

68th COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE BARBADOS 5 to 12 OCTOBER 2025

CONFERENCE CONCLUDING STATEMENT



CONFERENCE THEME:
‘THE COMMONWEALTH: A GLOBAL PARTNER’



This document contains the **Conference Concluding Statement** for the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) which took place in Bridgetown, Barbados from 5 to 12 October 2025, hosted by the Parliament of Barbados and CPA Barbados Branch. The statement is also available at the CPA website: www.cpahq.org.

To catch up on all of the news from the 68th CPC – please visit the CPA website and social media hashtag #68CPC.

Images from the events of the 68th CPC are available at the CPA's Flickr page. Image credits: CPA Headquarters/Parliament of Barbados.

A full round up of all of the conference news and workshop reports from the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Barbados will be published as an online supplement to the next issue of the CPA Journal, *The Parliamentarian* out in December 2025. *The Parliamentarian* is available to Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff through their CPA Branch Secretaries (print and digital editions) or to individuals and organisations by subscription. Email editor@cpahq.org for details about the CPA Journal.

68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference Conference Concluding Statement

16 October 2025

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS attending the **68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC)** and associated meetings recognised the Commonwealth's commitment to democracy and met under the conference theme of '*The Commonwealth: A Global Partner*'.

The conference, hosted by the Parliament of Barbados and CPA Barbados Branch from 5 to 12 October 2025 in Bridgetown, Barbados was attended by over 500 Parliamentarians and parliamentary officials representing Parliaments and Legislatures from across the Commonwealth.

The conference was hosted by the **CPA President (2024-2025), Senator Hon. Reginald Farley, JP, President of the Senate of Barbados; Hon. Arthur Holder, MHA, SC, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Barbados and the Prime Minister of Barbados, Hon. Mia Mottley, SC, MP.**

The 68th CPC was the second time that the CPA Barbados Branch has hosted the event – the previous time was the 35th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in 1989.

During the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, there were also a number of additional conferences and meetings including: **41st CPA Small Branches Conference; 9th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference;** meetings of the **Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network;** the **2025 CPA General Assembly** and meetings of the **CPA Executive Committee;** and the **59th Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) meetings.**

This concluding statement contains:

- the main outcomes of the conference, and
- a summary of the workshop discussions.

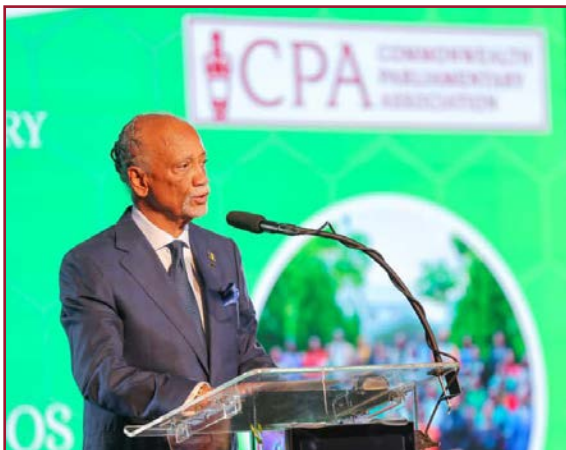
Alongside the substantive conference workshops and the CPA governance meetings (2025 CPA General Assembly and CPA Executive Committee meetings), the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference also included a number of additional events. The unique conference brings together Speakers, Members of Parliament and Parliamentary staff representing the nine regions of the CPA – Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic; India; Pacific; and South East Asia. The CPA reaches the countries of the Commonwealth as well as national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures bringing together almost 180 CPA Branches of the Association.

Issued by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Headquarters Secretariat on 15 October 2025 following the conclusion of the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC).

68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference - Opening Ceremony

The Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Her Excellency Dame Sandra Mason, GCMG, SC, the President of Barbados, urged Commonwealth Parliamentarians to work together to uphold the values of the Commonwealth as she opened the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

The CPA Vice-Patron, Dame Sandra Mason said that the Commonwealth and its institutions hold a special place for her in light of her work. She recognised the work of the organisation and its values saying that the



vast network of the Commonwealth has the ability to promote its values across the world and that the Commonwealth family works best when it works together. She highlighted that the Commonwealth Charter reaffirmed the importance of the role of the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary.

The CPA Vice-Patron recognised that the CPA has served its membership for 114 years to sustain parliamentary governments in the Commonwealth and to promote the role of Parliamentarians. She reflected on the theme for the 68th CPC on the role of the Commonwealth today and that the Commonwealth

shines as a positive beacon of multilateralism and a global partner. She also emphasised that education and advocacy can help to promote the benefits of the Commonwealth and welcomed the recognition for youth in the CPC programme as they are the future of the Commonwealth.

Delegates to the 68th CPC were welcomed by **Hon. Arthur Holder, MP, SC, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Barbados**. Hon. Arthur Holder welcomed the new CPA international legal status which will allow the CPA to play its part on the international stage and thanked the CPA Secretary-General for his work in this area.

He said that the 68th CPC is being held at a critical time for the Commonwealth - where there are a wide variety of challenges - stability, financial, social, environmental, responding to technological challenges. He welcomed the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network and the advances made in Barbados for persons with disabilities. He also





Hon Shirley A. Botchwey
Commonwealth Secretary General

welcomed the discussions being held at the 68th CPC on mental health for MPs, strengthening parliamentary institutions, youth development and support against gang violence.

The **Commonwealth Secretary-General, Hon. Shirley Botchwey** addressed delegates at the Conference and said: *“The Commonwealth is an association of nations – but it is also, crucially, an association of Parliaments. Governments propose, but it is Parliaments that debate, amend and decide. You embody the democratic values that lie at the very heart of our Commonwealth*

Charter. At a time when democracy is under strain, your role is more important than ever. Strong, inclusive, accountable Parliaments are the foundation on which all our ambitions rest. Without them, there can be no trust, no legitimacy, and no progress. That is why the CPA’s work is so vital – building capacity, sharing best practice, empowering women and young Parliamentarians, and defending the integrity of our democratic institutions.”

Hon. Ralph Thorne, MP, the Leader of the Opposition in Barbados said that the island nation had seen ‘*democracy in action*’ on the same day as the Parliament had elected a new President of Barbados. He emphasised that Barbados and the Caribbean are a place of peace where democratic transition is peaceful.



The **Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Hon.**

Dr Christopher Kalila, MP (Zambia) highlighted three key points saying: *“Firstly, I would like to express our gratitude to Barbados - its government and its people - for hosting the 68th CPC. Secondly, I thank all Commonwealth Parliamentarians - Speakers and Members of Parliament - who have travelled across the world to attend this important CPA conference and thirdly, I thank the Commonwealth Secretary-General for speaking at the 68th CPC and*

sharing her vision for the Commonwealth. The 68th CPC theme of ‘The Commonwealth: A Global Partner’ shows us that the Commonwealth is a global partner for all of our Parliaments. The Commonwealth represents a third of the global population and so it is essential that we promote the rule of law, democracy and human rights. The Commonwealth is a global leader, and the CPA is at the forefront of this work as the parliamentary wing of the organisation. The CPA offers a platform for Parliamentarians to meet to address global challenges, fostering inter-parliamentary dialogue, peer-to-peer learning and best practice. The CPA ensures that no Parliament stands alone.”



Delegates were also welcomed by the **Prime Minister of Barbados, Hon. Mia Mottley, SC, MP**. The Barbados Prime Minister welcomed representatives from one third of humanity to the small island nation of Barbados. She welcomed the CPA legal status change.

It was with great pride that the Barbados Parliament was hosting the 68th CPC – Barbados is one of the oldest Parliaments in the Commonwealth (third oldest). The

Prime Minister welcomed the urgency of the conversations on peace and democracy in the world that would be taking place at 68th CPC and that the climate crisis is ever present in the Caribbean. Our task as Parliamentarians is to build trust in our nations and with our citizens. Nations grow together when we commit to work together in partnership. She also welcomed the call for reparations from across the Commonwealth and that conversations need to take place.



The **CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg** said: “*This week’s 68th CPC builds upon the foundations laid by previous generations. As we prepare for our new legal status, this Conference will consider our new strategic plan which seeks to maximise the impact of the new status on the work of Parliaments and Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth.*

I am immensely grateful to the Government, Parliament and people



of Barbados for hosting us this week. In particular, I thank President Farley and Speaker Holder who have shown great personal leadership and commitment to our organisation.”

The Vote of Thanks was given by the **CPA President (2024-2025), Senator Hon. Reginald Farley, JP, President of the Senate of Barbados** who said that the CPA is a pivotal arm of the Commonwealth and that the Parliament is delighted to welcome the 68th CPC delegates to Barbados. He also said that we must always recognise the work undertaken in our Parliaments by our Clerks and parliamentary staff.

The opening ceremony also saw cultural performances and music by the Christ Church Foundation School Steel Orchestra, Celebration of Rhythms, Adrian Green (Spoken Word Artist), Betty Payne (singer) and the Zuoave Marching Band. The Master of Ceremonies was Mr Crispin Hackett.



68th CPC Presentation

At the conclusion of the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, the **CPA President (2024-2025), Senator Hon. Reginald Farley, JP, President of the Senate of Barbados** was presented with a commemorative silver salver by the **CPA Chairperson, Hon. Dr Christopher Kalila, MP (Zambia)** to thank the CPA Barbados Branch for the hosting of the conference.



2025 CPA General Assembly: Key Decisions

During the 68th CPC in Barbados, Commonwealth Parliamentarians attended the 2025 CPA General Assembly on 10 October 2025. The CPA General Assembly was presided over by the **CPA President (2024-2025), Senator Hon. Reginald Farley, JP, President of the Senate of Barbados** and was attended by **Members from 121 CPA Branches**. The CPA General Assembly, the Association's supreme authority, is constituted by delegates to the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.



In addition at the 2025 CPA General Assembly, CPA delegates approved the nomination of **Senator Hon. Sue Lines, President of the Senate of Australia (Australia Federal)** as the new CPA Treasurer for a three-year term. The role holder oversees the finances of the Association and works closely with the Trustees and Finance team at the CPA.



Some of the key decisions and outcomes from the 2025 CPA General Assembly were:

- Delegates approved the new CPA Strategic Plan 2026-2029 which sets the priorities for the Association for the next three years.
- Delegates were updated on the progress of the new legal status akin to an international, interparliamentary organisation following the UK Parliament passing the 'Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and International Committee of the Red Cross (Status) Act 2025' and progress on the UK Government's secondary legislation.
- Delegates were also updated on changes to the CPA's structural changes and the creation of the CPA Charitable Funds (CPACF).
- Delegates approved the 2024 CPA Annual Report (including the audited Financial Statements), the CPA Membership Report, the CPA Budgets and Financial Management Reports.
- Delegates endorsed reports from the three CPA networks - the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) and the CPA Small Branches.

The 2025 CPA General Assembly also approved the Chief Pleas of Sark as a new CPA Branch. One of the smallest Legislatures in the Commonwealth, the CPA Sark Branch joins the CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIM).

Delegates also looked ahead to the next Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference – the 69th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) to be hosted by the CPA South Africa Branch and Parliament of South Africa in 2026, following their approval as the next host Branch.

The CPA General Assembly also included a topical debate on '*The Commonwealth – A Global Partner*' with presenters from CPA Branches including India; Kenya; Sri Lanka; Canada Federal; Cyprus; Maldives; Australia Federal; Pakistan; Jersey; Punjab, Pakistan; Guernsey; Fiji; Singapore; New Zealand; Cook Islands; Bermuda; Malta; Balochistan.



CPA Executive Committee address key governance issues

The CPA Executive Committee met ahead of the 68th CPC in Barbados on 7 October 2025 chaired by the **Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Christopher Kalila, MP (Zambia)**. CPA Executive Committee Members discussed key governance issues and planning for the year ahead including updates to the CPA's legal status, financial reporting and future activities. The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg and other staff from the CPA Headquarters also attended the meetings.



The CPA Executive Committee represents the nine regions of the CPA.

The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Christopher Kalila, MP (Zambia) said: *"The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) provides a unique platform for inter-parliamentary dialogue to take place. The CPA's membership comprises the national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments of the Commonwealth. The diverse nature of the membership provides the CPA with a unique position within the parliamentary community to offer a comprehensive perspective on how to strengthen parliamentary democracy across the Commonwealth and to discuss new and innovative approaches on how to do so."*

The 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference is the most prominent event in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's calendar, as it offers a unique opportunity for the representatives of the Association's almost 180 Member Parliaments and Legislatures to network with colleagues from other jurisdictions and discuss common issues of concern which affect Commonwealth Parliaments."





During the meeting of the new CPA Executive Committee, **Hon. Carmel Sepuloni, MP, Member of the Parliament of New Zealand** and Regional Representative for the CPA Pacific Region was re-elected to the position of Vice-Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee. The position of Vice-Chairperson is for a term of one year and the holder is also a Member of the CPA Co-ordinating Committee. The CPA Chairperson also welcomed the new Members of the CPA Executive Committee.

Ahead of the official opening of the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, the Members of the CPA Executive Committee were received by the President of Barbados, Her Excellency Dame Sandra Mason, GCMG, SC, who is also the CPA Vice-Patron at a reception at State House.



CPA Regional Secretaries meet at 68th CPC to discuss future CPA activities

Ahead of the 68th CPC, the Regional Secretaries of the nine Regions of the CPA met to discuss CPA activities and the year ahead, joined by CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg and CPA Deputy Secretary-General, Jarvis Matiya. The nine Regional Secretaries represent Africa; Asia; Australia; British Isles and the Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic; India; Pacific; and South-East Asia.



Barbados Prime Minister highlights the Commonwealth's role in protecting democracy and the impact of climate change on small states at 3rd Lifaka Lecture

The Prime Minister of Barbados, Hon. Mia Amor Mottley, SC, MP spoke about Parliaments' role in protecting democracy as well as the ongoing impact of climate change on small islands states at the third CPA Emilia Monjowa Lifaka Lecture. The **3rd Lifaka Lecture** took place in the margins of the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Barbados and was attended by delegates and specially invited guests in Bridgetown.



Hon. Mia Mottley also urged the Commonwealth to lead by example and demonstrate that democracy, even in the most trying times, remains the fairest and most effective path to peace, prosperity and human fulfilment.

“Let us move forward hand in hand, with courage and conviction, to build a Commonwealth where democracy is not a privilege of the few, but the birthright of all. This is not simply the work of government but the work of all of our citizens, and those of us who will know better must guide and prepare, to allow those who may not yet be awakened to this reality, the opportunity to join us in this battle that truly will determine whether we progress or whether we regress into the domination of countries and individuals by a few. It is against this backdrop that we address how we secure the rights and aspirations of our people within the boundaries of our nations. How we protect them from the excessive power of any Executive or any Parliament. How we build democracies that deliver for every resident. We know what we must do. Let us do it together.”

- Watch the 3rd CPA Lifaka Lecture via the Barbados Parliament *YouTube* channel.

The CPA Lifaka Lecture was established in 2023 in memory of Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, the late Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee and Deputy Speaker of Cameroon. Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka was a passionate champion of the CPA and served as CPA Chairperson from November 2017 until her untimely death in April 2021. The CPA Lifaka Lecture is intended to provide a fitting tribute to her work.

Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities highlight local community engagement and elect new CPwD Chairperson

The Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network, led by the then **CPwD Chairperson, Hon. Laura Kanushu, MP (Uganda)**, highlighted how Parliaments can engage with local communities on disability inclusion during a town hall event in Barbados. The CPwD Regional Champions and delegates attended a town hall event in Bridgetown that examined how Parliaments can engage with civil society and representative organisations in shaping inclusive public policy. The CPwD Chairperson said: *“While many Legislatures express goodwill toward disability inclusion, meaningful engagement with civil society often falls short due to limited resources and poor mechanisms for consultation. This event aims to provide a platform for open dialogue between Parliamentarians and disability advocates, grounded in shared learning and mutual accountability.”* Panellists at the town hall event included Hon. Kerryann Ifill, President of the Barbados Council for the Disabled (BCD) and former President of the Barbados Senate; Hon. Kirk D. M. Humphrey, MP, the Barbados Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs; Mr Edmund G. Hinkson, former Member of the Parliament of Barbados; and Senator Andwele Boyce (Barbados). The event also heard opening remarks from local disabilities advocate, Janelle O'Dell.



The CPwD Regional Champions also met during the 68th CPC in Barbados. The CPwD Regional Champions represent each of the CPA's nine Regions and promote the rights of Commonwealth Parliamentarians with disabilities in their respective Regions and represent disability interests within the CPA. During the meeting, they elected **Senator Hon. Isaiah Jacob (Member of the Senate of Malaysia)** as the new Chairperson



of the CPwD network for a new three-year term. **Hon. Liesl Tesch, AM, MP (Member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly)** was elected as the CPwD Vice-Chair. The CPwD Regional Champions also set the agenda of the network for the year ahead including the CPwD Capital Investment Fund which supports Commonwealth Parliaments to become more accessible.

Parliamentarians from Pakistan, Ontario, Jamaica and Wales recognised at Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year 2025 Awards

The Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year 2025 Awards were announced at the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Barbados.

Hon. Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan, MPA, Speaker of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab in Pakistan has been announced as the recipient of the **2025 Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year Award** in recognition of his transformational leadership and instituting unprecedented reforms that have strengthen transparency, accountability and legislative independence.



Hon. Ted Arnott, the former Speaker of the Ontario Legislature in Canada was awarded the **2025 Parliamentarian Life-time Achievement Award** after 35 years of parliamentary service and **Hon. James Evans, MS from the Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament** was awarded the **2025 New Parliamentarian Award** in recognition of his contribution to promoting parliamentary democracy in his first term and through his work with multiple Parliamentary Committees.



Hon. Olivia Grange, MP, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport and the Deputy Leader of the House in the Parliament of Jamaica was awarded the **2025 Parliamentary Equality and Diversity Award** in recognition of her transformational and inclusive leadership in advancing gender equality and social justice in Jamaica.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg said: *“The Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year Awards align with our strategic objective of promoting the Commonwealth values of parliamentary democracy and sustainable development to a wide audience. Through these annual awards, the CPA recognises and highlights the invaluable contributions that Parliamentarians are making to their local communities within the Commonwealth.”*

As part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's mission to strengthen parliamentary democracy through the promotion of good governance and sharing best practice, the awards were launched in 2022 to recognise and highlight inspirational and active Parliamentarians for excelling in their field. CPA Awards are open to nominees who are current Parliamentarians* across the Commonwealth. The next awards will be open for nominees in 2026.



The awards were presented to winners or a representative from their CPA Branch by the CPA Chairperson, Hon. Dr Christopher Kalila, MP (Zambia) at the conclusion of the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Barbados.

** Nominees should be sitting Members of Parliament in a Commonwealth Legislature or have been a sitting Member of Parliament in a Commonwealth Legislature in the award period. The award can be made posthumously. Please check the CPA website for full nomination criteria.*

68th COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE – WORKSHOPS:

Conference theme: *'The Commonwealth: A Global Partner'*

At the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, delegates took part in a wide range of workshop topics including strengthening Parliaments to support democracy, leveraging technology and AI to transform Parliaments, examining the impact of climate change on global health and building trust in Legislatures. Detailed reports from the workshops will be available as an online supplement to the next issue of *The Parliamentarian*, Journal of Commonwealth Parliaments.

The seven main conference workshops and Youth Roundtable were as follows:

Workshop A: Strengthening our Institutions to Support Democracy (CPA Barbados Branch Host Topic)

What can Parliamentarians do to ensure their institutions are best placed to promote democracy? In times of profound democratic crisis globally, it is essential that institutions are upholding the standards that citizens expect and deserve.

This interactive workshop examined how Parliamentarians can best serve their citizens by examining the institutions that serve them. Senior Clerks from the Australian Capital Territory, Anguilla, KwaZulu Natal and Maldives shared how their Parliaments are upholding best practice and evaluating their practices utilising the updated CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures, which provide a guideline for how Parliaments can strengthen their institution to support democracy.



Workshop B: Leveraging Technology: Enhancing Democracy through Digital Transformations and Tackling the Digital Divide

Across the Commonwealth, Legislatures are navigating the profound opportunities and challenges of the digital age. While digital transformation offers the potential to make institutions more efficient, transparent and accessible, the persistent 'digital divide' risks excluding citizens and deepening existing inequalities. Framed by a discussion on the broader challenges of digital inclusion, particularly within the context of Commonwealth jurisdictions, this workshop aimed to move beyond theory to action.



This workshop explored this dual challenge, focusing on practical, innovative solutions that can enhance democratic processes for all. The discussion was led by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha (Parliament of India) along with experts on the topic from the Federal Senate of Brazil and the VOXPOP Foundation.

Workshop C: A Look Ahead to CHOGM 2026: Championing the Human Factor from a Gender and Accessibility Lens

In preparation for the 2026 CHOGM that will be hosted by the government of Antigua and Barbuda, this workshop examined the significance of inclusion and representation of marginalised groups. Panellists explored how gender equality, accessibility and human rights can be further embedded into CHOGM



outcome documents and policy, ensuring that the inclusion of those often underrepresented or marginalised is not an afterthought.

The discussion was chaired by the CPA Secretary-General with contributions from the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum.

Workshop D: Climate change and its threat to Global Health: Finding Sustainable Solutions

What can Parliamentarians do to tackle the negative impact of climate change on health from a national and international perspective? This workshop examined the dynamics between climate change and its direct impact on physical and mental health, and what role Parliamentarians can play to tackle this global challenge. Panellists examined the profound health impacts of a warming planet across the Commonwealth, from the rising burden of vector-borne diseases



to the devastating mental health consequences of extreme weather events. Delegates also had the opportunity to discuss related questions and share what their own Legislatures were doing.

This workshop session was chaired by the Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee alongside an expert in climate change from the University of the West Indies.

Workshop E: Building Trust and Transparency in Democracy: Financial Transparency in Parliaments and Elections

Are Parliamentarians building trust with their policies on financial transparency in elections and in their Legislatures? In an era of declining public trust, the financial integrity of political institutions has become a defining measure of democratic legitimacy. Allegations of opaque campaign financing, weak parliamentary oversight and a misuse of public resources continue to challenge confidence in Commonwealth governments.



Panellists from Canada Federal, Saint Lucia, Queensland and a financial expert from Nexus PFM Consulting explored how Parliaments can strengthen financial transparency in their internal operations and how electoral processes can be made more robust.

Workshop F: National Parliaments vs Provincial, Territorial and Devolved Legislatures: Protecting and Preserving the Separation of Powers

How can Parliaments ensure the fair distribution of powers in multi-level governance systems within the Commonwealth? This workshop examined the distribution of powers in multi-level governance systems within the Commonwealth, focusing on the balance between national and sub-national Legislatures. It emphasised the importance of



institutional responsibility and non-encroachment, drawing on the Commonwealth Charter and the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles. Delegates also had the opportunity for group discussions looking at solutions which could tackle unique and broader challenges faced by Parliaments. The workshop was chaired by a Member from the Welsh Senedd and also heard from a Member of the Parliament of India and an expert from the CPA Secretariat.

Workshop G: The Role of the Commonwealth in Good Governance, Multilateralism and International Relations

How can the Commonwealth strengthen good governance and remain a trusted voice in multilateralism and international relations? This workshop explored how the Commonwealth can remain a credible actor in an increasingly fractured world by strengthening its commitment to good governance, championing multilateral cooperation and supporting Parliamentarians as key agents of international engagement.



Drawing on the Commonwealth Charter, the Harare and Millbrook Declarations and the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles, the discussion highlighted how Parliaments can resist democratic backsliding, navigate geopolitical and economic turbulence and respond to global challenges such as climate change, Artificial Intelligence and disinformation.

This workshop was chaired by the Senate of Pakistan with panellists from New Zealand, Cyprus and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Youth Roundtable: Staying Safe and Free to Thrive: Empowering Young People to Overcome Modern Challenges - From Gang Violence to Cyber-Bullying

Young people across the Commonwealth face a wide range of interconnected challenges - from the physical threats of gang violence and exploitation to the digital risks of cyber-bullying, online harassment and misinformation. These pressures can limit their freedom to learn, participate and thrive, often leaving them vulnerable to harm, exclusion or disengagement from society.



The Youth Roundtable provided a safe and inclusive platform for young people from Barbados to share lived experiences, learn from each other and work with policymakers to co-create practical strategies for safety, resilience

and empowerment. Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from Northern Territories, Guernsey, Limpopo, Selangor, Tonga, Western Australia, Pakistan and the United Kingdom joined the discussion which drew inspiration from Commonwealth commitments to youth development, human rights and digital inclusion, ensuring that young people's voices are central to shaping solutions.



41st CPA SMALL BRANCHES CONFERENCE

Theme: ‘Shaping the Future for CPA Small Branches: Strengthening Parliamentary Independence and Capacity in Small Jurisdictions’

Focus on strengthening Parliamentary Independence for the smallest jurisdictions across the Commonwealth at 41st CPA Small Branches Conference



Commonwealth Parliamentarians met from 7 to 8 October 2025 to examine how to shape the future for CPA Small Branches and to strengthen Parliamentary Independence in small jurisdictions. The conference discussed strategies to meet the unique developmental needs of the CPA’s smallest Legislatures through key thematic workshops that helped to build parliamentary capacity for Members and parliamentary staff while also creating greater opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, parliamentary strengthening and cooperation across the network.

The **CPA Small Branches Vice-Chairperson, Deputy Adrian Gabriel (Guernsey)** said: *“We gather today as representatives of small jurisdictions from across the Commonwealth — places with unique challenges, diverse cultures and incredible resilience. Though our populations may be modest in number, our commitment to democratic governance, parliamentary excellence and service to our communities is anything but small. However, with these challenges come extraordinary opportunities — to innovate, to lead by example and to collaborate in new ways.*



The CPA Small Branches have often been at the forefront of adaptability. With limited resources, we’ve learned how to be creative. With smaller populations, we’ve remained closely connected to the voices of our citizens. And with shared challenges, we’ve strengthened one another through partnership and solidarity. This is a time for vision — to imagine what’s possible when CPA Small Branches are equipped,

empowered and connected. Our goal is not just to react to the future — but to help shape it. Let us work together — across oceans and time zones — to build a stronger, more resilient and more inclusive future for all of the Small Branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.” The CPA Small Branches Vice-Chairperson also thanked the CPA Small Branches Chairperson, Hon. Valerie Woods, Speaker of the National Assembly of Belize.

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg said: *“The 41st CPA Small Branches Conference brings together Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff from the smallest jurisdictions in the Commonwealth to discuss issues relevant to their Legislatures. The smallest of the CPA’s Legislatures have unique challenges and yet are asked to meet the same expectations of service delivery as larger Legislatures, requiring additional support and innovation.”*

In the margins of the conference, the CPA Small Branches Steering Committee met to discuss the strategic direction for the network. The CPA Small Branches Steering Committee comprises the CPA Small Branches Chairperson and nine Commonwealth Parliamentarians who represent the nine Regions of the CPA with Small Branches.



Of the almost 180 Branches of the CPA, fifty Branches are classified as ‘Small Branches’. The classification for CPA Small Branches was changed by the CPA General Assembly in 2022 to raise the population threshold to one million people. Examples of CPA Small Branches include Commonwealth countries such as Malta and Tonga, as well UK Overseas Territories such as Turks and Caicos or states and provinces within larger countries like Northwest Territories in Canada or the Northern Territory in Australia.

CPA Small Branches Workshop A: Navigating Challenges, Exploring Priorities – A World Café Dialogue

How can Parliamentarians address their most pressing challenges by collaboratively exploring priorities and developing a practical roadmap for their jurisdictions?

Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in CPA Small Branches report that while their institutions are essential to democracy, they are often constrained by systemic challenges such as limited resources, an over-reliance on the Executive and a lack of technological capacity. This workshop aimed to tackle these and other pressing issues head-on. Delegates explored four interconnected topics led by facilitators from Northwest Territories, Belize, Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania.

- ***The Accountable Parliament*** – exploring how Parliaments strengthen public trust through oversight, scrutiny and collaboration.

- *The Resilient Parliament* - examining how Legislatures build capacity to respond challenges, including misinformation and disinformation, climate change, security threats and declining trust.
- *The Digital Parliament* - exploring how technology transforms legislative operations.
- *The Connected Parliament* - focusing on collaboration and knowledge sharing across Legislatures.



CPA Small Branches Workshop B: Public Accounts Committees: Roles, Challenges and Solutions

This workshop examined how small Parliaments can strengthen the effectiveness and independence of their Public Accounts Committees (PACs), which serve as the final link in the accountability chain by scrutinising government expenditure. Delegates explored structural, political and resource-based challenges common to small jurisdictions and shared innovative approaches for reform.



Participants discussed the implications of having the Leader of the Opposition chair the PACs, with representatives from Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands (BVI), Grenada, Montserrat and Turks and Caicos noting that while this model promotes scrutiny, small Legislatures often lack the numbers to sustain balanced Committees. Some jurisdictions, such as Belize and Barbados, have moved toward joint-PAC models that draw members from both Houses or include independent Senators to mitigate government majorities. Examples from Jersey and the UK highlighted the use of lay members as another way of increasing the objectivity and overall effectiveness of PACs.

Break-out discussions identified key priorities: establishing PAC secretariats to provide onboarding and financial expertise; reducing government dominance on Committees; ensuring Members' disclosure of interests; and enhancing public engagement in oversight processes. Delegates also highlighted the value of continuous peer learning through the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC) and proposed creating a standing PAC agenda to advance issues raised at future Conferences.

CPA Small Branches Workshop C: Work-Life Balance and Mental Health for Parliamentarians in CPA Small Branches

This workshop explored the intersection of work-life balance, professional development and mental health among Parliamentarians in small jurisdictions. Participants reflected on the pressures of long hours, travel, public scrutiny and the absence of institutional wellbeing support, while identifying strategies to promote sustainable and healthy parliamentary careers.



Breakout discussions highlighted the need for intentional boundaries and personal wellbeing routines. Across their groups, delegates recommended setting cut-off times for work communication, scheduling regular family time and establishing support systems within Parliament. Others stressed the value of planning, prioritisation and delegating to staff or diary secretaries to maintain balance, as well as using available facilities like gyms for recreation.

Discussions around professional development gave rise to calls for continuous learning in skills like communication, stress management and governance processes beyond parliamentary rules. Participants also encouraged self-driven training, supported by the CPA Parliamentary Academy online courses. Greater awareness and use of the CPA Mental Health Toolkit were strongly encouraged.

CPA Small Branches Workshop D: Human Rights and the Legacy of Colonial Laws

This workshop took the form of a general debate under the central topics of human rights and the legacy of colonial laws. Facilitated by the CPA Secretariat, the debate encouraged delegates to consider how colonial-era laws continue to influence justice systems and human rights



across the Commonwealth. Participants reflected on whether these laws still hold relevance or whether their repeal is essential to advance modern democratic and constitutional values.

The Speaker of the House of Assembly of Barbados opened the debate and noted that many colonial laws were imposed without the consent of the governed and often contradict constitutional guarantees. He called for a people-centred process of

reform involving civil society, academics and non-governmental organisations, stressing that post-independence Legislatures must legislate for their own realities.

The Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malta emphasised that while reform is necessary, repeal must be thoughtful and well considered. Drawing on Malta's evolution from British colony to European Union member, he highlighted the importance of constitutional stability, the separation of powers and adherence to international conventions. He also urged collective moral leadership against global injustices, including those in Gaza and Ukraine.



Delegates from Gibraltar, Jersey, the Cayman Islands, Fiji, South Africa, and Australia added perspectives on migration, overlapping rights, gender equality, LGBTQ+ inclusion and indigenous justice. Delegates also raised the concern of how treaty obligations may often contradict local legislation and how this must be handled, particularly in cases where complying with international treaties may place their local populace at a disadvantage.

The debate concluded that while reform paths differ, the Commonwealth remains united in its resolve to modernise laws and strengthen collaboration between parliaments, civil society, political opposition, and the judiciary to ensure justice, equality, and human dignity for all citizens.

9th COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP) CONFERENCE

Theme: 'Parliaments since Beijing +30: Progress, challenges and the road ahead for gender equality'.



Looking at the road ahead for gender equality in Parliaments at 9th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference in Barbados

Women Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth held their 9th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference in Barbados to discuss women's representation in Parliaments, gender sensitisation and quotas amongst a wide range of topics. The main theme of the conference was: '*Parliaments since Beijing +30: Progress, challenges and the road ahead for gender equality*' and highlighted 30 years since the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China in 1995, where the United Nations (UN) adopted the landmark *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on gender*.

The 9th CWP Conference also brought together Members of Parliament to discuss equal representation in Parliaments through a series of workshops and governance meetings including four learning and development workshops for delegates. The host Branch of Barbados also held an open debate session where women Members provided contributions from the floor.



The CWP Conference was opened by the **CWP Chairperson, Hon. Dr Zainab Gimba, MP, Member of the House of Representatives at the National Assembly of Nigeria**, who welcomed delegates and gave an update on the activities of the CWP network.

The **CWP President (2025), Hon. Marsha K. A. Caddle, MP (Barbados)** spoke to the CWP conference about her experience as a legislator. She also highlighted that the Caribbean Region has been a leading advocate for gender equality and so it was particularly nice to welcome the CWP network to Barbados for this Conference. She added that the Caribbean aims to be a beacon for peace and security in the world and this can be extended through the work of the CWP and the CPA.

Over 100 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and delegates attended the conference from across the Commonwealth. The CWP conference saw leading figures in Commonwealth Parliaments addressing the conference and included four wide-ranging sessions for delegates. The CWP Conference also heard from a wide range of Members including the Parliaments of Zambia, Jersey, Western Cape, Fiji, Guernsey, British Virgin Islands, Sri Lanka, Barbados, Scotland, India, New South Wales as well as experts from UN Women and the Barbados Council for the Disabled.

Delegates at the CWP Conference also elected a new **Chairperson for the CWP network – Hon. Catherine Fife, MPP (CPA Ontario Branch)**. It is the first time that a woman from the CPA Canada Region has held the role. The CWP Business meeting updated on the CWP network's activities during the previous year and the plans for the year ahead. The CWP Chairperson also pledged to renew the effort to increase women's representation and political participation in Parliaments across the Commonwealth.



Following the 9th CWP Conference, the CWP Steering Committee met in Barbados representing the nine CPA Regions. CWP Steering Committee Members discussed activities for the year ahead as well as key themes for future conferences and meetings. The CWP Steering Committee elected **Deputy Sasha Kazantseva-Miller (Guernsey)** as the CWP Vice-Chairperson for a one-year term.

The CWP Conference was previously triennial (every three years) but in 2023, CWP Members agreed to hold an annual conference to be held in the margins of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

CWP Workshop A: Good Practices and Strategies to Realising Gender-Sensitive Parliaments across the Commonwealth

How can Commonwealth Parliaments become effective gender sensitive institutions? Despite growing representation, many Parliaments across the Commonwealth still face systemic challenges in becoming truly gender-sensitive institutions where women have equal opportunities to participate, contribute and lead. This workshop aimed to move beyond identifying these challenges to a proactive exploration of solutions.



Guided by the CPA Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines and Seven-Step Field Guide, this interactive workshop equipped participants with the tools to either start or further their Parliament's gender sensitive journey. Panellists came from Zambia, Jersey, Western Cape and Fiji and they shared their own Parliaments' perspectives on the role of a gender sensitive institution.

CWP Workshop B: 'Debate Not Hate': Not Accepting Abuse as an Outcome of Free Speech

How can Parliaments combat violence and harassment against women Parliamentarians in the digital space? Free speech is a fundamental pillar of democratic societies, but it must not be misused as a shield for harassment, intimidation, discrimination, or threats. Across the Commonwealth, abuse and harassment in its many varied forms,



micro-aggressions and misogyny, particularly targeting women Parliamentarians, are eroding healthy political discourse and discouraging democratic participation. As technology permeates every corner of our daily lives, it is being weaponised to harm women and girls, posing serious threats to their safety and wellbeing making it increasingly difficult for women to feel safe not only in public spaces, with technology-facilitated violence, in their own homes too.

This workshop aimed to unite Parliamentarians in order to combat harassment and violence within political and parliamentary sphere's and to provide a collaborative platform to explore how Parliaments and Parliamentarians can foster respectful debate, safeguard political engagement and ensure that they are seen and heard without fear or harm. Panellists came from Guernsey, British Virgin Islands and Sri Lanka.

CWP Workshop C: Parliamentarians Combatting Discriminatory Laws that Perpetuate the Disempowerment of Women

How can Parliamentarians pursue and champion legislative reform for gender equality? Across the Commonwealth, discriminatory laws continue to undermine women's rights, entrench economic inequality and signal that gender discrimination is acceptable. At the same time, recent years have seen notable reforms that demonstrate what is possible when political will, strategic advocacy and evidence-based policymaking come together.

A new publication, *Understanding, Assessing & Achieving Equality before the Law in the Commonwealth: A Practical Handbook for Change Agents with Historical Records, Statistical Data and Case Studies*, provides up-to-date mapping of such laws and highlights successful reforms.



Produced by UN Women, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the World Bank Group's Women, Business and the Law, the handbook serves as a practical tool for Parliamentarians seeking to lead change. Vital structured engagement with legislators enhances and strengthens efforts to address legislation, deepens public debate and enhances accountability in the movement towards greater gender equality and equity.

This workshop launched the new handbook and provided a unique space for Parliamentarians to share reform experiences, discuss priority areas for legislative change and commit to concrete next steps.

CWP/CPwD Joint Workshop D: Overcoming the Barriers to the involvement of Women with Disabilities in Politics

What are the barriers faced by women with disabilities in politics and what are ways to overcome these? This interactive workshop explored the unique barriers faced by women with disabilities in political life, with reflections of those with lived experience and those that advocate for their wider representation.



Panellists from Scotland, New South Wales and Barbados began the discussion by sharing the personal, structural and cultural challenges they have encountered on the road to elected office - from inaccessible political party systems and campaign infrastructure to broader issues of gender discrimination.

Delegates were also able to provide contributions and reflections during the collective dialogue in order to promote empathy, raise awareness and identify tangible pathways to support political participation of women with disabilities across the Commonwealth.

Past, Present and Future CWP Chairpersons

Ahead of the CWP Steering Committee in Barbados, a historic photograph was taken with the past, present and future Chairpersons of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network - Hon. Lindiwe Maseko MP, former Speaker of the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng who was the first CWP Chairperson from 2004 to 2007; current CWP Chairperson, Hon. Dr Zainab Gimba, MP (Nigeria) and the newly elected CWP Chairperson-elect for 2025 to 2028, Hon. Catherine Fife, MPP (Ontario).



59th GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY-OF-CLERKS-AT-THE-TABLE (SoCATT) IN COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTS

The **59th Meeting of the Society-of-Clerks-at-the-Table (SoCATT)** took place in the margins of the **68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC)** in Barbados. The meeting brought together Parliamentary Clerks and parliamentary staff from Commonwealth Parliaments to discuss the latest legislative practices and to share best practice. The meeting was chaired by **Mr Pedro Eastmond, Clerk of the Parliament of Barbados** as host Parliament.



Presentations were made during the two-day meeting by a number of different Parliamentary Clerks on a wide range of subjects including the role of Clerks in strengthening and transforming Parliament, a Clerk's perspective of governance in Parliament, utilising technology and AI in Parliaments, development of procedure and privilege, and the impact of procedural and administrative reforms in Legislatures.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Society's accounts for 2024 and proposals for the agenda for the 60th SoCATT General Meeting to be held in 2026 were agreed.

Please note that SoCATT has a separate administration to the CPA.

Visit <http://www.societyofclerks.org> for further details.

-ENDS-



Issued by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Headquarters Secretariat on 16 October 2025 following the conclusion of the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC).

This document contains the **Conference Concluding Statement** for the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) which took place in Bridgetown, Barbados from 5 to 12 October 2025, hosted by the Parliament of Barbados and the CPA Barbados Branch. The statement is also available at the CPA website: www.cpahq.org.

To catch up on all of the news from the 68th CPC – please visit the CPA website and social media hashtag #68CPC.

Images from the events of the 68th CPC are available at the CPA's Flickr page.

Image credits: Parliament of Barbados/Jeffrey Hyland at CPA Headquarters Secretariat/Dennis Mawira Gitonga at Parliament of Kenya.

A full round up of all of the conference news and workshop reports from the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) in Barbados will be published as an online supplement to the next issue of the CPA Journal, *The Parliamentarian* out in December 2025.

The Parliamentarian is available to Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff through their CPA Branch Secretaries (print and digital editions) or to individuals and organisations by subscription. Email editor@cpahq.org for details about the CPA Journal.

With thanks to the Rapporteurs team from the Parliament of Barbados/University of the West Indies for assistance in compiling these reports.

Please contact the CPA Headquarters Secretariat if you require any further information about the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

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**68th COMMONWEALTH
PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
BARBADOS
5 to 12 OCTOBER 2025**

CONFERENCE CONCLUDING STATEMENT



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