



I departed St Helena on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October along with my Colleague Derek Thomas who was accompanied by his wife Linda Thomas. One night stay over in Johannesburg and transit through Dubai before arrival in Dhaka on Wednesday evening. The Country of Bangladesh is one of great beauty which was clearly seen when flying into land.

Upon arrival we were met by the VIP Team, they escorted us to the VIP Lounge where we waited for the required clearances' before being transported to Radisson Blu Hotel, which was not only the accommodation provided but also the venue for the 36<sup>th</sup> Small branches Conference. At the Hotel we were checked in and given our passes which was to be worn as identification for the duration of stay.

### **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov**

The opening of the 36<sup>th</sup> Small branches saw a perfectly executed choreography of Climate Change. Opening speech by the Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Speaker of the parliament of Bangladesh, CPA President and Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee.

The Hon Angelo Farrugia Speaker of the House of Malta and Chairperson of the Small Branches then gave a speech as to why the small branches are essential part of the Commonwealth. An overview of the small branches strategy, why a strategy plan was required for the small branches, the challenges of small branches, and the tools needed and the thematic areas were presented.

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.

There were three discussion leaders, one expert from the UNDP and the moderator; all discussion leaders were to provide a recommendation and the UNDP expert also provided a recommendation. The session saw much discussion from delegates on Legislation and governance and transparency within governments. Shared ideas of working together with local people within the individual jurisdictions.

Following the discussion the following recommendations were endorsed by the majority vote from delegates:

1. 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.
2. Small jurisdictions, while not having the resources available to developed countries, must enact and enforce legislation establishing accountability and transparency in their governance systems.
3. Small jurisdictions with limited funding and resources must be strategic, creative and competitive in addressing their unique logistic and infrastructure challenges.
4. 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.

### **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov**

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

There were three discussion leaders, one expert from the UNDP and the moderator; all discussion leaders were to provide a recommendation and the UNDP expert also provided a recommendation. This brought about discussions of small branches who are financially dependent on aid and how this impacts the jurisdictions capabilities. The constraints that such jurisdictions face with the lack of financial and human resources. There were an example of sharing resources whereby some staff from one jurisdiction assisted another and vice versa, it was stated that sharing will lead to the development of greater expertise.



## 63<sup>rd</sup> COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION



Bangladesh Parliament

Following the discussion the following recommendations were endorsed by the majority vote from delegates:

1. CPA should encourage greater cooperation between Small Branches within and outside their Regions by way of internships and exchanges of technical assistance.
2. To overcome capacity and resource challenges, Commonwealth Parliaments in small jurisdictions should, wherever practicable, share knowledge and resources in order to function more effectively.
3. 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.
4. 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.

There were three discussion leaders and a moderator; all discussion leaders were to provide a recommendation.

This was a very hot topic for all delegates, which included personal conduct of politics especially in smaller communities', an independent commissioner who receives and deals with all reports of corruption in public office.

Following the discussion the following recommendations were endorsed by the majority vote from delegates:

1. Parliament must provide legislation, resources and institutional tools to enable the removal of any tolerance for corruption in the community, government and politics.
2. 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.
3. The Legislature should set the legal framework for the establishment and functioning of anticorruption 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.

This was final session for the 36<sup>th</sup> Small branches conference. There were only two discussion leaders, which I was one of and one moderator.

I gave my recommendation, which is numbered 1 below, followed by my presentation on this subject; I included some brief details of St Helena, EPO and types of pollution we encounter. The challenge of protecting our waters as we have no physical bodies to do so. This brought about a lot of discussion and delegates also asked about the airport.

Following the discussion the following recommendations were endorsed by the majority vote from delegates:

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

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> Nov**

There was nothing in the programme for the delegates only the Executive committee members.



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### Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> Nov

The official opening of the 63<sup>rd</sup> CPC was hosted at the parliament of Bangladesh. There were opening speech by the Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Speaker of the parliament of Bangladesh, CPA President and Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee. The Bangladesh Prime Minister Shedikh Hasina, Secretary General of the CPA Akbar Khan and The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland QC was unable to be present but gave her speech via video link. Bangladesh musical arts school students then provided splendid choreographed entertainment. All delegates and honourable members were then escorted outside and photographs taken.

His Excellency Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh gave his statement on the current situation on the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh. This brought about, as could be expected, a huge discussion and questions as to what is being done as this is far from tolerable treatment of human beings.

I then attended the British Islands and Mediterranean region where there was feedback from CWP, Executive Committee, the election of the CPA Chairperson and candidates and there was a consideration by Malta to host the next regional Conference.

### Monday 6<sup>th</sup> Nov

There were several workshops setup for the day, unfortunately they were running alongside each other so I could not observe all. I observed the workshop on Climate Change first as Derek was the moderator.

I then moved to observe the workshop - Giving voice to the youth: Mechanisms for ensuring effective participation of youth in the governance process. Discussions about how to ensure inclusiveness of youth were brought to the table and how the youth are not just future leaders but also leaders today. Having positive role models in parliament who interact and share with youth their experiences etc.

### Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> Nov

Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon was elected, with 107 votes, as the new Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) International Executive Committee at the 63<sup>rd</sup> CPA General Assembly. The Hon Shirley Osborne, Speaker of Monserrat and the Hon Nikki Rattel, Speaker of Cook Islands were the other two candidates and received 15 and 70 votes respectively.

The experience was truly an eye opener, the hosts – Bangladesh Government – went beyond themselves with their hospitality, the arrangement of an Army ranked Captain as my personal safety guard who accompanied me when outside of the Hotel grounds and the friendliness of their people are a real asset to the Country.

Kylie Hercules

MLC