

Owner: CPA Scotland Branch Secretariat
Oct 2006

**52ND COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY
CONFERENCE, ABUJA, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF
NIGERIA**

**SATURDAY 2 SEPTEMBER – SUNDAY 10
SEPTEMBER 2006**

CONFERENCE REPORT

**Jeff Cuthbert AM
Karen Gillon MSP
Jamie Stone MSP**

Background

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) mission is to 'promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance and by building an informed parliamentary community, able to deepen the Commonwealth's democratic commitment and to further co-operation among its Parliaments and Legislatures'. The Association is composed of 177 parliaments and legislatures in 52 of the 53 Commonwealth nations.

This year's conference, the 52nd Annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was hosted by the Nigeria Branch of the CPA. The conference was held in the city of Abuja in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory. The CPA Annual Conference is organised by the CPA Secretariat in London and the local host branch. Some 350 parliamentarians from 53 countries attended representing 153 parliaments and assemblies from across the Commonwealth.

Each of the UK's devolved parliaments and assemblies has established a local branch of the CPA. All three branches are within the CPA British Isles and Mediterranean Region. Each of the three UK devolved branches is entitled to send one delegate to the CPA Annual Conference plus additional Members as observers. Jeff Cuthbert AM represented the Wales Branch as its delegate. Jamie Stone MSP represented the Scotland Branch as CPA Executive Committee Member and leader of delegation and Karen Gillon MSP as a delegate. The Northern Ireland Assembly Branch is currently in abeyance and was therefore not represented. By convention the secretary to accompany the delegation is rotated between the three legislatures. The National Assembly for Wales provided a member of staff, Peter Kellam, to fulfil this role. Ann Nelson, Director of Legal Services for the Scottish Parliament also attended the Conference to attend the meeting of the Society of Clerks held within the programme of events.

Acknowledgements

The delegates wish to record their appreciation for the hospitality offered by the Nigeria Branch of the CPA and acknowledge the work of the host branch and the CPA Secretariat in co-ordinating the conference programme.

Aim

This report intends to provide a brief summary of the conference and to highlight contributions made to the proceedings by delegates from Scotland and Wales. More detailed information concerning this conference including the programme, supporting papers, transcripts of the principal addresses, and summary reports of the plenary debates and workshops are available at the CPA website <http://www.cpahq.org>

Conference Programme

The main conference programme of plenary sessions and workshops ran from Wednesday 6 – Saturday 9 September. The CPA Executive Committee met twice, on Saturday 2 and Saturday 9 September. A copy of the conference programme is included for information at Appendix 1.

CPA Executive Committee. Jamie Stone MSP attended the Executive Committee meetings held on 2 September and 9 September. There were two matters of some surprise to report. The first was that the Executive Committee's Vice Chair Dame Jennifer Smith (Bermuda) was not re-appointed. The second was the addition of an item added to the 9 September agenda recommending that that the Working Group of the Executive Committee should take upon itself to consider the terms and conditions of CPA Secretariat employees.

Monday 4 September

UK High Commission Briefing. Representatives from the British Isles and Mediterranean Region of the CPA were provided with an introductory briefing on Nigeria by Sir Richard Gozney KCMG, the UK High Commissioner. Delegates were briefed on governance at the federal and state levels, economic development and issues surrounding the May 2007 Presidential elections.

In the evening the Hon. Aminu Bello Masari, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nigeria's Federal Parliament hosted a reception and dinner for conference delegates.

Tuesday 5 September

Grand Durbar. A full day was spent on a cultural programme. Delegates were taken in a fleet of coaches to Zaria, some three hours distant from Abuja, to attend a Grand Durbar. This was a traditional ceremonial parade hosted by the Emir of Zazzau. After the durbar delegates were hosted to lunch by HE Mohammed Ahmed Makarfi the Executive Governor of Kaduna State. This day visit was very informative in providing an opportunity to leave the confines of hotel and conference rooms thereby gaining some direct experience and contrast between the levels of development and infrastructure within and away from the federal capital.

Wednesday 6 September

HE Chief Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria officially opened the conference. Delegates were reminded that Nigeria had previously hosted the conference in 1962 shortly before the country entered into three decades of military dictatorship. The conference provided an opportunity to reflect on the changes within Nigeria since its return to a presidential system of parliamentary democracy in 1999. The

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President urged those attending the conference to help each other find effective ways to deepen the democratic ethos in Nigerian and around the world. This address was followed by a briefing for delegates by the CPA Secretary General, the Hon Denis Marshall, and the Secretary General of the Nigeria Parliament, Nasiru Ibrahim Arab. In the afternoon delegates attended a British Isles and Mediterranean Branch meeting. This informal meeting offered an opportunity for the various parliaments and assemblies represented to inform each other of recent developments. Jeff Cuthbert reported on the opening of the new Assembly Building, the winning of Convergence Funding for West Wales and the Valleys and other more general matters.

HE the Rt Hon Donald C Mackinnon, Commonwealth Secretary General and the Hon Denis Marshall QSO, Secretary General of the CPA addressed the conference and held a question and answer session. In his address he raised concern at the size and associated costs of the conference and the intention to form a working party to look into conference funding. Delegates then attended an evening reception and dinner hosted by President Obasanjo.

Thursday 7 September

The working day was devoted to a series of six workshops, three in the morning and three in the afternoon. Members from Wales and Scotland made a number of contributions to proceedings:

- **Strategies in the care and support of HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children: the role of parliamentarians.** Karen Gillon MSP addressed the workshop on the need to ensure that people infected with HIV/AIDS are not subject to discrimination. She stressed the importance of education as a means of overcoming ignorance and recommended peer to peer counselling as a means of promoting HIV/AIDS awareness amongst young people.
- **Domestic Violence: is legislation enough to combat abuse and child abduction.** Jeff Cuthbert AM spoke at the beginning of the discussion, using his briefings from Amnesty International and Oxfam on violence against women in Nigeria and elsewhere. Mr Cuthbert informed the workshop about the unacceptable blight of violence against women which was generally acknowledged and accepted in the workshop. Mr Cuthbert also informed the workshop about Community Safety Partnerships in Wales and the importance of ensuring a joint approach from Local Authorities the police and Health Services. The workshop was briefed on Social Justice in Wales and how gender balance within the Assembly has ensured issues such as violence against women can be debated.
- **Trans-national security threats: unregulated migration and cross-border controls.** Jamie Stone MSP attended.

- **Climate change and desertification: how can parliamentarians influence the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development?** Karen Gillon MSP attended.
- **The role of parliament in constitutional reform.** Jamie Stone MSP contributed to this workshop following on to a contribution by the Rt Hon Sir David Steel former Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament. Whilst Sir David reflected on his experience in the formation and early years of the Scottish Parliament, Jamie Stone MSP reflected on more recent constitutional changes and the interrelationships between the Scottish and UK Parliaments. He informed the workshop of the tensions that can arise between elected representatives at the national and devolved levels in the UK. He noted the need to work hard to safeguard constitutional change once it has been achieved and the need to remind the public that constitutional change is a continual process rather than an event.
- **The role of parliamentarians in promoting good governance through increased fiscal transparency.** Jeff Cuthbert AM spoke within the workshop on the implications of Government of Wales Act in Wales, the recommendations of the Beecham Report on public service delivery in Wales. He also spoke on the role of Public Accounts Committees indicating the need to extend their remit beyond the public sector to encompass private companies involved in public sector delivery. He stressed that it is as important to ensure that spending is done cost effectively as it is to ensure that money is spent on the stated purpose.

That evening, the CPA UK Branch Chairman David Marshall MP and the UK High Commissioner joint-hosted a reception for delegates, High Commission staff and local community representatives at the High Commissioner's Residence.

Friday 8 September

Karen Gillon MSP attended a business meeting of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. Both Jeff Cuthbert AM and Karen Gillon MSP contributed to the debate within the opening plenary session 'Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership'. Both shared their experiences of representation of women in Wales and Scotland at all levels of government. Both stressed also that political parties must be prepared to take positive action to help encourage women to take a full part in political processes. In the afternoon delegates attended the Host Branch Plenary Session, the topic for which was 'The role of parliamentarians and civil society in poverty reduction'.

Saturday 9 September

The General Assembly Meeting of the CPA was held in the morning. The passing of Margaret Ewing MSP was noted at the start of the meeting and a period of silence observed. Dr William Ferdinand Shija from Tanzania, a former parliamentarian and cabinet minister, was elected as the New CPA Secretary General. Hon. Somnath Chatterjee MP Speaker of the Lok Sabha of India was elected President of the Association for the coming year and Hon. Tan Sri Dato' Seri Di Raja Ramli Ngah Talib MP, Speaker of the Dewan Raykat of Malaysia's Lower House as the Deputy President. New Delhi was confirmed as venue for the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, taking place 21-29 September 2007. The 2008 Conference will take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Hon. Hahim Abdul MLA, Speaker of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly continues as chair of the CPA Executive Committee. The Speaker of the Lesotho National Assembly Hon. Nlthoi Motsamai MP was elected as Vice Chairperson for the coming year. Mr David Marshall MP was elected as Treasurer. Dr Sylvia Jackson MSP was elected to the Executive Committee to complete Margaret Ewing MSP's term.

The topic for the final session of the conference was 'Enhancing good governance with transparency, accountability and exemplary punishment for corrupt practices'.

The conference ended with a farewell reception and dinner hosted by Senator Ken Nnamani, President of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Conclusion

The conference provided a valuable opportunity for those attending from the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales to meet fellow parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth, to discuss matters of common interest informally and to contribute to proceedings in both workshop and plenary sessions. The conference also provided delegates the opportunity to deepen their understanding of Nigeria and the challenges it faces in deepening its democratic structures.

Appendices:

1. 52nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference - Programme of Events.

Appendix 1

52nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference - Programme of Events

Monday 4 September - Arrival Day

- 0700 Breakfast.
- 0800 Registration. **Transcorp Hilton Hotel (THH) / Lobby.**
- 1300 Lunch.
- 1900 Reception and dinner. **THH / Congress Hall.**

Tuesday 5 September - All day tour to Zaria

- 0600 Breakfast.
- 0700 Depart.
- 1300 Lunch.
- Host: HE Mohammed Ahmad Makarfi, Executive Governor of Kaduna State.
- Evening Free.

Wednesday 6 September – Conference Opens / Regional Meetings

- 0700 Breakfast.
- 0900 Official Opening. **AICC / Africa Hall.**
- 1100 Photograph. **AICC / Fountain.**
- 1145 General briefing for delegates, observers, accompanying persons and secretaries by CPA Secretary General, Nigeria Parliament Secretary General. Followed by briefing for moderators, rapporteurs, discussion leaders and session secretaries. **AICC / Africa Hall.**
- 1300 Lunch. **AICC.**
- 1500 BIMR Regional Group Meeting. **THH / Niger.**
- 1530 Addresses. **THH / Congress Hall:**
- Commonwealth Secretary General
CPA Secretary General.

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Question and Answer session.

1830 Reception and dinner. **Banquet Hall, State House.**

Host: President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Thursday 7 September – Workshops (THH)

0700 Breakfast.

0900 Workshops:

A. Strategies in the care of and support of HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children: the role of parliamentarians. **Congress Hall.**

B. Domestic violence: Is legislation enough to combat abuse and child abduction? **Lagos / Kogi / Osun.**

C. Trans-national security threats: unregulated migration and cross-border controls. **Borno / Rivers.**

1300 Lunch.

Host: Minister, Federal Capital Territory.

1400 Workshops:

D. Climate change and desertification: how can parliamentarians influence the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development? **Congress Hall.**

E. The role of parliament in constitutional reform. **Lagos / Kogi / Osun.**

F. The role of parliamentarians in promoting good governance through increase fiscal transparency. **Borno / Rivers.**

1900 Reception for Clerks and Secretaries. **Reiz Continental Hotel.**
Host: CPA Secretary General and Nigeria Parliament Secretary General.

Dinner in hotel for delegates.

Friday 8 September

0700 Breakfast.

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- 0800 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Breakfast Meeting. **THH Lagos / Osun.**
- 1030 Plenary Session. Equal Participation of women and men in decision making processes at all levels, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership. **Africa Hall, AICC.**
- 1300 Lunch. **AICC.**
- 1430 Host Branch Plenary Session. The role of parliamentarians and civil society in poverty reduction. **Africa Hall, AICC.**
- 1900 Reception for Speakers and Heads of Delegations. Reiz Continental Hotel.
- Host: President of the Senate.
- Evening High Commissioner's Reception. **High Commissioner's Residence.**
- Hosts: CPA UK Branch Chairman and High Commissioner.

Saturday 9 September – Final Plenary

- 0700 Breakfast.
- 0900 General Assembly. **Africa Hall, AICC.**
- 1300 Lunch. **AICC.**
- 1400 Final Plenary. **Africa Hall, AICC.**
- 1700 End of Conference.
- 1900 Farewell Reception and Dinner. **AICC.**

Sunday 10 September - Departures