



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation to the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary
Conference and Bilateral Visit to Sri Lanka**

**Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary
Association (CPA)**

**Dhaka, Bangladesh
November 1 to 8, 2017
and
Colombo, Sri Lanka
November 8 to 11, 2017**

Report

The delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association which attended the 63rd Annual Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Dhaka, Bangladesh from November 1 to 8, 2017 and which participated in a bilateral visit to Sri Lanka from November 8 to 11, 2017 has the honour to present its report.

A. 63RD CPA CONFERENCE, DHAKA, BANGLADESH

The Canadian Branch was represented by the following delegates:

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, M.P., Chair of the Canadian Branch;

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan, Senator;

Hon. Marilou McPhedran, Senator;

Ms. Alexandra Mendès, M.P.;

Mr. Matt Jeneroux, M.P.;

Hon. Thomas Mulcair, M.P.; and

Mr. Rémi Bourgault, Association Secretary

Commonwealth parliamentarians attending the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and associated meetings recognised the Commonwealth's commitment to democracy and met under the conference theme of '**Continuing to enhance high standards of performance of Parliamentarians**'.

The conference, hosted by the CPA Bangladesh Branch and Parliament of Bangladesh from 1 to 8 November, 2017 in Dhaka, Bangladesh was attended by over 500 Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Clerks representing Parliaments and Legislatures from across the Commonwealth.

The conference was hosted by the CPA President and outgoing Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh. The conference also included the 36th Small Branches Conference and meetings of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP). Ms. Ratansi represented the Canadian Region at the CWP meetings.

Alongside the substantive conference workshops and the CPA governance meetings (63rd General Assembly and Executive Committee meetings), the 63rd 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 all 52 countries of the Commonwealth as well as national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures bringing together over 180 CPA Branches of the Association.

63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference - Opening Addresses:

The Chief Guest at the opening of the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, MP, Hon. Prime Minister of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and Vice-Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association who declared the conference open.

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh urged Commonwealth Parliamentarians to uphold democratic principles as she opened the 63rd CPC and said: *"We, Parliamentarians, being the people's representatives have the first and foremost obligations to preserve and maintain the faith of the people in democracy and Parliamentary institutions."*

The CPA President and Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee, provided messages from the Queen in her welcoming address. The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr. Akbar Khan welcomed Commonwealth Parliamentarians and delegates to the conference and said: *"The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference strengthens our networks and nurtures our shared Commonwealth democratic values."*

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland QC in a video message to delegates said: *"Shared understanding of democratic values, with honest and accountable administration, and respect for the separation of powers, are fundamental to our Commonwealth approaches to development. The CPA conference and the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association are fine examples of how forums and mechanisms for exchange of ideas and expertise enable us to leverage the advantages our shared inheritances offer."*

The vote of thanks on behalf of Members of Parliament was given by Hon. Vicki Dunne, MLA, CPA Treasurer and Deputy Speaker of the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly.

63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference: CPA statement on the Rohingya

Commonwealth Parliamentarians attending the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference were given a briefing by His Excellency Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh. Following the briefing, there was discussions on how the Commonwealth Parliamentarians could make a difference. Canadian delegates pointed out the fact that Canada was the only country that had appointed a Special Envoy, the Hon. Bob Rae, who had already visited Myanmar, Indonesia and the Cox Bazar, where the Rohingya refugees were. As well, Canada was the only country so far to not only make a commitment of \$25 million, but had announced a matching fund. Canada called on other countries to do the same. Canadian delegate, Hon. Thomas Mulcair helped in preparing a resolution/Statement which the Secretary General presented to the General Assembly. The adoption of a statement on the crisis was proposed by the CPA Malta Branch and a CPA statement on the Rohingya crisis was adopted by consensus by the Commonwealth Parliamentarians attending the 63rd General Assembly of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Tuesday, November 7, 2017. The CPA statement on the Rohingya crisis "affirms the collective will of the membership of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to call for urgent action from the international community to resolve the ongoing humanitarian crisis facing the Rohingyas ethnic minority."

The full CPA statement on the Rohingya is available at: www.cpahq.org/cpahq/rohingya.

63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Chairperson elected at the 63rd CPA General Assembly

Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon was elected as the new Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) International Executive Committee for a three-year term. Ms. Alexandra Mendès was elected to the position of Vice-Chairperson of the CPA, the first for a Canadian in decades.

63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference: CPA Australia Federal Branch

The 63rd CPA General Assembly approved the application from the Federal Parliament of Australia to reconstitute the Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the CPA from 1 January 2018. The Federal Parliament of Australia submitted a valid application together with a resolution to the CPA Headquarters Secretariat to re-join the CPA Membership.

63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference: Commonwealth CPA Lecture

The first Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Lecture for the CPA Asia Region was held at the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference with Professor Dr Gowher Rizvi, International Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh who spoke of the Commonwealth's enduring political values that bring challenges and opportunities for Commonwealth Parliamentarians.

Professor Dr Gowher Rizvi highlighted the significant role that the Commonwealth has played in international affairs and how the development of the Commonwealth had played a significant role in the history of the nations. He also spoke about how the Commonwealth functions as a self-serving organization for the benefit of all its members and the key role of the CPA in promoting unity and diversity amongst Parliamentarians.

63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference: Youth Roundtable

A youth roundtable event was hosted by the CPA Bangladesh Branch with discussions between Commonwealth Parliamentarians, including Mr. Matt Jeneroux, Canadian MP and young people from a range of youth groups in Bangladesh. The inaugural youth roundtable was chaired by the CPA President and Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee.

Eighteen Law Faculty students from Dhaka University and two of the young people who had attended the 8th CPA Commonwealth Youth Parliament in British Columbia, Canada exchanged views with Commonwealth Parliamentarians representing all nine CPA Regions. Following a lively session debating the democratic importance of parliaments engaging with young people to ensure that the views of the youth contributed to policy making decisions by governments, the workshop divided into two groups to agree a series of recommendations to be presented to conference delegates attending the 63rd CPC Workshop G - *Giving voice to the youth: mechanisms for ensuring effective participation of youth in the governance process*.

Group one put forward the following recommendations:

- **Introduce compulsory classes in schools to educate students about politics and the parliamentary process.**
- **Establish apprenticeship or internship schemes within parliamentary organisations in order to provide training for those with an interest in joining the world of politics.**
- **Invite youth representatives to participate on policy making bodies/establish youth advisory boards to ensure inclusivity.**
- **Allow candidates to stand for election at the same age as they can vote.**

Group two suggested the following recommendations:

- **Encourage greater use of social media by Parliamentarians, whilst ensuring traditional forms of communication continue for those without internet access.**
- **Introduce quotas for youth representation within parliaments.**
- **Establish special training courses in parliamentary processes for graduates.**
- **Consult with youth representatives when drafting legislation, particularly when there is a direct impact on young people (for example in relation to education, sport and culture).**
- **Ensure that every CPA conference includes a proportionate number of young delegates, especially when youth issues are under discussion.**
- **Expand access to student politics by electing rather than selecting candidates.**

63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference – Workshops:

Main conference theme: *‘Continuing to enhance high standards of performance of Parliamentarians’.*

The eight main conference workshops and their recommendations were as follows:

Workshop A: Democracy must Deliver: Role of Parliament in addressing the Challenges (Host Branch Topic)

The first workshop for the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was on the Host Branch topic of ‘Democracy and how it must deliver: role of Parliament in addressing the Challenges’. Discussion leaders presented the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 16 which refers to Parliaments and good governance. It was highlighted that Parliaments should ensure that their functions are properly implemented, especially with transparency, oversight and independence. The importance of the media, civil society and international standards must also be considered to ensure the best performance of Parliamentarians across the Commonwealth.

Parliamentarians from the Host Branch shared their experiences and different facets of democracy, especially in relation to climate change and how to achieve some of the SDGs by 2020. Delegates asked many questions and the decisive comment was how individual jurisdictions are playing their part to improve the situation and make full use of

their democratic powers. Members spoke of how their parliaments are addressing major challenges such as fighting corruption and the separation of powers.

The discussion leaders put forward four recommendations, which after much discussion, were all **endorsed** by the workshop:

- **Parliaments should ensure that Parliamentarians are equipped and enabled to make informed decisions on law-making, budgeting, oversight and public outreach in effectively implementing the SDGs.**
- **Parliamentarians to proactively play a role in translating the 17 Sustainable Development**
- **Goals into legislation and policies for country-specific goals.**
- **For Parliament to promote democracy and good governance, thereby enhancing people's participation, it should be more transparent and have a separation of power, making it easily accessible to the public.**
- **A democratic Parliament should reflect the social diversity of the population in terms of gender, geography, language religion, race, ethnicity and any other politically-significant characteristics.**

Workshop B: The role of Parliamentarians in building stronger ties within the Commonwealth: including new trade issues, visa issues, travel restrictions, non-tariff restrictions.

With the many complications of global trade, Commonwealth members fully recognize the value of international trade as a powerful means of achieving economic and social progress including the targets of the SDGs. By affirming the core values and principles of the Commonwealth's Charter, the Commonwealth builds strong networks which provide collective regional efforts to accelerate economic and trade growth, social progress, cultural development and tourism. Member countries have the possibility to negotiate disputes on trade and other social-economic issues through negotiations. In addition, by ratifying trade agreements and implementing their provisions through domestic legislation and appropriate budgetary allocation, international trade could be enhanced.

To build stronger ties within the Commonwealth on trade, travel and tariff issues, it is important to identify the common best practices which strengthen the capacity of parliamentary instruments, especially by improving trade facilities and logistics at the national and regional level which can significantly reduce trade costs and boost the output of trade. Consequently, simplifying customs procedures and tariff systems, upgrading systems to expedite the movement, release and clearance of goods and performing as logistic hubs are important factors for the increase in free trade.

For Parliamentarians to do their job effectively on trade relation matters, they need the opportunities and means to obtain a thorough understanding of the workings of the WTO system, the multilateral negotiating process and Regional Trade Agreements. It is equally important to have a national process of trade policy development. While acknowledging economic cooperation, Members can influence the direction of international trade and hold their governments to account on trade issues when dealing with international institutions.

The first recommendation was ***noted*** and the second and third recommendations were ***endorsed*** at the end of the workshop:

- **Free movement is key to building stronger ties within the Commonwealth. National Parliaments should therefore champion visa free regimes for Commonwealth citizens.**
- **To set up a committee charged with arranging a seminar with outside experts to examine the reasons for the decline in momentum in removing obstacles to international trade and to recommend appropriate remedies.**
- **In the Commonwealth, visa issues and travel restrictions operate against free movement of citizens to promote trade. Parliaments must ensure that immigration reform is enacted.**

Workshop C: The Climate Change Debate: A challenge for the Commonwealth?

This workshop focused on discussions that Commonwealth countries who have signed the COP 21 Paris Agreement should address and deal with climate change. The Commonwealth as a body encourages jurisdictions to address climate change and to look at the implementation of climate change rules. However, the financing of these measures result in 'bottlenecks' in terms of how much is to be paid and how the results are to be monitored.

The Commonwealth should reinforce the COP 21 Agreement especially as climate change adversely affects vulnerable, smaller Commonwealth countries. Most Commonwealth countries have not done much in terms of implementation. Estimates suggest that one third of the action has been undertaken; clearly there is much to be done. In 2020, all nations will revise their action plans on climate change and there was a call for new laws on climate change to provide predictability, legitimacy and autonomy.

Another discussion leader from the Caribbean Region spoke about the effects of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma which moved across the Atlantic Ocean and made landfall in a number of CPA Branches in the Region. Delegates were told that they need to deal with the realities of climate change that jurisdictions are being faced with whether they are man-made or natural. The economic impact of climate change also needs to be addressed and nations need to adapt to meet the challenges that climate change will bring.

The two recommendations at the workshop were ***endorsed*** as follows:

- **Legal reform can make a low carbon and climate resilient development pathway possible by reinforcing policy, strengthening institutions and mobilizing resources towards climate change activities.**
- **Parliaments within the Commonwealth should ensure a framework for combatting climate change is developed and implemented within each Region and updated at Regional Conferences.**

Workshop D: Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's): How can CPA Members work with their own governments in ensuring that the SDG goals have a proper gender lens to ensure success in the areas of alleviating poverty and women's empowerment? (*Gender-related Topic*)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi led the discussion on SDG's and Canada's approach to meet its SDG commitment 1 – alleviation of Poverty and 5 Gender Equity. She stated that Canada had led the way on meeting gender parity within its Cabinet, that it introduced a “feminist international policy” which helped organizations working with women at the grass roots get international funding. There was robust discussion from many male participants of their countries approach to meeting the SDG goals. The final outcome was that delegates acknowledge that achieving SDG 5 would contribute to the achievement of the other SDGs, particularly SDG 1, pertaining to poverty alleviation. Delegates, in this regard, considered how Parliamentarians could work with their respective governments to ensure that the implementation of the SDGs had a proper gender lens.

Delegates also noted that most states had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), effected policies and enacted legislation to enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women. However, the enforcement of these measures had remained a challenge for some states due to various factors including lack of political will, traditional practices and the stereotyping of gender roles.

Delegates acknowledged that, as Parliamentarians, they were best placed to ensure a proper gender lens was used in implementing the SDGs because they were responsible for adopting the budget, enacting legislation and scrutinizing public expenditure.

The workshop delegates **endorsed** the following recommendations:

- **CPA members should ensure that, as their parliament works toward the SDGs, it meaningfully consults and incorporates perspectives from women across a variety of demographics.**
- **Empower the Committees of Parliament to champion gender consideration of all budgets and**
- **Bills and promote gender sensitive Annual Reports that are tabled in Parliament.**
- **Parliaments vested with powers to make laws, allocate resources and represent the people are best placed to ensure promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, and women's representation in the parliament is central to ensuring that no women or girls are left behind as we set ourselves new targets to achieve the SDG goals critical to human development and indeed human survival.**

Workshop E: Critical Mass: Small jurisdictions and big problems - Logistics and infrastructure challenges (Small Branches Topic)

Ms. Alexandra Mendès was the moderator of this workshop. The delegates noted that there was a large variety between jurisdictions within the CPA, both in size and the level of development. There were problems in some jurisdictions in coping with a high demand for infrastructure but with a low national income. There were limited options to deal with these issues including: raising taxes; seeking private funding; seeking partnerships with private enterprise; selling off assets; using economic development; lowering expectations and spending less. These solutions all had their problems, but the last one was probably the trickiest.

The size of a jurisdiction was not an indicator of service level delivery. Some small jurisdictions had a very high level of development. On the other hand, there were some large jurisdictions with lower levels of service delivery.

The United Nations had a twelve year aim to eliminate poverty via development and the UNDP. The workshop delegates noted that Parliamentarians had to consider ways of creating solutions to development challenges and the following possible actions were suggested:

- Recognizing that Overseas Development Assistance was very badly coordinated. Doubling up was common and the selection of aid recipient was often irrational. Silo programming was an issue: if interventions were limited in subject then results were less good, so for example general sexual health aid was better for outcomes than focusing on HIV or other single issues.
- Recognizing that the Commonwealth and similar organizations could better coordinate aid. They could act as knowledge clearing houses for donors.
- Promoting knowledge using IT to enable better collaboration.
- Encouraging better developed jurisdictions to share benefits at the margins to people from less developed jurisdictions.

The four recommendations at the workshop were **endorsed** as follows:

- **Parliaments must ensure that governments enhance the policy and regulatory framework for market-led growth, whilst strengthening the financial sector to expand and better manage infrastructure.**
- **Small jurisdictions with limited funding and resources must be strategic, creative and competitive in addressing their unique logistic and infrastructure challenges.**
- **Knowledge and good practice sharing by Commonwealth parliaments at national and sub- national levels should wherever practicable be facilitated to help overcome resource gaps.**
- **The CPA should facilitate better knowledge sharing between Branches and be an advocate for better coordination of assistance from development partners to its Members.**

Workshop F: CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures: Progress in the past 10 years

Mr. Thomas Mulcair was a discussion leader at this workshop. The CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures were first developed in 2006 with the assistance of all nine regions of the CPA and support from international organisations like the World Bank. These CPA Benchmarks have provided a minimum standard to be met by all Commonwealth Parliaments and a description of how a Parliament should act, behave and function.

This workshop discussed the CPA Benchmarks and their implementation today. It was noted that regular updates are important to ensure that the CPA Benchmarks are relevant to each jurisdiction. Many CPA Branches have undertaken self-assessment of their Parliaments and Legislatures utilising the CPA Benchmarks. It was noted that the use of self-assessments by Parliaments to demonstrate their performance and to

highlight areas in which the organisation can improve was useful and that these assessments would allow for comparison between Legislatures.

It was noted that the CPA Benchmarks are not about 'shaming' Parliaments as there is no grading system but that the CPA Benchmarks allow Parliaments to take into account their own culture and history in development and can utilise the results to point to improvement in their own processes.

One jurisdiction gave the following examples of the tangible outcomes from their self-assessment against the CPA Benchmarks including:

- A shortened duration for the notice of submitted questions from 14 days to 10 days.
- The establishment of a Special Chamber for dealing with urgent public matters.
- Introducing the permission for questions to be submitted with a day's notice for Ministerial Questions.

The workshop delegates heard of the significant value in utilising external parties, including academic and independent organisations, to conduct and assist in assessments against the CPA Benchmarks as it is difficult for an individual to be truly objective in regards to their own jurisdiction. The inclusion of external groups in the assessment also adds to the confidence and validity of the process.

The four recommendations at the workshop were **endorsed** as follows:

- **Branch President/Clerks to assess their legislatures against the CPA Benchmarks to identify improvements and enhancements and to report on progress at future conferences.**
- **Where relevant, citizens, civil society and academia should be consulted when Parliaments conduct self-assessments with the CPA Benchmarks to promote transparency and accountability.**
- **Parliaments should use the updated CPA Benchmarks on Democratic Legislatures as a tool to ensure their contribution to SDG 16 (on inclusive and accountable governance).**
- **To conduct a regular meeting to review and enhance the CPA Benchmarks to suit the current developments.**

Workshop G: Giving voice to the youth: Mechanisms for ensuring effective participation of youth in the governance process.

Delegates gathered for this workshop in which stimulating presentations and a vibrant discussion focussed on the importance of giving a voice to the youth and the mechanisms for ensuring the effective participation of youth in the governance process. The discussion leaders began the session with formal presentations outlining the current situation in relation to engaging young people in the democratic process in their respective jurisdictions of Tasmania, India and Bangladesh.

The discussion leaders also highlighted:

- The importance of young people being considered as the leaders of today and not just as the future leaders of tomorrow.

- The need for youth engagement and participation in the governance process to occur in an organic manner and to facilitate practices which will lead to the natural outcome of developing young people into capable Parliamentarians.
- The emergence of positive role models in Parliament for young people with young leaders recently elected in a number of jurisdictions including Canada, New Zealand and France.

Workshop delegates also heard from two young people from Bangladesh who had participated in the Youth Roundtable during the conference and spoke passionately about the need to engage and encourage young people's participation through numerous measures including:

- quotas of young people both on a party basis and at a legislature level.
- encouraging the participation of young people not to be restricted to 'youth issues' but to full engagement on all global issues.
- analysis of data to identify the best international practices of youth engagement throughout the Commonwealth to share with different jurisdictions.
- to consider and address barriers preventing political and parliamentary participation by young people, such as offering training to develop the necessary skills through apprenticeships and civic education in schools.
- ensuring youth representation on all statutory bodies.
- promoting youth participation through digital democracy and social media.

The following five recommendations were **endorsed** by the workshop delegates.

- **Parliaments must ensure that the youth Parliamentarians are given a voice in all parliamentary, national, regional and international representative bodies.**
- **Parliament needs to give a voice to the youth by making sure the policies close to their hearts are actively considered.**
- **Parliaments and Parliamentarians should ceaselessly endeavour to ensure the mainstreaming of the youth in governance and nation building so as to equip and empower them to shape the destinies of democracies the world over.**
- **Introduction of youth quotas in Parliament and youth quotas at the party level in the case of choosing candidates.**
- **Youth must be mentored through internships and apprenticeships in statutory bodies and parliamentary functions should be taught within mainstream education.**

Workshop H: What factors fuel the rise of different kinds of nationalism?

In discussing this topic, the workshop delegates described nationalism as something that stems from internal or external forces pressuring unity and cohesion among native individuals of societies. Further, the delegates noted that nationalism has the capacity to bring about varying effects that can either ameliorate the livelihood of the citizens of a society or it can cause its detriment. Furthermore, the delegates noted that at global level, a number of changes appear to be taking place which are causing countries to retreat into their own corners.

In some jurisdictions, openness is succumbing to hostility, curiosity to suspicion and cooperation to protectionism. The reason behind all these changes was given as nationalism. Firstly, delegates at the workshop noted that nationalism could arise at personal, ethnic or national levels. Secondly, delegates stated that there were two types of nationalism; civic and ethnic. They also observed that nationalism could have the positive effect of igniting economic, political and social emancipation. To this end, the delegates noted that when unity is embraced, nationalism can be a tool that can be used to promote national growth and good neighbourliness, thereby strengthening the international community.

The workshop **endorsed** the following recommendation unanimously:

- **This CPC workshop recognizes that different factors, history, political systems and geography can influence different types of nationalism across different countries of the world.**

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Session

Workshop topic: If we want genuine positive change in the world, we need more women leaders. How can we persuade the world that the future is dependent on gender equality?

The workshop for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network discussed how a society with greater equality of opportunity is a more economically dynamic society. It was noted that as part of the Strategic Planning Session in Wilton Park, the CWP had asked each country to provide leadership for the plan. Canada's contribution through the Chair, Ms. Ratansi was to develop a Master Class Video on Gender Budgeting, this to help other Commonwealth parliamentarians to fulfil their mandate of meeting their SDG goals. The delegates noted that it was important to share best practices and information widely so that CWP can champion these causes and help other sister commonwealth countries achieve their goals.

It was highlighted that girls and young women usually most need mentors. Successful female legislators have a responsibility to be visible and to make themselves available to those who would most benefit from this mentoring. Equality of opportunity is not equality of outcome. Some delegates referred to 'gender equity' as the goal. In terms of parliamentary representation, there should be as much attention to women being in leadership positions and positions of influence where they can help determine the policy agenda as on the actual numbers of women Members. The cultural context is fundamental but in many jurisdictions with high levels of female representation in public and parliamentary life, it is often legislation that has given the crucial 'nudge' towards gender equality.

The following three recommendations were **endorsed** by the workshop delegates

- **Using data driven strategies to increase women's political participation, allow women Parliamentarians to serve as role models, and better support policies that promote gender equality.**
- **Women are born equal and, to strive and achieve equity and equality, the playing field should be made even to enable and provide equal**

opportunities for all. Parliaments have a key role in how we make this happen.

- **We ask world leaders to create a conducive environment in their countries for women to enter politics and positions of leadership to achieve the goal of gender equality.**

CWP workshop discussion on gender equality and the role of male Parliamentarians

In a first for CWP, a discussion was held at the 63rd CPC on the role of male Parliamentarians in championing gender equality. The discussion leaders noted that self-sustaining patriarchal power relations have held back women from making progress in parliamentary representation. The problem is not just getting women into Parliament, but ensuring that they stay there. Male Parliamentarians have often been part of the problem. Canada's approach to engaging male as champions was taken as a good example to emulate. Canada's approach to its own budget is another example that can be emulated, however it was acknowledged that there is still work to be done.

In different parts of the Commonwealth, there are encouraging signs of change. As the workshop discussion leaders illustrated, male Parliamentarians are now adding their voice and political weight to what were seen as more typically 'female' campaigns, such as the eradication of male domestic abuse of women, or in taking concrete steps in male dominated legislatures to increase the participation and visibility of women in political and public life, through both legislative reform and practical measures. Nonetheless, it was noted that there are still huge challenges. In particular, female Parliamentarians may face scorn and disapproval in the mass media to an extent not experienced by their male counterparts. This is not an issue restricted only to a few parts of the Commonwealth - it is practically universal - and the rise in social media use has in some respects exacerbated these issues. The delegates noted that jurisdictions must consider practical examples of how this has been addressed and to see how they can be applied in different cultures and contexts.

The following two recommendations were **endorsed** by the workshop delegates:

- **For too long, Parliaments have been male dominated. For real change, male Parliamentarians must work in equal partnership with women in championing gender equality.**
- **The male-dominated mind-set and personnel of the media must change and the reportage should promote gender equality objectives and sensitivities.**

36th CPA Small Branches Conference

1st Plenary: Critical Mass: Small Jurisdictions and big problems – Logistics and Infrastructure challenges to meet small jurisdiction expectations to achieve the same service levels as larger ones.

Discussion leaders briefed delegates on the challenges of becoming self-sufficient for the Small Branches in terms of funding and legislating for infrastructure growth. The discussion leaders also spoke about the necessity to identify and focus upon niche areas for engaging others in development regardless of the size of the jurisdiction.

The session heard a diverse range of views on how individual jurisdictions could engage citizens and partners in infrastructure development as well as creating a legislative framework for good governance and transparency. It was commonly accepted by the majority of delegates that although each Branch has differing challenges, there were common areas of focus and opportunities to maximize on their own localities. There are unique issues in the Small Branches in terms of infrastructure and many innovations in the manner in how they could meet the challenges of big problems in small jurisdictions were discussed.

The Small Branches Conference delegates **endorsed** the following recommendations:

- **Small Branches should collaborate in sharing best practices, expertise and success stories in order to learn and assist one another. This forum should unite us in becoming more effective.**
- **Small jurisdictions, while not having the resources available to developed countries, must enact and enforce legislation establishing accountability and transparency in their governance systems.**
- **Small jurisdictions with limited funding and resources must be strategic, creative and competitive in addressing their unique logistic and infrastructure challenges.**
- **Whilst Small Branches may not necessarily always face disproportionately different service delivery challenges to larger branches, cooperation between jurisdictions can assist in improving service delivery.**

2nd Plenary: Parliamentary innovations in small jurisdictions in the face of financial and human resource challenges.

The discussion leaders covered aspects of their own Branch experiences and how these have evolved over time to include more collaboration and partnerships, some of which have moved outside of their regions. The first discussion leader focused on looking beyond your immediate neighbours and outside of regional networks, citing examples of working through brokers to reach overseas jurisdictions providing beneficial outcomes.

For example, one jurisdiction had benefitted from a recent visit to Sierra Leone to provide Hansard editing expertise, training and skills to assist Parliamentary staff. As a consequence of these arrangements, the Parliament of Sierra Leone had sent staff to the host legislature and so parliaments had started a cycle of continued assistance. The second discussion leader gave a perspective from the Pacific Region expressing that more sharing will lead to the development of greater expertise and will enhance the high standards of Members in line with the overall conference theme.

The third discussion leader provided a perspective which included an interesting analysis of increased female participation through a mandated 10% minimum of woman Members. The outside expert from the UNDP provided examples of the assistance being made available in the Pacific Region for the analysis of budgets so that Members and the public can benefit from an understanding of the finances and the expenditure of governments. A floating Budget Office has been provided to Fiji and will next move to the Solomon Islands to allow the critical mass of expertise to move around and meet need as it arises.

The Small Branches delegates **endorsed** the following recommendations:

- **CPA should encourage greater cooperation between Small Branches within and outside their Regions by way of internships and exchanges of technical assistance.**
- **To overcome capacity and resource challenges, Commonwealth Parliaments in small jurisdictions should, wherever practicable, share knowledge and resources in order to function more effectively.**
- **Continued support of the CPA to all Small Branches and larger jurisdictions to collaborate with aid agencies and foreign affairs ministries in assisting small jurisdictions.**
- **Strongly encourage other small parliaments to follow Samoa's example of considering twinning arrangements as an initiative to create benefits for both.**

3rd Plenary: The role of Parliament in Combating Corruption.

With regard to the first recommendation of the 3rd plenary session, delegates felt that anti-corruption models had to deal with systemic corruption and misconduct and that bodies had to be established to deal with these corrupt practices. One such body given as an example by one of the discussion leaders was the Integrity Commission of Tasmania: an independent arbiter which would receive complaints of corruption, ascertain the merits of those complaints and determine the appropriate place for such complaints to be dealt with.

The process involved sought to root out corruption as it were but to educate and engender standards and a culture of change. The commission adopted a four pronged approach:

1. compulsory participation in misconduct workshops
2. mandatory reporting of corruption
3. authority to monitor the progress of all reports and to bring inaction to Parliament's attention
4. the reporting of any suspected criminality to the Director of Public Prosecution or the police.

In regard to the second recommendation, a three-limbed approach was canvassed: personal conduct; across government; law and policy making. It was argued that because of the very close connections in small societies, the systems of transparency and accountability in relation to personal conduct and the embracing of corporate governance. There should be diversity of membership in Parliament and effective procurement systems be established across government. There should be effective law and policy making underpinned by effective rule of law, the practice of free and fair elections and that the assumption of office is done fairly. Importantly, a culture of learning, transparency and education are key to tackling corruption.

The third recommendation was discussed and it was suggested that Parliament was a critical determinant of corruption with the need for resources to be made available and the adoption of oversight tools. Internally the setting up of committee systems was fundamental as well as administrative and financial autonomy. Externally it was noted

that the gain of public trust was important and should be achieved through effective communication, declaration of assets and the adoption of a code of conduct. The contribution of the free press was also noted and the advantages and threats of investigative journalism. The session stood for a moment's silence as a mark of respect to the investigative journalist killed recently in Malta.

The Small Branches delegates **endorsed** the following recommendations:

- **Parliament must provide legislation, resources and institutional tools to enable the removal of any tolerance for corruption in the community, government and politics.**
- **To agree that Parliamentarians should role-model high standards of integrity in personal conduct; maximise transparency across government; and recognise how policy-making can counter cultures of corruption.**
- **The Legislature should set the legal framework for the establishment and functioning of anti- corruption institutions, including the provision of adequate resources and proper follow-up.**

4th Plenary: The role of Parliament in meeting the challenges of protecting territorial waters.

The 4th plenary session, which also concluded the 36th Small Branches Conference, dealt with the role of Parliament in meeting the challenges of protecting territorial waters. Both discussion leaders briefed the delegates with regards to the importance of safeguarding the marine environment, especially by reducing overfishing, poor fisheries management, poaching, the destruction of marine habitat and offshore development. The discussion leaders also spoke about territorial waters and the best possible approach to make the best use out of it.

The overwhelming response from delegates to the Small Branches Conference was how the individual jurisdictions are playing their part in improving the situation and increasing their commitments, both as citizens and as Parliamentarians. A very common practice among the Small Branches is the reduction of plastic items such as bags and straws and it was suggested that they may be taxed in order to reduce the numbers ending up in the sea. Delegates pledged to commit to go back to their legislatures and improve legislation in order to safeguard their seas and their territorial waters. Both recommendations were endorsed with more than half of the delegates voting in favour respectively.

The Small Branches delegates **endorsed** the following recommendations:

- **Parliament must ensure that resources are made available to safeguard territorial waters against threats such as overfishing, poaching, habitat destruction, pollution and climate change.**
- **To recognise the potential within territorial waters to provide a secure form of renewable energy whilst at all times respecting the natural environment.**

While in Bangladesh, the delegation had bilateral meetings and made site visits.

Meeting with Ms. Khalada Zia, Leader of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP)

Ms. Ratansi thanked Ms. Zia for meeting with the delegates and mentioned that the Toronto area has a large Bangladeshi community. Ms. Ratansi asked for Ms. Zia's thoughts on the goals of Bangladesh. Ms. Zia stated that her party hopes the election will be fair and inclusive and that she plans to run in the upcoming election. Ms. Zia emphasized the need for many international observers during the next election. The Canadian High Commissioner noted that the Canadian government looks forward to a fair election and a peaceful electoral process. Ms. Zia stated that Bangladeshis themselves want a transparent process. The party released Vision 2030, which sets out its platform for the coming years. The platform focuses on such issues as human development, education and health care. Major reforms will be necessary to restore the country's institutions.

The discussion turned to the situation of the Rohingya who have come to Bangladesh from Myanmar. It is not the first time this influx has occurred. Ms. Zia explained that Rohingya refugees came to Bangladesh in 1978 and then returned to their country. Bangladesh is facing significant problems, given the large number of Rohingya who have entered the country. Ms. Zia said that her party was the one that has recommended a humanitarian resolution to this problem.

Meeting with the Hon. Bob Rae, Canada's Special Envoy to Myanmar

The delegation met with the Hon. Bob Rae, Canada's Special Envoy to Myanmar. The meeting took place within hours of Mr. Rae's return from Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where thousands of Rohingya refugees are living. The situation in the camp has reached a crisis point. Mr. Rae will report to the government in the coming months after holding talks in a number of countries.

Visit to Majhi Para Daycare Centre, a Urban Childcare Project by Aga Khan Foundation Bangladesh

Aga Khan Foundation Bangladesh (AKF-B) is building on its experience and commitment to early childhood development (ECD) for marginalized children in Bangladesh through the Urban Childcare Project (UCP).

The ultimate outcome of this pilot project is to improve developmental outcomes for children aged 2-6 years of low-income working women – primarily garment workers, but also day labourers and domestic servants, among others – in Dhaka. The project entails two primary components: i) establishing and operating 20 full-day community-based childcare centres that provide holistic ECD services; and ii) increasing awareness and understanding of ECD initiatives as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy to benefit both the private sector and communities.

There is a critical need for quality ECD services for young children of garment workers, most of whom are female migrants, in urban and peri-urban Dhaka. The availability of quality ECD services in these areas is also empowering for women, as it allows them to work and alleviates the stresses of leaving their children inadequately supervised.

The delegation visited a community-based childcare centre in Dhaka and met with children and parents using the facility. It is important to note that the centre offer more than childcare, and parents pay a nominal fee per child per month for the services and provide snacks and lunch from home.

Following the visit of the Majhi Para Daycare Centre, the delegation visited the Bait-ur-Rouf Mosque (Award winning project of Aga Khan Award for Architecture 2016).

Visit of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b)

icddr,b is an international health research institute based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Icddr,b is committed to solving public health problems facing low- and middle-income countries through innovative scientific research – including laboratory-based, clinical, epidemiological and health systems research. By developing, testing and assessing the implementation of interventions specifically designed for resource-poor settings, the institute aim to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in the world's poorest nations.

For more than 50 years, icddr,b has been carrying out high-quality research and promoting the uptake of evidence-based interventions. The initial focus was on diarrheal disease, but the institute now studies multiple infectious diseases, other threats to public health, and methods of healthcare delivery. The work of the institute has had a profound impact on health policy and practice both locally and globally – and this remains their key objective for the future.

The Government of Canada has been part of the core donor group, with other countries, and provided unrestricted funding to the organization. Following a presentation on Improving the Health and Status of Women and Girls, the delegation visited the laboratories and the hospital.

Security

In a briefing for the Canadian delegation, we were advised that due to security concerns, the delegates should be accompanied by a Security Liaison Officer (SLO). The delegation agreed and an unarmed SLO was assigned. The Parliament of Bangladesh provided security to the IPU delegation and it was very conscious of ensuring that all the CPA delegates were safe at the 63rd Commonwealth Conference. Since most of the Commonwealth countries face one or more security challenges, the delegation feels that there should be a more comprehensive process for providing delegations with timely security assessments for future visits.

B. BILATERAL VISIT TO SRI LANKA

Following the 63rd CPA Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association made a bilateral visit to Sri Lanka from November 8 to 11, 2017.

Member of Parliament Yasmin Ratansi, Chair of the Canadian Branch, led the delegation, which included the Honourable Salma Atallahjan, Senator, the Honourable Marilou McPhedran, Senator, Matt Jeneroux, MP, and the Honourable Thomas Mulcair, MP, as well as Rémi Bourgault, Executive Secretary of the Canadian Branch.

The CPA constitution encourages visits between member countries with the objective of giving parliamentarians the opportunity to discuss matters of common interest in bilateral relations and issues within the international Commonwealth organization.

Various topics were discussed during this visit, including parliamentary issues, the representation of women in Parliament, human rights, reconciliation and constitutional reform.

In general terms, the purpose of the visit to Sri Lanka was to strengthen ties with our Commonwealth partner and to exchange ideas on issues of mutual concern. The visit was important not only to build on our ties of friendship with Sri Lanka, but also to help our countries grow by fostering relations at the parliamentary level through strong interpersonal connections and a shared commitment to the Colombo Plan and Commonwealth values. As well the delegation was interested in finding out the progress of the UN Resolution sponsored by Canada, on the reconciliation, rebuilding and restoration process.

Sri Lanka

The island country gained its independence from Great Britain in 1948, and it became a presidential republic in 1972. The palpable tensions that existed between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil separatists flared into war in 1983. Sri Lanka was torn by a civil war that lasted nearly three decades before ending in 2009, when the government army defeated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels.

In March 2016, the Sri Lankan parliament passed a resolution to form a constitutional committee tasked to draft a new constitution that would devolve powers, expand the rights of ethnic minorities in the country, and balance the aspirations of the Sinhalese majority, the Tamil minority and Muslim minorities. Although progress has been rather slow, efforts to implement the new constitution are on track, and a national referendum is expected by 2018.

Canada and Sri Lanka are bound by strong ties. Canada is home to about 145,000 people of Sri Lankan origin, a great number of who live in the Greater Toronto Area, Ottawa, Winnipeg and other larger cities in Canada. There is a significant Tamil population in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and it is believed that the Tamil community in Canada is thought to constitute one of the larger Sri Lankan diaspora outside of Britain and US.

Canada's trade relationship with Sri Lanka is modest but growing. In 2016, trade between the two countries totalled \$620.8 million: Canadian exports to Sri Lanka amounted to \$272.6 million, while Canadian imports from Sri Lanka totalled \$348.2 million, including \$206.7 million in woven and knitted garments.

The civil war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan army was focused in the North. The 26 years has an impact on many economic and social dimensions of the northern regions. Some progress has been made in the area of reconciliation, reconstruction, rehabilitation and reintegration, since the visit of the Canada-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship Group and that of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister Dion, but there is still work to be done.

Sri Lanka, with a population of 20.6 million, has been able to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ranks 73rd out of 188 countries on the UN's Human Development Index.

Global Affairs Canada's bilateral development program currently amounts to about \$6 million per year. In 2017-18, the program plans to move forward with the approved National Languages Equality Advancement Project (\$11.2 million over five years) to help the Government of Sri Lanka deliver government services in both official languages (Tamil and Sinhalese).

Meeting with the Honourable Mano Ganesan, Minister of National Co existence, Dialogue and Official Languages

The minister thanked Canada's investment in bilingualism. Under Minister Dion, Canada had committed to the reconciliation process through language training and making Tamil an official language. The Minister acknowledged the importance of official languages policies, but stated that his budget was inadequate to get the job done. He asked the Canadian delegation to speak to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance when we met him.

The official languages act was passed in 1987, but it is not enforced. The minister would like to appoint bilingual language officers (Tamil and Sinhalese), but not too many people can speak and write in both languages, which makes this difficult. Moreover, very often, translation or interpretation between the two languages goes through English. The delegation pointed out that Canada has expertise in bilingualism. The minister dreams of a trilingual country. He is one of the few trilingual ministers.

Meeting with the Honourable Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

Ms. Ratansi talked about her visit in March 2017, the declaration signed at the United Nations, and the work of Minister Dion during his last visit to Sri Lanka in 2016. According to Ms. Ratansi, Canada believes that Sri Lanka is on the right track but there is still work to be done on official languages and reconciliation issues. The Prime Minister said that establishing official languages in the country will take time because not too many people speak Tamil. This will be a long process. Only 3% or 4% of Tamils are bilingual, and there is pressure in favour of teaching English. The government is prepared to allocate funding for language learning if this money is indeed used for languages and not for something else.

Ms. Ratansi mentioned that at her last visit in March 2017, discussion had been ongoing about the return of land, to allow the first steps of reintegration and reconciliation, that the slow process is creating a public relations issue for the government. She understood the challenges with regards to clearing of the mines which were put there by the Sri Lankan army, the LTTE and the Indian Army. As well, the fact that the missing persons committee has not been established, widows are unable to claim land. The High Commissioner of Canada pointed out that the Ottawa Treaty (Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines) was signed about 20 years ago. It is time that Sri Lanka signed this treaty.

Sri Lanka's position with respect to China and India was also broached. The country maintains close relations with both countries.

The government needs to deal with a number of issues in the coming months, including the criminal justice system, the Office of Missing Persons, and others. With regard to

missing persons, a large number of people may need counselling, but this must be done in Tamil.

The Prime Minister highlighted Canada's support in a number of files, stating that the current support is appreciate but desired more collaboration with Canada.

Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute (LKI) Round Table

The theme of this round table was "The Role of the Commonwealth in the New World Order." Ms. Yasmin Ratansi and Senator Salma Ataullahjan made presentations, followed by discussions with participants. The results of the round table are available in **Appendix A**.

Meeting with women leaders of civil society working on transitional justice and peace and security

Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa, Executive Director of the Association of War Affected Women (AWAW), and Ms. Shyamala Gomez, a Civil Society representative, attended the meeting. One of them is the mother of a missing soldier. In reply to a question from Ms. Ratansi, they claimed to understand that it is difficult for the government to move forward on the missing persons file. They also said that the government needs to improve communication with the Sri Lankan people about reconciliation. According to them, the government has put off municipal elections (local governments) for a long time, but that is no longer viable. This is not the only issue. People have been waiting for a long time and want some sort of action. All of this has an impact on the public's confidence in the process. It is important for these two women that the government work with the three communities, namely the Muslim, Tamil and Sri Lankan communities.

On another topic, they raised doubts about the intentions of the Sri Lankan diaspora living abroad. There is a perception amongst many in Sri Lanka that there are people in Canada who are "profiteers of war". The women advised us that they want peace and want everyone to work for peace, including the diaspora. There is a lot of opportunity for investment and Sri Lanka could benefit from the investment.

With regard to justice for women and women's rights, many women would like to return to the lands they were forced to leave during the civil war. There is another concern about the Muslim population that was driven out of the Northern Province (Jaffna) where the LTTE confiscated the land of the Muslim citizens and threw them out with only the clothes on the back. These Muslims approximately 450,000 are leaving as refugees since the civil war. They have no papers and cannot claim land. The other issues are that the right to ownership of land belongs to the husband and not to the woman, which complicates the restitution of lands, including those seized by the military. Unless the committee on the Missing Persons is established, this will remain a problem.

Meeting with Mr. M S Jayasinghe, Director General, Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) and with collaborators

The Office's mission is to lead, facilitate and support national unity and reconciliation initiatives in Sri Lanka.

When ONUR was created, eight focus areas were identified as priorities: engaging all Sri Lankans living in Sri Lanka and abroad in building national unity and reconciliation;

building an inclusive society by promoting social integration; ensuring coordinated development planning at the district level; securing the language rights of every Sri Lankan; supporting the healing process within communities; addressing issues of households headed by women; bringing youth and children to the forefront in building national unity and reconciliation; and facilitating the return of lands to rightful owners.

Sri Lankan participants pointed out that a large part of the public service does not speak Tamil and that is a significant limitation for the reconciliation process. The group wished to thank the Government of Canada for its contribution, especially in regard to the language lab and the investment in bilingualism. Mr. Mulcair offered Canada's help in developing a stronger base for bilingual initiatives as Canada had gone through the experiment.

Meeting with Ms. Ambika Satkunanathan, Commissioner, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

The position of Commissioner was created as a result of legislation passed by Parliament in 1996. In 2016, the Commission, which has more than 100 employees, received over 10,000 complaints, including some that involved acts of torture. Complaints come from all corners of the country. There is a backlog of more than 2,000 cases, some dating back over seven years. In addition to torture, complaints pertain to employment, school admissions and so on. Cases of extortion by police in rural areas have also been reported. So far, the Commission has had little difficulty in conducting its investigations. Officials have access to any location where a person is imprisoned or deprived of liberty.

In 2009, after the Civil War, the Commissioner travelled to the north of the country. Many women were afraid to talk about what they had gone through during the war, such as the recruitment of their children by rebels from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Women are now talking more openly, but that has taken years to happen. It must be kept in mind that, sometimes, not all police officers in police stations in the north speak Tamil. More than 12,000 people claim to be former rebel fighters with the Liberation Tigers. However, this figure may vary depending on the length of service with the rebels.

She pointed out that gay and lesbian relations are prohibited and constitute a criminal offence in Sri Lanka. In regard to transgender people, anyone who wants to undergo a sex change must choose to become a man or a woman; there is no third option. In closing, she said that the central government must review its strategy for communicating with the public.

Meeting with Mr. Shanmugam, Country Representative, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, and Ms. Hemanthi Goonasekera, National Coordinator, Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities

The Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities is modelled after the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. The Government of Canada supported the creation of this association of municipalities in Sri Lanka. A year ago, a quota of 25% of seats held by women was introduced for municipal elections. As is the case in many countries, there are challenges when it comes to encouraging women to run in

elections, even at the municipal level. The Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Sri Lanka led to the creation of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum in 2013. This organization can help municipalities develop regulations. Lastly, Mr. Shanmugam pointed out that 70% of municipal government employees are women.

Meeting with the Honourable Tilak Marapana, Minister of Foreign Affairs

The delegation indicated it would like to know what progress has been made in the reconciliation process since Minister Dion's visit and Ms. Ratansi's most recent visit earlier in the year. Minister Marapana stressed how important it was for the country to prioritize human rights and then economic development. The government has taken the path to democracy with the international community's support in order to open a new chapter for Sri Lanka. His government wants to focus on maintaining good governance, human rights, freedom of the press, accountability, the justice system and the public service. Without these elements, it would be difficult to advance the reconciliation process. The delegates reminded the minister that when it comes to reconciliation, the government may need to improve its strategy for communicating with the public. That would definitely help people understand that things are moving in the right direction. The opposition led by Raja Paaksha has a solid hold on the social media and other media channels. He has used the money from his time as President of Sri Lanka to consolidate his negative attacks. Hence the government has to be strong and communicate the good work it does. It can use its traditional friends such as the European Union and the United Kingdom, to assist in this endeavour.

On the economic front, the minister mentioned the need to make the port more efficient and productive and brought up the plan to develop a financial center in Sri Lanka. The country would like to become more economically independent. We were advised of a port that was built by China at a humungous cost to Sri Lanka. The port is useless and Sri Lanka has a great debt to pay China, hence is worried about its economic independence.

Meeting with the Honourable Karu Jayasuriya, MP, Speaker of Parliament, and Mr. Dhammika Dassanayake, Secretary General

Speaker Jayasuriya was pleased to host the Canadian delegation. He mentioned a number of important links between Canada and Sri Lanka, such as Canada's investments in the language program; the creation of UN peacekeeping missions as a result of a proposal by Prime Minister Pearson and Sri Lanka's participation in several of these missions; the visit of a Canadian naval ship to Sri Lanka; and 1950s-era trains that are still in operation. Regarding his country, Speaker Jayasuriya talked about the constitutional debate taking place in Parliament and the upcoming municipal elections. Unfortunately, women's representation in Parliament is not what it should be, probably because of Sri Lanka's political culture. In Sri Lanka, education is free and university is accessible. The subject of Canadian assistance for mine clearance was raised. Sri Lanka has an opportunity to ratify the Ottawa Treaty on the occasion of its 20th anniversary in December 2017. Speaker Jayasuriya would like to host more Canadian ministers and mentioned the last visit of a speaker of the House of Commons, Peter Milliken, in 2003.

Meeting with the Honourable Chandrani Bandara, Minister of Women's Affairs and Chairperson, Parliamentary Women's Caucus

The Honourable Sudarshanie Fernandopulle, State Minister of City Planning and Water Supply, the Honourable Anoma Gamage, Deputy Minister of Petroleum Resources Development, and the Honourable Sriyani Wijewickrema joined Minister Bandara at this meeting. The Chairperson of the Women's Caucus said that the caucus was founded in 2006. The group highlights International Women's Day and coordinates various activities with UN agencies. The Women's Caucus is proud of its role in the adoption of the 25% quota concerning the representation of women in municipal elections. Although there are few women in Parliament, Ms. Ratansi encouraged them to persevere. About 50 years ago, the Canadian Parliament also had few women in its ranks. Indeed, even today, the situation in Canada is not ideal. Most women in Sri Lanka come from families who are active in politics. There are only 12 elected women MPs in the Sri Lankan Parliament. This low rate is partly explained by the culture and the preferential system. However, things are changing in terms of the perception of women in politics. On another topic, it was mentioned that child marriage in Sri Lanka is not a very significant issue. By law, the minimum age for marriage is 18, but there are "personal" laws. In regard to violence against women, there are currently enough laws to protect women, but victims do not come forward to complain. This situation has been changing for some time now, since more and more rapes are being reported to the authorities.

Meeting with the Honourable Jayampathy Wickramaratne, MP, Member of the Steering Committee of the Constitutional Assembly

The Committee is working hard in order to propose constitutional changes soon. There will be two days of debate in the House. In addition, the next Committee meeting will be held in public. It is important to note that there will have to be a referendum on the proposed constitutional changes and that the two main political parties support the changes to the constitution. The Canadian delegation talked about Canada's experiences with constitutional changes.

Other

On Saturday, November 11, the delegation travelled to Ratnapura to join the Minister and the Governor of the region at the official opening ceremony of a primary health care clinic, which was built following the floods and landslides in the area. The clinic was set up by the International Organization for Migration and funded by the Government of Canada. On returning to Colombo, the delegation attended a Remembrance Day ceremony at the Liveramentu Cemetery, where several Canadians who died in World War II were buried. The delegation laid a wreath on behalf of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Acknowledgment

The delegation would like to thank the High Commissioner of Canada to Bangladesh, Mr. Benoit Préfontaine, and the High Commission staff for their support during the conference. In Sri Lanka, the delegation wishes to thank Mr. David McKinnon, High Commissioner of Canada to Sri Lanka, for his hospitality and all the staff at the High Commission for the excellent programme prepared for the delegation.

Respectfully submitted,

Yasmin Ratansi, M.P.
Chair of the Canadian Branch of the
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
ACTIVITY	63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
DESTINATION	Dhaka, Bangladesh
DATES	November 1 to 8, 2017
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Salma Atallahjan, Senator Hon. Marilou McPhedran, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, M.P. Ms. Alexandra Mendès, M.P. Mr. Matt Jeneroux, M.P. Hon. Thomas Mulcair, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Rémi Bourgault, Association Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$13,636.78
ACCOMMODATION	\$4,549.98
HOSPITALITY	\$204.50
PER DIEMS	\$3,205.80
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$297.18
MISCELLANEOUS	\$2,110.45
TOTAL	\$24,004.69

**Only expenses not reimbursed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association are included.*

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
ACTIVITY	Bilateral Visit to Sri Lanka
DESTINATION	Colombo, Sri Lanka
DATES	November 8 to 11, 2017
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Salma Ataullahjan, Senator Hon. Marilou McPhedran, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, M.P. Mr. Matt Jeneroux, M.P. Hon. Thomas Mulcair, M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Rémi Bourgault, Association Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$3,153.46
ACCOMMODATION	\$3,550.01
HOSPITALITY	\$1,800
PER DIEMS	\$1,118.05
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$454.55
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$10,076.07

**Please note that part of the transportation costs associated with this bilateral visit have been included in the transportation costs of the delegation's participation in the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.*

Appendix A

Visiting Delegation of Canadian Parliamentarians, on the Role of the Commonwealth in the New World Order

Three key takeaways from the Round Table with five Canadian parliamentarians of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association:

1. The Commonwealth is very valuable in this new world order, which is characterised by political and economic uncertainty. A common set of values from a diverse set of nations would help create structure and stability in such an uncertain order.
2. The voices of women, youth, LGBTQIA people and other minorities must be amplified within the parliaments and legislative assemblies of Commonwealth countries.
3. This is no time for complacency. The Commonwealth must become more active, especially in light of London's upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April 2018.

Introduction

- Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (MP) and Hon. Salma Atallahjan (Senator) addressed a Foreign Policy Round Table at LKI on "The Role of the Commonwealth in the New World Order" on 9 November 2017.
- Hon. Thomas Mulcair (MP, PC) and Mr. Matt Jeneroux (MP) also contributed to the Round Table.
- The Round Table was attended by the High Commissioners of Canada and Bangladesh, representatives from the Australian, British and South African High Commissions, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and representatives of nonprofits and think tanks.
- The Round Table was moderated by Dr. Ganeshan Wignaraja, Chair of LKI's Global Economy Programme.

Takeaways from the Canadian Parliamentarians' Presentations:

Gender Equality and Feminist Foreign Policy

- Twelve Commonwealth countries do not have a single woman in their parliament.
- However, in Rwanda, [64% of seats](#) in parliament are occupied by women.
- In Bangladesh, if 52% of women participated in the job market, GDP would increase by [at least 3%](#).

Youth Involvement and Engagement

- Among the two billion citizens of Commonwealth countries, [60%](#) are below the age of 30.

- Youth must be engaged more consistently on a broader range of issues, not only on youth-related ones (such as tuition fees).
- The Commonwealth Youth Society engages young people on various topics; Canada's Prime Minister is simultaneously the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Youth.

Human Rights within the Commonwealth

- The Commonwealth, by issuing a strong statement condemning Myanmar (the first time that the group has issued such a statement), has staked out a role for itself in the new world order. The Commonwealth must uphold strong values and stand up to injustice.
- Commonwealth human rights experts offered their technical assistance to Sri Lanka, to ensure equality and non-discrimination in the new constitution.
- The Commonwealth can build on political and economic synergies among member states, to help developing nations stabilise governance structures and uphold the rule of law.

Key Points from the Round Table Discussion

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Heads of state must understand SDG goals in the context of gender issues.
- If SDG 1 (No Poverty) or SDG 5 (Gender Equality) are to be met – given increases in GDP resulting from female participation in the labour market – developing states must secure commitment from their heads of state.
- While Canada may uphold intersectionality of race, class, gender and other demographic factors in SDG 5, Canada maintains a policy of non-interference in foreign political affairs due to the differing cultural norms of states.

Common Law within the Commonwealth

- The common law, associated with Commonwealth countries, may have a role to play within the normative and legal gaps of the new world order.
- However, Canada and Cameroon have also integrated civil law into their judiciary. Common law must be acknowledged; however, it is more important to emphasise the common values underpinning common law.
- Cynicism towards common law can emerge in countries when the executive, legislative and judicial branches are not wholly independent.

Strengthened Commonwealth Economic Relations

- The International Monetary Fund predicts that the world economy will grow at 3.7% in 2018, bringing opportunities with the recovery of trade and investment among industrialised countries; nevertheless, political and policy risks remain.
- The Canadian-Caribbean Twinning Initiative involves cooperative engagement to capitalise on states' bilateral needs through trade, negotiations and better governance.
- Historical trade patterns and Commonwealth institutions could help foster increased trade and investment in an uncertain world economy. Researchers should explore trade creation resulting from the "Commonwealth effect".

Suggested Further Reading

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