of continuing effect adopted by the Assembly on 31 October 2013. The Commissioner's role is to investigate complaints that a Member has breached the code of conduct or the rules relating to the registration or declaration of interests. The Commissioner is appointed by the Speaker following consultation with party leaders.
2014	Register of Lobbyists	An ACT Lobbying Code of Conduct and ACT Lobbyist Regulation Guidelines were adopted as resolutions of continuing effect on 20 September 2014. The resolution requires that Members must not meet with lobbyists unless they are on the lobbyist register.
2018	Anti-corruption body	Following two extensive Select Committee inquiries in 2016 and 2018, the Assembly passed the Integrity Commission Bill 2018. In 2019, the Speaker appointed the first Integrity Commissioner, and that position became one of the Officers of the Assembly, along with the Auditor-General, Electoral Commission and the Ombudsman (which was enacted in 2013).

TABLE 5: Action taken in relation to executive accountability in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Year adopted	Actions	Details
1989	Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has Opposition Chair as well as other Committees	Since 1989, it has become the practice that the PAC Chair is an Opposition MLA. Also, up to half the Assembly Committees are chaired by Opposition MLAs.
1989	Effective Question Time procedure	Each non-Executive MLA can ask up to three questions without notice per sitting day resulting in 51 questions per day (initially two questions). The Speaker is able to ensure that answers are relevant to the questions asked.
1989	Autonomous Parliamentary Committees	All Assembly Committees have the ability to self-refer matters within their terms of reference. In addition, all annual reports of executive agencies are referred to Committees every year for inquiry and report.
1996	Full sitting day for each sitting week devoted solely to Private Members' business	Initially in 1989, only two hours was set aside for Private Members' business. Then in 1996, every sitting Wednesday up to six items per day are debated (either a bill or a motion). Almost two-thirds of those are moved by Opposition or Crossbench Members
2009	Government advertising is scrutinised by a person whose appointment was agreed to by a two-thirds majority of the Legislative Assembly	In 2009, the Assembly enacted the Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act 2009 which has, as its objective, to prevent the use of public funds for advertising or other communications for party political purposes.
2012	Independent arbiter able to determine claims of privilege on documents ordered to be provided by the Assembly	On 22 March 2012, the Assembly adopted <i>Standing Order 213A</i> which provides that, where a document is requested by the Assembly and the executive claims privilege on it, an independent legal arbiter shall be appointed by the Speaker to adjudicate the competing claims.
2012	Independent statutory support agency for the legislature with sufficient funding arrangements	In 2012 the Assembly enacted the Legislative Assembly (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2012 which established the independence of the Clerk and the Office of the Legislative Assembly (OLA) from the executive. In addition, in 2014 the Chief Minister and the Speaker agreed to a set of budget protocols which set out requirements as to how the central Treasury directorate and the OLA preserve the exclusive role of the Parliament.



# SEYCHELLES TAKES CLIMATE CHANGE FIGHT SERIOUSLY



In May 2016, the former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on the 5<sup>th</sup> National Assembly of Seychelles to support the UN's effort in tackling three critical challenges: climate change, global sustainability and easing humanitarian suffering. The call did not go on deaf ears.

Following the election of the 6<sup>th</sup> cohort of the National Assembly in October 2016, the institution embarked on a series of projects showing its leadership in the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies and adopting sustainable practices to showcase possibilities and hopefully inspire other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to do the same.

In 2020, the 7<sup>th</sup> cohort of the country's legislative body, comprising of 26 directly elected and eight proportionately elected MNAs, took office. Members are well aware that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as the Seychelles are among the most vulnerable and greatly affected by the negative impacts of climate change.

The three main islands, making up the Seychelles archipelago, Mahé, Praslin and La Digue, where the MNAs' constituencies are situated, have over the years witnessed the adverse impacts of climate change, related to rising temperatures, sea level rise and changes in rainfall patterns.

The primary impacts have led to coastal erosion in constituencies including in Amitie and Anse Kerlan (Grand Anse Praslin), Au Cap, La Digue and North East Point (Glacis). Meanwhile, other coastal constituencies like Pointe Larue, Au Cap, La Digue and Providence (Cascade) suffer from recurrent flooding.

Coastal erosion and massive flooding events are damaging critical coastal infrastructure such as airports, ports, desalination

plants, and main roads, utility lines (for both electricity and water), houses, hotels and other buildings.

It should be noted that it is not only the state that must be held accountable for its contributions to climate change but also businesses based in each of the constituencies which have the responsibility to respect human rights and do no harm in the course of their activities.

The country's water security is also under threat of sea level rise which can cause saltwater intrusion in the underground water storage systems affecting water quality and availability, according to the Seychelles National Climate Change Strategy published in 2009.

Seychelles' massive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of about 1.37 million square kilometres of crystal-clear waters have suffered ocean acidification and coral bleaching, which have negatively impacted on the country's natural beauty which tourists the world over come here for.

Its outer coralline islands now commonly experience coastal erosion, storm surges and tropical cyclones. During the 2006-07 South-West Indian Ocean cyclone season, the intense tropical cyclone Bondo severely damaged buildings and vegetation on Providence Atoll, which is approximately 710 kilometres from the capital Victoria, on Mahé island.

Ten years later, between 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> April, tropical cyclone Fantala, one of the most severe storms to ever hit the South-West Indian Ocean, twice passed near the Farquhar group, which is located 770 kilometres (478 miles) southwest of the capital.

The storm caused widespread damage to nearly all private and public buildings, including the destruction of important desalination facilities (only four cyclone-proof facilities on the island survived),



**Hon. Gervais Henrie, MNA** is the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of the Seychelles and he is the CPA Africa Region's representative on the CPA Small Branches Steering Committee. He was first elected as a proportionately elected Member from 2007 to 2011. In 2016, he was elected for the district of Mont Buxton and in 2020, he became the first MNA to successfully defend his mandate in the constituency and return to the National Assembly as a ruling party. He is also an award-winning journalist with over 27 years' experience.





while significantly impacting on the community and livelihoods in the archipelago. Cyclone Fantala also affected the Providence Atoll.

The massive storm that hit Farquhar caused US\$4.5 million in damages and losses, according to a World Bank report following an assessment of the destruction caused by cyclone Fantala. The Government of Seychelles lost around US\$500,000 in revenue which it would have collected as Value Added Tax (VAT) and business tax from Farquhar during the island's gradual recovery.

Amid everything that is happening around us, the National Assembly of Seychelles starting with the 6th cohort came up with various proposed solutions to address the negative impacts of climate change through adaptation.

The National Assembly has improved its water management using a rainwater harvesting system for use in its daily operations, which has not only helped it to make considerable annual savings but also eased pressure on budgetary requirements.

A second project which is in line with the institution's strategic priority of taking the lead in environmental sustainability and reduction of carbon footprint is the installation of a solar panel system on the rooftop of the National Assembly building at Ile du Port on Mahé.

The installation of the solar panel was made possible through a grant from the Indian Government in collaboration with the Public Utilities Corporation (PUC).

The 90kWp solar photovoltaic system produces about 126,000 kWh per year, which translates into annual savings of R616,169 (US\$44,000) on the National Assembly's electricity bill at present tariffs.

The National Assembly of Seychelles spends a significant proportion of its annual budget on generating electricity from diesel engines and since this system is connected to the grid, it is expected that there will be a large reduction in diesel consumption.

So far the National Assembly has also undertaken a successful climate change and sustainability audit assessment of its institution in collaboration with a non-governmental organisation, *Sustainability for Seychelles (S4S)*.

As a result of this report the Secretariat have made big steps in ensuring that the National Assembly continues to be a greener Parliament and continues to be the leading institution implementing these environmental practices as part of its daily operations.

A Sustainability Policy was formulated and adopted by the management team. The Secretariat then established an internal Committee called the Environmental Implementation Committee (EPIC) chaired by the Sustainability Practice Manager. This Committee put together an action plan that includes the recommendations in the S4S report, as well as a monitoring and evaluation system whereby it can track progress being made and discuss how well the sustainable practices are being implemented.

Thus far the Committee has drafted and adopted the below policies:

- Waste Management Policy
- Water Efficiency Policy
- Energy Efficiency Policy
- Green Purchasing



## SEYCHELLES TAKES CLIMATE CHANGE FIGHT SERIOUSLY

The move ensured that the National Assembly is the first Government institution in Seychelles to have an internal Committee dedicated to the environmental and sustainable practices.

The legislature has also banned the use of plastic bottles on its precinct, as part of a sweeping effort against plastic waste that despoils beaches and pollutes oceans.

Seychelles is proudly part of the international coalition of nations which is taking the important step to reduce littering and plastic pollution in our oceans and seas.

In April 2019, twenty-five tons of waste - including some 50,000 flip-flops - were collected on the Seychelles' remote atoll of Aldabra, which is 1,150 km away from Mahé.

For five weeks, five volunteers from Queen's College, Oxford University and seven from Seychelles joined the Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) team, to help clean up the world's second largest coral reef, where a lot of man-made rubbish especially plastic waste has accumulated in recent years.

The National Assembly of the Seychelles was the first state institution to set this new and ambitious standard, paving the way for the rest of the MDAs.

The Government and Opposition parties in the National Assembly also agreed to reduce the large quantity of printed material given to MNAs and instead move to a more modernised system of using electronic forms of documents. The move was hailed as one that would not cause environmental damage and save money.

Each MNAs has been given a laptop. These documents and reports are sent via email and saved in those laptops. The National Assembly now also has E-Sittings and E-Committee meetings to reduce paper wastage and cut down costs. It purchases more consciously and is making steps to greatly improve its current waste management system.

***“As a legislature, we are aware of the importance of political will in order to not only mitigate the effects but also in finding sustainable solutions to the issues that have already become a challenge. This is why, since the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s call, the National Assembly has remained determined to be a key institution that is leading in sustainably reducing its environmental impact by its current ongoing green campaign.”***

The National Assembly is currently running an educational awareness campaign led by the Public Relations Officer to educate staff on different kinds of sustainable practices that can be implemented at home and at work.

It has a project to establish a ‘Speaker’s Garden’ which will be the home of endemic flora only in order to promote more endemic biodiversity on its grounds. The project is currently on hold because the impact of COVID-19 has resulted in budget cuts. However, the National Assembly is looking at partnering with TRASS or any other environmental NGOs to get it back up and running.

The National Assembly has also started composting in a move to feed and nourish the reclaimed soil where the institution has been built. The Commonwealth Garden is expected to have improved soil, with a new generation of endemic plants.

Although Seychelles still remains an insignificant emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs), its level of susceptibility to the negative impacts of climate change will keep increasing over the years as the impacts become more severe. The country emits less than 0.003% of global GHGs, an insignificant amount globally but an average of 5.38 tons of Co2 is released per person, and this is growing annually.

An increase in the average global temperature of 2 degrees Celsius will be catastrophic for Seychelles given that over 90% of the critical infrastructures are located along the shoreline.

Members of the National Assembly are mindful that because of the impacts of climate change on human rights, it must effectively address climate change in order to honour their Constitutional commitment to respect, protect, promote and improve human rights standards for all.

Seychelles has come a very long way since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 with various achievements made to date in combatting climate change. It was the 16<sup>th</sup> country to ratify the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and has since taken the issue of climate change seriously.

As a legislature, we are aware of the importance of political will in order to not only mitigate the effects but also in finding sustainable solutions to the issues that have already become a challenge. This is why, since the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s call, the National Assembly has remained determined to be a key institution that is leading in sustainably reducing its environmental impact by its current ongoing green campaign.

*“I count on Seychelles to engage in these important events. During the years of discussion, one thing has become very clear to me. Small states have big ideas and big political will. Your experiences, commitment and insights have been invaluable”,* the former UN Secretary-General told the Seychellois Legislators five years ago. He stressed: *“When you are united, small states can change the world.”*

Ultimately the power to mitigate and adapt to climate change lies with the public, but the National Assembly like other Parliaments around the world, plays an essential role in representing short and long-term interests, leading the public in change, promoting green policies and holding the Executive to account.





# HOW PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES CAN BE CONSTRAINED BY THE SIZE OF THE LEGISLATURE

The Speaker of Yukon Legislative Assembly writes about the influence of the Assembly's small size on the exercise of parliamentary democracy.



Yukon is a Canadian territory which has almost twice the land mass of the United Kingdom, but a population of a mere 43,000 souls. While there are 650 seats in the UK House of Commons, and 338 in the Canadian House of Commons, the Yukon Legislative Assembly is comprised of just 19 Members. In the current (34<sup>th</sup>) Legislative Assembly, there are 11 government Members, 6 Members in the Official Opposition, and 2 Members in the Third Party.

Though Canada's ten provincial and three territorial Legislative Assemblies all share elements of the Westminster system, no one House exactly resembles another. For example, while Yukon's Legislative Assembly, like those of all the provinces, features political parties, the other two territorial Assemblies operate according to a consensus model. Also, Canada's sub-national Legislative Assemblies range substantially in size. Yukon and the Northwest Territories are tied for the distinction of being the smallest House, while the two largest Assemblies, Ontario and Quebec, have 124 and 125 seats respectively. For decades, observers of politics in Yukon have noted that the comparatively small number of MLAs elected to Yukon's Legislative Assembly has necessarily and understandably affected the way in which the Assembly conducts its business.

Yukon's 'small-but-mighty' Legislative Assembly on the whole performs the same functions as a large Legislative Assembly. However, the limited number of MLAs does impact upon the operations of our Assembly and does influence the way that parliamentary democracy is expressed in the territory. Compared with most other Canadian Legislative Assemblies, Yukon achieved responsible government fairly recently in November 1979. Nevertheless, the principles of responsible government

underpin the Assembly's operations. A hallmark of responsible government is that a government retains power only as long as it has the confidence of the House. This fundamental principle would be undermined if an Assembly were to be comprised of more Ministers than non-Ministers; that is, if most Members were in Cabinet, an Assembly would be unable to truly legitimize the government's exercise of power.

In recognition of this principle, limits have been established and are codified in subsection 2(3) of Yukon's *Government Organisation Act*. On the size of Cabinet, it specifically states that: "At all times, there must be fewer Members of the Legislative Assembly appointed to the Executive Council than there are Members of the Legislative Assembly who are not appointed to the Executive Council."

However, while there is a hard cap on the size of Yukon's Cabinet, there is no limit on the number of departments, agencies, and areas of responsibility that may exist. As a result, Yukon Ministers typically wear a number of hats. In larger Assemblies, that can accommodate a larger Cabinet, it is not uncommon to see a Minister tasked with a single area of responsibility, a Minister without portfolio, and sometimes even a greater specialisation in Ministerial portfolios. For instance, at the time of writing, in the National Assembly of Québec, there are three Ministers who are responsible for different elements of education in the province.

By way of comparison, currently Yukon's entire Cabinet, which was sworn-in in December 2016, is comprised of just seven MLAs. For the purpose of illustration, one individual in Yukon's Executive Council presently serves as the Minister of Education, the Minister of Justice, and the Government House Leader, while another



**Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA** is the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly in Canada. He was first elected to the Yukon Legislative Assembly in the general election for the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly in 2016 and was elected as the 25<sup>th</sup> Speaker in 2017. As Speaker, he is also Chair of the Members' Services Board. He is the CPA Canada Region's representative on the CPA Small Branches Steering Committee. Prior to his election, he practiced law in the territory, serving from 2000 until 2016 as the Executive Director of the Yukon Legal Services Society.



## HOW PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES CAN BE CONSTRAINED BY THE SIZE OF THE LEGISLATURE

member of Yukon's Executive Council is the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Minister of Environment, and the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation.

If there can be said to be a multiplier effect with regard to the size of Yukon Ministerial portfolios due to the limit on the number of MLAs who may be in Cabinet as dictated by the small size of the Assembly and pursuant to the Government Organisation Act, the effect is even more pronounced when it comes to the Opposition's critic responsibilities.

As is the case in the current Legislative Assembly, the Official Opposition is likely to have fewer members than there are MLAs in Cabinet, and the same holds true for the Third Party. Whereas in some larger Assemblies, an Opposition Member may be a critic for one particular area, in Yukon, Opposition MLAs are called on to be generalists. In fact, at times, as was the case for most of the previous Legislative Assembly, the Yukon Legislative Assembly's Third Party consisted of a sole MLA. In such a scenario, that Member serves, *de facto*, not just as the Leader of the Third Party in the House, but as the critic for *absolutely everything*.

In larger Houses, it is often the practice for the Assembly's Presiding Officers to be drawn from different caucuses. For example, the Speaker may belong to the government caucus, the Deputy Speaker may be a member of the Official Opposition caucus, and the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole may be drawn from the Third Party. The experience gained presiding over the Assembly's proceedings, even in a capacity other than Speaker, can afford a Member an enviable learning opportunity in gaining greater familiarity with the rules of the House. This experience has helped to prepare some Presiding Officers in larger Houses for their future roles as Speaker.

Turning to the case in Yukon, as there are only 19 Members in the Legislative Assembly, and as typically a high proportion of Yukon's government MLAs are in the Executive Council, there are comparatively few government backbenchers. Similarly, in light of the limited overall size of the House, the number of MLAs in the Official Opposition caucus, and to an even greater degree, the Third Party caucus, tends to be small. Not unexpectedly,

***“In fact, at times, as was the case for most of the previous Legislative Assembly, the Yukon Legislative Assembly's Third Party consisted of a sole MLA. In such a scenario, that Member serves, *de facto*, not just as the Leader of the Third Party in the House, but as the critic for absolutely everything.”***

opposition caucuses in Yukon historically have been reluctant to offer Presiding Officer candidates from their ranks, as Presiding Officers must conduct themselves in a non-partisan manner in the Chair and of course, cannot take part in a debate while presiding. A Third Party caucus consisting of one Member would in essence lose its sole voice in the Chamber if its only representative were to take the Chair.

As a result, Presiding Officers in the Yukon Legislative Assembly are almost exclusively elected by the House from among those Members of the government caucus who are not in Cabinet. At times, this can have unanticipated consequences. In the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, four Members of the government caucus, including myself, as Speaker, are not in Cabinet. This, however, was not the case in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Assembly, where at that time, other than the Speaker, there was only one government caucus private Member. That Member was elected Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole, but there was no Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole. This meant that the Member did yeoman's service chairing proceedings, as there was no MLA upon whom he could call to take the chair in Committee of the Whole. Apart from being physically and mentally taxing, this also reduced the time available for that Member to devote to their other responsibilities.

As well, with that Member having no one with whom to share Committee of the Whole chairing duties, the Assembly had no 'safety net'. If the Chair of Committee of the Whole had been away, but to his credit he was a paragon of reliability, the Assembly would have been unable to resolve into Committee of the Whole. While the Standing Orders would have empowered the Speaker in such circumstances to appoint a Member to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole, the Speaker would likely have found no Member willing or able to take on that role, on the grounds of either belonging to a numerically limited opposition caucus, or being in Cabinet. In that case, the Committee could not have met, and had, for example, witnesses been scheduled to appear in Committee of the Whole pursuant to an order of the House, said order would have been frustrated.

While in many larger Houses, Bills are routinely sent for detailed consideration to one of a number of Committees, this is not the case in Yukon. In another adaptation to being a small Assembly, Bills normally stand referred to Committee of the Whole after a Second Reading. As a result, Members spend a great deal of their time in the Chamber in Committee of the Whole. Practically speaking, there simply aren't enough MLAs to both keep the House functioning and at the same time have Members meeting in various Standing, Select, or Special Committees, in contrast to larger Assemblies, where Committees often run concurrently to when the House sits.

Another Yukon nugget is that the quorum requirement in our House is quite high and is defined as “*a majority of the members of the Legislative Assembly, including the Speaker*.” As the quorum requirement is set out in the *Yukon Act*, a piece of federal legislation that serves as the Yukon's constitution, the Yukon Legislative Assembly cannot amend it. In contrast, quorum in Committee of the Whole, as set out in our rules, is eight, including the Chair.

The small size of the Yukon Legislative Assembly also affects when committees may meet. There is a Spring and Fall Sitting,



The main chamber of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

during which the Assembly normally meets Mondays through Thursdays, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. During capital-‘S’-Sittings, the small number of MLAs forming the Assembly and the need to maintain quorum in the Chamber limits the times available for Committees to meet, practically speaking. During Sittings, any Standing, Select, or Special Committees that do meet, tend to meet on Fridays, or else in the morning on a sitting day. Occasionally, a Committee meeting may be scheduled to begin after the House rises for the day. Between Sittings, there are of course fewer constraints on when Committee meetings may be held.

The small number of MLAs in the Assembly also means that we tend to have fewer Committees than is the case in larger jurisdictions, and furthermore, a smaller number of MLAs appointed to the Committees. Our Standing Orders limit the size of Standing, Special and Select Committees to no more than seven Members *“without the consent of the Assembly.”*

Currently, Yukon’s five Standing Committees range in size from five Members (the Members’ Services Board), to six Members (the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments), to seven Members (the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, and the

Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees).

Most recently, in December 2020, the House established a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation. Similar to some Select Committees in recent Assemblies, this Special Committee is an all-party, three-Member Committee, although unlike some of those earlier Committees, the Special Committee is not chaired by a Minister.

One significant difference that the small size of our Assembly has on the form and operation of Committees is that, unlike in larger Legislative Assemblies, it is not unusual for Ministers to be permanent Members of Committees, or to ‘sub in’ at a Committee meeting. However, though it has occurred in the past, it is not the usual practice for a Minister to chair a Standing Committee.

There are of course a number of other distinct elements of the Yukon Legislative Assembly’s operations which are affected by the reality of the small size of our House, including but not limited to the greater opportunities for private Members to speak, and comparatively less competition to catch the Speaker’s eye, but as they say, that is a tale for another day...





# GUERNSEY GOES GREEN ON A GLOBAL STAGE



Guernsey does not often get the chance to operate on a truly global stage. Although over the course of history, our people have made a huge impact in establishing international trade links, in the arts, and in sport, it is rare that Guernsey, as a small jurisdiction, has a chance to position itself globally.

Green finance is such a chance, a huge global movement. The scale of investment required to fight climate change is in the trillions, and global policymakers are being pushed to use finance as the weapon.

Investment in this space is needed because people are realising that, as Ban Ki-moon, the former United Nations' Secretary-General, said: *'There is no plan B, because there is no planet B'*.

Given our specialism in finance, Guernsey has an ability to play an outside role in this global cause where financial services drives more than 40% of our GDP and more than 70% of our export economy – and indeed our place in the world. Green finance is a global cause, and a fast-moving cause.

Guernsey's green finance strategy, developed with the full support and participation of the States of Guernsey, is today the keystone of our island's financial services strategy, the golden thread which runs through our business.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has also consistently reported that there is 'no time to lose'.

The climate crisis has arrived, and is accelerating faster than most expected, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity. We face the risk of potentially irreversible climate tipping points, and chain reactions disrupting ecosystems, society and economies.

Transformative change on the scale required will cost a lot of money – out of the scope of small governments such as Guernsey, and also too challenging for the major global economies.

Governments alone will not be able to finance this transition. So the green finance sector – and investment from institutions and individuals – will play a key part.

Guernsey's government has played its part so far, meeting emissions targets, embedding environmental sustainability into our formal investment frameworks, including our investment principles for the States of Guernsey and our regulatory framework, and providing funding to develop the green finance initiative.

But while we do what we can at a local level to fund the necessary transition, we are a community of 65,000 people and this is a global problem that requires a global joined-up solution. Technology projects and infrastructure that our local finance sector funds in other parts of the world are much more likely to be on a scale that will have a bigger global impact compared to what the sector invests in locally.

Last summer, Guernsey Finance, the promotional agency for our island's financial services industry, organised a week-long event, *Sustainable Finance Week*, which should have actually taken place in Guernsey. COVID-19 put paid to that, but we continued with the event, over the course of three webinars and three podcasts, with international guests and reach to a global audience.

We also enjoyed the oversight and feedback of Tim Hames, former Director-General of British private equity industry group, the British Venture Capital and Private Equity Association (BVCA). Tim has been a regular visitor to Guernsey over the years, and is well aware of Guernsey's long-held strength and expertise in private equity investment funds. He summarised the event thus: *"Guernsey has shown considerable imagination with regards to green and sustainable finance and it should view this as platform for bigger and better products. It should think of COP26 as an occasion of a type akin to the Olympic Games or the football World Cup. It should really want to be noticed by others."*



**Deputy Lyndon Trott** is a member of Guernsey's Assembly, the States of Guernsey. He has served as an elected member since 2000, and has spent full terms as the island's Finance Minister, Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister over that time. He has been the Chairman of Guernsey Finance, the promotional agency for the Guernsey financial services industry, for the past five years and is an independent Trustee on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Trust Funds.



It has certainly been our aim to be recognised as a significant contributor to the green finance debate. Guernsey Finance's membership of the United Nations' Financial Centres for Sustainability (FC4S) network – alongside global finance centres including London, Luxembourg, Paris, Shanghai and New York – is now well-established. We have a longstanding relationship with the UK's Green Finance Institute. Our schedule of green finance events continues to position ourselves strongly on a local, national and international platform.

A number of themes emerged from *Sustainable Finance Week*, which I am delighted to see will take place again in some fashion this summer. Our industry steering group, *Guernsey Green Finance* will be looking to take some of these critical issues forward.

- The legacy of the COVID-19 crisis has to be about the need for a new order in the economy and society and not simply the restoration of an old normal.
- The relationship between public capital and private capital will change – it is vital that there is a meaningful role for private capital here in the years ahead.
- Those who disproportionately have resources – be it high-net-worth individuals, family offices or conventional limited partners – have an obligation to show leadership. The line 'billionaires will save the planet' is too crude, but they do have a vital role in recovery.
- We need a more holistic appreciation of the notion of systemic risk, and a much more enticing set of incentives to think about the longer-term before the short-term.
- Finally, many of those who already have a record of involvement in sustainable finance, and others who will now enter the frame, instinctively believe that they would have most effect via supporting impact investment, rather than another round of involvement with enhanced ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance), which in many senses is required, but has become something of an industry in itself. There are differences in sentiment as to whether individuals and institutions should make direct investments in this space or operate on a co-investment basis or through specialist funds. Scale and skill sets vary considerably here, and that will have a major influence on strategies.

There is a danger that the 'ESG conversation' post-COVID-19 is swamping the green and sustainable finance space. Conformance with ESG is one thing, but the conversations are rarely grounded by the actuality of the current provision and data.

In Guernsey, we accept that simple metrics and reporting are necessary. We are seeing the emergence of ESG reporting as a portfolio function for administrators here in Guernsey, given the island's leadership in the development of sustainable finance product and services.

We must guard against costly complexity. For finance, there is a simple measure – carbon content of the portfolio, and its path to zero.

Investors' need for a trusted, transparent product was the rationale behind our creation of the *Guernsey Green Fund*, the world's first regulatory regime, in 2018. A simple, straightforward notification and disclosure regime, aligned with international standards, designed to provide investors with confidence from a regulatory wrapper.



The historic Royal Court building in St Peter Port is home to the Guernsey States Assembly.

In a similar vein, our *Green Principles for Private Equity*, described at the time by market commentators as simple ESG principles, provided a straightforward guide to investing, aligned with the climate change agenda.

The private equity industry and private markets need the comfort and confidence of a robust investment product, aligned with global standards, without the cost and complication of prescriptive rules.

There is plenty that we can still do. There is plenty that the world, and the global financial services industry, needs to do to finance climate change mitigation.

These are immensely important subjects where there is a leadership void at present. 2021 is the year of COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021, we will be there, hopefully in person, and certainly in spirit.

Guernsey has the will to stay at the forefront of this global issue. Our global futures depend on it.



# A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF A CPA SMALL BRANCH: THE ISLE OF MAN



Small Branches across the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) have unique challenges and opportunities. However, in many ways, CPA Small Branches can be some of the most active participants in the organisation. From COVID-19 and climate change to constituents' individual issues, we seek to learn and share with each other, developing innovative solutions to problems which face all of us. The Isle of Man is no different, and our population of 85,000, like many Island nations are both forward- and outward-looking in approach. I hope that this article will provide ideas to other branches as to how they can increase their participation in the CPA.

We have recently undertaken our latest review of the CPA *Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures* which showed encouraging progress in areas such as equality of franchise. Historically, the Island had one-, two- and three-seat constituencies dating back to town and rural areas as defined in the first Act of Tynwald governing popular elections in 1866.

However, the exercise also noted deficiencies around the budget process and lack of an Auditor General. Reference to the CPA Benchmarks were part of the case that I put to Tynwald in November 2020 seeking parliamentary support for an Appointed Day Order to bring the 2011 Auditor General Act to life, which was ultimately agreed. We expect our first Auditor General to be appointed during 2021.

In the good old days when travel was possible, we welcomed Clerk attachments, as well as sending our Clerks to other jurisdictions as part of mutual development programmes. Public Accounts appears to be a particular specialism - our Deputy Clerk, Jonathan King spent some time with the Cayman Islands Public Accounts Committee, whilst the current Public Accounts Committee Clerk, Jo Corkish has been part of CPA Post-Election Seminars and Public Accounts Committee development work

in Montserrat and the Falkland Islands. Our Deputy Clerk, Dr Jonathan King commented *"There is enormous value in these opportunities. Parliamentary officers everywhere benefit greatly from the opportunity to share learning with counterparts doing similar jobs in other places. For those serving in small jurisdictions, engagement with another small jurisdictions can often be more relevant than a visit to Westminster or Ottawa, inspiring as such a visit may be."*

Travel also permitted some of our latest Members and Clerks to attend the relevant courses at McGill University run by CPA, which have given all those who have attended greater confidence and understanding of our Parliament and the practices of others, allowing searching questions of our own practices which must always be welcomed.

When COVID-19 hit, the Isle of Man became trailblazers in virtual Parliaments and virtual scrutiny, which I wrote about last year in *The Parliamentarian*. However, virtual working has become the new normal. Whilst there are obvious drawbacks about building personal networks and informal discussions that add real value to conferences, the CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region has engaged in virtual exploratory groups bringing together Members to look at particular themes and how they have been handled to allow some comparison between jurisdictions. The first of these organised by the CPA Malta Branch and coordinated by the Regional Secretariat at the CPA Regional Conference, is on responses to COVID-19 across the themes of health and social impact, borders, residence and travel, recovery and effective Parliaments. We expect the output to be published later this year.

This offers a model for future workstreams coming out of regional and global conferences where an initial brief can be agreed at the meeting and followed up virtually.



**Hon. Juan Watterson, SHK** has been a Member of the House of Keys since 2006 and has been the Speaker since 2016. He was previously a Minister for Home Affairs (2011-2016) and he is also the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. He is the CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region's representative on the CPA Small Branches Steering Committee. Prior to entering Parliament, he was a Chartered Accountant with KPMG.





Another concession to virtual life was the recent Virtual Commonwealth Youth Parliament which included two Manx participants, but also several from other CPA Small Branches including a Presiding Officer role for Hon. Sharie de Castro of the British Virgin Islands, and an opportunity for me to relive my youth as a Commonwealth Youth Parliamentarian (back in 2000!) in giving the throne speech.

Domestically, Junior Tynwald sadly had to be cancelled in 2020, but is a regular feature of the Tynwald calendar giving an opportunity for young people to debate issues and ask questions of current Parliamentarians. It also has the advantage of allowing some backbenchers to 'act up' taking on Ministerial roles and answering questions. All part of ongoing parliamentary education!

Our annual open-air ceremony, dating back to the foundations of Tynwald in the 10th century, had a very different look this year. It came just as we were declared COVID-19-free, hence no need for social distancing, but with a much slimmed down cast. This ancient ceremony at which petitions are received and laws proclaimed to the people is often a chance to showcase our Island to visiting Parliamentarians, and we hope it can be again in the future.

The first CPA event we lost to COVID-19 was our 2020 Commonwealth Day Dinner. On that occasion Lord Dubs, a distinguished humanist, had been due to talk to Members, former Members and invited guests. These events allow for sharing ideas in an 'after dinner speaker' format and have been presented in the past by Eddie Ouko (Kenyan Auditor General), Deputy Monty Tadier (Jersey) and our own Lieutenant-Governor Sir Richard Gozney (former High Commissioner to Eswatini and later Nigeria, Ambassador to Indonesia and Governor of Bermuda).

An opportunity to participate in election monitoring in Guernsey also fell victim to COVID-19, although we have had a number of Members train and attend delegations from former Members, Tim Crookall and Alex Downie to St Helena and BVI respectively, and the President of Tynwald, Hon. Steve Rodan MLC's involvement in the observation of the Cayman Island elections in 2017. These are a great 'deep dive' exercise into other political systems.

The importance of bringing people together cannot be underestimated, either physically or virtually, as it is through these measures that the CPA is strengthened. It is therefore of significant concern that hosts of CPA plenary conference will no longer be required to provide the accommodation. Whilst I understand it will encourage hosts to come forward, for participants this will add an annual cost burden of several thousand pounds on top of our £23,250 GBP membership fee and travel costs. It seems a far cry from when the Isle of Man hosted the plenary conference in 1984 and some delegates had to be put up in Members' homes! It is the smaller CPA Branches that will be hardest hit by this change, whose participation is at risk, and the CPA Small Branches Steering Committee will need to consider the impact this has on smaller CPA Branches.

I hope that this article will provide ideas for other CPA Small Branches to further their CPA participation, and encourage greater education of Parliamentarians in their own system and those of other jurisdictions. As we celebrate 40 years of the CPA Small Branches network, we should constantly look for ways to learn from others, to share our experiences and bring those to bear for the benefit of our constituents.



The Parliament building of the Isle of Man in Douglas.

The Isle of Man is a self-governing Crown Dependency. Located between Great Britain and Ireland, it is home to the world's oldest continuous Parliament, Tynwald, established by 979 AD by the Vikings. Tynwald is comprised of a popularly elected 24-Member House of Keys, and a Legislative Council comprising 8 Members elected by the Keys, together with the Lord Bishop, Her Majesty's Attorney General (non-voting) and the President of Tynwald. The branches sit separately to consider primary legislation, but have a monthly joint sitting presided over by the President of Tynwald where policy, finance and secondary legislation are considered. There is a Council of Ministers of nine, and all Members bar one sit as independents.



# IMPORTANCE OF PARLIAMENT IN 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY: A VIEW FROM JERSEY

**What is the nature of being a Commonwealth  
Parliamentarian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the importance of  
Parliament being reflective and responsive to the needs  
of society?**



Amidst all the noise generated by the politics that takes place within Parliaments throughout the democratic world, it is surprisingly easy to forget the crucial role they play as the foundation stones of our democracies.

Parliaments are not just one of the three main arms of modern governments, acting as the legislature, the law-making body alongside the Executive and the Judiciary, Parliaments are much more than that. They are vital institutions in the story of every democratic nation no matter how large or small.

Indeed, I don't believe it is an exaggeration to say that Parliaments are the principle national institution. Unlike the Judiciary or the Executive, Parliaments bind the various peoples of democratic nations together and the best way to understand that role is to go back to basics to understand the word 'Parliament' itself, as well as to look at one of those earliest Parliaments that unintentionally created the templates upon which our modern Parliaments are modelled.

'Parliament', the word, is derived from old French, indeed modern French speakers will recognise its roots from the word 'parler' - to speak, and indeed at the most basic analysis, a Parliament is a channel of expression and it is this role that underpins its importance in democratic states.

One of the key tensions in any jurisdiction is that between the individual and the society in which they live. All people have the desire to express their opinions but for a nation to act on every single view expressed would of course be unworkable, leading to social chaos rather than social harmony.

Representative Parliaments provide an institutional filtering mechanism that enables the views of the individual to be expressed and then combined with those of others through amendment and compromise before finally being put to the test via a vote, which enables the majority to adopt their preferred way forward.

In short, Parliaments enable every citizen to become involved in the governing of a nation and to do this, they bring together the representatives of those people and I believe there is no more evocative image of this assembling of people than the ancient Parliament of Iceland, the 'Althing', which is believed to be the oldest active parliament in the world (not to be confused with the Isle of Man's Tynwald, which is the world's oldest continuously active Parliament).

I had the privilege to visit the site of this ancient Parliament in 2017, about 9 months before I stood for election myself. It is hard to understate the magnificence of the setting on plains beneath a magnificent cliff and at the point of division of two continents.

The Althing was established in about 930 AD and "*laid the foundation of independent national existence in Iceland. All free men could attend the assemblies, which were usually the main social event of the year and drew large crowds of farmers and their families, parties involved in legal disputes, traders, craftsmen, storytellers and travellers.*"<sup>1</sup>

The gathering must have been an incredible site, particularly as those attending the assembly lived in temporary camps throughout the session.

Iceland is a vast, beautiful and formidable island. Its geography is like no other place on Earth and yet to stand at the location where 1,000 years ago, early Icelanders would travel hundreds of miles through goodness knows what kind of weather, to gather together with the communal intention of guiding their nascent community to a brighter future, was a deeply humbling experience and one which fixed very clearly in my mind and my heart, the most basic meaning of 'Parliament' and the institution's purpose.

I have already mentioned the fact that Parliaments exist as one of three branches of government and in my view, they are the most important. In most modern forms of government, the Executive, that



**Deputy Kirsten Morel** was first elected to the States of Jersey in May 2018, as Deputy for St Lawrence, having previously worked as a technology and finance writer. He chairs the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel and the 'Brexit' Review Panel in the States Assembly and he is Vice-Chairperson of the CPA Jersey Branch Executive Committee.

Reference: <sup>1</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Althing>



arm which enacts policy and proposes the majority of new laws, is drawn in one way or another from the Parliament itself.

Indeed, in Jersey, it is the States Assembly, an institution which currently is dominated by independent members, that elects the Executive. In larger, more well-known jurisdictions such as the UK, it is Parliament, through its party system that proposes the Prime Minister for appointment by the monarch. Quite simply, the Executive gains its legitimacy from the democratically elected Parliament.

However, Parliament is not limited to electing an Executive, it also has the incredibly important role of holding the Executive to account, scrutinising legislation and policy. Ultimately, in the worst of situations, Parliament is able to stop the excesses of a power-hungry Executive by removing it from power.

When Parliaments fail in this, the consequences are horrendous. Hitler's rise to power in the 1930s was enabled by a failure of Parliament and today we do not have to look too far to see examples of Parliaments that act as window dressing to authoritarian leaders, providing a fig leaf of democratic legitimacy to their dictatorial methods.

In its full form, one of Winston Churchill's most famous utterances addresses this role precisely: *"Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time but there is the broad feeling in our country that the people should rule, continuously rule, and that public opinion, expressed by all constitutional means, should shape, guide, and control the actions of Ministers who are their servants and not their masters."*

When it comes to the Judiciary, Parliament's role is less direct. The laws that are applied by the courts are given democratic endorsement by Parliaments but it is generally accepted that Parliaments should play no role in appointing the jurists who sit in judgment, so as to ensure fairness in application and to quite rightly avoid the politicisation of this process.

Today, there are countries in Europe where we see the courts being politicised and as a result, the entire democratic process is being damaged because the courts themselves have a key role to play in ensuring that neither the Executive nor the Legislature overstep the boundaries of their power. This is vitally important when it comes to the protection of minorities, for one of the dangers of democracy is that the majority can theoretically ride roughshod over minority groups, which makes human rights laws so incredibly important.

It is this matter of basic human rights that I believe, forms the basis of our roles as Parliamentarians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We are already seeing the rights of minorities under attack from various places but this stands at odds with the fact that we live in a globalised world and one in which we are not only seeing people move between nations and regions but we are also gaining a better understanding of the diversity that exists within all groups of people.

From differing physical capabilities to neuro diversity, religious diversity and sexual diversity, to name just a few ways in which all humans differ from each other, it is the role of Parliaments to ensure that their views are represented, and their rights upheld.

The current pandemic has shown us how Parliaments, which are often derided as slow and out of touch, can move quickly and with great flexibility. Here in Jersey, we were possibly the first Parliament to move online and as such were able to deliver for islanders throughout the period of lockdown necessitated by the crisis.

This flexibility, however, cannot be a one-way street. The economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, just 10 years after



The States Assembly in Jersey.

the global financial crisis, will hit the young in our societies far harder than it will hit the old. The economic outlook for the under 30s is now really quite bleak and yet we know that Parliaments are often less likely to listen to the young, possibly because they vote less than their elders but again we must look to history, which tells us that if you don't look after the young, the consequences can be violent and atrocious.

We know that young people communicate in different ways to those that many of us are used to but it is up to us as Parliamentarians to find the channels that enable them to speak with us. We cannot and must not expect them to move to our preferred methods of communication. As elected members, we need to learn how to engage effectively via the appropriate digital platforms and show those people who may well feel that their futures are not as bright as they had once hoped that we are here to listen to and speak for them.

As Parliamentarians, we no longer need to travel for miles through treacherous weather on foot or on horseback to reach our assemblies, but we still play exactly the same role as those ancient Icelanders. We convey the views and concerns of all of our electorate so as to ensure their voices are heard, and right now, during a period of crisis, we need to step up and reach out so that our communities and our nations can be assured of a bright, prosperous, democratic and inclusive future.





# DEMOCRACY DURING A PANDEMIC IN ONE OF THE WORLD'S REMOTEST ISLANDS

**'Remote working' has a special meaning in the world's most isolated council chamber. Chief Islander of Tristan da Cunha reflects on a momentous time.**



The last year has altered the way many democratic bodies around the world have done their business. For the Island Council on Tristan da Cunha, our way of working has remained unchanged. What did change, however, is the range of issues we've had to consider. Emergency measures to keep our community safe from COVID-19 were debated and decided in the face of urgent deadlines. Improvements to our tourism offer were put in place for when the cruise trade returns. And our decision to create the planet's fourth-largest marine reserve attracted headlines worldwide.

Tristan's Council isn't strictly a legislature, because laws for this isolated community of 244 islanders are made by the Governor (who is also the Governor of St Helena and Ascension Island). Our role is to advise, with the Tristan da Cunha Administrator as Council President providing the central link in the chain, and to date our advice has always been taken. Tristan da Cunha's South Atlantic location – 1,500 miles from St Helena and 1,730 from mainland South Africa – means our council chamber is the remotest democratic forum on

Earth. The Islands are home to 244 UK citizens living in the world's most isolated settlement of Edinburgh of the Seven Seas.

The Island Council consists of eight elected and three appointed Members, in addition to the Administrator. Elections are held every three years and a special feature of our constitution is that at least one councillor must be a woman (three took office in 2019).

## 2020: challenges and opportunities

COVID-19 presents a special challenge to a remote island with limited medical facilities and no ventilators, where residents are also exceptionally vulnerable to respiratory disease. As 2020 began, we'd been without TV for months following storm damage, and it came as a shock when the service was restored and images of the worldwide trauma of COVID-19 flooded into our homes. So when we gathered as a Council on 4<sup>th</sup> February and again on 5<sup>th</sup> March, we had tough decisions to take. Three cruise ships were due to call in quick succession, bringing tourists with much-needed cash to spend. But our discussions considered islanders' complete exposure to the risk of a novel virus, and we concluded that visitor landings would have to be banned.

A surely unique consequence of our decision was that Tristan da Cunha's only full-time police officer, Inspector Conrad Glass, who was returning from leave aboard the cruise ship *Le-Lyrial*, had to sail straight past his neighbours and continue to Cape Town where he waited five months before finally reaching home.

The Island Council knew that a few yachts were also due to call at Tristan and would be asking for permission to come ashore. It was agreed that the 'no visitors' rule would apply to all, but we would assist them with fuel, water and medical treatment if needed.

Many practical problems had to be tackled. The island hospital was prepared as best we could, and extra medical supplies were ordered from South Africa to last us for more than six months. Plans were made for a mid-year supply voyage, protected by strict quarantine, that would also bring long-term stocks of essential foodstuffs that cannot

**Below: Members of the Tristan da Cunha Island Council including Chief Islander James Glass (fourth from left) with Administrator, Fiona Kilpatrick (third from left) and other members of the Island Council. Two Councillors were absent overseas.**



**Councillor James Glass** is the current Chief Islander of Tristan da Cunha. He was elected for a record fourth term in March 2019 and so becomes the first Chief Islander to serve four terms. The Chief Islander is a Tristanian elected separately from the Island Council and serves for three years. He is also Tristan da Cunha's Director of Fisheries and makes regular trips overseas to oversee the retention of Tristan's valuable Marine Stewardship Council award for its sustainable Tristan Lobster Fishery.



Image credit: Robin Repetto

The world-famous albatross against a backdrop of island life in Tristan da Cunha.

be home-grown. Council instructed the Island Store manageress to draw up a list of essential items, including cooking gas, that would be rationed in the shop to prevent panic buying.

COVID-19 has impacted Tristan da Cunha in other ways too. The island operates a commercial fishery for gourmet rock lobster (*Jasus tristani*) that is MSC-certified as sustainable. Its worldwide sales provide over four-fifths of our income and underpin our way of life, but at one point in 2020 they dropped by 75%. The Island Council agreed a wage freeze and Heads of Department were told to find 5% cuts from their budgets. Travel restrictions also impacted inbound research visits and outbound medical cases. The island was without fresh fruit for five months, which highlights that we need to be more sustainable than we currently are. We're now exploring ways to boost local horticulture and renewable energy.

The pandemic was a significant part of our 2020 agenda, but we also looked to the future. We ruled that cruise operators who adhere to the highest standards of environmental protection will in future be permitted to land guests accompanied only by ships' guides instead of depending on the availability of islanders, many of whom have two jobs alongside their subsistence farming. This will give more flexibility to find windows in the Atlantic weather for visitors to experience our amazing nature. The Tristan archipelago is home to more than 90% of the world's Northern Rockhopper Penguins, 80% of Subantarctic Fur Seals, and birds such as the

Spectacled Petrel that breed nowhere else on earth. Two of our islands, Gough and Inaccessible, form a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Ours is a truly special destination for the eco-tourist.

Councillors had a big decision to make on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020. For four years, with support from the UK Government's 'Blue Belt' programme, we'd been assessing the potential to create new marine conservation measures within our vast 754,000 km<sup>2</sup> ocean zone. Tristan da Cunha was the first Territory to come to the scheme with both a resident population and an existing commercial fishery. So for us, the decision was always about balancing the health of the ocean with the economic health of the community. In the end we resolved to retain sustainable fishing in a strictly limited part of our waters, but to turn 687,000 km<sup>2</sup>, nine-tenths of the zone, into a fully-protected 'no-take' marine reserve, the largest in the Atlantic and fourth biggest in the world. The Island Council considered that these protections will help improve Tristan's marine environment to deal with the impact of climate change, which should help safeguard the species which live here and the people who depend on them.

## Looking ahead

2021 has brought the news of a new and more infectious South African strain of the COVID-19 virus: we've responded by extending our quarantine rules. But in March 2021, we expect our fishing vessel MFV *Edinburgh* to come over the eastern horizon from Cape Town with a precious cargo: a batch of COVID-19 vaccine, supplied by the UK Government to which we are hugely grateful. We need the immunity it will provide in order to re-open our links with the outside world.

Tristan da Cunha entered the new year still COVID-free and braced for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for us as guardians of the South Atlantic. But we are anxiously awaiting a strategic approach from London to its support of the UK Overseas Territories in a post-Brexit world. Now that the UK is no longer contributing to the European Development Fund which formerly helped shore-up Tristan da Cunha's infrastructure, we look to Westminster and Whitehall for reassurance and we're worried by the near-silence to date. Here in the remotest settlement on Earth, the union flag flies proudly as we help the UK deliver on its global environmental promises.

My fellow councillors, and our whole community, send our best wishes to Commonwealth legislators from across the miles.

Below: The modest Administration Building in Tristan da Cunha's only settlement, Edinburgh of the Seven Seas, houses the Council chamber.

Image credit: Chris Carney





# COLLABORATION ON THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 DEMONSTRATES THE UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES' UNIQUE LINKS



## Introduction

It is honour for the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA) to contribute this article to this special issue of *The Parliamentary* on the Commonwealth's smallest jurisdictions.

By way of brief introduction, the 12 inhabited United Kingdom Overseas Territories are scattered across the globe, with a combined population estimated to be 350,000. These are: Anguilla, Ascension Island, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn Islands, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and Turks & Caicos Islands (<https://ukota.org/member-territories/>).

The Overseas Territories retain a constitutional link with the United Kingdom (UK) and most are largely self-governing, each with its own constitution and its own government which enacts local laws. Although the relationship is rooted in four centuries of shared history, the UK government's relationship with its Overseas Territories today is a modern one, based on mutual benefits and responsibilities.

UKOTA is constituted by the governments of the Overseas Territories and exists to promote the interests of the UK Overseas Territories and cooperation between them. Membership is equal, regardless of the size or the GDP of any Overseas Territory.

Accordingly, though individual Overseas Territories may be supported by various UK-based private or non-profit entities, UKOTA is the sole association with the express mandate from each Overseas Territory government to represent the collective interests of the Overseas Territories in the UK.

## Overseas Territory Representative Work

The individual governments and peoples of the Overseas Territories are officially represented in the UK by their respective Representatives and through their London offices. When interests align, the UK Overseas Territories may speak with a united voice through UKOTA.

Like embassies and high commissions of independent states, the Overseas Territories Representative offices in London serve as extensions of their respective Overseas Territory Governments in the UK, and each Representative is a central UK contact point.

As such, each Representative leads their country's overseas consular office in London to promote a better economic, social,

cultural, and political understanding of their Overseas Territory as well as gathering and disseminating information and developing and maintaining strategic links.

Day-to-day each Overseas Territory Representative handles governmental business, political and international relations, and assists their citizens permanently or temporarily residing overseas, such as students, young professionals, the elderly and unemployed - especially when there is an emergency or crisis at home or aboard.

## The Collective Positive Consequence of COVID-19

Against this background, UKOTA finds it fitting to highlight its joint work in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic, especially from the outset of the COVID-19 outbreak in the UK as well as the resulting lockdowns of 2020. Such joint work, while painstaking, served to strengthen goodwill and diplomatic relations between the Overseas Territories.

COVID-19 is of course a crisis like no other. Normally, an Overseas Territory contends with a crisis that only affects or impacts itself alone, such as a natural disaster. However, COVID-19, being a global pandemic, has the unique effect of impacting the Overseas Territories collectively along with the UK in much the same way at roughly the same time. Whereas, in the case of a hurricane or volcanic eruption for example, the full depth of the challenge is only fully felt by those who witness it first-hand and deeply understand the desperate need for assistance.

This presented a silver lining: unlike an Overseas Territory-specific crisis, each country in the UK-UKOTA grouping understood, on a fundamental and intuitive level, the nature of the challenge and the havoc it could wreak; thereby motivating a collective response and unprecedented, innovative collaboration.

## Collective UK-UKOTA COVID-19 Actions

Ordinarily UKOTA meets monthly to discuss common issues relevant to the Overseas Territories, enabling the Representatives to support each other with common challenges, share best practices and work to resolve issues of common interest.

However, COVID-19 compelled increased interaction amongst the Overseas Territories which enhanced an exchange of knowledge, ideas and advice and has provided each Overseas





Typical of many of the Overseas Territories, Rendezvous Bay in Montserrat with crystal clear waters and pristine beaches.

Territory with greater interface with key contacts including Parliamentarians, UK officials and EU officials.

Most notably, the Foreign Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), which is the UK government department with primary responsibility for Overseas Territory relations, provided an immensely helpful forum for exchange of information between Overseas Territories and the UK, as well as access to various resources when needed.

With experience assisting each other in various national disasters, the Overseas Territories were already well versed in acting decisively and quickly, however the outbreak and lockdown in the UK brought new levels of cooperation.

For starters, on 18 March 2020, Overseas Territories' Representatives joined a conference call with Baroness Sugg, then the UK Minister responsible for the Overseas Territories, to discuss sourcing additional essential equipment and supplies to assist the Overseas Territories. A sign of such early support and collaboration was shown between the UK and the Cayman Islands whereby twelve specialists from the UK were deployed in the Cayman Islands at the end of April 2020 to provide support in the coordination of essential medical supplies and personnel, offering a liaison function with UK naval assets in the region, working with Hazard Management Cayman Islands on Hurricane Preparedness and providing advice on any security threats that might occur in these exceptional circumstances.

Meanwhile all Overseas Territories' Representative Offices in London were immediately assisting stranded citizens in the UK as well as third countries (as far flung as Japan and Australia) to return

home through logistical coordination of repatriation flights, and additionally providing continuous and detailed updates to ensure citizens were aware of swiftly changing COVID-19 regulations in the UK. This required Overseas Territories Representatives remaining in close contact with each other and the FCDO to ensure lockdown measures were clearly understood so correct advice could be conveyed to Overseas Territories' citizens.

A total of 8 repatriation 'airbridge' flights were coordinated between the UK and the Cayman Islands including extensions for Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Coordinated in conjunction with the FCDO and Governors' offices in relevant Overseas Territories, these flights were a testament to the effective working relationship built between the UK and the Overseas Territories as several of these 'airbridge' flights were over-subscribed and Overseas Territories' Representatives had to negotiate with one another regarding the selection of passenger seat allocations to balance urgent, competing travel cases.

### Examples of Individual Overseas Territories' COVID-19 Initiatives

As indicated in the above introduction the Overseas Territories are a diverse group of countries, with unique characteristics, culture, and challenges; geographically located in vastly different regions around the world.

Hence, there are instances where an Overseas Territory must take individual steps, and COVID-19 is no exception to this basic tenet.



## COLLABORATION ON THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Some examples of individual Overseas Territory COVID-19 actions are as follows (which is by no means an exhaustive list, but a sample demonstration).

### Tristan da Cunha

Tristan is the world's remotest settlement and the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened its isolation.

Such a community is particularly vulnerable to the introduction of any new virus as there is very limited immunity amongst the people. Therefore, even with common colds, epidemics occur locally which cause the hospitalisation of the most vulnerable. In addition, Tristan's population has a disproportionate number of older people, many of whom have underlying respiratory disease which places them in the most at-risk group.

Healthcare facilities on Tristan are limited and there are no ventilators, but the island was very grateful for special medical supplies arranged by the UK government and delivered by ship to the healthcare centre.

The Tristan Island Council decided in March 2020 to not allow passengers to disembark from visiting cruise ships. There were three cruise ships booked to call at Tristan during the 2020 tourist season: *Le Lyrial*, *Silver Cloud* and *Plancius*.

Further important decisions had to be made as the lifeline shipping link with Cape Town (2,787km to the east) was disrupted.

Essential supplies ran low in the island store, and rationing was introduced. Occasional ship calls were later reinstated, with strict quarantine measures imposed, to allow supplies to get through once again.

Subsistence farming means Tristan can sustain an isolated existence better than most, and the island has remained completely free of the virus. It is hoped that a small consignment of vaccine kindly provided by the UK government will finally allow this unique community to re-open its links with the wider world. Read more about Tristan da Cunha's experience on page 42.

***“COVID-19 is of course a crisis like no other. Normally, an Overseas Territory contends with a crisis that only affects or impacts itself alone, such as a natural disaster. However, COVID-19, being a global pandemic, has the unique effect of impacting the Overseas Territories collectively along with the UK in much the same way at roughly the same time.”***

### Bermuda

The Government of Bermuda closely monitored global COVID-19 developments through the World Health Organisation and with their regional public health partners – Public Health England, Pan-American Health Organisation and Caribbean Public Health Agency.

Upon the re-opening of the L.F. Wade International Airport in July 2020, the Bermuda Ministry of Health created detailed travel guidance and robust testing requirements for residents and visitors. They partnered with locations across the island to offer COVID-19 testing to the community.

To keep the members of the public informed of the COVID-19 cases on the island, the Ministry provided daily updates, press releases, and news briefings. On their website is a dedicated Coronavirus page which is frequently updated to provide the community with the latest information and guidance surrounding the pandemic.

To aid the Bermuda Government's ability to closely monitor the local developments of Coronavirus, the *WeHealth Bermuda* app was created. This app is free to download on smartphones and provides its users with anonymous COVID-19 exposure notifications. To support Bermuda's national vaccination strategy and its priority to prevent COVID-19 mortality and protect health care workers, essential workers and social care staff and systems, the Ministry of Health developed a three-phase Vaccine Allocation Strategy. This strategy was based on international best practices and gives priority to groups who are most at risk.

### St Helena

When South Africa's borders were closed, St Helena was no longer able to send patients to South Africa. Medical treatment was needed for critically ill St Helena patients in the UK which was a challenge. Repatriation/Charter flights were arranged between the UK and St Helena which enabled residents and key medical staff to travel. St Helena remains COVID-19 free and has robust quarantine processes in place to reduce the risk of community spread should an arrival tests positive for COVID-19.

### Anguilla

The Anguilla Ministry of Health and the Health Authority of Anguilla are extremely appreciative of the Government of the Republic of Cuba for responding favourably to their request for help. Cuba's support to the health sector in the Caribbean has a long and exemplary history and has benefitted numerous Caribbean citizens.

A Cuban Medical Brigade arrived on a direct chartered flight from Havana, Cuba and comprised an anaesthesiologist, a medical epidemiologist/infectious disease specialist, a medical doctor, an intensive care nurse and a registered nurse. Its deployment was made possible through hard work of the Governor, H.E. Tim Foy, and his staff along with the support of the FCDO and the British Ambassador in Cuba. The terms of their engagement are captured in an MoU executed between the Governments of Cuba and Anguilla which was signed by their respective Ministers of Health, which in Anguilla's case is the Hon. Evans McNiel Rogers. The Ministry of Health and Health Authority of Anguilla express their gratitude for this unwavering support.





Above: The visiting ships of the cruise industry are a major source of income in many Overseas Territories, however with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the travel industry has been severely affected.

### Falkland Islands

As borders closed across South America in response to COVID-19, the Falkland Islands became a hub for a significant humanitarian repatriation effort. The Government, working with the Governor's office, UK Embassies in South America, the local private sector, and British Forces South Atlantic Islands was able to assist the repatriation of 651 passengers (204 were UK Nationals) across four vessels. A further two vessels were assisted, totalling around 1,000 people that have returned home via the Islands. Over 24 nationalities were involved. In one example, more than 100 Australian doctors and dentists were helped. No doubt they are now making an important contribution to Australia's COVID-19 response. These repatriations were carried out under very strict conditions to ensure the protection of the civilian and military population of the Islands.

Separately, British Antarctic Survey (BAS) needed to bring home its non-wintering staff from the British Antarctic Territory. With their usual route through Chile closed, the Falklands has become a vital lifeline. BAS personnel returned to the UK by air on the South Atlantic Airbridge and by sea using chartered vessels.

These cruise ship and BAS repatriations are just one example of how the Falkland Islands unique location allowed the UK presence in the Islands to work with local government and private sector organisations to make a material contribution to the global response to COVID-19.

### Conclusion

The 2020 COVID-19 outbreak response by the Overseas Territories was unprecedented and a testament to ongoing innovative work that the Overseas Territories are leading with their own resources and steady leadership. The relationships built over UKOTA's 26 years culminated in a tour de force of countries able to utilise contacts effectively and expertise for the greater good. As a result, bonds of fellowship and trust have been positively entrenched and will long endure for the benefit of the people of the Overseas Territories and ultimately the community and democracy of each Overseas Territory.

For more information about the UKOTA please visit <https://ukota.org/>.





# THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN STUDYING ISLANDS AND SMALL STATES



The Islands and Small States Institute at the University of Malta promotes research on the economic, social, cultural, ecological and geographical aspects of islands and small states.

## Introduction and brief background

The Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI) promotes research and training on economic, social, cultural, ecological and geographical aspects of islands and small states. Based at the University of Malta, the Institute evolved from the Islands and Small States Programme which was set up in 1989 at the Foundation for International Studies, Valletta. In 1993, the Programme was restructured as an Institute with the principal aim of enabling it to offer academic programmes of study. During its thirty years of existence, the Islands and Small States Institute was instrumental in producing a considerable number of scientific publications on islands and small states, (some of which are internationally considered as seminal work), organised various international conferences and workshops, collaborated closely with many international organisations, and ran various academic programmes. Today, the Institute offers a suite of undergraduate and post-graduate programmes of study, among which the only Doctoral programme known to specialise in islands and small states studies.

The impact of the Islands and Small States Institute on the small island state literature is significant: there is hardly any noteworthy

publication on islands small states studies that does not cite work produced, or inspired, by academics from the University of Malta affiliated to the Institute. One of the main areas of the research work undertaken by the Institute is to answer the question as to why small states succeed economically, in spite of the constraints faced by these states in view of their small economic size and heft. The work of the Islands and Small States Institute contributed to the development of two key school of thoughts in this regard.

The first advocated, by Professor Godfrey Baldacchino, a scholar of international repute, is based on the argument that there are many advantages of being a small island state: such as a higher degree of social cohesion in the face of adversity, more flexibility in decision making, and governance facilitated due to the possibility that the government would have a 'helicopter' view of what's going on, including an innate tendency for entrepreneurship and resourcefulness. The strong and unavoidable reliance on export markets and international trade, rather than a weakness, is a tonic that obliges the actors in small economies to seek and exploit competitive niches (*Baldacchino and Bertram, 2009*).



**Stefano Moncada** is Director of the Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta.



**Godfrey Baldacchino** is Professor & Pro-Rector of the University of Malta and Malta's Ambassador for Islands & Small States.



**Lino Briguglio** is a Professor of Economics and former Director of the Islands and Small States Institute.



The Parliament of Malta.

The second, promoted by Professor Lino Briguglio, also a scholar of international repute, argues that there are major disadvantages associated with and inherent to small country size, notably a limited ability to benefit from economies of scale. Given that small states have no option but to rely on international trade due to their very small domestic markets and limited natural resource endowments, they are highly exposed to economic shocks, and therefore to economic vulnerability. This is exacerbated by a relatively high dependence on a very narrow range of exports, such as tourism, finance, sugar and bananas and an equally high dependence on strategic imports such as food, fuel and industrial supplies. According to this strand of research, many small states succeed economically in spite (rather than because) of their small economic size, with the success being attributed mainly to policy measures aimed at withstanding or recovering from such shocks. It is argued that small states that do not adopt such policy measures often end up as failed or almost failed states.

This prompted the adoption of the so-called Vulnerability and Resilience Framework, a concept that was referred to by many international organisations, particularly the Commonwealth Secretariat, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in their studies and policy reports relating to small states, to argue that these states need to be supported to enable them to strengthen

their economic governance for resilience- building purposes (Briguglio *et al.*, 2009).

This summary of the two stances would seem to indicate that the difference between the two is that the first assumes that islanders and small state citizens are innately resourceful, and that their success is due to an inherent sociocultural and political ecology, activated automatically among individuals, households and organisations; whereas the second stance assigns more importance to policy measures, suggesting that actions conducive to economic resilience need to be developed within a policy framework.

It needs to be said here that the first stance does not exclude the benefits of good governance and associated policy measures, and the second does not exclude the possibility that there is an innate resourcefulness in the citizens of islands and small states. The main difference would seem to be one of emphasis, with the first focusing more on the character of citizens on the ground and the second highlighting the need for appropriate policy measures by the relevant authorities.

These debates, together with the study of the nature and workings of small sovereign states (however defined) and non-sovereign territories, have been captured by a dedicated journal, hosted by the Islands and Small States Institute, the *Small States*



## THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN STUDYING ISLANDS AND SMALL STATES

and Territories, encouraging a truly pluri-disciplinary approach to the study of small jurisdictions.

The Islands and Small States Institute, in the past decade, has also been specialising in teaching and research in the areas of climate change, public health and tourism, dedicating specific research platforms to these three key dimensions for islands and small states.

### Climate Change Platform

The Climate Change Platform (CCP) is a collaborative project between different academic entities at the University of Malta. Its main objectives are to facilitate collaboration between academic entities, individual scholars, and students, interested in climate change issues, and to promote research and teaching initiatives relating to climate change. The Platform provides various facilities to encourage such collaboration and promotion of research, including, periodical issue of reports and press releases that provide a summary of climate change related activities by University entities; information about research and teaching activities, as well as participation in climate change related conferences by individual academics and entities, and promotion and show-casing of climate change related research. Some key research areas include climate change mitigation in the transportation sector, climate change adaptation of vulnerable coastal communities in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), energy saving and efficiency in buildings, climate change negotiations, and climatology and climate change impacts, always in the context of islands and small states.

The work of the Islands and Small States Institute has also been instrumental to support the diplomatic work of the Alliances of Small Island States (AOSIS), especially in its early days, assisting in the preparatory work prior to international negotiation meetings, and in assessing the results of the outcomes from a small island states perspective.

### Small States Health Platform

The Small States Health Platform (SSHP) within the Islands and Small States Institute aims to promote research on health systems in small states and to provide a depository for such research. The

work of this platform aims to provide additional scientific evidence to support the work of the World Health Organisation (WHO) related to policy capacity and governance of health systems in small states.

Through this initiative, the Islands and Small States Institute brings together the academic experience of researchers on health systems in small states and encourages a multidisciplinary approach to such research. In addition, the SSHP organises activities relating to such research, and supports the Islands and Small States Institute in its role as a WHO Collaborating Centre on Health Systems and Policies in Small States. Due to its notable track record of top-level policy research on resilience, economy, environment and health in small states, the Institute has been working with the WHO as a centre of excellence, especially to develop frameworks and policies for strengthening resilience in small state health systems.

Some of the recent activities carried out by the platform and the WHO Collaborating Centre refer, specifically, to small states and access to medicines, discussing the relatively higher costs incurred by small states and the possibility to promote a *small state alliance* to increase the bargaining power when purchasing medicines. Other initiatives range from tackling the issue of rare diseases in small states to addressing cancer policy from a small states perspective. The SSHP also offers specific training programmes, building on its unique areas of expertise, to other small states and generally to existing WHO networks.

Further initiatives of the SSHP include socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on small states. The disproportionately over-dependence of small states on few(er) resources, such as international tourism, and the challenges to maintain high quality in their health services, pose a serious threat to many small states.

This is even more of a concern if the World is about to enter a new era of pandemics (Ågerfalk *et al.*, 2020), which many small states in the medium and long-term might find difficult to sustain, both financially and from a societal point of view. This is why current work of the SSHP is looking at 'Planetary Health Approach to Recovery in Small States', prompting a profound rethink of how to invest in resilient health systems, and how to inform policy to identify 'win-win' measures to support climate change adaptation and healthy systems, especially in SIDS.

### Island Tourism Platform

The Island tourism platform (ITP) was set up in 2017 as a collaborative project between the Islands and Small States Institute and the Institute for Tourism Travel and Culture (ITTC), also at the University of Malta. Its mandate is to facilitate collaboration between these entities and individual academics interested in island tourism issues and to promote research and teaching initiatives relating to island tourism. The activities of the ITP range from specialized workshops and seminars to collaborative projects and publications, conducting research, among other fields, of over- and under-tourism, and sustainable tourism development. The ITP also cooperate with other organisations in research and dissemination of knowledge. In this regard, the ITP collaborates on an ongoing basis with the Observatory on Tourism in the European

***“The future of islands and small states studies is bright. There is a growing interest in this specific area, and many international actors are increasingly recognising the features that can hamper the economic development of islands and small states, including their economic vulnerability.”***





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The historic buildings of Valletta, capital of Malta.

Islands (OTIE), mostly in the organisation of a tourism summer-school.

Current and future research activities include various assessments of the COVID-19 crises on tourism development, investigating how, and to what degree, tourism in islands and small states is being impacted, is adapting, and whether innovation in the offer and the formulas of tourism services can provide new avenues to foster sustainable development, especially in the context of SIDS.

### Future research

The future of islands and small states studies is bright. There is a growing interest in this specific area, and many international actors are increasingly recognising the features that can hamper the economic development of islands and small states, including their economic vulnerability. However, it is also recognised that governance in these jurisdictions as well as their inhabitants' resourcefulness, cultural practices, traditional knowledge and skills (Nunn & Mimura, 1997), often enable them to build their resilience - especially in the face of external shocks.

The Islands and Small States Institute has initiated a series of cooperation agreements with many islands and small state universities and research centres, conducting collaborative research, offering training and consultancy in the interest of islands and small states. This has the potential of possibly fostering steadier and more effective cooperation than traditional ones, stemming from a common understanding of concepts like

*islandness* and *smallness*, often not completely accounted for by large international donors.

With its 12,000 students and long history, the University of Malta is the oldest and largest small state university in the world. Islands and Small States Institute takes pride in serving as UoM's focal point to advance an epistemology grounded in an appreciation of a specific geographical and political predicament, shared also by many other jurisdictions in the Commonwealth and the world beyond.

For further information please visit [www.um.edu.mt/issi](http://www.um.edu.mt/issi) or email [stefano.moncada@um.edu.mt](mailto:stefano.moncada@um.edu.mt).

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# RESEARCHING THE LEGAL ISSUES FACING THE WORLD'S SMALL STATES

The work of the Centre for Small States at Queen Mary University of London.



The small states of the world differ considerably in their geography, history, political structures, legal systems and wealth. Nevertheless, because of their size, small states face a set of common challenges including vulnerability to external economic impacts such as changing trade regimes and limited ability to diversify economic activity; limited public and private sector capacity, including the legal and judicial infrastructure; a need for regional co-operation and the impact of international law and globalisation. Many small states of the world are islands, and these are particularly susceptible to environmental impacts such as natural disasters and climate change. Small states can also be flexible, adaptable, sites of social development and innovation, and have an influence in the world disproportionate to their size.

We believe that the experiences of small states have important lessons for larger ones; that our understanding of the world is enriched by including small states in our discussions; and that as the number of small states increases as a proportion of the global community of states, more attention should be paid to them. Small states are not unimportant, nor should they be marginalised.

## About the Centre for Small States

The Centre for Small States was founded by Dr Caroline Morris of Queen Mary University of London in 2015. Hosted by the Department of Law, the aim of the Centre is to provide a platform for researchers interested in discussing and analysing the particular issues small states face, primarily through a legal but also through an interdisciplinary lens. Public and private law scholars with an interest in small states are all welcome at the Centre for Small States. We have a particular focus on the small states of the Commonwealth, given their common law heritage and experiences of colonialism. We have strong relationships with similar institutes in

Europe such as the Centre for Small States Studies at the University of Iceland, the Islands and Small States Institute at the University of Malta and the Small Jurisdictions Network at the University of Leuven.

## Our activities 2020-2021

Over the past five years, the Centre has arranged a variety of events attracting the interest of academics, policy-makers, civil servants, politicians and lawyers. As well as traditional academic conferences, we have hosted book launches, training events for law drafters, grant-writing workshops, expert lectures and panel discussions. Topics covered have included environmental law (particularly climate change, a pressing interest for many small states), international dispute resolution, international financial services, the impact of 'Brexit' for small states, independence and secession referendums for aspiring small states, law reform and law drafting, and the experience of small states in Europe. We have also participated in a network of European universities with an interest in small states to produce a free of charge suite of postgraduate syllabi on small states. The Centre was responsible for the international law syllabus.

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely restricted the possible activities of the Centre for Small States in the last year. In December 2020, we were pleased to host an online book launch of Margaretha Wewerinke-Singh and Evan Hamman (eds) *Environmental Law and Governance in the Pacific: Climate Change, Biodiversity and Communities*. We were delighted to be able to showcase this book, a unique collection which navigates the major environmental law and governance challenges of the present and future of the Pacific. Twenty-one Pacific Island countries and territories, including Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New



**Dr Caroline Morris** is a Reader in Public Law at Queen Mary University of London. Caroline's research focuses on democracy – both the representative and direct forms. She is an acknowledged expert on citizens' initiatives, and is a member of the International Advisory Board of IRI-Asia. Caroline founded the Centre for Small States, an initiative dedicated to research and analysis of the legal issues facing the world's small states.



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Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Samoa are featured as well as a broad range of themes, such as deep-sea mining, wetlands and mangroves, heritage, endangered species, human rights, and access to justice.

One silver lining of the pandemic is that, although the Centre is based in London, we were able to have contributors from as far afield as Hawai'i, Papua New Guinea, Australia and Fiji. The book launch itself sparked a discussion of the gendered implications of climate change in the Pacific - work is underway to follow this up.

### **Publications in the World of Small States Series**

The Centre for Small States has shared responsibility for the *World of Small States* series published by Springer. Seven titles have been published since 2017. 2020 saw the publication of Anne-Marie Brady and Baldur Thorhallsson (eds) *Small States and the New Security Environment*. This book examines the security, defence and foreign policy choices and challenges of small states in NATO and its small partner states in the new security environment. The main aim of the book is to analyse how these states are dealing with current and emerging security challenges and how they might better prepare for these challenges. A special focus is on 'new' security threats and solutions, such as drones and hybrid warfare.

Titles currently in production include volumes on climate change and SIDS, law making and law reform in small jurisdictions, comparative social security law in 20 small states, the harmonisation of insolvency laws in the Caribbean, and security relationships between small European states.

### **Selected publications by members of the Centre**

As well as the *World of Small States* series, individual members of the Centre have been busy publishing their own research into small states. Some recent examples of their work include:

- Stephen Allen, 'Self-determination, the Chagos Advisory Opinion and the Chagossians' (2020) 69(1) *International & Comparative Law Quarterly* 203-220
- Lino Briguglio et al (eds) *Handbook of Governance in Small States* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2021)
- Peter Edge, 'Lisvane's Legacy? Constitutional reform in the Isle of Man' *Legal Studies* 40 (1) (2020) pp.22-41
- Ian Kelman "Small Island Developing States Addressing Climate Change" in A Sapat (ed) *Handbook of Environmental Governance* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2021)
- Peter O'Brien (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Caribbean Constitutions*, (Oxford University Press Oxford, 2020).

### **An invitation**

The Centre for Small States is always happy to hear from anyone with an interest in small states. Whether it's to suggest an event, a project, to alert us to new writings or developments in the world of small states, or simply to say hello, we would be glad to make contact with you! You can email the Director at [c.morris@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:c.morris@qmul.ac.uk). You can also learn more about the Centre, its people and its activities via our website [www.centreforsmallstates.com](http://www.centreforsmallstates.com) or on Twitter @SmallStatesQM.



# WHAT CAN ISLAND STUDIES SHOW US ABOUT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY TODAY?

## The work of the Institute of Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island.



Located in Canada's smallest province, Prince Edward Island (population estimate in 2020: 159,625<sup>1</sup>), the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) is a research, education, and public policy institute based at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) in Charlottetown. Established in 1985, the Institute of Island Studies was the brainchild of Harry Baglole, from Summerside, Prince Edward Island, who saw a need for an organisation that was devoted to preserving and celebrating all that is special about his home island. With the help of an advisory board, he created its mandate: to encourage a deep knowledge, understanding, and expression of Prince Edward Island; to serve as a bridge between the University and Island communities; and to contribute to the formulation of public policy in Prince Edward Island.

But it was truly an inspired decision to include a fourth part to the mandate: to undertake and facilitate island studies research and education at local, national, and global scales. Looking at Prince Edward Island through the lens of other islands led to a vision that has carried on for nearly four decades: to be the leading centre of excellence on issues related to island studies scholarship, public policy, and engagement worldwide.

Over the years Island Studies has grown to become a constellation at UPEI, which includes an academic program (the world's only Master of Arts in Island Studies<sup>2</sup>), a publishing house (Island Studies Press<sup>3</sup>), a top-ranked academic journal (*Island Studies Journal*<sup>4</sup>), a Canada Research Chair in Island Studies (2003-2013: Dr. Godfrey Baldacchino<sup>5</sup>), and a prestigious UNESCO Chair in Island Studies and Sustainability<sup>6</sup> (2016-present: Dr. James Randall), which is one of only 28 chairs in Canada and 700 around the globe.

It is that outreach to other islands that has led to its international reputation as a leader in global Island Studies.

Over the last nearly four decades, Island Studies has grown from a relatively unknown discipline to become one of those in the front seat driving global issues. Although islands were critical in early exploration and played a major role in colonizing the globe, islands themselves were not the focus until recently. Yes, they were instrumental in the scientific work of Darwin and Wallace and the anthropological work of Margaret Mead; and yes, they have served as laboratories in nuclear testing and served as strategic locations in various wars. But more recently, as the idea of thinking *with* islands coalesced into the field we know today as Island Studies, islands have become bellwethers or canaries in the coal mine when it comes to understanding climate change, sea level rise, and sustainability. They play major roles in territorial disputes and understanding the impacts of globalisation. And in the midst of a global pandemic, we see now more than ever the role that islands play in understanding disease control.<sup>7</sup> In the age of the Anthropocene<sup>8</sup>, islands are rock stars.

The University of Prince Edward Island has been at the forefront in research, education, and public policy in the field of Island Studies. Prince Edward Island-focused research has ranged from land use, economic development, and population studies to issues of governance, migration, and Islanders' quality of life. Serving as an 'honest broker', the Institute of Island Studies takes an evidence-based approach to public policy research and strives to create safe spaces for open dialogue about issues concerning Islanders through its Lecture Series and Public Forums. In partnership with the Government of Prince Edward Island, the Institute of Island Studies is about to embark on a four-year study of



**Dr Laurie Brinklow** is a poet, editor, former book publisher, and nissologist from Canada. She is currently Interim Co-ordinator of the Master of Arts in Island Studies and Interim Chair of the Institute of Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island. She is Secretary of the International Small Island Studies Association, Treasurer of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, and is Iceland's Honorary Consul to Prince Edward Island. A passionate Islander, her PhD research explored people's attachment to islands.



indicators of well-being on PEI, looking at Islanders' attitudes toward aspects of life from health and education to citizen engagement, climate change, and social connections with neighbours.

Globally, through scholarship, conferences, and events, the Institute of Island Studies has contributed to the paradigm shift from perceiving islands as peripheral, insular, and vulnerable to becoming dynamic, resilient, and culturally confident geographies with control over their own destinies. Beginning with its first major conference in 1992, 'An Island Living', the Institute of Island Studies has played a major role in bringing together experts from around the globe to talk about how we might share "*lessons from the edge*" that would lead to more sustainable island communities.

In the 1990s, the North Atlantic Islands Programme brought together researchers from Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Cape Breton Island, Iceland, the Isle of Man, the Åland Islands, and the Faroes to share lessons and best practices in the areas of primary resource use, the knowledge economy, culture, and governance.<sup>9</sup> This led to the North Atlantic Forum,<sup>10</sup> a biennial conference that continues to travel back and forth across the North Atlantic; the next one will be held in Connemara, Ireland.

In recent years, a 2016 '*Climate Change and Islands Symposium*'<sup>11</sup> co-hosted with the UPEI Climate Lab

brought together scholars from Prince Edward Island, Canada, and internationally to talk about global climate change and islands, and what islands could do to mitigate and/or adapt to rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events.

In 2018, the Institute co-hosted with the University of Aruba '*Sharing Stories of Island Life, Governance and Global Engagement*',<sup>12</sup> a conference exploring small states and subnational island jurisdictions: their similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses, and, above all, their stories.

Currently, a three-year federally funded research project, '*Sustainable Island Futures*',<sup>13</sup> pairs six island states with six subnational island jurisdictions such as Prince Edward Island, Guam, and Réunion Island to continue those comparisons, focusing on sustainable island tourism and financial crises, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

And, finally, the *Annual Report on Global Islands* (2017-2020),<sup>14</sup> published in collaboration with China's Hainan Foreign Affairs Office, provides a summary and interpretation of the previous year's *21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road: Island Economic Cooperation*

***"Globally, through scholarship, conferences, and events, the Institute of Island Studies has contributed to the paradigm shift from perceiving islands as peripheral, insular, and vulnerable to becoming dynamic, resilient, and culturally confident geographies with control over their own destinies."***





## WHAT CAN ISLAND STUDIES SHOW US ABOUT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?



Above: Province House is the location for the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island and the Legislature has met there since 1847, making it Canada's second-oldest seat of government.

Forum sessions, updated descriptions and interpretations of economic development on global islands, and chapters on the major issues and topics associated with island economic development written by international and Chinese experts.

In the realm of education, the interdisciplinary Master of Arts in Island Studies program has graduated over 50 students and currently has another 50 enrolled in the thesis and course/work-study streams focusing on Island Tourism, Sustainable Island Communities, and International Relations and Island Public Policy. The program is proud to contribute to the legacy of Island Studies scholars who are part of the ever-expanding discourse in Island Studies, through research in such areas as sustainability, energy democracy, politics and governance, indigeneity, colonial and postcolonial legacies, migration, fisheries, agriculture, tourism, the blue-green economy, literature, islandness, and island identity, to name just a few.<sup>15</sup>

And, in public policy, over the last year, our attentions have turned to how islands worldwide are faring during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our COVID-19 Island Insights Series<sup>16</sup> is an initiative led by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG)<sup>17</sup> and the Institute of Island Studies, in collaboration with Island Innovation.<sup>18</sup> The Series aims to bring together critical assessments of how specific island governments around the world have performed in the pandemic and the extent to which

their recovery plans are able to promote long-term resilience and sustainability. The Institute is also pleased to be part of 'COVID-19 Economic Impacts and Recovery in the Northern Periphery & Arctic', a research project that will speak to a better post-pandemic world. Led by CoDeL,<sup>19</sup> based in the Western Isles of Scotland, this European-funded project (Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme and the European Union) looks at the economic impacts of COVID-19 on communities from Atlantic Canada to Finland.<sup>20</sup>

With nearly four decades behind us, and with Island Studies coming into its own, we are proud to be part of the growing world of 'nissology', which studies islands on their own terms. Increasingly, islands are being recognised for the significant role they play on the world's stage. As Prince Edward Island poet, Milton Acorn wrote about islands: "Growing up one's good training / For living in a country, on a planet."<sup>21</sup>

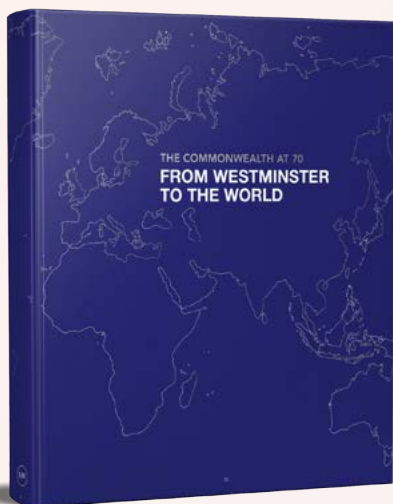
If you are interested in being part of the future of Island Studies, you can connect with the Institute of Island Studies on social media, by email [iis@upeil.ca](mailto:iis@upeil.ca) and by subscribing to our monthly newsletter. For these links and to learn more about the Institute of Island Studies, please visit our website: [www.islandstudies.com](http://www.islandstudies.com).

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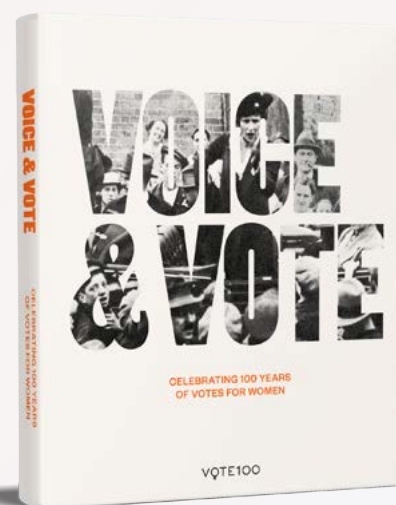


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# HONOURING OUR COMMITMENTS: WHY HALVING MALARIA ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH IS VITAL TO A HEALTHY FUTURE FOR ALL

## Role of Parliamentarians in overcoming one of the world's oldest and deadliest diseases.

Over the last twelve months, Commonwealth countries have been consumed by the threat of COVID-19 to our lives and livelihoods. This global pandemic has exposed how fragile our collective health security is, and the importance of unified action to restore it.

As the pandemic continues, there is a risk that malaria is forgotten despite its effects on large populations in the Commonwealth countries. To underline our commitment to strengthen health security, it more urgent than ever to defeat this preventable disease. Doing so will not only save lives, it will also free vital resources to help us better prepare to handle other pandemics.

As two Parliamentarians passionate about the cause of ending malaria, we invite you to consider the continuing fight against this disease and how Members of Parliament can play a role in 2021.

### **Deadly, preventable and of concern for all**

Malaria is one of humanity's oldest foes. The World Health Organisation estimated that more than 228 million cases were experienced in 2019, resulting in over 409,000 fatalities. Tragically, most of them were children under five. The cost is immense in lives lost, family wages spent on treatment, days of education missed and workforce productivity drained.

The disease thrives where there are gaps in basic health services, and the resulting fever cases mask outbreaks of other illnesses presenting with similar signs and symptoms, as well as putting a huge strain on underfunded health systems. It has been estimated that as many as 40% of fever cases go undiagnosed each year and many will be mistaken for malaria. With nearly half of Commonwealth countries still malaria endemic, our collective health security is at risk when new disease outbreaks can hide in plain sight.

Whilst there is no 'silver bullet' to eradicate malaria, we do have the tools at our disposal to suppress, control and ultimately eliminate it, country by country. Just look at the humble insecticide treated nets developed in recent years. Costing only a few dollars, they are responsible for the majority of malaria cases averted. Increased availability of affordable anti-malaria treatments has also contributed to the reduction of malaria cases. When we acknowledge how much we can achieve with so little investment, we must recognise that malaria is a deeply preventable illness.

The Commonwealth suffers a huge burden from malaria. Nine out of every ten Commonwealth citizens live in countries where they are at risk of malarial illness. And the burden is disproportionate. The Commonwealth suffers over half of all the



**Hon. Pauline Latham, OBE, MP** has represented the constituency of Mid Derbyshire in the UK since 2010. She is keenly interested in international development and health, and is a member of the UK

Parliament's International Development Committee and Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases.



**Dr Hon. Otiende Omollo, SC** is a Member of Parliament for Rarieda Constituency which is a malaria endemic area of Kenya. He suffered and overcame the debilitating effects of malaria in childhood. A lawyer by training, he builds

modest houses for widows and orphans in Rarieda each weekend with Parliamentary earnings. He was first elected to the Kenya National Assembly in 2017.



Above: A family in Ghana show how their insecticide treated net keeps them safe from malari. *Photo credit Malaria No More UK.*

world's cases and deaths from malaria each year yet has only a third of the population.

Progress on reducing malaria has been significant in recent decades. Since 2000, the combined efforts of malaria endemic countries, donor country partners, philanthropic and private sector groups saw 1.5 million cases and 7.6 million deaths averted. The creation of the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria was a vital component of this and has had resolute backing from high-income countries in the Commonwealth such as the UK from day one. Despite these great efforts, progress began to stall in the final years of the last decade.

#### **A historic Commonwealth commitment**

Faced with slowing progress, Commonwealth countries took part in the Malaria Summit London 2018 which featured over \$4.1 billion of commitments to tackle the disease. The next day, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2018, all Commonwealth leaders pledged to halve malaria by 2023. This

'Commonwealth malaria commitment' was a landmark moment for the Commonwealth. If achieved, it is estimated that over 600,000 lives could be saved.

At the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2021 in Kigali, Rwanda, leaders have asked for a progress report on the commitment. Data from the latest World Malaria report shows that progress so far is mixed.

We have seen good progress in some areas. By the end of 2019, almost one third of malaria endemic Commonwealth countries were on track to halve both their case incidence and mortality rates by 2023.

Despite this progress, the Commonwealth as a whole, is currently not on track to reach the commitment of halving the cases and malaria by 2023. Over 2 billion citizens of the Commonwealth remain at risk of malaria. There were more than 124 million cases of malaria in 2019 across Commonwealth countries and over two thirds of the cases occurred in just three countries – Mozambique, Nigeria, and Uganda.



## How to make progress happen

In pursuit of the commitment, malaria endemic countries across the Commonwealth are working hard to deliver faster, further and more innovatively before. To give just a few examples:

Zambia is working to engage sectors beyond health more effectively. Zambia's End Malaria Council was launched by H. E. President Lungu in March 2019 and aims to keep malaria high on the national agenda. The End Malaria Council and Fund convene senior leaders across all sectors (i.e. public, private, and civil society), to accelerate malaria control and elimination. Members make commitments on behalf of their respective sectors and hold each other accountable for fulfilling commitments.

As a country on the brink of elimination, Malaysia is on high alert for malaria and is doing everything possible to avoid outbreaks. When threatened by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Malaysia acted swiftly to add pandemic prevention measures to its malaria elimination activities. For example, it started house-to-house distribution of insecticide treated nets to maintain social distancing and avoid community gathering and added COVID-19 prevention precautions to its standard operating procedures for malaria screening among high-risk groups.

Finally, in Kenya, the government is renewing their focus to tackling malaria through investments at the Primary Health Care level, as part of its approach to expanding Universal Health Coverage. The approach includes a significant roll out of free bed-nets to around 16 million individuals across 27 counties, alongside indoor residual spraying, and educative materials on how citizens can protect themselves against the disease.

## Fighting malaria in the age of COVID-19

Beating back malaria was a challenge before the global pandemic. As COVID-19 emerged in early 2020, the move to national lockdowns and curtailing of essential services posed a real threat to the malaria campaign. Modelling from WHO and partners showed a worst-case scenario where malaria deaths could double in Africa, due to disruption of prevention and treatment programmes, diverted resources and overwhelmed health systems.

From early 2020 onwards, there were herculean efforts at global, regional and national levels to keep malaria programmes on track. At the national level, this required innovative thinking. As seen in Malaysia, and in many other countries, net distribution campaigns had to rapidly pivot their distribution models to the household level.

Cooperation between countries and partners was also key. Just as COVID-19 hit in early 2020, Namibia was facing a shortage of the artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) compound used to treat malaria. Working with the regional *Elimination 8* initiative in Southern Africa and the WHO, an emergency supplier of ACTs was found in South Africa and reprogramming of supplies was facilitated to support Namibia.

The disruption to international supply chains has also catalysed efforts to increase domestic production of essential malaria programme commodities such as bed nets and rapid diagnostic testing kits. Kenya's President Kenyatta, recently appointed Chairman of the *African Leaders Malaria Alliance*, is leading the charge in his own country, and across the continent, to reduce the

bottlenecks in producing more of these lifesaving tools closer to home.

Given the early projections, the achievement of so many countries in continuing their vital malaria programs is worthy of celebration. At the same time, we do not yet know the true picture of COVID-19's disruption to the fight against malaria. Whether from confusion between the symptoms of malaria and COVID-19, reluctance to visit facilities for fear of being exposed to the pandemic or reduced availability of staff to provide treatments, there is concern that malaria is going undiagnosed and could lead to a silent crisis. The indirect impact of the pandemic is equally concerning. For families who have lost their jobs because of measures to contain COVID-19, the choice between paying for malaria medicines and feeding their children is stark.

Across the Commonwealth, governments and civil society actors have worked hard to communicate that anyone with malaria illness should seek treatment even during the pandemic crisis. As Parliamentarians, we can actively dispel myths about the two diseases, and ensure that everything possible is done to keep malaria treatment facilities open.

## How Kigali 2021 can deliver a more health secure Commonwealth

Commonwealth leaders will hopefully meet in June this year at their postponed CHOGM in Kigali, Rwanda. As Rwanda assumes the mantle of Chair-in-office for the Commonwealth, leaders will inevitably turn their focus on how we can build back from the pandemic.

To capitalise on CHOGM, the Government of Rwanda will also host the Kigali Summit on Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs). The event will bring together malaria-endemic country leaders and donor counterparts, as well as major partners from corporate, philanthropic, scientific, and civil society communities.

The summit and CHOGM present a golden opportunity to think holistically about our collective health security following the experience of COVID-19. In doing so, investments in malaria programming should not be viewed as standalone initiatives. They are critical components of the Commonwealth's health security infrastructure.

Improving health security across the Commonwealth is reliant on us detecting outbreaks of new infectious diseases early. To do this, we need to distinguish between existing, treatable illnesses like malaria, and new threats like we have seen with COVID-19. The robust and cost-effective programmes for preventing, detecting and treating malaria are key to this. To give just one example, everyday thousands of community health workers are hard at work testing, tracking and signposting patients for malaria treatment. Investments made in malaria such as these are scalable and capable of delivering a 'win-win' result, preventing malarial illness whilst watching out for new diseases.

In June, Commonwealth leaders can signal the importance of this by a renewed commitment to the Commonwealth's pledge of halving malaria by 2023. Ahead of the CHOGM and Kigali summit, Parliamentarians can play their role by encouraging their national governments to deliver ambitious commitments at the summit and re-energise their promise made in 2018 to halve malaria. For example, in Kenya, this will mean working through the Parliament's



Image credit: Malaria No More UK.

**His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales spoke at the London Malaria Summit in 2018 where he said: *“I have always firmly believed that the Commonwealth is uniquely placed to take on such pressing global challenges, for our shared values, history and culture provide us with a remarkable and potent platform for transformative action.”***

Health and Environment Committee to highlight the malaria prevention and treatment gaps and encourage sufficient fiscal resource allocation.

#### **Getting back on track**

At the mid-point of the Commonwealth commitment, there is much still to do if we are to halve malaria by 2023. And the last year has shown that our health systems are only as strong as their weakest links. The forthcoming CHOGM and Kigali summit on malaria and NTDs are an important opportunity for Commonwealth leaders to address the dual challenges of malaria and pandemic preparedness head on.

As Parliamentarians, we must use our voice to urge our leaders to live up to the promise made in London just three years ago. For it is not just the health of someone suffering from malaria that is at stake here, it is our collective security as a Commonwealth of nations.

To find out more visit <https://malariaenomore.org.uk/>.



# SOCIALLY DISTANT BUT DEMOCRATICALLY TOGETHER: TOWARDS A VIRTUAL PARLIAMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

## Introduction

Over the past century, many millions of people have died defending traditional western institutions and our democratic way of life. Through two world wars, Parliaments around the globe ensured they continued to operate.

As people and organisations around the world now grapple with the increasing confines of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that our democracy continues to advocate for the interests of the people through the principal mechanism of Parliament. We should not cripple a central pillar of democracy.

A Member of a Parliament has a unique role in representing the people and making laws in the public interest. Notwithstanding constitutional and logistical challenges, a virtual Parliament should be pursued in New South Wales, as is occurring elsewhere.

Indeed, faced with the global pandemic, many jurisdictions have moved to partial or even fully digitised methods for convening parliamentary sessions and continuing the work of committees, including Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), Wales, New Zealand, Canada, the European Union (EU), Brazil and the Maldives.

## Basic principle: the importance of Parliament in democracy

Parliament is obviously central to the operation of democracy. The legislature must be able to hold the executive to account in accordance with the principle of responsible government. Despite adverse circumstances, the Parliament should continue to make and review laws, which are implemented, enforced, interpreted and otherwise applied by other branches of government.

At the beginning of each sitting day, Members of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly pray that their deliberations may be directed '*to the true welfare of Australia and the people of New South Wales*'. Each Member has a duty to represent those who

have elected them in the business of making and debating laws. This principal purpose can be achieved in an environment that encourages robust and orderly debate amongst Members of all backgrounds and political persuasions.

Traditionally, Members from New South Wales have physically gathered together to achieve this purpose in chambers located within the Parliament House on Macquarie Street, Sydney. They address various matters, ranging from laws that affect the State, questions about the actions of government, to community issues in local electorates. Laws are passed when votes are cast from the government and opposition benches. Many common terms in parliamentary parlance refer to the physicality of Parliament, such as the chamber, house, frontbench, backbench, crossbench, crossing the floor, and locking the doors.

In the rich vein of parliamentary tradition, the concrete experience of Parliament has significant value and we should not abandon it without compelling reason.

## Extraordinary times: Parliament in pandemic

By all accounts, the COVID-19 pandemic qualifies as sufficient reason to alter the usual methods of Parliament. At the time of writing this paper (1 May 2020), more than 3.1 million people had contracted COVID-19 and the virus had killed over 217,000 people.<sup>1</sup> With no vaccine or cure available in the near future, many governments have responded to the developing crisis by closing borders and largely shutting down economies to stop the spread of the disease. In New South Wales alone, over 3,000 people have contracted Coronavirus and dozens have died.<sup>2</sup> People have been prevented from leaving their residences without a reasonable excuse, with maximum penalties of up to \$11,000 or imprisonment for six months.<sup>3</sup>



**Hon. Jonathan O'Dea MP** is the Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly and the Member for Davidson in northern Sydney. He was first elected in 2007 and became Speaker in 2019. He has held a number of parliamentary roles including Chair of the Public Accounts Committee and Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and Treasurer. Prior to his election to Parliament, he was a Councillor for North Sydney Council.





The Parliament of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia.

As a result of the pandemic, 24 March 2020 was unique in the history of the New South Wales Parliament. The Legislative Assembly sat with a sparsity of Members in the chamber, spaced more than 1.5 metres apart with at least four metres square of space per person, to meet social distancing requirements. Over 50 of the usual 93 Members were absent from the precinct, a situation enabled by pre-negotiated pairing arrangements. The Leader of the House moved new sessional orders and a suspension of Standing Orders that allowed the House to only consider emergency Bills instead of its usual routine of business.

The House passed three important Bills: COVID-19 Legislation Amendment (Emergency Measures) Bill 2020; Treasury Legislation Amendment (COVID-19) Bill 2020; and Better Regulation and Customer Service Legislation Amendment (Bushfire Relief) Bill 2020. The sitting day was livestreamed on *Facebook* Live and the parliamentary website for the benefit of the public as well as Members and staff working from their electorate offices.

The House also resolved that the next sitting day would be 15 September 2020, with all Members allowed a leave of absence from 25 March until 15 September. Under the new Sessional Order 47A, the next scheduled sitting day could be varied or postponed in the public interest. Where the Government requests that the date of the next sitting be varied and the Speaker is satisfied it is in the public interest, he is to communicate the new sitting date and time to Members. The new sessional orders give the House greater flexibility to navigate the extraordinary circumstances presented by the pandemic, subject to the public interest test.

This recall safeguard ensures that the House can continue to meet, as necessary in the public interest, in order to pass important legislation. It is a positive measure that promotes transparency and accountability during the COVID-19 crisis. Under these procedures, the Legislative Assembly has been recalled to sit on 12 May 2020 to pass urgent legislation related to the crisis. Similar procedures have been followed in the New South Wales Legislative Council, which has also been recalled to sit on 12 May 2020. However, New South Wales Parliament House remains closed to the public, as it has been since 30 March 2020.

This is not the first time that a global pandemic has conspired to pause parliamentary proceedings in New South Wales. The 1918 flu pandemic (also known as the Spanish Flu) caused many Parliaments to have long breaks in sitting, including the Queensland Parliament (7 November 1918 to 5 August 1919), Victorian Parliament (20 December 1918 to 8 July 1919), and the Australian Federal Parliament (20 December 2018 to 25 June 2019).

In New South Wales, His Excellency Sir Walter Davidson KCMG, KStJ, the Governor of New South Wales, prorogued the Parliament by Proclamation, ultimately from 11 December 1918 to 18 August 1919. On 19 August 1919, the Governor opened the Parliament with the following words in the Legislative Council: *“The recent epidemic of influenza was the cause of profound distress throughout the State, and of deep anxiety to my advisers. Acting under the highest professional advice the Government of the State took all necessary steps for combating the plague.”*



## SOCIALLY DISTANT BUT DEMOCRATICALLY TOGETHER

A century later, global leaders echo similar sentiments about the COVID-19 pandemic while they contend with complex challenges to public health and civic life that would be all too familiar to our democratic forebears.

What the leaders could not have known in 1919 are the rapid advances in telecommunication technologies that enable meeting in 2020 via videoconference, with parliamentary proceedings potentially streamed live to a global audience.

### **A way forward: Virtual Parliament in New South Wales**

With the technologies available to the New South Wales Parliament, why not consider how to stand together in democratic solidarity during this socially distanced time? It is a privilege that Members can represent their communities and advocate on their behalf, and this essential role should not be undermined by suspending Parliament during a crisis.

A virtual Parliament would help uphold robust democracy in New South Wales, as courts continue to operate under COVID-19 restrictions and executive government gains significant powers to impose restrictions on citizens.

It is in the public interest that the New South Wales Parliament continues to sit during each scheduled sitting week, including virtually when it is otherwise not feasible. Indeed, the emergence of the vile COVID-19 pandemic prompts an obligation to seriously consider implementing alternative methods of meeting.

Modern technology allows each person in an Assembly or meeting to see each other via videoconference and to see and potentially hear any comments being made in real time via video, audio and/or chat functions. The Speaker of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly would continue to uphold order in the House, and act as a discussion moderator. For example, given the technology constraints, all microphones might be muted by default until a Member is called upon by the Speaker, so that one person could be heard at a time.

***“With the technologies available to the New South Wales Parliament, why not consider how to stand together in democratic solidarity during this socially distanced time? It is a privilege that Members can represent their communities and advocate on their behalf, and this essential role should not be undermined by suspending Parliament during a crisis.”***

Even if the Parliament sat with a modified routine of business, restricted hours and adapted procedures, the symbolism of Parliament continuing to fulfil its role is powerfully vital in such exceptional times.

Parliament sitting virtually enables the Government to pass any emergency or urgent legislation without the administrative burden and public health risk of recalling Members for a special physical sitting of Parliament. The Opposition also retains the opportunity to ask challenging questions and hold the Government to account for its actions.

Question Time is the prime example of democratic dialogue at work. As a central feature of parliamentary business, having Question Time at least one day each sitting week conveys the enduring value of parliamentary debate and deliberation to the public.

In her report, *How Could a Virtual Parliament Work?*, Dr Hannah White, Deputy Director of the Institute of Government and former UK House of Commons Clerk, underscores the significant role of the House of Commons in the UK’s constitutional democracy: *“The government needs to be able to pass legislation, and MPs and peers need to be able to hold ministers to account for the decisions they are making on behalf of citizens. Crucially, Parliament needs to be seen by the public to be doing these things .... Perhaps most fundamentally of all, the House of Commons needs to be capable of sitting and voting to demonstrate its confidence in the government, were that ever to be called into question. That is why innovations that will enable Parliament to continue sitting, even if remotely, and operating as normally as possible are so important.”*<sup>4</sup>

In this respect, the historically derivative Parliament of New South Wales has the same prerogative as the UK House of Commons. The reality is that convening Parliament through videoconference or teleconference is comparable to assembling in person. While some shortcomings of a virtual meeting must be acknowledged, it is surely a better alternative than not meeting at all.

If it were adopted by the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, a virtual Parliament would testify to Members’ ongoing commitment to their constituents and determination to preserve democratic debate. Some Members have communicated support for the House to consider a virtual Parliament, and there have been relevant exchanges with the Premier’s office.

As the independent and impartial representative of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, the Speaker directed the staff of the Legislative Assembly and Department of Parliamentary Services to prepare possible parliamentary practices and procedures necessary to support a virtual sitting of Parliament. Groundwork has also been laid for the possibility of remote or electronic voting, with the Legislative Assembly recently introducing a new e-divisions application whereby the Whips use devices to electronically tally and verify Members’ votes. These are then seamlessly transferred to parliamentary records.

Some Parliamentary Committees, comprised of Members from across party lines, have continued their work with remote participation. Standing Order 295(2) allows Committee proceedings by electronic communication so long as there is a quorum of Members, and Members and witnesses are able to speak and hear each other contemporaneously.





The interior of the Legislative Assembly Chamber at the Parliament of New South Wales.

From the last term of Parliament, Committee chairs have held videoconference meetings, virtual public hearings and even divisions by teleconference with the support of Committee staff. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, 28 Committees continue to be active across 38 inquiries. Many Committees have opted for deliberative meetings via teleconference and videoconference to date, including the Committees for Investment, Industry and Regional Development, Staysafe (Road Safety), Community Services, Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission and Legislation Review.

A manual for virtual committee proceedings is now available to Members and staff to guide them in transitioning to virtual meetings.

### International jurisdictions

From some of the oldest constitutional democracies boasting a rich tableaux of parliamentary traditions to more modern nation-states adopting innovative methods, many Parliaments across the globe are investigating the possibilities of virtual Parliament sittings. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has produced a '*CPA Toolkit for Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures on the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic and Delivering Parliamentary*

*Democracy*' to guide its 180 Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures in navigating practice and procedure.

With such a variety of democratic histories and social contexts, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to a virtual Parliament and it is, however, expedient to compare the ongoing work of international Parliaments to glean what wisdom can be shared across continents.

### Legal reform: Constitutional challenges

One of the main considerations regarding a virtual Parliament in New South Wales is fundamental to our democracy - namely, the *Constitution Act 1902 (New South Wales)*. The New South Wales Constitution requires that Members assemble 'together' and that voting is carried out by those who are 'present', which casts some doubt on the current legal validity of virtual proceedings.

In her examination of the federal situation in Australia, constitutional expert Anne Twomey has argued that while it might have been drafted in the 1800s, the Commonwealth of Australia's Constitution is commonly interpreted to accommodate changes in technology, and therefore 'there appears no reason why attendance may not, with the permission of the House, be by electronic means'.





## SOCIALLY DISTANT BUT DEMOCRATICALLY TOGETHER

The New South Wales Constitution appears even more accommodating in one respect. Section 10 enables the Governor to fix the time and place for holding every Session of the Legislative Council and Assembly. Provided they give sufficient notice, the Governor 'may change or vary such time or place as ... judge[d] advisable and most consistent with general convenience and the public welfare, giving sufficient notice thereof'.

In the corporate world, technology has so permeated the practices of board meetings that it is provided for in the governing legislation. Section 248D of the Corporations Act indicates that Board directors may meet using any technology consented to by all directors. Sections 249S, 252Q and 601JH of the Act state that Members of Committees and compliance schemes may meet using any technology that gives Members as a whole a reasonable opportunity to participate. New South Wales law governing meetings of Body Corporates similarly permits a voter to be present in person, by proxy or by written or electronic voting paper.

One can therefore easily argue that there is no need for a distinction between being 'present' in person as opposed to by videoconferencing or otherwise. It can likewise be argued that there are now different forms of legitimate 'gatherings' or 'assemblies' – both physical and electronic.

While the framers of our New South Wales Constitution would not have foreshadowed an assembly by videoconference, terms such as 'present' and 'together' need to be given wider definition and scope today. Such an interpretation is consistent with an 'ordinary, everyday meaning' that has evolved over time through to the modern, electronic age.

However, a more conservative interpretation is that introducing a move to a virtual Parliament would require amendments to the *New South Wales Constitution Act*. As the relevant provisions are not entrenched, the required amendments would appear to be relatively straightforward. They could facilitate all Members' ability to fully participate in proceedings. There is also scope to confirm the application of parliamentary privilege to virtual proceedings in any such amendments.

### Technology and logistics

Typically, Parliaments have not enjoyed a reputation for championing innovative technologies. However, progress is being made to modernise Parliaments to encourage digital engagement with Members, staff and the public. The *World e-Parliament Report* 2018 noted that:

- Plenary rooms were equipped for video conferencing in 22% of Parliaments;
- Committee rooms were equipped for video conferencing in 38% of Parliaments;
- 67% of Parliaments used some form of electronic voting methods in the plenary chamber, either exclusively or together with manual voting methods; and
- Only two Parliaments, Paraguay and Spain, had systems enabling Members to vote remotely in a plenary session.<sup>5</sup>

Extemporaneous addresses and robust debate are key features of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, affectionately known by many as 'The Bear Pit'. Moving to a virtual Parliament would undoubtedly dampen free-spirited debate to a degree,

as it is difficult to see how spontaneous questions, remarks and points of order could be made by Members without confusing and impractically slowing down virtual proceedings.

While a more ordered debate, with fewer interjections, might lead to a longer-term improvement in the standards of behaviour of Members, that is not the aim of a virtual Parliament. In examining the pitfalls of migrating to a purely digital solution in the UK, Greg Power noted: *"Although the bear-pit atmosphere of the Commons is often rightly derided as creating more heat than light, the sheer presence of the place when fully-occupied has a concentrating effect on ministers. And a ministerial ability to read the mood of the place and to hold the floor of the chamber – or not – has been a key factor in determining the outcome of numerous critical debates ...."*<sup>6</sup>

Despite this, during a time of unprecedented Government action in response to a once-in-a-generation pandemic, a virtual debate offering Members and the public opportunities for Government scrutiny certainly trumps no parliamentary debate at all.

### Conclusion

Today our citizens participate in virtual meetings, virtual church services, virtual social activities and other forms of virtual assemblies where people are very much present together and engaging with each other in the digital sphere. So why not have a virtual New South Wales Parliament?

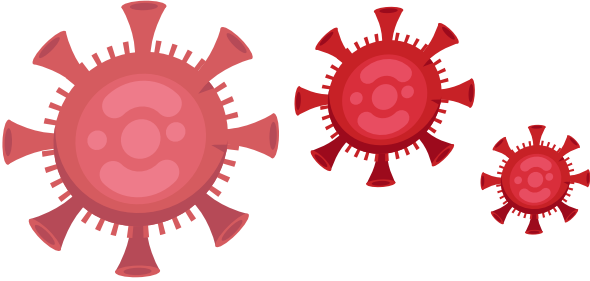
The New South Wales Parliament should amend the *Constitution Act* to clearly enable this to occur. It should also introduce sessional orders that facilitate electronic attendance of Members, including for Question Time.

A virtual Parliament has been achieved in many other jurisdictions around the world, and New South Wales should stand alongside other jurisdictions determined to keep the wheels of democracy fully turning in these uncertain times. Introducing a virtual Parliament option in New South Wales would assure citizens of solid representation and accountability in Parliament during a time of crisis. It is time to innovatively pursue a virtual Parliament that reinforces public trust in the New South Wales Parliament and democracy.

This article is an extract of a longer paper finalised on 1 May 2020 and published in the *Australian Parliamentary Review*, the Journal of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group (Autumn 2020, Vol 34 No 2). See: [https://www.aspg.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/APR\\_Spring\\_2019\\_Autumn\\_2020\\_Vol\\_34\\_No\\_2.pdf](https://www.aspg.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/APR_Spring_2019_Autumn_2020_Vol_34_No_2.pdf)

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# CPA TOOLKIT FOR COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTS ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND DELIVERING PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

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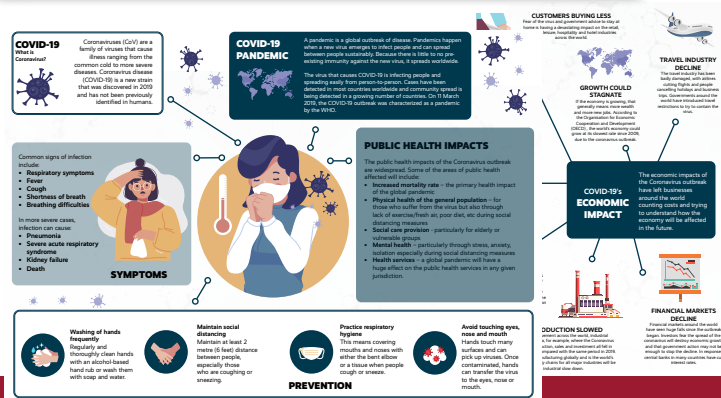
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## COVID-19

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The outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and its spread to at least 180 countries has consequently plunged many Parliaments and Legislatures across the world into a state of emergency. Commonwealth Parliaments and Parliamentarians are grappling with many different issues both to implement the emergency health measures during this global pandemic while at the same time looking at new ways to conduct debates, scrutinise and pass legislation, hold parliamentary committees and question the actions of their governments.

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# JUDAISM IN THE COMMONWEALTH

This article examines the work of the Commonwealth Jewish Council.

Although the Commonwealth Jewish Council was only formally accredited to the Commonwealth just a little over three years ago, it has actually been in existence for nearly four decades. It came into being as a fairly loose alliance of Jewish community leaders and activists from 16 Commonwealth countries and strove to develop links between sometimes very small and widely scattered Jewish communities around the world.

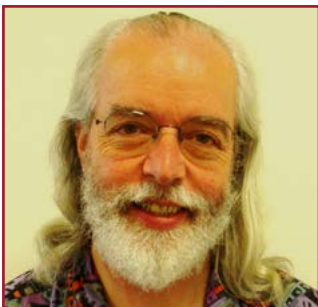
Under refreshed leadership from 2015, the Commonwealth Jewish Council now includes Jewish communities from about 40 countries and territories in the Commonwealth, ranging from large communities numbered in hundreds of thousands to tiny outposts containing just a few tens of Jews. As far as we know, some countries have no Jews living there, most particularly most of the Pacific island nations, but, not least due to the pressures of Jewish history, there seem to be Jews pretty well everywhere else. The Commonwealth Jewish Council is organised into four global regions, centred on the four largest Jewish communities in the Commonwealth, and all led by our President, Lord Mendelsohn, who sits in London and is a Labour peer in the UK House of Lords.

Any lazy stereotypes of Jews collapse in the face of Commonwealth reality. For example, do you think that someone can look 'typically Jewish'? Give it up! There are Black Jewish communities, for example, in Uganda, living their lives in regular African rural communities and there are Oriental Jews helping to make up the diverse Jewish community in Singapore. Jews in Canada are both Francophone and Anglophone and the Jews of

India are in many ways indistinguishable from their non-Jewish neighbours. Some Jews are religious, and in a whole variety of ways. Others are secular and identify as Jews ethnically and culturally. The Commonwealth Jewish Council brings them all together.

If you have a Jewish community in your country of any size, you will know the eager part that Jews play in civic life. Historically, as soon as Jews have been allowed equal rights they have stepped up to the plate, culturally, academically, economically, scientifically and politically. Jews can be found across the political spectrum from Right to Left and Jews have received about 20% of all the Nobel prizes awarded over the years – even though we make up only about 0.2% of the world's population.

When the Commonwealth Jewish Council finally achieved accreditation in 2018 and joined the other 70 or so accredited organisations, we were surprised to discover that we were one of only two organisations with any association with a religion (the other being Muslim Aid). We have of course cultivated rich fraternal relationships with them, but their focus is more specific than ours and we are concerned that the Commonwealth and its machinery does not seem to attend to the phenomenon of religious communities at all. This is remarkable given the Commonwealth's interest in the power and value of civil society. There can be few more potent forces and structures than religious communities and yet, other than one initiative over a year ago, there appears to have been no recognition or invitation to religious communities to play



**Clive Lawton, OBE** is currently CEO of the Commonwealth Jewish Council, a magistrate on the Bristol Bench in the west of England and an independent tribunal Chair for the National Health Service. He has held many roles including high school principal, Chief Examiner, advisor to the UK Home Office on Race Equality issues, Chair of a hospital board and independent member of the Metropolitan Police Authority. He works worldwide on educational development, has had over a dozen books published and has broadcast on moral and ethical issues on BBC radio.





***“The Commonwealth Jewish Council wants to be a constructive and valuable part of the Commonwealth family. We are determined to engage with issues far beyond the boundaries of Jewish direct concerns or interests, for example, with our climate change campaign or our founding of the Inter-religious Commonwealth Youth Alliance.”***

their part in Commonwealth circles, other than perhaps for the annual Commonwealth Day service at Westminster Abbey.

In response to this lacuna, one of our recent initiatives has been to create the Inter-Religious Commonwealth Youth Alliance (IRCYA). This alliance has drawn together over a hundred young people from a significant variety of countries and religions – and the number continues to grow – to work together on issues that the participating young people themselves identify as requiring attention. The Commonwealth Jewish Council does not want to own or control this group, just to facilitate its activity. (My metaphor to its leaders has been that we see ourselves as the Alliance’s midwife, and would be happy to be its wet-nurse.) Our only condition is that nothing happens without people from at least two countries and two religions, and so far that seems to be working. (If readers know of young people who might want to be involved in the IRCYA, please do put them in touch with us.)

It’s early days but we’re proud of what it’s achieved so far. The Jewish world has a very rich heritage of active youth movements and student organisations which are peer-led and activist. We wanted to share that expertise and experience and did not want IRCYA to be a talking shop where, for example, we simply ask young people to tell us what they think or care about. We wanted to challenge them to do stuff – and, wonderfully, they are!

A central campaign of ours is called ‘Small Islands: Big Challenges’. It addresses the climate challenges that small island nations in particular face. Not only do we urge our Jewish communities to get behind campaigns to encourage governments and ordinary people to address the issues, but we have, for example, recently written to the heads of international financial institutions and structures to add our voice to the growing pressure to lift the intolerable load of debt, compounded by the twin pressures of climate impact and COVID-19 that has fallen on several otherwise well led and responsibly managed countries. We know our letter will not make everyone suddenly sit up and change overnight, but as Jews we know what it is like to be a small minority in the world and to feel friendless. We will not stand by where there appears to us to be an injustice taking place. Furthermore, our hearts go out in particular to the Pacific Island nations who face

the imminent disappearance of their homelands. Jews know all too well what it is like to live without a homeland and we would not wish it on anyone.

Given the long-standing special interest and respect Jews have for trees (for example, Israel was one of only a tiny handful of countries to end the 20<sup>th</sup> century with more trees than it started the century with,) we have successfully supported Jewish communities in encouraging their governments to join in with the wonderful Queen’s Commonwealth Canopy project. Jews even have an annual festival called ‘The New Year for Trees’. And this year, noting the rare coincidence of that festival falling on International Holocaust Memorial Day at the end of January, a notable number of our members, where restrictions allowed, have held ceremonies in public places together with civic authorities to plant six trees in memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Our climate campaign is obviously of direct interest to our members in, say, Barbados or Jamaica, but we will equally care about Fiji or Vanuatu where, so far as we know, we have no Jewish presence. This is not about looking after Jews. It is about standing up for right.

Our newly formed Commonwealth Jewish Women’s Network demonstrates this kind of wider interest too. At their inaugural meeting, they were honoured to be addressed by the Commonwealth Secretary-General herself, but the other two speakers were an Israeli woman with an unrivalled record in development work and a representative of the Uyghur people. Of course, Uyghurs are neither Jews nor from the Commonwealth, but we insist that all issues of righteousness and justice should be on our agenda and: we also seek to ensure they are on the agenda of the Commonwealth too.

In a short article there is insufficient room to outline all our activities and concerns, but I will finish with one more. Many





readers will be familiar with the working definition of anti-Semitism devised by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). It has become widely known as 'the IHRA Definition'. Not only have about thirty countries and governments adopted it as their working definition, a host of municipalities, universities, political parties, trade unions and even the Football Association and the Premiership in the UK have done the same. More and more countries and organisations have recognised its value. Though it is not in itself a legislative tool, it does help in the recognition and pursuit of anti-Semitism when it manifests itself.

Obviously, Jews have an interest in combatting anti-Semitism, but we hope we are not alone in this. One of the virtues of the IHRA definition is that it was not devised by Jews. IHRA is an alliance of governments, civil servants and academics and so one can be confident that the definition is robust and not self-seeking. Producing similar definitions of other kinds of discrimination would have much value, but, if one wanted to do it effectively, each would have to be done by disinterested parties. For example, by such a rule, a definition of sex discrimination should not be written exclusively by women or predominantly by activist feminists.

As for anti-Semitism, sadly all the evidence is that it can often thrive more effectively where people cannot double-check what they read on the web against their local reality. If you have Jewish friends and neighbours, then you might be more immune to nonsense told about Jews than if you do not. With or without

Jews locally, anti-Semitism is in the air and growing. And Holocaust awareness appears not to be enough to challenge it.

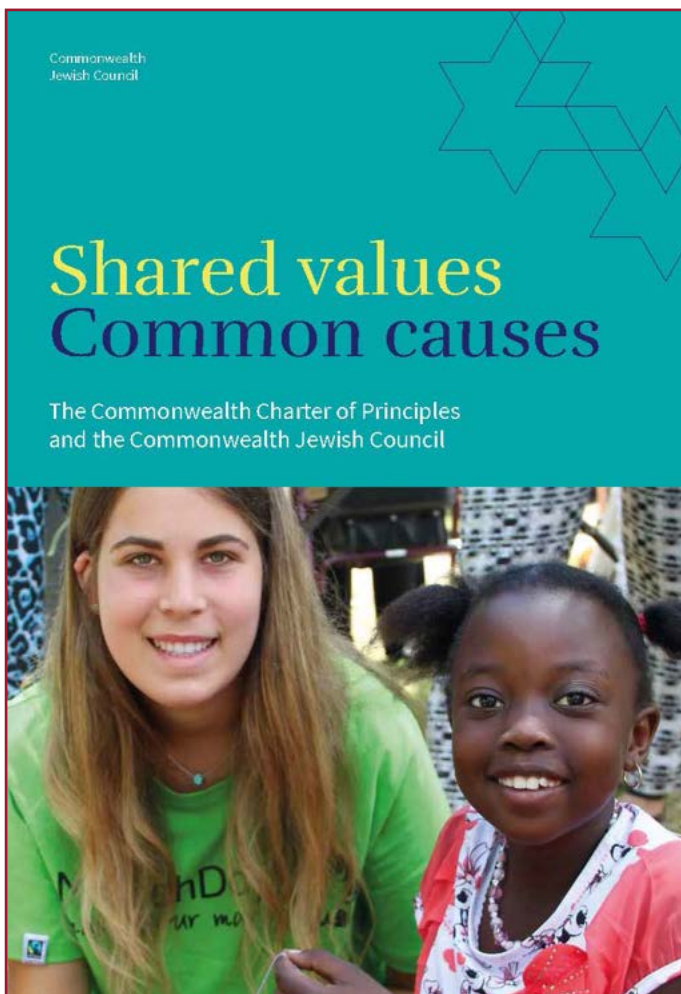
So, it is no surprise that we in the Commonwealth Jewish Council believe that all governments, *especially* those with small or no Jewish communities at all, should adopt this definition and thus have a tool whereby anti-Semitism can be confronted. And while this would be good for the Jews, we are convinced that it would be good for the world too. Anti-Semitism has sometimes been called 'the longest hatred' and it is resilient and adaptable. It used to be based on religious differences. Then it was based on economic accusations, then it became racially biased. Now often it seems to be political accusations that justify anti-Semitism. That is why Holocaust education or existing assertions against anti-Semitism are not enough. An anti-Semite might say, *'Yes, that was terrible, but nowadays, I oppose Jews for these other reasons so it's different'*. Just a glance at its growth around the world will show that it is usually to be found somewhere within every conspiracy theory, every extremism and almost every piece of nonsense peddled by demagogues and autocrats.

Historically, and, I would argue still, anti-Semitism is the litmus paper test for the health of a society. If a society acts against anti-Semitism, it is almost certainly on the right track more generally. If it tolerates anti-Semitism, it is probably sick at its heart, even if it is not yet evident.

So we want to see every country of the Commonwealth adopt the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism – because you can't combat something you can't recognise or define and, as I've indicated above, anti-Semitism keeps changing and adapting, a bit like the Coronavirus, so that just when you think you've got it beat, it pops up slightly adapted to give more grief. That is the reason why IHRA insists the working definition is not complete without its accompanying examples. Without those it would prove impossible for anyone to stand against the clever mutations anti-Semitism adopts to outwit anti-racists or anti-discriminatory legislation and rules.

Overall then, the Commonwealth Jewish Council wants to be a constructive and valuable part of the Commonwealth family. We are determined to engage with issues far beyond the boundaries of Jewish direct concerns or interests, for example, with our climate change campaign or our founding of the Inter-religious Commonwealth Youth Alliance. At the same time, we seek the support of others to act with us as allies in keeping Jews safe and protected from the harm that others seek to do us. We support Jews by ensuring that our communities are robust, well networked and well informed, but at the same time we challenge them to up their game, both internally, in terms of the quality of Jewish life they facilitate but also the contribution they make to the wider societies in which they live.

For a more complete insight into the principles by which we operate, please visit our website [www.cjc.org.uk](http://www.cjc.org.uk) and our publication there 'Shared Values: Common Causes'. In it, we examine the Commonwealth's principles and match them to Jewish values and the Commonwealth Jewish Council's motivations. The fit is gratifyingly close.





# SHARING KNOWLEDGE IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES: DEVELOPING A COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

**The importance of Parliamentary Communications has never been greater and a new network will aim to link Communications professionals in our Parliaments.**

The importance of legislatures in passing laws, scrutinising the Executive and debating the issues of the day is well established. But what is the value of doing this if the wider public don't know about or understand about what their elected representatives are doing?

Whether it's doing a Tweet about a Committee hearing, or devising a long-term engagement strategy, parliamentary communications is an important yet often under-researched part of the democratic landscape.

If the past ten months has shown us anything, it's that the need for rapid changes to ways of working and the effective sharing of ideas and best practice is vitally important.

## **The importance of knowledge sharing**

As the world has adapted to life under the Coronavirus pandemic, legislatures across the Commonwealth have made rapid changes to the way in which they work, with many sessions moved either partially or fully online. Parliamentary communications teams have been at the forefront of explaining these changes to the public, whilst themselves often having to adapt to the changes to the way in which they work.

Here in the UK House of Commons, my colleagues in the Media Relations Team and the wider Communications office are primarily working from home, whilst communicating a legislature that is still sitting in a mixture of physical and virtual proceedings. It has

been our job to communicate and explain the biggest changes to the House's proceedings for centuries. It is important that at a time of great anxiety and worry for people across the country, they are aware that their democratic institutions are still functioning and that their concerns are being represented in the legislature, albeit in many cases via a zoom link rather than in the traditional surroundings of the Chamber.

Our experiences in the House of Commons will be shared by counterparts in legislatures, large or small, across the Commonwealth, especially as many of us follow similar parliamentary traditions. It is important, now more than ever, that we share knowledge and ideas, exchanging thoughts and best practice on how our legislatures can adapt to the biggest shake-up to the way in which they operate for many years.

There have been many informal contacts between legislatures in recent months, for example here in the UK, we have an interparliamentary communications network that brings together Communications teams in both houses of the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly and Welsh Senedd.

However, we have been looking at ways to put this knowledge sharing on a more formal and permanent basis, and to encourage opportunities for networking amongst those working in the field of parliamentary communications. Therefore, I am currently in the process of establishing a Commonwealth Parliamentary Communications Network.



**Mr Alasdair Rendall** is the Head of Media Relations for the UK House of Commons since September 2020. Prior to this, Alasdair worked as Head of Broadcaster and Press Gallery Relations, and as a Media Relations Manager. He also worked for the CPA UK Branch as a Communications Manager. Earlier in his career, he held several positions in the BBC and the European Parliament. He has a high level of expertise in the workings of the UK House of Commons and European Parliament, with a strong understanding of devolved legislatures.





***“One area where the survey showed up quite a disparity of approaches, but one that is vital for the work of a parliamentary Communications team, is the relationship between the legislature and the media. It obviously depends very much on the size of the country/territory, for around half of the respondents noted that their legislature had fewer than 40 accredited journalists, whilst 10% had more than 150 accredited journalists. The Westminster Press Gallery must be one of the largest, with over 300 press passes in circulation.”***

To inform the development of a network, I carried out a survey of the communications functions of a number of Commonwealth legislatures during autumn 2020. I would like to thank all those legislatures who participated – the findings were very interesting and showed a great deal of support for the creation of a network of officials who work in this crucial part of the parliamentary landscape.

### **Summary of the survey and key findings**

Before looking at potential next steps, I want to share with you some of the key findings of the survey. Legislatures from across the Commonwealth took part, including Crown Dependencies and UK Overseas Territories.

The survey highlighted that nearly three quarters of all legislatures (71%) have a dedicated team (or, in the case of very small legislatures, an individual) dedicated to parliamentary communications. For those that don't have a dedicated communications function, the responsibility for communications and engagement sits with a wide variety of individuals, from the Clerks' office to the Library and Information Service. A very small number of legislatures outsource communications work to freelance PR specialists.

Over two thirds of legislatures have some form of social media presence, with the vast majority being on *Facebook* and *Twitter*, followed by *YouTube*, *Instagram* and *LinkedIn*. In the UK House of Commons we have been focusing recently on growing our *Instagram* and *LinkedIn* presence, which has given us opportunities to highlight more of the work that goes on behind the scenes, and the people that make Parliament happen, rather than



purely focusing on procedural, chamber and legislative matters, as important as those areas are.

One area where the survey showed up quite a disparity of approaches, but one that is vital for the work of a parliamentary Communications team, is the relationship between the legislature and the media. It obviously depends very much on the size of the country/territory, for around half of the respondents noted that their legislature had fewer than 40 accredited journalists, whilst 10% had more than 150 accredited journalists. The Westminster Press Gallery must be one of the largest, with over 300 press passes in circulation.

The facilities that legislatures provide to the media varies considerably, with just over a quarter having a dedicated media centre, and many others having a mix of facilities ranging from dedicated offices for the media to a shared press working area. The vast majority of legislatures (80%) do provide dedicated filming and broadcasting points, with three quarters of legislatures having clearly defined rules in place that journalists must abide by. However the question of who governs the rules varies – sometimes they are set and enforced directly by the Communications team, often in collaboration with the security department; sometimes they have ‘political’ cover by being overseen by the Office of the Speaker or Presiding Officer, often in tandem with the Serjeant-at-Arms or equivalent.

### Developing a Communications network

The vast majority of participants in the survey expressed support for the establishment of a Commonwealth Parliamentary Communications Network, and the establishment of such a network is now well underway.

An informal launch of the network is planned to tie in with this year’s Commonwealth Day. At this stage it will simply be a mailing list and contacts list of legislatures who have expressed an interest, offering colleagues the chance to share ideas, thoughts and best practice. Later in the year I hope to run an online seminar for parliamentary communicators to give a more formal launch to the network. We hope to establish a web presence in due course where contact details, useful links and other useful resources can be exchanged. Mirroring the work done by other Commonwealth parliamentary networks we will also work to develop various toolkits to help communications practitioners effectively communicate the work of Parliament. I also hope to ensure that the role of parliamentary communications is included in any delegations, conferences or professional development of parliamentary staff in the future.

We will also reach out to parliamentary press lobbies who themselves have also expressed a desire to create an informal network of those reporting on parliamentary proceedings across the Commonwealth.

If you or someone from your legislature is interested in joining the Commonwealth Parliamentary Communications Network, I would be delighted to hear from you via email [rendallae@parliament.uk](mailto:rendallae@parliament.uk).





## YOUNG LEADERS DISCUSS COVID-19 AND UNEMPLOYMENT AT FIRST VIRTUAL COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT

Young citizens from across the Commonwealth participated in a week-long Virtual Commonwealth Youth Parliament, giving them the opportunity to experience parliamentary democracy, meet other young leaders and discuss urgent global issues.

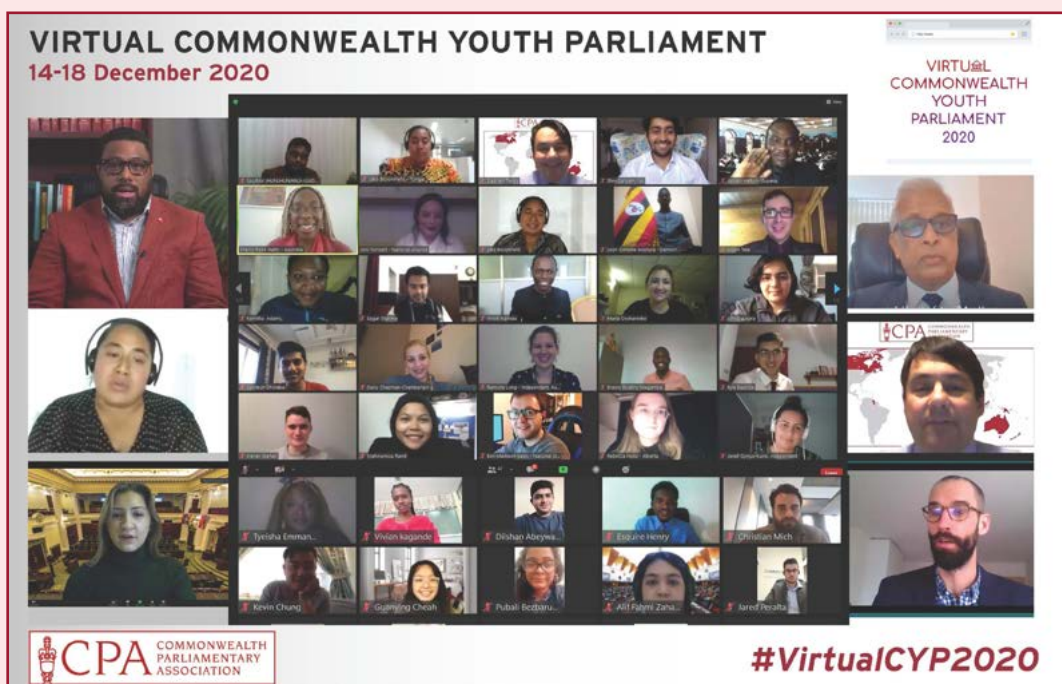
Organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Commonwealth Youth Parliament took place from 14-18 December 2020 and was held virtually for the first time. The virtual format allowed young people from all 9 CPA regions to connect across a remarkable 17 time zones. In total, 59 delegates representing 32 different Commonwealth Parliaments participated in a range of parliamentary activities. Delegates, aged 18-29, were nominated to attend the event by their national or subnational Parliament.

Youth delegates acted as Members of Parliament for the fictional jurisdiction of 'Commonwealthland'. They were split into two political parties, with a third group of independent Members. The central issue of the week was a mock Bill proposing a new COVID-19 Youth Relief Fund and a Statistical Bureau for Youth Unemployment. Sessions were designed to replicate real parliamentary processes and included intra-party meetings, Prime Minister's Questions, Committee hearings, a debate on the Bill and a mock press conference.

Some of the youngest current Parliamentarians in the Commonwealth acted as Speakers for the Commonwealth Youth Parliament, ruling over the House and moderating debates. The three Speakers for the week were Lord Fakafanua, the youngest ever Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Tonga; Senator Jordon Steele-John, the youngest current Member of the Senate of Australia; and Hon. Sharie De Castro, a Member of the House of Assembly of the British Virgin Islands and a prominent youth activist.

The CPA also partnered with leading international and Commonwealth organisations to provide expert witnesses for the Committee sessions of the Parliament. These sessions were an opportunity for the young Parliamentarians to scrutinise a Bill in detail and receive evidence from external specialists. Drew Gardiner, from the International Labour Organisation; Taofeekat Adigun, from the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network; and Dr David Strain, from the Commonwealth Medical Association, fielded questions from delegates on issues relating to social affairs, employment and health.

At the opening session of the week, Dr Arjoon Suddhoo, Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General, and Lord Fakafanua spoke alongside CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg. Dr



Suddhoo challenged delegates to “be bold and be different” and to “create the kind of Parliament you would like to see in the future”, whilst Lord Fakafanua urged participants to “seize opportunities to represent your community.”

The CPA Secretary-General encouraged everyone to enjoy their week, telling attendees that, “Young people’s voices must be heard, particularly during challenging periods such as a global pandemic. As we look to rebuild from the COVID-19 crisis, we must do so inclusively and sustainably, harnessing the power of technology and innovation. The Commonwealth Youth Parliament brings together a diverse group of young people to learn from one another and find common, cross-party solutions to global challenges.”

Lātū Bloomfield, who represented the Parliament of Tonga at the Commonwealth Youth Parliament and was chosen by her fellow delegates to act as Prime Minister of ‘Commonwealthland’, thanked the CPA and praised the attitude of her peers throughout the week, saying “I have gained many new friendships and it has been great to see the harmony and unity of delegates, regardless of the political party they represented.”

A highlight of the week was the return of Hon. Juan Watterson, Speaker of the House of Keys, Isle of Man, to the Commonwealth Youth Parliament. Twenty-three years after attending the first ever Commonwealth Youth Parliament as a delegate, Speaker Watterson gave the ceremonial Speech from the Throne, showcasing the power of the programme to create future leaders.

The CPA is committed to promoting and facilitating youth engagement in democracy through programmes such as the Commonwealth Youth Parliament. By bringing together young citizens from the Commonwealth to experience democracy in action and to share their ideas and perspectives, this programme fosters youth leadership and creates a more connected approach to development.





# LESSONS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT: A VIEW FROM JAMAICA

**Taking part in the recent Commonwealth Youth Parliament organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, David Salmon represented the Parliament of Jamaica and also served as the Opposition Spokesperson for Health in 'Commonwealthland'.**

Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the quality of youth participation in programmes across the world. However, despite the lack of physical sessions, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) presents a model that governments can adopt to further important conversations with youth. Recently, the CPA held its first Virtual Commonwealth Youth Parliament.

Hosted between 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> December 2020, this conference was a unique experience as over 50 exceptional young people from more than 20 countries and jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth were able to interact with each other. Participants came from territories as far as the serene Polynesian Kingdom of Tonga, to the diverse Indian subcontinent, the plains of Tanzania, the Mediterranean shores of Gibraltar and the frigid oceans of the Falklands.

The diverse cohort of participants allowed for varied in-depth perspectives to be given during this sitting. Hearing these views was essential as this assembly debated the model Bill to establish the COVID-19 Youth Relief Fund and the Bureau for Youth Unemployment in the fictional jurisdiction of Commonwealthland. In many ways, Commonwealthland embodies the diverse backgrounds of participants as several jurisdictions bore similarities to the fictional island nation.

This experience was rewarding as we were able to comprehensively scrutinise the Bill and examine how it would impact different stakeholders. We also got the opportunity to examine this Bill using specific Committees that interviewed professionals, which is similar to Parliamentary Select Committees. For example, participants from my region in the Caribbean, Canada

and the South Atlantic were able to have a very robust discussion with Dr David Strain, Senior Clinical Lecturer at the University of Exeter Medical School. Ably chaired by my colleague from Guyana, Jamain Hatton, this Committee delved into the impact of COVID-19 on the health sector.

From this session, we learned new information including specific symptoms of the virus, strategies to cope with physical distancing as well as specific nuances between the Oxford vaccine and the Pfizer vaccine. Thus, the Committee system was a successful addition to the Commonwealth Youth Parliamentary experience as youth legislators were able to develop an appreciation for the important role Committees play in dissecting important societal and policy issues.

Adding to the noteworthiness of this occasion were discussions about contentious issues such as data protection, privacy, the role of government and the future of the global economy. This underscores the important role youth plays in the COVID-19 recovery process, and it also emphasises the universality of our creativity and imagination.

Prime Minister's Questions was one such session where we were able to demonstrate our grasp of public policy issues as we used both imagination and oration when posing questions to Ministers of Government. On this occasion, legislators from the governing National Alliance clashed with the opposition, Democratic Party as conflicting party values came into sharper focus. For instance, in my peroration, I tackled the government on 'transforming into Mr Scrooge' due to their insistence on dismantling welfare programmes.



**David Salmon** is a journalist and political commentator who focusses on public policy issues within Jamaica and the Caribbean. He served as Prime Minister for the National Youth Parliament of Jamaica in 2020, where he represented the constituency of St Andrew Eastern. He also served as the Opposition Spokesperson for Health in the Commonwealth Youth Parliament in the same year. Furthermore, he is currently a student at the University of the West Indies and a member of the board for Jamaica's Early Childhood Commission.



Above: Young citizens from across the Commonwealth participated in a week-long Virtual Commonwealth Youth Parliament in December 2020.

In response, Government Ministers chided the opposition for their previous handling of the economy.

When questions were posed about the legislation, the Social Affairs Minister ingeniously used the assembly's Standing Orders to delay further scrutiny of the Bill. On the other hand, the Prime Minister's strategy was to develop new policies in the House to immediately address identified issues from the Opposition. Thus, participating in these rich exchanges illustrated the benefits of being quick-witted in politics.

Amused by these exchanges, our session's Speaker of the House, current Australian Senator Jordan Steele-John remarked on how the Westminster system encouraged these creative strategies in the political process. Although, he cautioned the assembly that an overreliance on political grandstanding can lead to public frustration with government. Therefore, he accentuated the need to also have robust debates when discussing the direction of the country.

For this reason, my favourite session from the week was the sitting where we debated the COVID-19 Youth Relief Fund Bill while focusing on providing opportunities for youth during the pandemic. This session was particularly enjoyable as we heard riveting submissions from members who represented different parliamentary cultures.

For example, my colleague from India, Zinnia Aurora, shared her experience on how lively her local assembly can be during debates on critical issues. Jamaica is no stranger to these vivacious discussions in our own Parliament. Thus, practising parliamentary procedures learned was very novel.

Using the special mention provision in the assembly's Standing Orders was also a noteworthy moment for me, as this provision is adopted from the Indian Parliament. Jamaica, like other parliamentary jurisdictions, can learn from these examples. By using this provision, I was able to draw attention to the crucial role skills training play in the process of economic diversification for small island developing nations.

Countries, like Commonwealthland, are often times too dependent on sectors like tourism or offshore financial centres. However, by focussing on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), these nations can empower their own citizens while capitalising on the opportunities the pandemic presents for a reset of the economy.

Additionally, serving as the Opposition Spokesperson for Health for the Democratic Party was also a privilege. The highlight of this experience was the successful passage of amendments to the legislation that were introduced by my party. These amendments ensured that minorities like the disabled community were represented, part-time workers were protected, small businesses were supported, and privacy safeguarded within Commonwealthland.



To achieve these results, strict party discipline was enforced as the opposition whip ensured that all members were present for the final debate. In fact, the Opposition's strategy of developing relationships with Independent members also yielded dividends as this group overwhelmingly backed our amendments. In the instance, where there are multiple political parties vying for influence in the process, every vote counts when making laws.

Additionally, a number of the government's back-benchers broke ranks after some prodding and private negotiations especially after impassioned statements were made about the merits of the amendments. From this observation, I recognised that politics is more than the speeches and presentations. Arguably, the most important skill in legislating is the ability to canvass votes. As German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck once remarked, *"Laws are like sausages, it is best not to see them being made."*

Moreover, within our intra party meetings, the party's ideological positions were clarified and negotiating position laid out. The

online nature of the assembly did not detract from the discussions that were had. These sessions were quite useful as they facilitated the harmonisation of values among party members. As a result, party values were translated into policy positions.

The knowledge and skills gained from this Commonwealth Youth Parliament can be applied in multiple ways. For one, this experience can be used to teach youth about the role and functions of the legislature. The important role of the legislature is quite often forgotten in the age of personality politics. Lessons such as how to make compromises and incorporating diverse voices in the policy formulation process can also be applied. This assembly was able to make several major amendments to the legislation as the interests of different stakeholders were incorporated.

Being able to dissect legislation from multiple angles is another key takeaway that should be shared. Furthermore, additional knowledge of the Committee system can be used to enhance our own National Youth Parliament of Jamaica while encouraging the meaningful engagement of youth in the legislative process. The perspectives provided by the Virtual Commonwealth Youth Parliament demonstrated the important role of youth in governance as innovative solutions were provided to address major issues.

Gratitude must be expressed to several stakeholders including the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for organising the event and the Jamaica's Houses of Parliament for preparing me to represent Jamaica on this occasion. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, particularly the Youth and Adolescent Policy Division and the Youth Advisory Council of Jamaica, also deserve recognition for continuing their mandate to support Jamaica's young people.

Going forward, we know that Jamaica's youth are represented by the best young people. A key lesson learned is that despite our differences in our own distinctive systems, there are some characteristics that unite youth globally. These include our commitment to duty, our sense of purpose and our passion for change. Sharing these valuable lessons with youths will ultimately make the Commonwealth and Jamaica a much better place for all.

To contact contributor David Salmon please email [davidsalmon@live.com](mailto:davidsalmon@live.com).

***"The knowledge and skills gained from this Commonwealth Youth Parliament can be applied in multiple ways. For one, this experience can be used to teach youth about the role and functions of the legislature. The important role of the legislature is quite often forgotten in the age of personality politics."***







## CWP CHAIRPERSON JOINS VIRTUAL CWP CANADIAN REGION STEERING COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA (Pakistan) attended a virtual CWP Canadian Region Steering Committee to discuss future activities of the network and the CWP strategic plan.

The virtual meeting was chaired by the CWP Canadian Region Chair, Hon. Lisa Thompson, MPP (Ontario) and was attended by representatives from the Canadian Federal Parliament and Provincial Legislatures as well as the CPA Secretary-General Stephen Twigg. CWP Members looked ahead to activities to mark International Women's Day in March 2021 on the theme of #ChooseToChallenge.

## FIJI WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT CONTINUES TO IMPROVE

The participation of women in Fiji at the national leadership level reached another key milestone after the swearing in of Hon. Tanya Waqanika as a Member of Parliament in December 2020. Women's representation in Fiji has grown significantly from 4.3% in 1995 to 21.6% in 2020. According to the Pacific Women in Politics website, women have never comprised more than 30% of the membership of national Parliaments in the Pacific Island countries since Independence (not including Australia, New Zealand and the territories of the United States of America and France, respectively in the region), and the percentage of women in Pacific Parliaments overall currently stands at an average of 8.8% (as of April 2020).

Sustainable Development Goal 5.5 calls on countries to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in the political, economic and public life and the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) is working closely with Parliaments in the Pacific Region to assist in this goal.

## CWP CHAIR AT PGA GLOBAL EVENT

In November 2020, the CWP Chairperson addressed the Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) event - 11<sup>th</sup> Consultative Assembly of Parliamentarians on the International Criminal Court and the Rule of Law (CAP-ICC). The virtual event, co-hosted by the PGA National Group in The Netherlands, discussed the challenges and opportunities in attaining a universal justice system through the Rome Statute, while discussing the sanctions against the ICC and the independent mandate of its organs during the unprecedented circumstances the current global health emergency.

## CWP AUSTRALIA CHAIR AT 2020 REYKJAVIK GLOBAL FORUM FOR WOMEN LEADERS



In November 2020, Senator Sue Lines, Deputy President of the Senate of Australia and Chairperson of the Commonwealth of Australia chapter of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network spoke at the 2020 Reykjavik Global Forum for Women Leaders. Senator Lines, representing the CWP and the Australian Parliament at the Forum, discussed the impact of COVID-

19 on progress towards economic and social equality for women. She urged governments to create gender-aware recovery strategies and find new, innovative solutions to women's issues to prevent a reversal of progress on gender equality in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Founded in 2018, the Forum provides women leaders from around the world the opportunity to connect across sectors and to share solutions for fostering equality in decision-making and building back better post-COVID-19. Held online over the course of three days and consisting of panels, keynote speeches, interviews and other events, this year's digital forum was attended by prominent women leaders from politics, business and entertainment, including former US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, philanthropist Melinda Gates and Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, leader of the opposition in Belarus.

Senator Lines began by acknowledging the recent passing of Susan Ryan, Australia's first female Labor party cabinet minister and a 'trailblazer for Australian women in politics'. Ryan, Lines said, had pioneered the Women's Budget Statement, which surveyed the impact of budget allocations on women's rights. The need for gender analyses of policy, she said, was needed now more than ever to ensure the response to the pandemic does not disrupt years of progress on gender equality. According to recent studies, the Senator said, women are facing increased job insecurity and have been disproportionately impacted by the pressures of working from home. At the same time, incidents of domestic abuse have risen sharply during lockdowns around the world. Governments must create sustainable recovery plans that recognise the particular adversities that COVID-19 has caused women.





## ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUITY WITHIN PARLIAMENTS: CWP BEGINS A SERIES OF ROUNDTABLES ON GENDER SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS



The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network has begun a series of virtual Regional roundtable discussions for both female and male Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff across the Commonwealth that will explore the relevant steps Parliaments can take to ensure that they strive to become gender sensitive institutions.

Uniquely designed and tailored to the individual needs of all nine regions of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the roundtables seek to facilitate a united Commonwealth approach to increase the number of gender sensitive Parliaments

across the Commonwealth. The CWP roundtables will provide attendees with an intimate platform to share their experiences and adoption of gender sensitive actions in their respective Parliaments.

Sarah Childs, Professor of Gender and Politics at Royal Holloway University of London, who produced the CWP's 'Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines' stated that *"this provides the opportunity for elected Members and parliamentary officials to hear from the author of the 2020 Guidelines, in discussing regional-specific concerns, and exploring how the CWP and CPA can support individual Parliaments in very practical ways to realise greater gender sensitivity in the years ahead, including of course, taking into account the additional significance of gender sensitive Parliaments in these COVID-19 times."* Please turn to page 82 to read Professor Sarah Child's article about the new guidelines.

The first CWP roundtables have taken place for the CWP Pacific and CWP Africa Regions with further events planned. You can read extracts of the presentations at these events on pages 80-81. For more information about how your Region can participate please contact [hq.sec@cpahq.org](mailto:hq.sec@cpahq.org).

## CWP CHAIRPERSON HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANT ROLE OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AT PAKISTAN/AFGHANISTAN SEMINAR



The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chairperson, Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA addressed delegates at the Center for Research & Security Studies 'Beyond Boundaries' seminar which brought together women Parliamentarians and key stakeholders from Pakistan and Afghanistan. The CWP Chairperson spoke about the importance of women's economic empowerment in transforming the lives of all citizens and the work towards Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality.

Other topics covered at the seminar included the impact of COVID-19 on women and the need for children's rights and basic education provision around a national curriculum. The Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities Regional Champion for the CPA Asia Region, Hon. Zille Huma, MNA also highlighted the CPwD network and the importance of campaigns for disability rights at the seminar.





At the recent CWP Pacific Region roundtable on Gender Sensitive Parliaments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, **Hon. Selina Napa, MP (Cook Islands)** spoke about her own jurisdiction and the wider Pacific Region:



As the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians for the Pacific Region, I extend a warm Pacific welcome to all Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff who are participating in this flagship event that begins the series of CWP roundtables.

I extend to you the meaningful Cook Islands greeting of *Kia Orana* – may you live long. Thank you for your presence at this important regional event which has been uniquely designed for the Pacific Region.

It is important to note that this roundtable is the flagship event that will officially mark the beginning of a series of CWP Regional roundtables that will form part of a wider CWP programme on gender sensitisation.

I have been a member of parliament in the 24-member Cook Islands Parliament for just over 10 years. This roundtable is not simply a women's discussion. In order to create lasting change, the participation of male Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff is required.

It cannot be emphasised enough that Parliaments throughout our Region must strive to become gender sensitive as there are proven benefits when women are involved and included in all levels of parliamentary activities.

Gender sensitisation is a matter that should be considered of great importance to all Parliaments in the Pacific Region. We are part of what could be an important process to increase the numbers of female participation across our Parliaments that meets the international standard and target of 30%.

According to the latest data gathered by CWP, only one out of 13 CPA Branches in the Pacific Region have achieved the target of at least 30% representation of women. We in the Cook Islands are pleased that we have met that target

and actively seek to improve on it – in our Parliament of 24 representatives, six are women, equating to 34% of our Parliamentarians being female. We know we can improve on that.

I would like to also note that, six out of the 13 CPA Branches have under 10% of women presentation in Parliament. We know that this is something that can be improved upon.

Established in 1989, the CWP network provides a means of building the capacity of women elected to Parliament to be more effective in their roles. This means improving the awareness and ability of all Parliamentarians, male and female, and encouraging them to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role - legislation, oversight and representation and helping Parliaments to become gender-sensitive.

The CWP Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines were produced to provide Commonwealth Parliaments with an outline of gender sensitising standards that they can look to achieve. This series of roundtables will help all CPA Branches with relevant knowledge and appropriate materials regarding gender sensitisation as well as providing an intimate platform to ask questions, exchange information and experiences with due consideration to their national and regional environments. I encourage all Members to take this opportunity to learn and be proactive to get the answers to important questions that will help strengthen their own institutions. May this significant event achieve much to improve upon our respective parliamentary institutions. *Kia Orana and Kia Manuia*

*This is an extract of the speech delivered at the CWP virtual roundtable on Gender Sensitive Parliaments for the Pacific Region.*





At the recent CWP Africa Region roundtable on Gender Sensitive Parliaments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, **Hon. Dr Zainab Gimba, MP (Nigeria), CWP Vice-Chairperson** spoke about her own jurisdiction and the wider Africa Region:



This CWP roundtable is the second of its kind in a series of Regional roundtables that will form part of a wider Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) programme of action on gender sensitisation. The theme of the roundtables 'Gender Sensitive Parliaments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century' is relevant to our quest to create Gender Sensitive Parliaments across the CWP Africa Region.

Essentially, the CWP Gender Sensitising Parliaments roundtables are aimed at assisting Parliamentarians and Parliaments with relevant knowledge and appropriate materials regarding gender sensitisation. It is hoped that the awareness and the interest the discussion is expected to generate will further spur the participants to mobilise for Gender Sensitive Parliaments.

A Gender Sensitive Parliament will not only redress the gender imbalance in representation but also allow a more inclusive policy approach where the realities, interest, needs and aspirations of women are accommodated. It is therefore, imperative for Parliaments within the CWP Africa Region to mainstream gender issues by providing equal opportunities for women and men to influence internal parliamentary procedures.

This call becomes amplified in view of the abysmally low representation of women in some Parliaments across the African Region. Most Parliaments are regarded as 'gendered institutions' traditionally designed by and for men, and female Parliamentarians are viewed as 'space invaders'. In the 2020 study carried out by CWP, it was established that only 17 out of 36 CPA Branches listed in the Africa Region have achieved the 30% level of women's representation in Parliament as recommended by the Commonwealth. In the same study, nine out of the 36 CPA Branches in the

Africa Region have under 10% of women's representation in Parliament. We must all work together to change this trend.

The misconception of a fully patriarchal Parliament which discriminates against and gives no space for women's interest and needs should be discarded and as a Gender Sensitive Parliament, it will bring different perspectives and approaches which will allow for a better representation of women's citizen rights, their interest and needs.

This is not a challenge to female members of Parliament alone but also to the male Parliamentarians. Through our collective efforts, both female and male Parliamentarians as well as parliamentary staff, we will surpass the threshold. I am particularly encouraged by the few male participants at this roundtable. Your attendance will further elevate the conversation and will provide a forum of interaction for dialogue, share ideas and experiences, while also urging you to take this message of change to others so that women can be giving a generous space. This will help shape other women's political attitude and behaviors towards making our Parliaments more gender sensitive.

Since 1989 when it was established, the CWP has provided the platform for building capacity of women Parliamentarians to be more effective in the discharge of their roles. The body has also worked to improve the ability of all Parliamentarians and engaged in a sustained advocacy in creating awareness about including a gender perspective in all aspects of the activities of Commonwealth Parliaments. We shall continue on this path until we achieve Gender Sensitive and inclusive Parliaments.

*This is an extract of the speech delivered at the CWP virtual roundtable on Gender Sensitive Parliaments for the Africa Region.*



# AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAMME AT THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ACTIVELY SEEKS TO ENGAGE YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

The Deputy Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament writes about an innovative programme that is addressing the under-representation of young women in politics in Scotland.

The Young Women Lead (YWL) programme was created from a need to address the under-representation of young women in politics in Scotland. Increasing women's representation was an issue which the Scottish Parliament Presiding Officer, Rt Hon. Ken Macintosh MSP, drew attention to in a previous article for *The Parliamentarian* in 2019 to commemorate this Parliament's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

I would like to go into more detail about this particular innovative programme which I have had the great honour of chairing for the last 3 years.

Working with YWCA Scotland - the Young Women's Movement, the Scottish Parliament designed and delivered a leadership programme for young women. Since 2017 participants from a range of diverse communities have been coming together in the Scottish Parliament to form their own Committee and run an inquiry, just like a Committee of MSPs, on an issue of their choice. Since 2017 they have carried out investigations into sexual harassment in schools, access to sport and physical activity and the transition from education to employment for young women from ethnic minorities.<sup>1</sup>

Sitting in one of the Parliament's Committee meeting room, in a formal committee meeting format, chaired by myself, the participants take evidence and question experts and Scottish Government officials as part of their inquiry. They are supported by Parliamentary Clerks and work with engagement and social media staff. They carry out engagement work across Scotland and produce reports (again with the support and guidance of Clerks) with recommendations on how policy can be improved to create change for young women living in Scotland.

Left: The Deputy Presiding Officer speaks to students at a CPA Roadshow for young people in Scotland.



**Hon. Linda Fabiani, MSP** is the Deputy Presiding Officer in the Scottish Parliament. She was first elected in 1999 as the MSP for Central Scotland (Region) before being re-elected in 2011 as the constituency Member for East Kilbride.





Above: Deputy Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, Hon. Linda Fabiani, MSP chairing a Young Women Lead evidence session in a Scottish Parliament Committee room.

The young women said their aim was to ‘take up space’ in the Parliament, and with access to Parliament staff, facilities, and resources they were supported to make their voices heard and engage with politics, the Scottish Parliament and their local communities. The programme was designed to create a network of young women who would become role models and leaders for other young women across Scotland.

Participants have been drawn from diverse backgrounds, including BAME, transgender, disabled, and from rural areas. Through training days in the Scottish Parliament, they have been supported to address gender inequalities they face in their own lives, sharing stories and creating a supportive environment to carry out their work. They have spoken highly of their personal outcomes from involvement in the programme, including confidence to try a new career, raise issues with MSPs and setting up a support network for other young women. The participants remain involved in the work of both YWL and the Scottish Parliament and stay in regular contact through a social media group where they have created a positive and supportive peer network.

I believe the programme has had significant benefits for both partner organisations and the young women involved. The Scottish Parliament gained the insight and perspective of an underrepresented group, giving access to young women who now felt more confident to engage with the Parliament. This has been, and continues to be, essential for Committee scrutiny, and diversifying witnesses is a strategic aim for the organisation. Indeed, some of the new ways of working and reporting, as used by the young women, can now be piloted by our Committees.

In terms of outcomes, 94% of participants said that their understanding of Committee work and processes significantly improved as a result of the programme and that they feel more valued and heard by the Parliament. Importantly, 100% of participants now feel more confident to give evidence to, and engage with, the Scottish Parliament. The outputs from YWL has the potential to create real change for all young people. If recommendations from the YWL Committee are taken on board, young people of all genders will feel more supported and empowered growing up in Scotland.

I have had the pleasure to discuss this programme with a range of other legislatures, both in the Commonwealth (for example Wales and Québec in Canada) and beyond (with Parliaments in Bavaria, Flanders and Catalonia) where great interest has been shown in a simple but effective and practical way to engage with young women.







# GENDER SENSITISING PARLIAMENTS: A DEMOCRATIC IMPERATIVE IN CRISIS AS WELL AS GOOD TIMES

Gender Sensitive Parliaments have become, since the Commonwealth Parliamentary Associations 2001 Kuala Lumpur Report, an established international norm, supported by many international groups and organisations, as well as by individual Parliaments and Parliamentarians.

The CPA has an essential role to play in these ongoing international and domestic efforts; if all CPA Branches meet the 2020 Gender Sensitive Parliaments Guideline's standards (published by the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians network), the quality of democracy around the world would be substantially enhanced, with societies everywhere benefitting.

Admittedly, 2020 has been far from the easiest of times for Parliaments – as workplaces they have been affected by the health protection measures introduced to try to limit the spread of COVID-19, with at times substantially negative effects on a Parliament's democratic work. Yet in such crisis times, efforts to gender sensitise Parliaments are more, rather than less, urgent; the possibility of responding to the needs of all citizens is much reduced without gender sensitive Parliaments. When the 2020 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Gender Sensitive Parliaments Guidelines were commissioned, the disruption and challenge to democratic decision-making caused by the pandemic could not have been foreseen; by asking Commonwealth Parliaments to audit their gender (in)sensitivities using its checklist and against a set of agreed standards, there is the potential for the CWP's Gender Sensitive Parliaments Guidelines to be a truly transformative democratic intervention.

The CPA and CWP have championed women's equality for more than two decades; it published its Gender Sensitising Commonwealth Parliaments: The *Report of a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Study Group - Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*, in 2001. Three goals were identified:

- (i) to share analyses, experiences and good practices of Standing Orders in Commonwealth parliaments (subsequently 'widened' to explore other 'aspects of parliamentary life');
- (ii) to identify concrete strategies and mechanisms to make Commonwealth parliaments as gender sensitive as possible; and
- (iii) to prioritise key areas for action, based on the recommendations of the Study Group.

'Political commitment' had to be established at the national and international levels, with the legal regime reflecting 'this commitment in letter and spirit'.

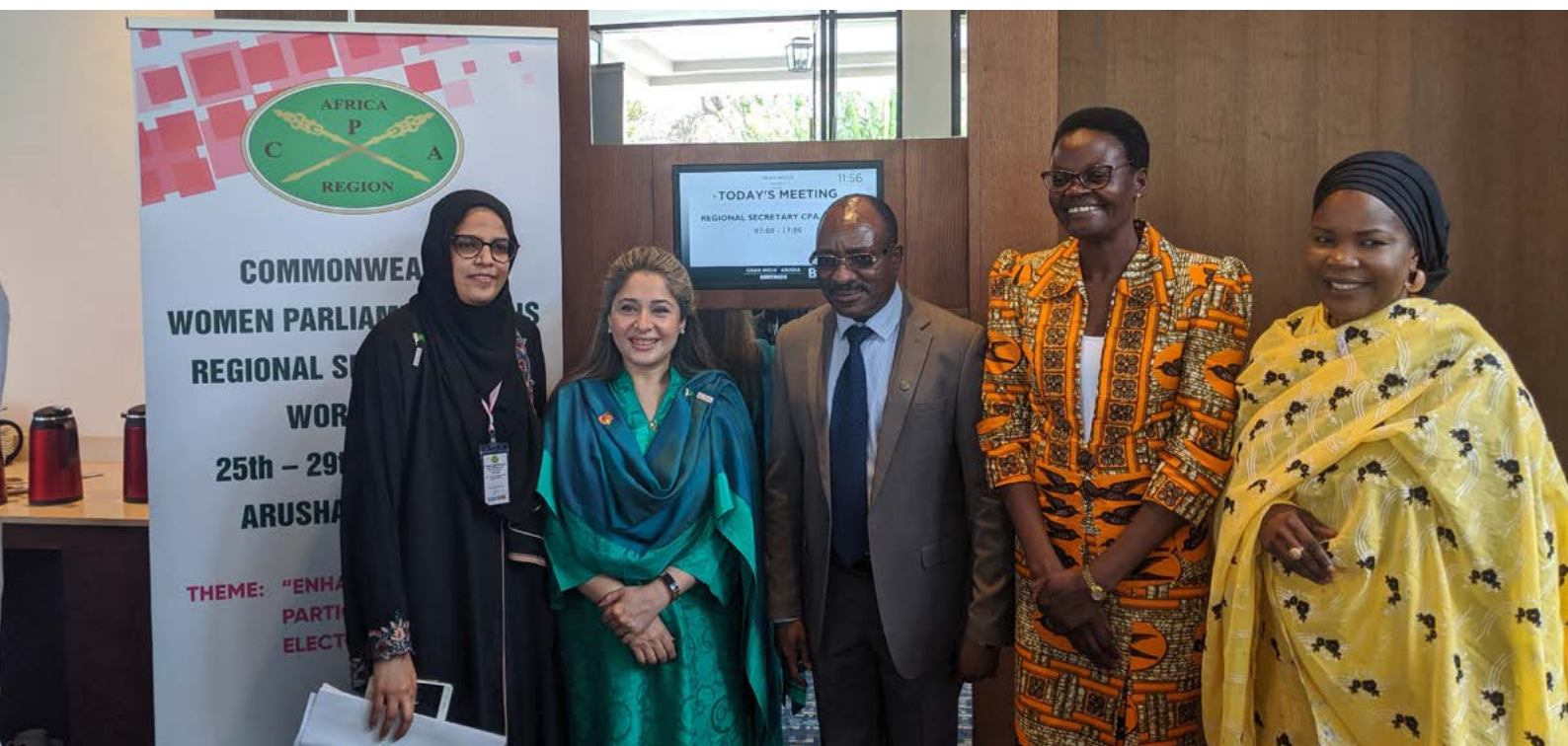
The 2001 Report established that across Commonwealth Parliaments, women lacked representation equal to their presence in the wider population. This was not only considered an unacceptable state of affairs, holding that women's greater political participation is a societal 'good', but that once elected, women political representatives must gain 'real' power. In respect of the internal parliamentary actors and institutions identified as either causing gender insensitivities or considered to be critical in gender sensitising Commonwealth Parliaments, the 2001 Report named:

- **Women:** who need to be made aware of their political rights and obligations.
- **Women MPs** who should: highlight the poor behaviour by male MPs; act as role models, and directly encourage young women (schoolgirls and universities students) to participate in politics.
- **Men:** who are to be 'sensitised to the unconscionable nature of gender inequity in politics'.
- **Political Parties:** who must 'recognise' the need to provide support for women candidates.
- **The Speaker:** to ensure a 'high' standard of debate.

Under the CWP Chairpersonship of Hon. Shandana Gulzar Khan, MNA, Pakistan, it was agreed that the 2001 Gender Sensitive



**Professor Sarah Childs** is Professor of Politics and Gender at Royal Holloway, University of London. Previously she was Professor of Politics and Gender at Birkbeck College, University of London and at the University of Bristol. Professor Childs' research centres on the theory and practice of women's representation, gender and political parties, Parliaments and institutional change.



Parliaments Guidelines would be updated. In her foreword to the *updated* guidelines, the CWP Chairperson noted that ‘only 34 of the 180 CPA member Branches have at least 30% women’s representation in their Parliament’, revealing ‘much more work to be done by Parliaments to ensure that the institution is one that embraces both gender equality and the empowerment of women’. Today, parity of women’s and men’s political representation has to be the goal.

The updated *CWP Gender Sensitive Parliaments Guidelines* built upon the ground-breaking 2001 Report by reflecting on changes in women’s political participation in electoral politics and wider democratic developments - good and bad over the last 20 years - as well as the greater knowledge regarding the determinants and features of women’s political participation and representation.

The 2020 *CWP Gender Sensitive Parliaments Guidelines* provide a set of Standards for all Commonwealth Parliaments to meet. They start from the fundamental premise that Commonwealth Parliaments should undertake a Gender Sensitive Parliament audit as soon as possible to establish an initial benchmark against which future efforts and developments can be evaluated. The accompanying Checklist is designed to ‘empower Parliaments to successfully initiate gender sensitive reform’.

Gender (in)sensitivity is to be measured across four dimensions – *Equality of participation within Parliaments; Parliamentary Infrastructure; Parliamentary Culture; and Gender Equality Policy/ women’s substantive representation*. In this way, Parliaments’ formal and informal rules, norms, practices and procedures; Parliamentarians’ and parliamentary staff’s experiences and preferences; individual behaviour and collective interactions that take place within the institution; as well as the wider parliamentary culture, can be first reviewed and then reformed.

Key to the successful implementation of the 2020 *CWP Gender Sensitive Parliaments Guidelines* is the principle of

‘institutionalisation’. In everyday terms this refers to the means by which Commonwealth Parliaments’ leadership - political and administrative - can establish and embed new GSP procedures and parliamentary organisations within their institutions, and how Parliaments (leaderships, and elected members and officials and parliamentary staff) develop and sustain a supportive GSP culture. The CPA Headquarters Secretariat, as well as the CWP Steering Committee and regional and individual CWP Members, make clear commitments to practically support Member institutions’ efforts.

If the 2020 *CWP Gender Sensitive Parliaments Guidelines’ Standards* set the aspiration of all Commonwealth Parliaments, its Checklist is designed to ensure that Parliaments target:

- (i) institutional leadership capacity;
- (ii) the provision of systematic and comprehensive sex/gender disaggregated data;
- (iii) the regular undertaking of GSP reviews;
- (iv) the sufficient presence of gender experts and of gendered analysis, practices, legal requirements, and training, alongside established and routine extra-parliamentary links with civil society women’s representatives; and
- (v) the establishment of, and institutional support for, women’s parliamentary bodies, e.g. a women’s caucus and/or a women’s committee.

To access a copy of the 2020 *CWP Gender Sensitive Parliaments Guidelines* please visit [www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwpresources](http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwpresources).







# COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATIVE NEWS

PARLIAMENTARY REPORTS AND THIRD READINGS FROM  
PARLIAMENTS AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH



## CANADA

Resignations and new  
appointments

**Page 88**

## AUSTRALIA

Update on Australian Federal  
Parliament during COVID-19

**Page 94**

## UGANDA

100 sittings and 26 Bills amidst  
COVID-19 disruptions

**Page 100**

## NEW ZEALAND

Opening of 53<sup>rd</sup> New Zealand  
Parliament

**Page 92**

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Opposition motions in challenge  
the Government

**Page 98**

## UNITED KINGDOM

Future Relationship Bill passes  
as 'Brexit' transition period ends

**Page 104**

## THIRD READING REPORTS

British Columbia **Page 87**

India Union **Page 89**

New Zealand **Page 93**

Australia Federal **Page 96**

Uganda **Page 103**

## BOOK REVIEW

**Page 106**





Third Reading Report by Natalie Beaton, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.



The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

## THIRD READING REPORT

### Finance Statutes Amendment Act, 2020

On 8 December 2020, *Bill 3, Finance Statutes Amendment Act, 2020*, was introduced as the returning government's first legislative initiative following the 24 October 2020 provincial general election. The Bill amends a statutory requirement that the government present an annual budget and estimates by the fourth Tuesday in March to a requirement to do so by 30 April if a provincial general election is conducted in the preceding fiscal year. The Bill also extends release dates for quarterly reports from 30 days up to 60 days after a fall provincial general election in order to maintain the current practice of including the third quarterly report with the budget, even though the budget and estimates are being presented after year-end (31 March). It also requires a post-election government to make public a report that provides a fiscal update within 90 days after cabinet is sworn in. The Bill includes amendments to the *Financial Administration Act* that would authorise special warrant spending authority when the budget and estimates for the new fiscal

year are presented very close to or after the start of the new fiscal year and where a supply act has not been enacted for the new year before 1 April, or when there are unforeseen circumstances.

Hon. Selina Robinson, MLA, Minister of Finance, explained that the Bill allows additional time for the budget and estimates development process following a provincial general election. In regard to the upcoming 2021-22 budget, she noted that this additional time was necessary to develop a budget that would address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on British Columbians. She also stated that the special warrant spending authority ensures the continuation of the operations of government after a provincial general election so those reliant on government funding would continue to receive the necessary support until a supply act could be passed. She explained that the spending authority would be limited to a proportion of the voted appropriations of the previous fiscal year.

Official Opposition Critic for Finance, Mike Bernier, MLA, stated that the Legislative Assembly should focus on providing immediate support to British Columbians to address the impact of

COVID-19 rather than delaying the delivery of such support by extending the timeline for the presentation of the budget by more than five weeks. In addition, the Bill's provisions to extend timelines for fiscal reporting could negatively affect the accountability of government and the transparency of the fiscal situation of the province. He also questioned why an additional budget deadline extension was necessary since, in the previous Parliament, the deadline had already been extended by 30 days (to the fourth Tuesday in March) if a provincial general election is conducted in the preceding fiscal year.

The Leader of the Third Party, Sonia Furstenau, MLA, expressed concern that the provisions in the Bill could be used by future governments to defer the work of the Legislative Assembly and the Bill's provision of 'unforeseen circumstances' as a basis for authorizing special warrant spending authority could allow the government to make decisions and implement program spending without oversight by the Legislative Assembly.

The *Finance Statutes Amendment Act, 2020* received Third Reading on 17 December 2020.



# RESIGNATIONS AND NEW APPOINTMENTS AT THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENT

Parliamentary Report by Gabrielle de Billy Brown, Parliament of Canada.

## RESIGNATION OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL

On 21 January 2021, Rt Hon. Julie Payette resigned from her role as Governor General. The reasons cited included family responsibilities, respect for the integrity of the Vice-Regal office, as well as the good of the country and of Canada's democratic institutions.

This resignation occurred at a time when the office of the Governor General was under an independent investigation. As indicated in a previous issue, it had been launched in July 2020 regarding potential issues of harassment and abuse in the office of the Governor General.

At the time of the Governor General's resignation, the final report from the investigation had not yet been released. It was made available on 27 January 2021 and detailed allegations of a "toxic" work environment from many current and former employees.

Rt Hon. Richard Wagner, Chief Justice of Canada, will serve as Administrator of the Government of Canada until the appointment of a successor.

## CONTINUED RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

On 29 January 2021, Hon. Anthony Rota, MP, Speaker of the House of Commons announced modifications to the preventative measures in place in the House of Commons. Masks are now mandatory in the Chamber as well as Committee rooms unless the Member is at their place during parliamentary proceedings. In addition, masks are now mandatory in all offices, both Members' and

administration, unless two-metre physical distancing is possible.

On 2 February 2021, the Speaker of the House of Commons made a ruling regarding masks worn by Members in the Chamber. He ruled that they must be plain and neutral, in accordance with previous rulings which prevent visual displays or presentations while sitting.

## PARLIAMENTARY WORK

On 27 October 2020, the Senate of Canada adopted a motion to implement a hybrid model for its parliamentary proceedings. This motion allows for the remote participation of Senators, sets up voting mechanisms and allow for the electronic tabling of documents. It expired on 18 December 2020 as the Senate adjourned for the holidays. The Senate resumed sittings on 8 February 2021.

On 25 January 2021, the House of Commons adopted by unanimous consent a new motion governing the proceedings of the House until 23 June 2021. This motion reinstates the hybrid system that was in place during the fall sittings. These temporary rules allow for either virtual or in-person participation of Members, allow documents to be tabled electronically with the Clerk and require witnesses to participate virtually.

New elements in this motion include provisions for the implementation of a remote voting system through a cellphone application, which is still under development by the House of Commons Administration. Until it is

implemented, votes will take place as they did in the fall through roll call or in person. Following two successful voting simulations that receive approval from all recognised parties, votes for Members participating remotely will take place through electronic means.

## CHANGES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND IN CABINET

On 26 October 2020, two by-elections took place in the ridings of Toronto Centre and York Centre following the resignation of Hon. Bill Morneau, MP and Michael Levitt, MP. The Liberal Party of Canada retained both seats and Marci Ien, MP and Ya'ara Saks, MP joined their new colleagues in the House of Commons.

On 9 November 2020, Yasmin Ratansi, MP, announced that she was leaving the caucus of the Liberal Party of Canada and would sit as an independent.

On 12 January 2021, Hon. Navdeep Bains, MP, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry announced that he would step down from his ministerial role. Consequently, Rt Hon. Justin Trudeau, MP announced changes to Cabinet: Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, MP moved from Foreign Affairs to Innovation, Science and Industry. Hon. Marc Garneau, MP changed portfolios from Transport to Foreign Affairs. Finally, Hon. Omar Alghabra, MP joined Cabinet for the first time as Minister of Transport. In addition, Hon. Jim Carr, MP



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Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada.

rejoined Cabinet as Special Representative for the Prairies.

On 20 January 2021, **Derek Sloan, MP** was removed from the caucus of the Conservative Party of Canada and now sits as an independent.

On 25 January 2021, **Ramesh Sangha, MP** was removed from the caucus of the Liberal Party of Canada and now sits as an independent.

## CHANGES IN THE SENATE

On 10 November 2020, **Hon. Norman E. Doyle** retired, after having served in the Senate since 2012.

On 29 December 2020, **Hon. Elaine McCoy** passed away. She had served in the Senate since 2005.

On 25 January 2021, **Hon. Lynn Beyak** resigned, after having served in the Senate since 2013.

On 31 January 2021, **Hon. Murray Sinclair** retired, after having served in the Senate since 2016.

As of 5 February 2021, the standings in the Senate were:

Independent Senators Group 43, Conservative Party 20, Canadian Senators Group 12, Progressive Senate Group 11, non-affiliated 5 and vacant 14.

## POTENTIAL CHANGES TO THE CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

On 5 October 2020, Canada's Chief Electoral Officer published a special report, *Administering an Election during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, in which he makes some key recommendations regarding possible temporary changes to the *Canada Elections Act* that would enable Elections Canada to better prepare for a general election in pandemic conditions. Three main elements were identified: an extended voting period, vote administration in long-term care residences and more flexibility for the Chief Electoral Officer to adapt measures as may be necessary.

In response, on 10 December 2020, the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada tabled *Bill C-19: An Act*

*to amend the Canada Elections Act (COVID-19 response)*. The temporary measures created by the Bill would extend the polling period from one day to three. It would also implement the other measures requested by Elections Canada regarding long-term care facilities and additional flexibility to ensure that public health guidelines can be followed.

## PARLIAMENTARY POET LAUREATE

On 3 February 2021, **Senator Hon. George Furey**, the Speaker of the Senate, and **Hon. Anthony Rota, MP**, the Speaker of the House of Commons, announced the nomination of **Louise Bernice Halfe - Sky Dancer** as the ninth Parliamentary Poet Laureate of Canada. She is also the first Indigenous Poet Laureate in the program's history. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Halfe previously served as Poet Laureate in the province of Saskatchewan.

In her new role, **Louise Bernice Halfe - Sky Dancer's**

responsibilities may include composing poetry for use in Parliament, sponsoring poetry readings and advising the Parliamentary Librarian on the Library's collection. Created in 2001 through an amendment to the *Parliament of Canada Act*, this position is appointed by both Speakers of the Parliament of Canada for a period of two years.

## IN MEMORIAM

On 29 December 2020, the late **Hon. Elaine McCoy** passed away while still in office, a few months before her planned retirement in March 2021. She had been a Senator for over 15 years, having been appointed by the then Prime Minister of Canada, **Rt Hon. Paul Martin**. The late **Hon. Elaine McCoy** was a founding member of the Independent Senators Group in 2016 and was named its first leader. In 2019, she became a founding member of the Canadian Senators Group and remained a Member until her passing.





## THIRD READING REPORT

**The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2020****Background**

The *Indian Medicine Central Council (IMCC) Act, 1970* was enacted to provide a solid foundation for the growth of medical education of Indian Systems of Medicine, namely, Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Sowa-Rigpa and provides for constitution of the Central Council of Indian Medicine for regulation of the educational standards of Ayurveda, Unani Siddha, and Sowa-Rigpa systems of medicine, maintenance of the Central Register of practitioners and for matters connected therewith.

Keeping in view that there were lacunae in the Act and also in order to streamline the functioning of the Central Council of Indian Medicine, to bring transparency in the mechanism for grant of permission to medical institutions and to improve the standards of medical education in Indian Systems of Medicine, the Central Government had introduced the Indian Medicine Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2005 in Rajya Sabha which was pending.

In the meantime, in 2016, the Central Government constituted a Committee chaired by Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog to review the Indian Medicine Central Council Act and the said Committee had recommended for enactment of the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2018 on the same lines as that of the National Medical Commission Bill, 2018 which had been introduced in Lok Sabha.

Thereafter, the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill 2020 was introduced in Rajya Sabha. This Bill was subsequently passed in Rajya Sabha.

**Salient features of the Bill**

Constitution of a National Commission for Indian System of Medicine for development and regulation of all aspects relating to education, medical profession and medical institutions of Indian System of Medicine and an Advisory Council to advise and make recommendations to the Commission.

Provision for constitution of four Autonomous Boards to regulate standards;

to carry out inspections and to assess and rate the medical institutions; to regulate professional conduct and promote medical ethics amongst practitioners and professionals of Indian Medicine; to maintain a national register of all licensed practitioners of Indian medicine;

**The National Commission for Homeopathy Bill, 2020**

The *Homeopathy Central Council (HCC) Act, 1973* was enacted to provide a solid foundation for the growth of homeopathy medical education and provides for constitution of the Central Council of Homeopathy for regulation of the educational standards of homeopathy, maintenance of the Central Register of practitioners and for matters connected therewith.

To address the bottlenecks and in order to streamline the functioning of the Central Council of Homeopathy, to bring transparency in the mechanism for grant of permission to medical institutions and to improve the standards of medical education in Homeopathy, the Central government had introduced the Homeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2005 and the Homeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2015 in Rajya Sabha which were pending.

In the meantime in 2016, the Central Government constituted a Committee chaired by Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog to review the Homeopathy Central Council Act and the said Committee had recommended for enactment of the National Commission for Homeopathy on the same lines as that of the National Medical Commission Bill, 2018 which had been introduced in Lok Sabha. Thereafter the National Commission for Homeopathy Bill, 2019 was introduced in Rajya Sabha. This Bill was subsequently passed by Rajya Sabha.

**Salient features of the Bill**

To provide medical education system that (i) improves access to quality and affordable medical education, (ii) ensures availability of adequate and high quality Homeopathy medical professionals in all parts of the country that promotes equitable and universal healthcare and makes services of Homeopathy medical professionals accessible to all citizens.

**Debate**

In respect of both the Bills which were passed by Rajya Sabha on 18 March 2020, the Bills came up for consideration in Lok Sabha during the next session in September 2020. (Both Houses had to be prematurely adjourned *sine die* and thereafter prorogued owing to pandemic and imposition of lockdown with effect from 24 March 2020, hence the next session of both Houses of Parliament could only be held in September 2020).

During the combined discussions were held on both the Bills. The Minister in charge of the Bills, while piloting the Bills *inter alia* stated that 50 years ago in 1970 Parliament had enacted the *Indian Medicine Central Council Act*, and again in 1973, the *Central Council for Homeopathy Act* was enacted in order to regulate Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy. The Central Council for Indian System of Medicine and the Central Council for Homeopathy were constituted under both these Acts. But it was felt both these institutions could not discharge their responsibilities which they were supposed to do on order to monitor the Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy and oversee the medical education.

After 70 years of independence, India witnessed historic reforms as a consequence of the National Medical Commission. The Government were of the considered view that commissions be formed to Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy and usher in substantial reforms. Accordingly, the Bills had been brought forward.

The Bills which were passed on 18 March 2020 were passed by Lok Sabha on 14 September 2020. The Bills as passed by both Houses of Parliament were assented to by the President of India on 20 September 2020.

**The National Forensic Sciences University Bill, 2020**

The Bill seeks to establish the National Forensic Sciences University. The proposed National Sciences University seeks to facilitate and promote studies and research and to achieve excellence in the field of Forensic Science in conjunction with applied behavioral science studies law, criminology and other allied areas and technology and other related fields for strengthening criminal justice system



The Parliament of India.

in the country. It would be a teaching, research and affiliating university, and may affiliate with colleges and other institutions in the States and Union Territories. Apart from imparting education, the proposed university would also set up a center excellence in the area of Forensic Sciences and provide modern facilities in these areas.

The objectives of the University include:

- (i) promoting academic learning in the field of forensic science in conjunction with split behavioural science studies, law and other allied areas to strengthen the criminal justice institutions in India,
- (ii) fostering research and applied applications in forensic science, applied behavioural science studies, and law

- (iii) coordinating with the central and state governments to improve investigations, crime detection and prevention through research, and
- (iv) assisting the central government creating and maintaining a national forensic database for criminal investigation, including DNA and fingerprints.

The Bill provides for the establishment of several authorities including the Chancellor of the University; the Court which will review the broad policies and programmes of the University; the Board of Governors which will be the principal executive body; and the academic policies of the University. The first statutes of the University would

require the approval of the Central Government.

#### Debate

During the debate on the Bill in Parliament, several suggestions emerged including the exchange of forensic medicines with other institutions in India; the creation of a knowledge pool of all such institutions; a mechanism should be put in place for the sharing of benefits by stakeholders.

The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on 20 September 2020 and by Rajya Sabha on 22 September 2020. The Bill as passed by both Houses of Parliament was assented to by the President of India on 28 September 2020.

## NEW BOOK ON THE PARLIAMENT OF INDIA REFLECTS ITS DIVERSE DIMENSIONS

*The Parliamentarian's* India Parliamentary correspondent, Ravindra Garimella, formerly a Joint Secretary (Legislation) and consultant to the Lok Sabha Secretariat has launched a new book '*Parliament of India: Diverse Dimensions*'. The book is a compilation of ten articles covering the varied facets of the workings of the Parliament of India, parliamentary procedures and practices, membership related matters, rituals and conventions.

In the book, Ravindra Garimella goes into great detail on a myriad of different aspects of India's democratic polity, based on his experiences as a parliamentary officer for more than 30 years and 25 years as an Officer-at-the-Table (Lok Sabha). Through this book, the author has covered a wide range of parliamentary-related aspects, documented from a practitioner's perspective. The book is intended to serve as useful reference source for Parliamentarians, officials, academics and researchers alike.

The author presented a copy of the book to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and CPA India Regional Chairperson, Shri Om Birla at the Parliament of India.







### OPENING OF 53<sup>rd</sup> NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT

Parliamentary Report by Luke Harris, Parliament of New Zealand.

#### 2020 GENERAL ELECTION

New Zealanders went to the polls on 17 October 2020 to elect Members to the 53<sup>rd</sup> Parliament of New Zealand. The 83% voter turnout was higher than at any of the previous six general elections. There was also a substantial increase in the number of people who cast their vote in the two-week period prior to Election Day. On the day itself, voting booths applied strict social-distancing measures. A further measure was the delay of the election itself, from the planned September date until the country was free of community transmission of COVID-19.

The New Zealand Labour Party, led by Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern, won 46 of the 72 electorate seats, six of the seven Māori seats, and gained 50% of the party vote. In total, Labour won 65 seats in the 120-seat Parliament, increasing their share by 19 seats and assuring them of a second term in Government. In fact, they won an outright majority of seats in the 53<sup>rd</sup> Parliament, something that no other party has done under New Zealand's Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system since the first general election under MMP in 1996. Although they had no need for a coalition partner, Labour subsequently entered into a cooperation agreement with the Green Party, which returned to Parliament with 10 seats, two more than they had previously held.

The National Party secured 33 seats, returning as the largest party in Opposition although significantly down from the 56 seats they held in the previous Parliament. In the first year of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, Hon. Simon Bridges had succeeded Rt Hon. Bill English

as party leader, but within four months of the planned election date, National changed leadership twice. The party elected its current leader, Hon. Judith Collins, in July 2020.

Labour's former coalition partner, New Zealand First, led by Rt Hon. Winston Peters, also lost considerable support. It failed to gain either an electorate seat or more than five percent of the party vote, which meant it has no seats in the 53<sup>rd</sup> Parliament. The ACT Party, which for three terms had just a single member in the House, was returned with 10 Members. Te Paati Māori (the Māori Party), which had no representation in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, returned with two members in the 53<sup>rd</sup> Parliament.

#### OPENING OF 53<sup>rd</sup> PARLIAMENT AND ADDRESS IN REPLY DEBATE

New Zealand's 53<sup>rd</sup> Parliament met on Wednesday 25 November 2020 for Members to be sworn in and to elect a Speaker. Rt Hon. Trevor Mallard, MP (Labour), Speaker in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, was declared elected unopposed as Speaker of the House of Representatives. Members swore their oath in either English or Māori, and had the option to recite it a second time in their own language. Eleven Members chose to do so.

The following day, the Governor-General of New Zealand, Her Excellency Dame Patsy Reddy DNZM, delivered the Speech from the Throne at the State Opening in the Legislative Council Chamber, outlining the Government's policy commitments and legislative intentions for the 53<sup>rd</sup> Parliament. On resuming, the House appointed Adrian Rurawhe, MP (Labour) as Deputy Speaker, and Hon. Jenny

Salesa, MP (Labour) and Hon. Jacqui Dean, MP (National) as Assistant Speakers.

As is customary, two new Government Members moved and seconded the motion that a respectful address be presented to the Governor-General in reply to her speech. Ms Arena Williams, MP (Labour) moved the motion, which was then seconded by Mr Ibrahim Omer, MP (Labour). Both Members delivered their maiden speeches, the first of 41 maiden speeches in the Address In Reply Debate.

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Judith Collins, MP (National) congratulated the new Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern, MP (Labour) on "a remarkable election result." She told the Parliament that "Miss Ardern is governing New Zealand during one of the most important times in our nation's history and I wish her well because the decisions that we make here in this Chamber over the next three years will shape the country we live in for decades to come." She reminded the House: "The Labour Government promised in 2017 to address New Zealand's housing, child poverty, and transport issues. And what's

*happened? Well, they all got worse and that was even before the COVID-19 pandemic."* Ms Collins moved an amendment to the Address In Reply motion that included the statement "That in the context of a Government that is borrowing more than any other in our history and the burden this leaves future generations, the Government will be held to account for the poor quality of its spending."

In her reply, the Prime Minister thanked New Zealand "for the honour and the privilege of being back here and forming a Labour Government." She said Labour's support came "from rural communities, it came from urban, towns, cities" and she acknowledged the responsibility that came with that, promising "we will be a Government for all New Zealanders, not least because that is what is needed in these times." The Prime Minister also reflected on the make-up of the new Parliament, saying "This is, in this 53<sup>rd</sup> Parliament, the most diverse Parliament we have ever had, and that's because voters - that's because, ultimately, New Zealanders - have chosen to reflect who we are as a nation in this House of Representatives."







Third Reading Report by Luke Harris, Parliament of New Zealand.

### THIRD READING REPORT

#### COVID-19 Public Health Response Amendment Bill

The COVID-19 Public Health Response Amendment Bill passed its Third Reading under urgency on the morning of 2 December 2020. Its passage through the House followed a truncated process, with debate at the First Reading only. The Minister in charge of the legislation, Hon. Chris Hipkins, MP (Labour), Minister for COVID-19 Response, explained: *"It is a simple Bill that does two things ... The first thing it does is relatively simple: it changes references to the Minister of Health to the Minister responsible for the Act, and that's quite simple. ... a relatively simple technical adjustment that reflects the fact that there is now a Minister for COVID-19 Response ... The second amendment that the Bill makes ... is it allows the Government to remove restrictions made under orders with less than 48 hours' notice."* He clarified: *"the orders that we're talking about are things like the air border order, the maritime border order, our isolation and quarantine order, the orders requiring people to be tested, and any orders that are issued relating to alert levels."*

National Party Member and Opposition spokesperson for COVID-19 Response, Mr Chris Bishop, MP stated: *"The National Opposition will be supporting the passage of this Bill through its particularly truncated passage through the House. We think it's a, to the extent that it does anything, sensible piece of legislation. ... for tidiness, I suppose, it's useful to have the Minister for COVID-19 Response in the legislation rather than the Minister of Health, but I'm not really sure it was absolutely required."*

The Minister of Transport, Hon. Michael Wood, MP (Labour) was the only other Member to speak at the Bill's First Reading. He said, *"I do want to note is that this piece of legislation is an important part of the overall legislative infrastructure for how we have managed our way through an extraordinary year. I think the way in which the Parliament and the Government have been able to come together to ensure that we have legislation that's fit for purpose, that enables quick decisions to be made in the public health interest, while also making sure that there is parliamentary oversight, has actually been a bit of a*

*standout success story of our democracy this year."* He concluded that the changes reflected in the Bill *"are all pretty sensible, all pretty pragmatic, and contribute to us having an ongoing piece of legislation that helps us to keep New Zealanders safe in these challenging times."*

The Bill passed with unanimous support and received the Royal Assent on 7 December 2020.

#### Drug and Substance Checking Legislation Bill

The Drug and Substance Checking Legislation Bill passed its Third Reading under urgency on 1 December 2020, with support from the Labour Party, the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, ACT New Zealand, and Te Paati Māori; the National Party opposed the legislation. The Bill amends the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1975* and the *Psychoactive Substances Act 2013* to try to minimise drug and substance harm by allowing drug and substance checking services to operate legally in New Zealand.

The Minister in charge of the Bill, the Minister of Health, Hon. Andrew Little, MP (Labour) said: *"The reason we're doing this ... under urgency is because it is December. The music festival season for the forthcoming summer is upon us. ... We know that the cohort of people who go to those festivals tend to be younger people, and many of them are at an age where they are experimenting with substances, many of them illicit substances, and some of them are substances the safety and security of which is not really known. So we accept the reality that this is going to happen. People are going to turn up to these events with illicit substances. We know that some of those substances are at risk of a lack of safety and causing harm to the potential user of them, and we want to minimise that harm and we want to make ... the risk being taken with the ingestion of those substances, as low as possible ..."*

Fellow Labour Member Dr Liz Craig, MP noted that the Bill *"expires 12 months after it comes into force because, in the meantime, the Minister of Health is going to go back to Cabinet with a more detailed solution. At that time, Parliament will be able to debate in detail and will have a full Select Committee process so the people of New Zealand can come in and provide their feedback on that more detailed solution."*

Opposition spokesperson for Justice, Hon. Simon Bridges, MP (National) opined: *"[the Bill] is part of a wholesale decriminalisation of drugs in New Zealand."*

Hon. Mark Mitchell, MP (National) added: *"we have got a drug problem in New Zealand ... It's becoming a growing industry, unfortunately, because we are being the recipients of serious criminal organisations like ... gangs ... that are coming in from Australia, and they're taking us to a new level in terms of violence and organisation around the drug trade and the supply chain. ... I can see why the Government would want to be focused on tackling that, but I feel very strongly in my heart of hearts that this is the wrong pathway to go down."* He stated: *"There are good young people out there ... that won't take drugs, and the reason why ... is that it's illegal and they don't want to break the law. ... Now they're going to have a lot more peer pressure and they're going to have people saying, well, you know what, the Government said that it's OK; we'll test your drugs."*

Ms Chlöe Swarbrick, MP (Green), in response to Mr Mitchell, countered: *"I'm not sure which young people he's spoken to ... because quite typically it's young people actually doing the opposite of what those in authority are saying they should do. So, first and foremost, with regard to the messages that are presently being sent from a prohibition type of approach, they're 'Do it secretly. Just do it over there. We don't really want to know about it, but we kind of tacitly know that it is occurring right now.'"*

The ACT Party Leader, Mr David Seymour, MP explained: *"All [this legislation] does is temporarily allow voluntary organisations, filled with people who want to help others reduce harm, go about their business without the fear of prosecution that exists in the current legal grey area around pill testing. It allows people who are hosting music festivals, concerts, and so on to have people who offer a testing service for drugs to be able to be on their premises without fear of legal repercussions. ... It does not remove the prohibition on supply and possession of classified illegal drugs."*

The Drug and Substance Checking Legislation Bill passed its Third Reading after a party vote of 86 to 33. It received the Royal Assent on 7 December 2020.



# UPDATE ON AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT DURING COVID-19

Parliamentary Report by Fleur Hall, Parliament of Australia.

## COVID-19 UPDATE

The Australian Federal Parliament continues to meet and, by effectively managing risks posed by the Coronavirus pandemic, has ensured the safety of Parliamentarians, building occupants, and the broader community.

As readers of the previous issue of *The Parliamentarian* may recall, since 24 August 2020, the Parliament has permitted Members and Senators to participate remotely in certain chamber proceedings, if they are unable to attend Parliament because of the pandemic.

In the Australian House of Representatives, an *Agreement for Members to Contribute Remotely to Parliamentary Proceedings*, made between the Leader of the House, Hon. Christian Porter, MP and the Manager for Opposition Business, Hon. Tony Burke, MP, was presented on 24 August 2020. The Agreement stipulates that Members unable to attend may use the official parliamentary video facility for the purposes of participating in Question Time or for making a speech. However, Members may not vote or be counted for quorum; move or second any motion; move or second any amendment to a motion or a Bill; propose or support a proposal to discuss a Matter of Public Importance; call for a division or call for a quorum to be counted.

On 30 November 2020, the first day of the final sitting fortnight for the year, the Leader of the House presented a revised Agreement. The slight modification enabled remote contributions to occur in the case of the

Prime Minister, Hon. Scott Morrison, MP, at The Lodge, the Prime Minister's official residence, where he had been in quarantine after returning from overseas travel. For the first three days of the sittings, the Prime Minister participated by video link during Question Time – a first for an Australian Prime Minister.

The Australian Senate has continued to pass a resolution, at the start of each period of sittings, that the rules for remote participation recommended by the Senate Procedure Committee (which include that its use by absent Senators extend to any matter before the Chair, with some limitations) have effect for that particular period.

During the pandemic, there have been varying limits placed on the numbers of Members and Senators permitted at any one time in the chambers, due to social distancing requirements, even if they have been present in the building.

In a statement to the House on 30 November 2020, the Speaker, Hon. Tony Smith, MP, noted that seating arrangements for the final fortnight would accommodate the highest number of Members (125) since February to be present in the chamber. Acknowledging the sacrifices that Members have made by not attending the chamber, when necessary, during the year, the Speaker said that *"the chamber has only been able to continue its work because a significant number of Members, at various times, have volunteered not to be here."* One of the ways this has been formally recognised is, since 12 May 2020, through the recording of pairs – and

therefore voting intentions – in the House's official record, the *Votes and Proceedings*.

Throughout 2020, the Parliament has struck a sensible balance between enabling Parliamentarians to perform their essential democratic roles (and Parliament House to function as normally as possible) and managing potential health implications. As the Speaker remarked: *"In this short period, the House has demonstrated its ability to adapt to the unusual circumstance without sacrificing either the integrity of its role and operations or the wellbeing of participants and their constituents."*

## BUDGET NIGHT 2020

The date for the 2020 Federal Budget was originally scheduled for 12 May 2020. However, on 20 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced that the Budget would be deferred until 6 October 2020, given the uncertainty surrounding parliamentary sittings because of the pandemic. On 23 March 2020, three supply Bills were introduced, debated and passed both Houses. These supply Bills provided seven-twelfths of the estimated appropriation for 2020-2021.

On 6 October 2020, Budget night saw the introduction of Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2020-2021 (the Main Appropriation Bill); Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2020-2021 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No.1) 2020-2021. Because of the supply Bills passed in March, the Budget Bills only provided funding for the remaining five-twelfths of the estimated 2020-2021 annual appropriation and funding for

new measures. The Budget Bills were assented to on 4 December 2020.

From a procedural perspective, Budget Night 2020 operated as normal with the Treasurer, Hon. Josh Frydenberg, MP presenting the Main Appropriation Bill shortly after 7.30pm, moving its Second Reading and making the traditional (and televised) Budget speech. However, with the closure of the public and press galleries, the number of visitors to Parliament House was significantly reduced: admissions in 2020 (inclusive of passholders) totalled 4,448 compared with 9,671 admissions for the same 24-hour period in 2019.

## BUSY COMMITTEE REPORTING AND LEGISLATIVE PERIOD AS 2020 DREW TO A CLOSE

In the last sitting fortnight for 2020, 32 Bills were introduced in the House, 28 of which were government Bills. Private members' Bills accounted for the remaining four.

During the fortnight, 32 Bills passed the House, of which 29 were passed in the final week.

A total of 28 Committee reports were presented in the House on a wide range of subjects, including the destruction of 46,000 year old caves at the Juukan Gorge in Western Australia; the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs, defence and trade; and the procedures put in place by the House in response to COVID-19.

The House and Senate are next scheduled to meet on 2 February 2021.



The Australian Federal Parliament in Canberra.

## NEW AND RETIRING MEMBERS AND SENATORS

On 18 September 2020, Dr John McVeigh MP (Liberal National Party of Queensland) resigned his seat as the Member for Groom in the state of Queensland. On 8 October 2020, the Speaker announced that the date of the by-election for Groom would be 28 November 2020. The seat was retained by the Liberal National Party of Queensland, with Mr Garth Hamilton, MP becoming the new Member. Mr Hamilton was sworn in on 3 December 2020.

On 30 November 2020, in the Australian Senate, Senator Benjamin Small (Liberal Party of Australia) was sworn in to represent the state of Western Australia, filling the vacancy caused by the resignation on 6 November 2020 of

former Senator Hon. Mathias Cormann.

On the final sitting day of the year, 10 December 2020, the Member for Lingiari in the Northern Territory, Hon. Warren Snowdon, MP (Australian Labor Party) announced his intention to retire from Parliament, telling the House he was planning to “roll the swag” and would not be contesting the next election. Mr Snowdon has served in the Parliament for over 31 years, having been first elected in 1987, and is the only remaining Member or Senator to have come across from the Old Parliament House. Mr Snowdon’s seat of Lingiari covers 1,348,158 square kilometres, an area comprising over 99% of the Northern Territory, as well as the Territory of Christmas Island and the Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

In a statement on indulgence, Mr Snowdon told the House that it was an enormous privilege to serve the people of the Northern Territory, and paying tribute in particular to the “*cooperation across the Parliament on Parliamentary Committees*” said that “*we have people of commitment on both sides of the Parliament and we need to recognise that commitment for what it is.*” Mr Snowdon made his announcement the day after the Electoral Amendment (Territory Representation) Bill 2020, had passed both Houses. This Act guarantees the Northern Territory two seats at the next election, thereby retaining its current level of federal representation.

## PARLIAMENTARY REPORTS FROM THE AUSTRALIA REGION

### QUEENSLAND STATE ELECTION 2020

The general election for the state of Queensland was held on 31 October 2020. The Labor Party, led by incumbent Premier, Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk, MP, was returned for a third term, winning 52 of the 93 seats in the Legislative Assembly to form a majority government. Ms Palaszczuk, who became the first female Premier to win three elections, acknowledged that the year had been “*incredibly tough*”, but described Queenslanders as “*strong and united*” in the face of the global pandemic, promising “*my team will roll up our sleeves and we will get back to work as quickly as possible for you.*”

The Liberal National Party of Queensland (LNP) won 34 seats, with leader Mrs Deborah (Deb) Frecklington, MP conceding defeat late in the evening. Mrs Frecklington congratulated the Premier and, in her concession speech, thanked Queenslanders “*for voting and upholding our democracy.*” Following the election loss, Mrs Frecklington resigned her position as leader of the LNP and on 12 November 2020, Mr David Crisafulli, MP was elected unopposed to the position.

### STATE ELECTIONS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

On 7 December 2020, the two Houses of the Parliament of Western Australia, the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council, were prorogued by the Governor of Western Australia, Hon. Kim Beazley, AC. The next state general election for Western Australia will be held on 13 March 2021. Voters in Western Australia will elect one candidate for each of the 59 Legislative Assembly districts and one candidate for each of the six Legislative Council regions.





## THIRD READING REPORT

### Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020

This legislation was introduced to the Australian House of Representatives on 3 September 2020, and provisions of the Bill were on that day referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade for inquiry and report. It was finally assented to on 10 December 2020.

The Act establishes a framework for Commonwealth engagement with arrangements between State or Territory governments and foreign governments, and their associated entities. The Act enables the Minister for Foreign Affairs to assess such arrangements to determine whether they adversely affect Australia's foreign relations or are inconsistent with Australia's foreign policy, and to prevent the arrangement from proceeding, if so judged. The Act applies to all arrangements between State and Territory entities and foreign entities, whether those arrangements are legally binding or not, and regardless of when the arrangement was entered into.

The Act distinguishes between:

- 'core' arrangements, which, before they are entered into, require State and Territory governments to obtain the approval of the Minister.

- 'non-core' arrangements, which, if they are proposed to be entered into, require State and territory entities to notify the Minister, who may make declarations about the negotiations of such arrangements.

The Attorney-General, Hon. Christian Porter, MP (Liberal Party of Australia), told the House that the Bill *"is necessary, because it ensures that the Commonwealth government will have full visibility of all arrangements with foreign countries"* and that it *"is designed to give the Australian public confidence that all levels of Australian government are coordinated, aligned and working effectively together for the national interest."* The Attorney-General explained that the scheme is *"intentionally comprehensive, to ensure that the Commonwealth can fulfil its constitutionally mandated role to conduct Australia's foreign affairs and represent Australia internationally."* The Member for Wentworth, Mr Dave Sharma, MP (Liberal Party of Australia) added that the Bill *"is not directed abroad or directed at any particular country; it is directed internally, towards Australian entities and institutions."*

The Member for Isaacs, Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP (Australian Labor Party), informed the House that Labor supported the objectives of the Bill, but said that *"the legislation itself is so sloppy that it must be re-written."* Elaborating, Mr Dreyfus told the House that *"the drafting of this Bill was*

*self-evidently rushed, and it means that a range of fundamental issues have not been considered."* He commented that the Bill *"fails to provide clear definitions of critical terms, including the terms 'foreign policy' and 'foreign relations' [which] leaves the ambit of the legislation entirely unclear."* Mr Dreyfus also bemoaned the Bill's provision of broad discretionary powers to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and its lack of merits review. Finally, Mr Dreyfus said that *"the government has failed to explain how the Bill complements and interacts with the suite of existing legislation, processes and institutions that already works to safeguard Australia's sovereignty, build domestic institutional resilience and regulate international engagement."*

Advising the House that the Greens did not support the Bill, the Member for Melbourne, Mr Adam Bandt, MP (Australian Greens), said that it was *"ineffective in what it sets out to do, because it doesn't include the things that would actually get to the sources of interference in our democratic processes."* Mr Bandt added that, in relation to universities, *"if the federal government wants to ensure that there is no risk of foreign interference [they should] provide them with secure, adequate funding."*

In the Australian Senate, Senator Hon. Penny Wong (Australian Labor Party) reiterated Labor's support for the *"reasonable"* premise of the legislation, which *"is that Australia's national government should be responsible for*





*international relations.*” However, Senator Wong called for the government to “*re-draft the Bill and address its flaws*” and for “*the Minister to engage in genuine consultation with the Australian entities covered by the Bill on the design of the regime.*”

Some of these sentiments were echoed by Senator Griff Stirling (Centre Alliance) who agreed that federal oversight of such arrangements was “*sensible*” but that the Bill was “*incredibly unbalanced*” in that “*it doesn’t give the Commonwealth the final say over foreign investments and arrangements; it gives the only say.*” Senator Stirling also objected to the Bill’s lack of a requirement for the Minister to provide reasons for decisions, and quoted from constitutional law expert Professor George Williams, who told the Senate Inquiry into the Bill that this means “*that an agreement may be overturned, but the parties will have no idea why.*”

Finally, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women, Senator Hon. Marise Payne (Liberal Party of Australia) thanked Senators for their contribution to the debate, and acknowledged the “*significant contribution that states, territories, local governments and universities make to Australia’s international engagement, including through arrangements with foreign governments.*” The Minister emphasised that the Bill “*does not seek to prevent these arrangements [but] does seek to put in place a robust, proportionate process...so that everyone can be confident that the arrangements...are consistent with Australia’s foreign policy.*”

## Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Supporting the Wellbeing of Veterans and Their Families) Act 2020

This Act, which was assented to on 26 November 2020, amends the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRC Act) and the *Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986* (VE Act) to create a ‘Repatriation Commissioner’, to be appointed by the Governor-General on advice from the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, to represent veterans’ families. The Act further amends the MRC Act to enable the provision of assistance or benefits to former Australian Defence Force members to help them to transition into civilian work, and amends the VE Act to extend eligibility for a quarterly energy supplement to a

cohort of ‘Gold Card’ holders to ensure all Gold Card holders are treated consistently.

The Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Hon. Darren Chester, MP (Liberal Party of Australia) explained to the House that the new Commissioner, to be known as the Veteran Family Advocate, “*will work with veterans’ families to build understanding of risk and protective factors relating to the wellbeing of veterans and their families, particularly during the transition from the Australian Defence Force.*” The Minister added that the Veteran Family Advocate “*will be responsible for directly engaging with the families of veterans, to help shape policy, improve the design of all veteran programs and services, including mental health support and services.*” The Minister described that the Bill would also facilitate the provision, to eligible veterans, of pre- and post-employment assistance such as “*career advice, coaching, assistance with skills translation, resume and interview preparation, and coaching to adapt to the structure and styles of communication in civilian employment.*”

Informing the House that Labor supported the Bill, the Member for Burt, Mr Matt Keogh, MP (Australian Labor Party) spoke of his “*trust*” that the position of Veteran Family Advocate created by the Bill “*will have the necessary resources and independence to adequately represent the views of veterans’ families to the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and influence actual policymaking.*” Mr Keogh noted our “*special obligation*” to help veterans, who put their lives at risk for us, and, expressing concerns that they “*are not getting the support they and their families need after they leave the Australian Defence Force*”, called for the government to “*do more to address veterans’ mental health and suicide*” by establishing a Royal Commission.

The Member for Lingjari, Hon. Warren Snowdon, MP (Australian Labor Party) thanked the Minister for the initiatives being proposed, describing them as “*extremely important*”, and putting them into context by estimating that there are over 60,000 Australian Defence Force members who have served overseas since 1991. Mr Snowdon also acknowledged the importance of “*looking after people as individuals and within a family unit*” and said that the legislative intent therefore “*goes a long way to addressing what has*

*been a real need in the Defence Force Community and the veterans’ community.*”

The Member for Warringah, Ms Zali Steggall, MP (Independent), indicating her strong support for the Bill, commented on the “*importance of the Bill in giving prominence to veterans’ wellbeing and to the significant role that families play in supporting veterans through their transition.*” Ms Steggall noted that “*there is no doubt that families...are the first to experience mental health struggles of veterans*” and drew attention to some concerning statistics, including the much higher rates of suicide, imprisonment and homelessness among ex-veterans compared with the civilian population.

In a similar vein, the member for Indi, Dr Helen Haines, MP (Independent), said that “*the reforms in this Bill make it clear that the nation sees our veterans and their families and recognises their immense contributions and unique challenges.*” Dr Haines described the Bill as “*another bridge to civilian life*” and spoke of the importance of assisting former Australian Defence Force members to utilise their “*incredible skill sets*” in areas such as “*leadership, strategic planning and problem solving*”, in civilian life and employment “*if they wish to, and [to] bring such skills and expertise to our community.*”

In the Senate, Senator Carol Brown (Australian Labor Party), while acknowledging Labor’s support for the Bill, and noting that it “*should support better mental health outcomes and suicide prevention for veterans and their families*”, nonetheless reiterated Labor’s call for the government to establish “*a Royal Commission into veteran suicides so we can tackle the issue once and for all.*”

Summing up, the Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator Zed Seselja (Liberal Party of Australia) acknowledged that “*our veterans were prepared to make great sacrifices when we needed them*” and that the government recognises “*that in many ways the service of defence families on the home front is just as important as service on the front line.*” Finally, Senator Seselja reiterated what had been widely acknowledged by Members and Senators in both chambers during the debate on the Bill: that “*we cannot solve the complex problems faced by veterans without the assistance of their families.*”



# OPPOSITION MOTIONS IN THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO PARLIAMENT CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT

Parliamentary Report by Paras Ramoutar, Freelance Journalist based at the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

## GOVERNMENT DEFEATS OPPOSITION MOTION ON COVID-19

The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Hon. Dr Keith Rowley has challenged Opposition leader Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar that her motion of no-confidence in Minister of National Security, Hon. Stuart Young, should have been posited on himself.

The motion was defeated by 20 Government MPs voting against, while 18 Opposition MPs voted in support of the motion. The motion was debated in the House of Representatives on 27 January 2021.

In presenting her motion, Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar heavily criticised the Minister on his handling of the Exemption Policy in the wake of COVID-19. In presenting her motion, she asked the Minister why he had allowed 17 Embassy workers to leave and return to Trinidad and Tobago and not be isolated and put into home quarantine. The Opposition leader highlighted that MPs should express their disenchantment with the Minister just as citizens in Trinidad and Tobago's Arima Central, Cunupia and Hindustan/St. Mary's districts had expressed no confidence in the People's National Movement (PNM) earlier that week. She was referring to three Local Government by-elections which the Government had lost to her United National Congress (UNC) Party.

In his response, Hon. Dr Keith Rowley said that the Opposition Leader should have tackled him instead of the Minister, as he was ultimately responsible

overall for national security and the government's response.

Dr Rowley acknowledged the difficult circumstances under COVID-19 and that some people would not like the government measures – however, he asked that the Opposition parties should not indulge in misinformation that would result in citizens refusing to cooperate.

## OPPOSITION CALLS FOR RELEASE OF ENTITIES THAT HAVE BENEFITTED FROM CUSTOM DUTIES

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar has called on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to release the names of entities benefitting from exemptions in the Third Schedule in the *Customs Act*.

The Opposition leader was speaking during a motion laid in Parliament by the Trade and Industry Minister, Senator Hon. Paula Gopee-Scoon, saying that the Minister did not give quantifiable data to show the exemptions that had benefitted the economy over the years. The exemptions are for approved industries including agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries, hotels, and mining purposes. Exemptions had been offered by governments since 1959, but there had been no tracking of the benefits.

Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar said that in the last three years, the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago data showed that the exemptions were not benefitting farmers and that exemptions would not help with the growth and expansion of the tourism sector.

The Minister of Youth Development and National Service, Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds pointed out that the Opposition leader had failed to mention the \$500 million allocation and the lifting of taxes from the agriculture sector. He identified some 26 entities in the agriculture sector which had benefitted from the exemptions.

## SENATOR CALLS FOR AMENDMENTS TO PUBLIC PROCUREMENT BILL

Opposition Senator Wade Mark has said that the Government's proposed amendments to the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property (Amendment) Bill 2020 went against its own party manifesto in the recent General Election. The Senator said that wherever public money is involved, whether government to government or private/public sector arrangements, *"there must be complete scrutiny, transparency, accountability, integrity, and honesty along with value for money."* He said: *"Today marks a watershed moment in our country's history. We are in an extremely dangerous place if we in the Senate allow this piece of legislation to pass and to pass without hindrance."*

## SENATOR WARNS AGAINST INTERFERENCE WITH THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CENTRAL BANK

Opposition Senator Wade Mark has accused the Government of interfering with the independence of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

He told the Upper House that he wondered whether the Government wanted to control the Central Bank and turn it into a virtual division of the Ministry of Finance.

The Senator was speaking in relation to the Miscellaneous Provisions (FATF Compliance) Bill 2020, which was piloted by Attorney General, Hon. Faris Al-Rawi.

The Senator, who is a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, argued that the Bill aims to alter the *Interception of Communications Act* by allowing the authorities to access peoples' stored data.

## FINANCE MINISTER WARNS OF FINANCIAL SHORTFALL RESULTING FROM COVID-19

The Minister of Finance, Hon. Colm Imbert told the Senate that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago faces *"astronomical costs"* if it agreed to the recent demands of public sector employees. The Minister said that COVID-19 has hit the Government finances resulting in a shortfall between revenue and expenditure of \$15 to \$16 billion TT dollars.

The Minister said that it was just not feasible to proceed with the plan in the context of the problems associated with COVID-19. The Government did not have the requested \$765 million to make available at this point in time. In the face of the \$16 billion hole in the budget created by COVID-19, the Government was unable to authorize the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) to continue to increase allowances.





The House of Representatives in the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

## YOUNG PEOPLE ACCOUNT FOR 40% OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POPULATION

The Minister of Youth Development and National Service, Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds has announced a series of programmes aimed at enhancing youth development in Trinidad and Tobago, according to a statement in Parliament. He said that the country's youth population hovers around 40% of the total.

The Ministry will take a positive youth development approach and it does not perceive the youth as a problem 'to be fixed'. Rather, though this approach, the Government will see youth as a national resource, an asset and a source of socio-economic growth, but more importantly, they see them as co-creators and contributors to sustainable development. The Minister added: "Young people are to be respected, nurtured,

*positively influenced, guided, supported and moulded for the benefit of themselves, their community and country. They are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but leaders of today."*

Pillars for youth development are to include supporting youth action on climate change, environmental sustainability and climate justice; creating safe spaces, peaceful communities and environments; the facilitation and active youth participation in the civic and democratic life of Trinidad and Tobago; and the youth contribution to rural transformation, agricultural production and food security. The Minister also said that a new network of stakeholders will guide youth, including NGOs, police youth clubs and civic organisations.

## NEW PACKAGING FOR CIGARETTES

The Minister of Health, Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh has proposed a new form of

packaging for cigarettes. He stated, while presenting a Bill in the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago, that the new regulations would allow the Government to print graphic images on cigarette packs to deter people from smoking and reinforce the message that smoking is unhealthy.

The Minister noted that between January 2013 and December 2017, some 641 deaths were attributed to smoking. He said that despite the widespread information and the millions of deaths globally caused by smoking, including deaths from lung cancer, throat cancer and other parts of the body, about 93% of the world's population still live in countries that are not covered by 100% smoke-free public health regulations. He also pointed out that cigarettes contain over 4,000 harmful chemicals.

The Minister pointed out that the on the new packaging, the graphic images would cover half of one side of the cigarettes packaging, and he expects

that this process would take a year, before it comes fully into fruition.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator Wade Mark, called for a programme to encourage students from primary to university level education to reject smoking and called for legislation to stop young people being exposed to vaping as a gateway to full-fledged smoking.

The Senator also cited a 2011 PAHO report that had been very critical of smoking in Trinidad and Tobago and "estimated that about 40% of students between the ages of 13 to 15 years have experimented with cigarette smoking at one time or the other, whilst an equal percentage, 40% of males and females, have also experimented with smoking before the age of ten."

The Senator also asked the Government what facilities and counselling services would be available for citizens who wanted to quit smoking.



# PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA SITS 100 TIMES AND PASSES 26 BILLS AMIDST COVID-19 DISRUPTIONS

Parliamentary Report by Mohammed Katamba, Parliament of Uganda.

## COVID-19 UPDATE

The Parliament of Uganda resumed sittings after the Christmas and New Year break as well as the general elections held on 14 January 2021 to complete the final but very crucial part of their five-year term.

During this period, which will run until sometime in May with the prorogation of the current, 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament, MPs are considering the National Budget for the financial year 2021/2022. The 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament commenced in May 2016 and will end in May 2021.

The new Parliament, to which Members were elected during the January general election will find the National Budget ready, and one of the first items on their agenda will be the budget presentation, which is usually done in mid-June.

In the year ended, despite disruptions to government activities and suspension of key activities and services, the Parliament of Uganda managed to put in 100

sittings in which up to 26 Bills were passed; 97 Ministerial statements considered and 171 urgent questions responded to by Government Ministers. The House also approved 17 motions authorising government to borrow so as to facilitate different activities in the country.

It was during this time that Parliament considered and passed the National Budget for the current financial year 2020/2021 and also had the presentation of the State of the Nation Address by the President. The Address marked the opening of the fifth and last session of the 10th Parliament. Parliament also considered and approved funds that were required to provide the much-needed boost to different sectors to enable the country to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

In November 2020, the Uganda Parliament, through resolution, authorised the Government to borrow up to US\$ 600 million from

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and a further Shs 3,258.5 billion through domestic borrowing to finance the budget deficit for the FY 2020/2021.

The Parliament also passed amendments to various electoral laws to facilitate the organisation and holding of the 2021 general elections. The Bills included: the Electoral Commission [Amendment] Bill, 2019; the Political Parties and Organisations [Amendment] Bill, 2019; the Local Government [Amendment] Bill, 2019; the Parliamentary Elections [Amendment] Bill, 2019; and the Presidential Elections [Amendment] Bill, 2019.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS BILLS

In the same year, the Parliament of Uganda passed nine resolutions granting Members leave to introduce Private Members Bills. These are proposed legislation moved

by backbench Members rather than the Government. These proposals included: the Public Enterprises Reform and Divestiture (Repeal) Bill, 2020; the Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill, 2020; the National Legal Aid Bill, 2020; the Real Estate Agents Bill, 2020; the Fish (Amendment) Bill, 2020; the Leadership Code (Amendment) Bill, 2020; the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2020; and the Establishment and Management of Markets Bill, 2020.

The Parliament of Uganda also approved a motion and created 15 new cities, some of which will only come into effect in the years ahead.

## UGANDA PARLIAMENT AMENDS ITS RULES OF PROCEDURE DURING COVID-19

For Parliament to proceed and consider all this business, it had to make adjustments or provisions for both the plenary and Committees to be able

Right: The Speaker of Parliament of Uganda, Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga (left) and the Clerk to Parliament, Mrs Jane L. Kibirige discuss as they prepare to start a Committee of the Whole House to consider a Bill in 2020.



Image credit: Images provided by the Parliament of Uganda.





Image credit: Images provided by the Parliament of Uganda.



to meet during interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the health requirements imposed and intended to prevent the spread of the pandemic, the Parliament of Uganda was forced to quickly amend its Rules of Procedure to consider how it would continue with its Constitutional mandate under the circumstances.

The House Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline was asked to review the Rules of Procedure to provide for either fully virtual sittings or hybrid virtual sittings. With the numbers of Members of Parliament and staff of Parliament who attend sittings, together with the available space in meeting rooms in the Parliament Building, it would not be possible to have the required social distancing respected.

The Committee on Rules recommended, and indeed

the plenary approved, a hybrid virtual Parliament where some Members of Parliament would be physically present at a meeting while others participate in the same meeting through a designated digital platform.

The plenary sittings were moved from the Parliament Chamber into the motor vehicle parking area to provide for social distancing.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament of Uganda comprises 457 Members, while each Committee consists of a maximum of 35 and 30 Members for Standing and Sectoral Committees respectively. On top of these are support staff required to attend such meetings, in addition to persons routinely invited to appear before the Committees.

*"It was deemed imperative that the Parliament of Uganda adopts a virtual Parliament, so as to ensure parliamentary business is not interrupted*

**Above: The Speaker of Parliament of Uganda, Rt Hon. Rebecca Kadaga and the Speaker's delegation makes its way to the House led by the Sergeant-At-Arms. During this period of COVID-19, the House was moved temporarily to the motor vehicle parking area to provide for social distancing for all Member of Parliament and parliamentary staff.**

*or paralysed by the COVID-19 pandemic or any other exceptional circumstances and emergencies as determined by the Speaker, from time to time,"* said Mr Kenneth Ongalo-Obote, the Chairperson of the Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline, which is charged with reviewing the House Rules of Procedure.

The Committee examined the rules to identify areas that required amendments for the smooth running of a hybrid virtual Parliament and suggested new rules, where it was found necessary.

In recommending a hybrid virtual Parliament, the

Committee observed that the communications infrastructure at Parliament, and in Uganda more widely, was not adequate and would present challenges of having every Member logged onto a virtual Parliament at the same time.

In the changes, the definition of 'House' was amended to mean a sitting of Members in the Chamber of Parliament and Members virtually present in the House.

*'Member virtually present in the House'* refers to a Member participating in the proceedings of Parliament outside the Chamber of Parliament through a designated digital platform,





having obtained leave of the Speaker and registered with the Clerk to so appear at least 12 hours before the commencement of a sitting. These Members attending virtually also part of the House quorum, and can vote through proxies.

'Table' means the Clerk's Table or a virtual table designated by the Speaker from time to time and accessible to all Members. This was meant to make provision for online participation of Members and online tabling of documents; and further, to protect online processes by parliamentary privilege.

The amended rules also provide for electronic laying of documents and how Members on a virtual platform catch the Speaker's eye when they need to make contributions.

In addition, Parliament suspended a requirement which stipulates that the quorum of Parliament shall be one third of all Members of Parliament entitled to vote, revising it downwards to one third of the cap of 80 Members per sitting in line with the COVID-19 guidelines.

### STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA

Following wide stakeholder consultations, the Parliament of Uganda formulated and launched the Strategic Plan for the Parliament of Uganda FY 2020/21 – 2024/25, replacing the Strategic Plan of FY2016/17 - FY2019/20. This Plan outlines a framework for the development of the institution for the given period and provides for the modernisation of systems and processes utilised in executing parliamentary business and in strengthening the capacity

of Members and the staff of Parliament.

The Strategic Plan builds on the experiences, achievements and lessons learnt from the implementation of the outgoing Strategic Plan. It also provides a structured framework for implementing and delivering its functions as required by the Constitution.

Below: Members of Parliament during a recent plenary sitting of the Parliament of Uganda. During this period of COVID-19, the 'chamber' was moved temporarily to provide for social distancing for all Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff.



Image credit: Images provided by the Parliament of Uganda.



Third Reading Report by Mohammed Katamba, Parliament of Uganda.



The Parliament of Uganda in Kampala.

### THIRD READING REPORT

The following Bills were passed in the Parliament of Uganda during this period:

#### **Traffic and Road Safety Act 1998 (Amendment) Bill, 2019**

The Bill seeks to amend the *Traffic and Road Safety Act, 1998* to strengthen road transport regulation and road safety management in Uganda. It seeks to repeal sections relating to road licenses, require drivers to be in physical possession of a valid driving licence and a copy of the registration book while driving or in charge of a motor vehicle; to amend the grouping of motor vehicles to conform to international standards; provide for a demerit point system; and related matters. The Bill was passed on 29 January 2020.

#### **The Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets (Amendment) Bill, 2019**

The Bill seeks to amend the *Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets*

Act to amend the functions of the Authority and of the Board of Directors of the Authority; to provide for electronic records and communication; to provide for the aggregation of procurement requirements; to provide for marginalized groups under reservation schemes; and related matters. The Bill passed on 31 January 2020.

#### **The Tobacco Control (Amendment) Bill, 2020**

The Bill seeks to protect the present and future generations from the devastating health, social, economic and environmental consequences of tobacco use and exposure; give effect to the obligations Uganda has undertaken to protect the people against tobacco-related harms; promote health and other human rights as a Party to the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and other related treaties; and to regulate the manufacture, sale, labelling, promotion, advertising, distribution, public use of tobacco products and sponsorship of tobacco products and to provide for

other related matters. The Bill was passed on 14 April 2020.

#### **The National Payment Systems Bill, 2020**

The Bill sought to regulate payment systems; to provide for the safety and efficiency of payment systems; to provide for the functions of the central bank in relation to payment systems; to prescribe the rules governing the oversight and protection of payment systems; to provide for financial collateral arrangements; to regulate payment service providers; to regulate issuance of electronic money; to provide for the oversight of payment instruments and for other related matters. Payment system means a system used to effect a transaction through the transfer of monetary value, and includes the institutions, payment instruments, person, rules, procedures, standards, and technologies that make such a transfer possible. The Bill was passed on 28 May 2020.

#### **The National Local Content Bill, 2019**

This Bill made provision for the application of local content to all undertakings where public money is used, in the extractive industries, in donor or loan funded projects and in activities carried out by a local content entity in possession of an investment agreement; the granting of preference to goods and services manufactured in Uganda or available on the Ugandan market; the granting of preference to Ugandan citizens, Ugandan companies and resident entities in the procurement of goods and services; the prioritization of Ugandan citizens in employment in all activities where public money is used, in the extractive industries, in donor or loan funded projects and in activities carried out by a local content entity in possession of an investment agreement; transfer of skills and technology to Ugandans and government during execution of activities where public money is used, in the extractive industries, in donor or loan funded projects and in activities carried out by a local content entity in possession of an investment agreement. The Bill was passed on 20 May 2020.





# UK PARLIAMENT PASSES FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BILL AS ‘BREXIT’ TRANSITION PERIOD ENDS

Parliamentary Report by Michael Berry, Parliament of the United Kingdom.

## FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BILL

Negotiations to strike a trade deal between the UK Government and the EU continued throughout November and into December 2020 as the end of the ‘Brexit’ transition period approached. If the UK Government and EU did not strike a deal before the end of 2020, the United Kingdom and EU would trade on WTO terms resulting in the imposition of tariffs on goods, and the end of various other agreements in policy areas including border controls, security and data without any replacement arrangements.

Meanwhile the controversial United Kingdom Internal Market (UKIM) Bill continued its passage through the House of Lords in November and December 2020. The Bill made provision for the UK internal market (trade within Great Britain and between Great Britain and Northern Ireland) to continue following the end of the transition period. The Bill proved contentious when it was first introduced in Parliament, as it contained provisions for Ministers to make regulations to determine how EU state aid law is applied, including in a way that could modify or disapply aspects of the Northern Ireland Protocol. The Protocol is an agreed part of the UK’s Withdrawal Agreement with the EU. Several Conservative MPs rebelled against the Government during its passage in the Commons (see *The Parliamentarian* 2020: Issue Four). At Committee stage, the Lords defeated the Government and voted to remove clauses 42 to 47, which contained the controversial

regulation-making powers. The vote on whether clause 42 should stand part of the Bill was the third largest vote in the House of Lords since its 1999 reform. 433 peers opposed the question that clause 42 should stand part of the Bill, with 165 in favour. At Report stage in the Lords, the Government was defeated a further seven times.

The UKIM Bill then began several rounds of ping-pong, with amendments made by the Lords and Commons considered by the other House. During the first round of ping-pong, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Paul Scully, MP (Con) told the Commons that, following progress in the negotiations between the UK Government and the EU, “the UK Government will be prepared to remove clause 44...[and] to deactivate clauses 45 and 47, concerning state aid, such that they could be used only when consistent with the United Kingdom’s rights and obligations under international law.” This produced concessions to some of the Lords amendments.

When the Bill returned to the Lords on 9 December, Rt Hon. Lord Judge, Crossbench Convenor, told the House “I welcome the Government’s decision to abide by the decisions of this House on Clauses 44, 45 and 47... We proceeded in earlier stages in the House based on their being tainted by the unconstitutional clauses - as I describe them. Now that those clauses are being removed, these are no longer tainted.” After further rounds of ping-pong took place to resolve outstanding differences, including the

establishment of a common legal framework programme between the home nations of the UK regarding devolved matters, the Bill received Royal Assent on 17 December 2020.

## FINAL NEGOTIATIONS AND AGREEMENT

On 9 December 2020, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Rt Hon. Boris Johnson, MP travelled to Brussels for a summit with the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. Despite media speculation, a trade deal was not reached at the summit, but it was agreed that talks should continue with a decision on the future of the talks to be made on 13 December 2020. Later that day, a joint statement by Prime Minister Johnson and President von der Leyen stated “despite the exhaustion after almost a year of negotiations, despite the fact that deadlines have been missed over and over we think it is responsible at this point to go the extra mile. We have accordingly mandated our negotiators to continue the talks.” Only 18 days remained before the transition period would end.

Negotiations continued after the UK Parliament rose for the Christmas recess on 17 December 2020. On 24 December 2020, announcements were made by both the UK Government and the EU that an agreement, known as the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), had been reached. The UK Parliament was recalled on the 30 December 2020 to consider the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill. The Bill, introduced that day, would implement the provisions of the TCA before the Brexit transition

period ended on 31 December 2020. The Bill also included the provision to disapply section 20 of the *Constitution Reform and Governance Act 2010*, which provides that treaties cannot be ratified unless they have been laid before Parliament for a period of at least 21 sitting days and the House of Commons has not passed a resolution against ratification in that period. The passing of the Bill would therefore also enable the Government to ratify the TCA before 31 December 2020.

During the Second Reading debate, the UK Prime Minister told the House “*with this Bill, we are going to become a friendly neighbour - the best friend and ally the EU could have, working hand in glove whenever our values and interests coincide, while fulfilling the sovereign wish of the British people to live under their own laws, made by their own elected Parliament.*”

Following the Prime Minister in the debate, the Leader of the Opposition, Rt Hon. Sir Keir Starmer, MP (Lab), explained why the Opposition would vote for the Bill: “*After four and a half years of debate and division, we finally have a trade deal with the EU. It is imperfect, it is thin and it is the consequence of the Prime Minister’s political choices, but we have only one day before the end of the transition period, and it is the only deal that we have... Ultimately, voting to implement the treaty is the only way to ensure that we avoid no deal.*” The Bill passed both its Second and Third Reading in the Commons with the same number of votes; 573 votes to 73.





The Parliament of the United Kingdom in London.



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The Bill was brought to the House of Lords. A regret motion was tabled to the Second Reading motion by **Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town** (Lab), Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Lords, which included that *“this House welcomes that the agreement with the European Union has avoided the United Kingdom leaving the transition period without a deal, but regrets the many shortcomings [of the agreement].”* Baroness Hayter’s motion was defeated by 312 votes to 213.

Lord Newby (Lib Dem) tabled a fatal amendment to the question *‘That the Bill do now pass’*. This amendment was also defeated by 466 votes to 101, with both the Government and the Opposition voting against.

Royal Assent was signified to both Houses shortly after

midnight on 31 December 2020, less than 24 hours before the Brexit transition period would end. The passing of the Bill marked the conclusion of one of the most controversial periods of UK politics in modern times.

### UNIVERSAL CREDIT OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

An Opposition Day debate was held in the UK House of Commons on Monday 18 January 2021. The Opposition tabled the motion *‘That this House believes that the Government should stop the planned cut in Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit in April and give certainty today to the six million families for whom it is worth an extra £1,000 a year’*. Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit are social security benefits. The amount paid to recipients of these benefits was

increased by the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer on 20 March 2020 for a 12-month period as part of a wider package of financial measures in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

When moving the motion, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, **Jonathan Reynolds, MP** (Lab), responded to reports that the Government would whip its MPs to abstain on the non-binding motion. He told the House: *“Opposition days have been a feature of our parliamentary system for many decades. They were used very successfully by the Conservative party when it was in opposition... All majority Governments, except this one, have accepted that if they cannot win a vote in Parliament on one of their policies, then they have to change that policy.”*

Closing the Opposition Day debate, Chief Secretary to the

Treasury, **Rt. Hon. Stephen Barclay, MP** (Con) responded by saying *“The Government are acutely aware of the harm that the crisis has done to people’s finances....that is why we introduced a wide-ranging package of welfare measures worth over £7 billion this year. That included temporarily increasing the universal credit standard allowance and the working tax credit basic element by £20 a week - an increase that has boosted welfare spending by £6.1 billion.”* He added *“given the evolving nature of the pandemic, it is right that we wait until the Budget before making future tax and welfare decisions.”*

The motion was carried by 278 votes to 0. Six Conservative MPs voted with the Opposition in favour of the motion.

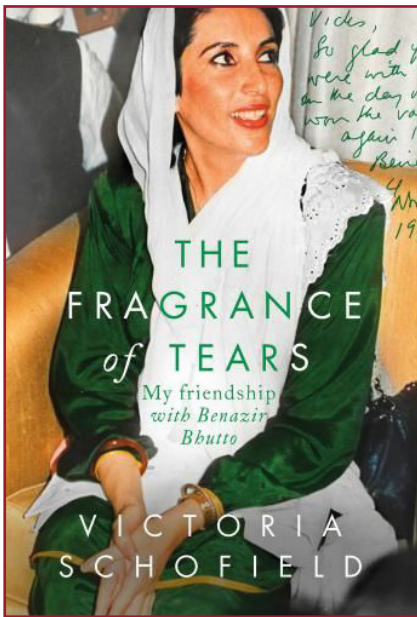


## The Parliamentarian: Book Review

### *'The Fragrance of Tears: My Friendship with Benazir Bhutto'* by Victoria Schofield

A new book about a former Prime Minister of Pakistan and her university friend from England brings a unique perspective about one of the Commonwealth's enduring historical figures.

Review by Rt Hon. Lord Lamont of Lerwick.



This book is about a friendship, a remarkably close one between the author and historian, Victoria Schofield, and Benazir Bhutto, later the Prime Minister of Pakistan. They first met at Oxford University where they were in the same college and both active in the then very male dominated world of the Oxford Union. But this friendship went beyond student politics and they remained extremely close for over 30 years.

Clearly Victoria was an exceptionally good friend to Benazir, going well beyond the cause of duty, giving much needed support during some horribly difficult events. In her 'salad days' at Oxford University, Victoria could never have imagined how she would be catapulted into the violent ups and downs of Benazir's life.

Politics everywhere is a rough trade. But in some parts of the world, as Benazir said, it is literally a matter of life and death.

In July 1977, Benazir's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was removed from office as Prime Minister in a coup by his chief of army staff,

General Zia-ul-Haq, tried and sentenced to death in rigged proceedings. Benazir, who was away from Oxford at the time, found herself under house arrest as a 'danger to human life and property'. Anxious for her friend, Victoria set off for Pakistan intending on a short visit and found herself staying almost a year. She helped out wherever she could, even typing up notes smuggled out of jail by the former Prime Minister as he awaited his fate.

The hanging of Zulfikar Bhutto on 4 April 1979, when Benazir was only 25, was just one of several tragedies. One brother died in mysterious circumstances in the south of France, another was killed in a shoot-out with the police, her husband spent more than 10 years out of their 20 years of marriage in jail. She herself had several periods in jail, house arrest or exile before her being murdered in the prime of life.

Victoria makes clear that Benazir had not intended to go into politics and wanted a career in the Pakistani diplomatic service. But after her father's execution she felt she had an obligation to fight for his legacy.

And fight back she did, winning two elections to become Prime Minister of Pakistan. Throughout this period, the two remained in touch doing what friends always do, remembering birthdays, discussing children, sending presents, sometimes meeting, sometimes writing. Occasionally Victoria's work, as an expert on Kashmir, took her to South Asia or Benazir would come to the UK, as when her son, Bilawal, went to study at Oxford University and Victoria accompanied the proud parents on his first day.

What Victoria brings out is Benazir's astonishing grace under pressure. I myself knew Benazir Bhutto in her last years and was always struck by her concern for her friends. She told me about her negotiations with the military for her return to Pakistan. Again, I marvelled at the absence of

bitterness or any desire for revenge. "Democracy is the best revenge" she used to say. She was well aware of the danger of returning to Pakistan, but her worry was always for those accompanying her.

Benazir was a secular politician in a country where a conservative version of Islam played an increasing role. She believed that Islam and democracy were compatible, and she was determined to fight for democracy. However, her political career would never have been possible had not General Zia himself been mysteriously killed in a plane crash in 1988.

Benazir was also the first woman Prime Minister of a Muslim country. She confided to Victoria one of the reasons she married was because she realised if she did not marry, as a single woman, she would not be able to have a political career in a conservative male-dominated environment.

Historians will argue about Benazir's success or failure in office. She was of course very constrained in her freedom of action by Pakistan's deep state. But she admitted some shortcomings and was determined to do better. No one can doubt her courage. In 2007, after eight years in exile, she flew back from Dubai to Karachi to fight the forthcoming elections. Once more Victoria was by her side and witnessed the bomb attack on Benazir's

**"Politics everywhere is a rough trade. But in some parts of the world, as Benazir said, it is literally a matter of life and death."**





bus, hours after landing in Pakistan. On this occasion Benazir escaped with her life but two months later, when Victoria was now back in England, the assassins finally succeeded at political rally near Rawalpindi.

Victoria helped organise the London Press Conference where Bilawal announced that he, aged 19, was now succeeding his mother as co-Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party. This was not what Benazir intended nor wanted, far from it, but party stalwarts wanted the name 'Bhutto'.

This book is not a biography. The author does not pretend to be detached nor to

make an assessment of Benazir's career. But what she has given us is a moving insight into a friendship and the family life of a politician facing challenges of a kind we in the West can scarcely imagine.

Book review by Rt Hon. Lord Lamont of Lerwick.  
Lord Lamont is a UK Parliamentarian who was elected to the House of Commons seven times between 1972 and 1997. He served in several UK Governments as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Chief Secretary to the Treasury as well as Ministerial roles in Defence, Trade and Industry. He was made a life peer in the House of Lords in 1998 and hold many official roles in public life.

**About the Author:** Victoria Schofield is a historian and commentator on international affairs, who has written for the Sunday Telegraph, The Times and the Independent and has published many books on a wide range of topics. She holds many memberships and affiliations and is the Chair of the Editorial Board of *The Round Table*, the Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs.

*'The Fragrance of Tears: My Friendship with Benazir Bhutto'* by Victoria Schofield (published by Apollo/Head of Zeus) is available at all major bookshops and online at via Amazon: <https://amzn.to/2Gy4Fbr>.

The Pakistan Monument is a national monument and heritage museum located in Islamabad, Pakistan.

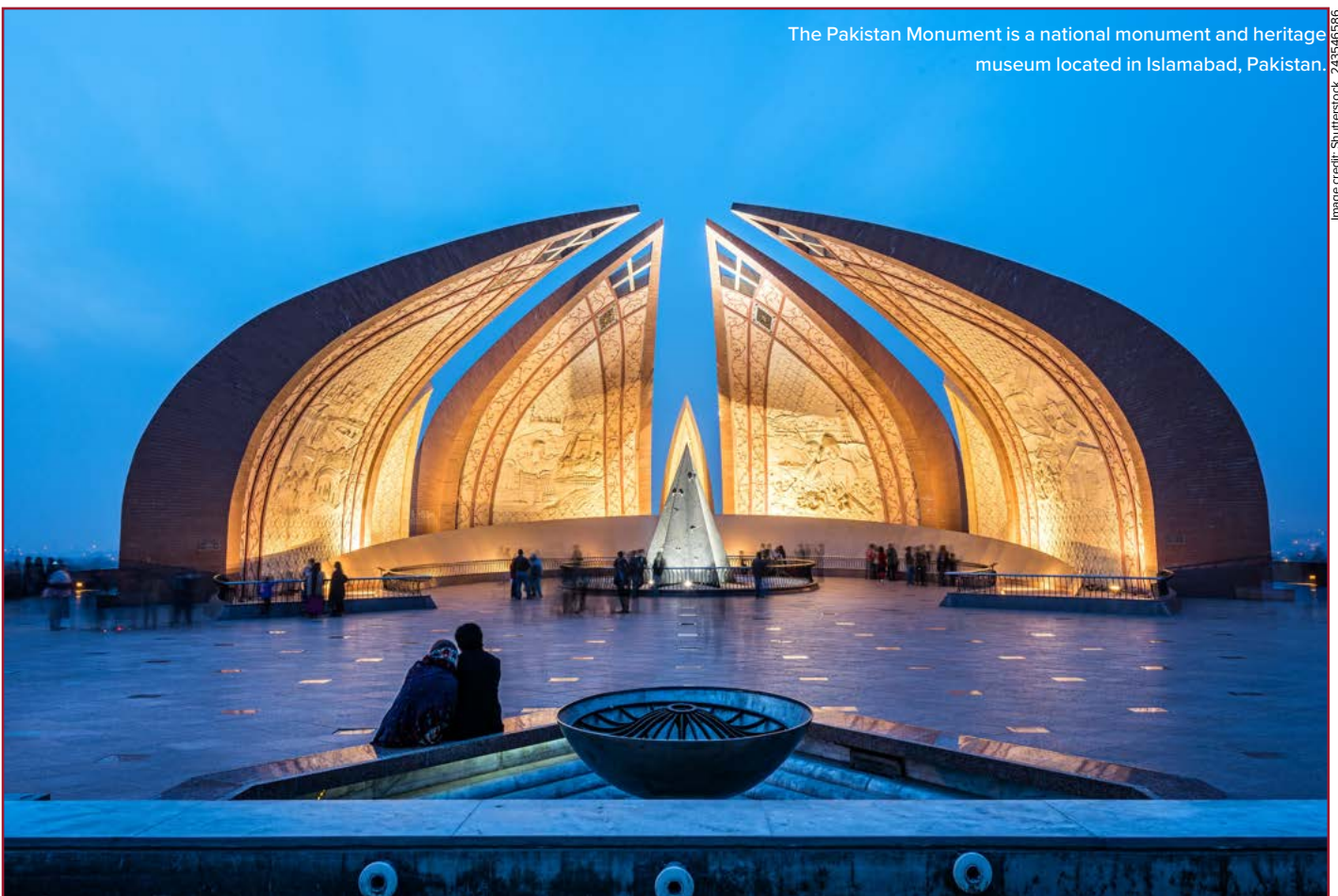


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### Mr Stephen Twigg

CPA Secretary-General  
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, CPA Headquarters Secretariat, Richmond House, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0AA, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 7799 1460

Email: [hq.sec@cpahq.org](mailto:hq.sec@cpahq.org)

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