CPA COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Update

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(1) CPA Executive Committee sets the year's agenda

The CPA Executive Committee met in Jersey from 21 to 26 April to complete plans for the Association's work this year in advancing parliamentary government and supporting the professional development of Parliamentarians.

Chaired by Hon. Hashim Abdul Halim, MLA, Speaker of India's West Bengal Legislative Assembly, the Committee of 35 Commonwealth Parliamentarians met in St Helier as the guests of the States of Jersey Branch of the CPA. The Committee's meeting was officially opened by the Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Philip Bailhache, in the States Chamber.

Key among its decisions was the determination that increasing the involvement of Parliaments in resolving three of today's most serious global challenges – preventing environmental degradation, promoting sustainable development and reducing threats to security – should be debated at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference from 1 to 10 August in Malaysia. More than 350 Members of the Commonwealth's parliamentary leadership will discuss issues under the theme: "Expanding the Role of Parliament in Global Society: Environment, Development and Security".

The Conference will also include the 28th Small Branches Conference for MPs from the Commonwealth's microstates, a Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians meeting and discussions on parliamentary practice and administration organized by the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table.

The Committee warmly received an invitation from Tanzania to host the 2009 Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Arusha. It also approved an extensive collection of CPA conferences, seminars, workshops and communications to promote the evolution of Parliament and the professional development of the Members and staff of the Commonwealth's 172 Parliaments and Legislatures. A new Director of Administration and Finance from the Australian state of Victoria was also appointed following a Commonwealth-wide recruitment process.

The Chairperson and several Committee Members visited the CPA's London Secretariat while en route to Jersey.

(2) Promoting Freedom of Information in Zambia

Commonwealth parliamentary advice on Freedom of Information legislation and practices was given to Hon. Mike Mulongoti, MP, Zambia's Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, on 1 May when he met with CPA Secretary-General and Secretariat staff in London. Good practice recommendations from two CPA Study Groups on Freedom of Information and Media Law were provided to the Minister, along with CPA reports of discussions on this issue in India, South Africa and Fiji Islands. The Minister is studying Freedom of Information law and supporting administrative systems in advance of enacting legislation in the Zambian National Assembly. Issues of media responsibility and standards and how these should best be enforced were also discussed during the Minister's briefing.

(3) Legislative Interns visit the CPA

Four interns from the Legislative Assembly in Saskatchewan visit the Secretariat in mid-April during a comparative study tour that took them to the United Kingdom Parliament in London and the Northern Ireland Assembly in Belfast. The Saskatchewan internship programme, similar to programmes in the Canadian federal Parliament and some other provincial Legislatures, brings leading university graduates into the Assembly for an academic year to learn about parliamentary democracy by working for government and opposition Members.

(4) British Islands and Mediterranean Parliamentarians meet

Members from the 13 Parliaments and Legislatures in the CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region were invited to Gibraltar from 11 to 14 May to discuss issues around the theme of "The Environment".CPA Secretary-General Dr William F. Shija attended and addressed a session on the CPA.

(5) Post-Election Seminar for the Turks and Caicos Islands

CPA Secretary-General Dr William F. Shija leads a team of four Commonwealth resource persons to assist discussions at the Post-Election Seminar for the Turks and Caicos Islands Legislative Assembly from 19 to 21 May in Providenciales. Also joining him in the team are Hon. Alvin Smith, MP, Speaker of The Bahamas House of Assembly and former Jamaican Speaker Mr Ripton McPherson, and they will be joined by Dr Heather Lank of the Canadian Senate Clerk's Department.

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