



**Report of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth
Parliamentary Association**

**Commonwealth Parliamentary Association United Kingdom
Virtual Forum on Climate Change**

By videoconference

From March 22 to 24, 2021

Report

Commonwealth Parliamentary Forum on Climate Change

In November 2021, the United Kingdom (U.K.) will be hosting the 26th United Nations (UN) Conference of Parties on Climate Change (COP26). In preparation for this event, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) U.K., in partnership with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, hosted the first virtual Commonwealth Parliamentary Forum on Climate Change from 22 to 24 March 2021. The overarching objective of the forum was to engage parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth in dialogue on climate change, with particular regard to their various roles and responsibilities.

The following members of the Canadian Branch of the CPA participated in a number of the forum's sessions: Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, MP, the Honourable Diane Griffin, Senator, the Honourable Terry M. Mercer, Senator, Mr. Daniel Blaikie, MP, Mr. Matt Jeneroux, MP, Ms. Monique Pauzé and Mrs. Salma Zahid. The Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities also participated in the forum as a panellist.

The forum consisted of 10 substantive sessions that addressed climate change related topics important to Commonwealth countries. This report provides a summary of each substantive session.

In Preparation for COP26

The goal of this session was to initiate a discussion on the role of parliamentarians in encouraging governments to set ambitious climate action targets. Nigel Topping, the United Nations High Level Climate Action Champion (HLCAC), was a panellist during this session.

Mr. Topping's discussed his role as the HLCAC and the importance of engaging non-state actors, particularly private industry, in the fight against climate change. He presented various alternatives to punitive measures and taxation that could be used to encourage private sector actors to participate in addressing climate change. One example he provided was the HLCAC's "Race to Zero" campaign which "is a global campaign to rally leadership and support from businesses, cities, regions and investors for a healthy, resilient, zero-carbon recovery that prevents future threats, creates decent jobs, and unlocks inclusive, sustainable growth."¹

This session focussed on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The invited panellists were Mr. Alex Sobel, MP, Chair of the Net Zero All-Party Parliamentary Group (Net Zero APPG); Dr. Kedrick Pickering, former Premiere of the British Virgin Islands; and Ms. Sarah Boyack, MSP, Scottish Labour's Campaign Cabinet member for Environment Climate Change and Land Reform.

¹ United Nations, Climate Change, [Race To Zero Campaign](#).

Raising Ambitions: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

This session focussed on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The invited panellists were Mr. Alex Sobel, MP, Chair of the Net Zero All-Party Parliamentary Group (Net Zero APPG); Dr. Kedrick Pickering, former Premiere of the British Virgin Islands; and Ms. Sarah Boyack, MSP, Scottish Labour's Campaign Cabinet member for Environment Climate Change and Land Reform.

1. Alex Sobe

Mr. Sobel focussed his remarks on the role of the U.K. Parliament's Net Zero APPG, which was formed to secure a low carbon and clean industrial and economic future for the U.K., embed zero carbon solutions and accelerate the U.K.'s commitment to deliver net zero growth and innovation. During his presentation, Mr. Sobel underscored the importance of setting ambitious targets and clear objectives. He pointed to the Net Zero APPG's 10-point plan for the U.K. Government as an example.

2. Dr. Kedrick Pickering

Dr. Pickering's presentation considered the impact of climate change on small island states, particularly those in the Caribbean. He explained that the increasing frequency of extreme climate events, as a result of climate change, is already having devastating consequences on small island states, such as the British Virgin Islands. He suggested that these states consider setting ambitious objectives for protecting their environment and start investing in more resilient infrastructure.

3. Sarah Boyack

During her presentation, Ms. Boyack noted that climate change has become a mainstream political issue in Scotland. She also gave examples of initiatives taken in Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, such as making homes more energy efficient, moving away from gas boilers and building green spaces to protect biodiversity.

Build Back Better: Sustainable Investment and Green Recovery Post-COVID-19

The main purpose of this session was to gain a better understanding of the UN Office of Disaster Risk Reduction's concept of "building back better," which is the

use of the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phases after a disaster to increase the resilience of nations and communities through integrating disaster risk reduction measures into the restoration of physical infrastructure and societal systems, and into the revitalization of livelihoods, economies and the environment. ²

The invited panellists were the Right Honourable Philip Dunne, Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee in the U.K. Parliament; Stephen Hammer, Advisor of Global Partnerships and Strategy at the World Bank; Rebecca Sheeran, Executive Leader of the U.K.'s National Audit Office; and Unnikrishnan Divakaran Nair, Head of Climate Change at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

1. The Right Honourable Philip Dunne

² United Nations, Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, [Build back better](#).

The Right Honourable Dunne discussed the work of the U.K. Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee, which is mandated to "consider the extent to which the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development, and to audit their performance against sustainable development and environmental protection targets." ³

2. Stephen Hammer

Noting that the COVID-19 pandemic had slowed progress on the UN's Development Goals and increased country debt, Mr. Hammer focussed his remarks on how the World Bank plans to help countries build back better. He reported that the World Bank was integrating climate action measures into COVID-19 recovery plans and ensuring that both short- and long-term spending plans include climate change considerations.

3. Rebecca Sheeran

Ms. Sheeran gave an overview of the U.K.'s climate action plan, including its five-year strategy and its commitment to achieving net zero. She stated that the U.K. Parliament has two cabinet committees on climate change and noted that the U.K. has established a senior conference board on climate change.

4. Unnikrishnan Divakaran Nair

Mr. Nair reported on the Commonwealth Secretariat's approach to climate change and how it helps commonwealth countries establish climate change policies. For instance, he noted that the Commonwealth Secretariat is providing help with climate change financing.

Supporting Small Island and Developing States

This session aimed to improve understanding of the impact of climate change on small island states. Presentations were made by the Honourable Simon Stiell, Grenada's Minister for Climate Resilience, The Environment, Forestry, Fisheries and Disaster Management and Dr. Atiur Rahman, Development Economist and Former Governor of the Central Bank of Bangladesh.

1. The Honourable Simon Stiell

During his presentation, Mr. Stiell noted that the impact of climate change on small island states was disproportionate to their contribution to this global problem. He emphasized that large countries could help give small island states a voice in multilateral fora. He also underscored various ways in which parliamentarians can contribute to the fight against climate change domestically and internationally.

2. Dr. Atiur Rahman

Dr. Rahman discussed some of the challenges that Bangladesh is currently facing as a result of climate change and provided an overview of some of the mitigation and adaptation efforts it has introduced. In particular, he highlighted the work of Bangladesh's Central Bank, which has created a "green fund" for enterprises of various sizes.

Round Table with Youth Representatives

³ United Kingdom, "[Environmental Audit Committees](#)".

This session consisted of a “round table” discussion with youth climate action activists. The discussion covered a broad range of topics including youth activism and climate change, engaging with young constituents, social media platforms and engaging with parliamentarians. The following panellists participated: Angelique Pouponneau, CEO, SeyCCAT Executive Team; Anoka Primrose Abeyrathne, Co-founder of Growin’ Money and Policy and Advocacy Lead, Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network, Asia Pacific Representative; Daisy Chapman-Chamberlain, Commonwealth Youth Parliamentarian; Fontoh Desmond Abinwi, Commonwealth Youth Climate Network, National Coordinator, Cameroon; and Leneka Rhoden, Commonwealth Youth Climate Network, Pan-Commonwealth Coordinator.

Acting on Climate Change: The Role of Parliamentarians

The objective for this session was to identify opportunities for parliamentarians to take action on climate change. The session covered a range of topics, including the role of upper chambers, private members’ bills, the private sector, parliamentary caucuses and other parliamentary initiatives. The invited speakers were the Right Honourable Baroness Hayman GBE, Co-Chair of Peers for the Planet; Darren Jones, MP, Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee in the U.K. Parliament; Inna Gardiner, Deputy Chair of the Public Accounts Committee in the Jersey State Assembly; and the Honourable Gideon Ochanda Ogolla, MP, Chair of the Parliamentary Caucus on Sustainable Development Goals and Business and member of the Departmental Committee on Health of the National Assembly of Kenya.

Oversight, Scrutiny and Accountability

This session’s goal was to consider ways in which parliamentarians can leverage their oversight function to ensure executive accountability on climate policies as well as the implementation of climate change legislation. The invited speakers were Janet Finch-Saunders MS/AS, Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Energy, and Rural Affairs and Member of the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee in the Welsh Parliament, Lord Robin Teverson of the U.K. Parliament and Martyn Atkins, Clerk of the U.K. House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee.

1. Janet Finch-Saunders

Ms. Saunders discussed various strategies opposition members can use to advance climate change policies. Her presentation touched on oral and written questions, legislation, motions, press releases and debates. She also talked about her private member’s bill, which aimed to reduce the use of plastic in Wales.

2. Lord Robin Teverson

Lord Teverson focussed his remarks on the role of the House of Lords in advancing climate change policies. He specifically looked on the House of Lords oversight function and the importance of the upper chamber’s committee work.

3. Martyn Atkins

Mr. Atkins discussed the role and work of the U.K.’s House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, such as its recent report entitled “**Growing back better: putting nature and net zero at the heart of the economic recovery.**” He also emphasized the

importance of the cross-party consensus in realizing the U.K.'s 2050 goals for climate change.

Climate Change and Evidence-Based Policy

This session provided information on evidence-based policy making and how it can be applied to parliamentary work on climate action. The presenters also gave an overview of various techniques and frameworks to assess the quality of climate evidence. The invited speakers were the Right Honourable Lord Deben, Chairman of the U.K. Independent Committee on Climate Change; Professor Corinne Le Quéré, Royal Society Research Professor of Climate Change Science at the University of East Anglia and Member of the Independent Committee on Climate Change; and Jack Miller, Senior Energy Advisor in the U.K.'s Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology.

1. The Right Honourable Lord Deben

The Right Honourable Deben discussed the role of the U.K.'s Independent Committee on Climate Change (CCC), an independent statutory body established under the *Climate Change Act 2008*. Its primary purpose is to engage the government on its climate change action and policies. In fulfilling its mandate, the CCC tracks the government's progress on greenhouse gas emission reductions and its climate change preparedness plans. The CCC tables its findings in parliament.

2. Corinne Le Quéré

Ms. Le Quéré presented her research on the effectiveness of climate change policies in various countries. Her findings indicate that, while carbon emission rates are declining in most countries, countries with specific policies aimed at carbon emission reduction perform better. She also identified a number of areas where climate investments should be targeted and argued that long-term climate change planning is critical for giving people certainty.

3. Jack Miller

Mr. Miller gave a presentation on the role of the U.K.'s Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST), which is a bicameral parliamentary institution focused on producing impartial, non-partisan and peer-reviewed briefings intended to make scientific research more accessible. Mr. Miller underscored the effectiveness of the institution's POSTNotes – four-page reports on emerging areas of research.

Environmental Democracy: Representation and Advocacy

The goal for this session was to highlight ways in which parliamentarians can engage constituents on the climate change challenge to ensure local interests are heard at the national level. The panellists were the Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities in the Parliament of Canada; the Honourable Andleeb Abbas, Member of the Climate Change Committee in the National Assembly of Pakistan; Sarah Allen, Head of Engagement, Involve, and Project Manager Climate Assembly U.K.; and Rafael Jiménez-Aybar, Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

1. The Honourable Catherine McKenna

The Honourable Catherine McKenna focussed her remarks on the impact of climate change on vulnerable groups such as women and Indigenous people in Canada, particularly those in the country's northern region. She noted that, while Indigenous people contribute the least to climate change, they are among those who will be the most affected by it. During the discussion, Minister McKenna also emphasized the need for independent bodies to oversee the government's work. She also provided an overview of Canada's Net-Zero Advisory Body, a group of experts mandated to engage with Canadians and provide advice to the Minister on pathways to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

2. The Honourable Andleeb Abbas

The Honourable Andleeb Abbas discussed the impact of climate change on Pakistan, noting that it is among the top five countries most affected by the changing climate. He also presented some of Pakistan's climate reduction initiatives, such as zero emission transportation policies as well as the country's 10 Billion Tree Tsunami – a five-year tree planting initiative launched by the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 2018.

3. Sarah Allen

Sarah Allen focussed her remarks on the U.K.'s Climate Assembly, which brought together 108 regionally and demographically diverse participants from around the country. The objective of the assembly was to better understand, discuss and prioritize actions the U.K. should take with respect to achieving net zero by 2050. Ms. Allen reported that at the conclusion of the assembly, a report was prepared with more than 50 recommendations for the U.K. government.

4. Rafael Jiménez-Aybar

Paris Agreement

Beyond the Conventional: Climate Justice and Security

This session focussed on climate justice – a movement that promotes the incorporation of human rights, development and equity into the climate change debate. The discussion was led by Sophie Howe, Future Generation Commissioner of Wales, who presented a broad range of solutions, including the incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals into domestic law, using measures other than gross domestic product to determine prosperity, investing in more efficient homes and greener infrastructure.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Terry M. Mercer, Senator
Vice-Chair
Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth
Parliamentary Association (CPA)

Terry Duguid, M.P.
Vice-Chair
Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth
Parliamentary Association (CPA)

Travel Costs*

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
ACTIVITY	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association United Kingdom Virtual Forum on Climate Change
DESTINATION	By Videoconference
DATES	From March 22 to 24, 2021
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Diane Griffin Hon. Terry M. Mercer
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Yasmin Ratansi Daniel Blaikie Matt Jeneroux Monique Pauzé Salma Zahid
STAFF	Rémi Bourgault Jean-Philippe Duguay
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 0.00
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 0.00
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 0.00
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 0.00
TOTAL	\$ 0.00

**No expenses incurred. The Forum was held by video conference.*