



NEWS RELEASE

57th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference London, United Kingdom, 21 – 28 July 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 20 JULY 2011: Close to 700 Commonwealth Parliamentarians and parliamentary officials will meet in London over the coming week to mark the Centennial of the founding of the Commonwealth's oldest organization.

The 57th annual Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will be officially opened Monday in Westminster Hall by HRH The Princess Royal as the Association marks 100 years since its founding as the Empire Parliamentary Association at a July 1911 meeting at Westminster of British Parliamentarians and Members from five dominion Parliaments. This year's conference will be attended by Members from nearly 170 Parliaments and Legislatures in the nations, states, provinces and territories of the Commonwealth who will discuss issues under the theme of "Reinforcing Democracy".

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference will be preceded by meetings of the Small Branches Conference, the CPA Executive Committee, the CPA Working Party and the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee. During the plenary Conference, meetings of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments will also take place.

The meetings will be hosted by the United Kingdom Parliament. The 2011 President, Rt Hon. John Bercow, MP, Speaker of the House of Commons, will preside over the Conference while the Lords Speaker, Rt Hon. Baroness Hayman, will preside over the CWP meeting as its 2011 President. The plenary and the Small Branches agendas are attached, and the CWP will discuss "Being an Effective Agent of Change: Prerequisites and Modus" as MPs pool experiences and ideas so their Assemblies adopt more effective laws and policies.

"Commonwealth Parliamentarians today all stand as equal partners with a shared commitment to the common goal of advancing parliamentary democracy through the development and sharing of best practices at this conference, the CPA's other meetings and through our constant and now instant communications throughout every year," said the Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Hon. Dato' Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal, MP, Malaysia's Minister of Rural and Regional Development. "Parliamentary democracy is all about evolving new processes to meet the challenge of change through engaging all our people in the development and implementation of solutions shared at CPA forums."

Members will hear major assessments of global issues facing Parliamentarians by CPA Secretary-General Dr William F. Shija and Commonwealth Secretary-General H.E. Kamallesh Sharma.

Dr Shija said the London meetings will discuss how the CPA and its member Parliaments and Legislatures can expand their role in transforming the Commonwealth into an even more effective global champion of good governance and equitable development.

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“The CPA and the wider Commonwealth are bound together by shared values and our commitment to working together to improve the lives of all people,” said Dr Shija.

“As the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association celebrates 100 years of parliamentary evolution, and as we seek to reinforce democracy, it will increasingly be necessary to formulate and implement policies that ensure the welfare of all. In this way, violence and conflict can be prevented or resolved and the vulnerable in our societies, such as the disabled, aged and minorities, can be better served.”

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is composed of the Parliaments and Legislatures in 53 of the 54 Commonwealth nations and their overseas territories. It has a membership of more than 16,000 Members of national, state, provincial and territorial Assemblies. The only Commonwealth country not currently in the CPA is Brunei, which does not have an elected Parliament. The CPA Branch in Fiji Islands is in abeyance as the South Pacific country’s Parliament has been dissolved by the current military government.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE CPA, PLEASE CONTACT:

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Reinforcing Democracy

Opening Plenary

Addresses by CPA Secretary-General and the Commonwealth Secretary-General

Workshops

- A. Host Branch topic – Challenges for the Commonwealth in the 21st Century: Climate Change, Food and Water Security, and Trade.
- B. Parliament and Reforms – Raising the Benchmarks.
- C. Commonwealth Initiatives in Handling Migration Issues
- D. Enhancing Good Governance and Accountability: Improving Standards of Probity and Performance.
- E. The World Economy and Obstacles Facing the Commonwealth.
- F. Women as Agents of Change: Where Are We Now? The Way Forward
- G. Technological Threats to International, National and Personal Security.
- H. The Role of Parliamentarians in Advancing the Transfer of Agricultural Technology and Research.

Final Plenary:

Commonwealth Parliaments: Progress and Challenges.

31st Small Branches Conference
London, United Kingdom
23 – 24 July 2011

1st Plenary Session

Commonwealth Initiatives in Handling Migration Issues

2nd Plenary Session

Countering Threats to the Stability of Small Democracies: Piracy, Drug Trafficking, Terrorism

3rd Plenary Session

Women as Agents of Change in Small Societies

4th Plenary Session

Strengthening Democracy in Small States: Youth Leadership Training, Citizen Involvement and Parliamentary Reform