
Media Release

CAYMAN ISLANDS REPRESENTED IN UK'S DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

House of Parliament, George Town, 7th June 2023

The Speaker of Parliament, Honourable Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, Member for West Bay Central, and former Premier Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, Member for Red Bay, attended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's (CPA) Small Branches Workshop on Disaster Risk Management in London at the end of May, to gain additional skills that will aid the Parliament in preparing for and responding to natural disasters.

The three-day workshop brought together 25 Parliamentarians from over a dozen countries, as well as six expert specialists from the Institute for Hazard, Risk and Resilience at Durham University. Participants discussed the impact of disasters on their communities, from hurricanes to the pandemic, and best practices using up-to-date research.

Twenty professional development sessions took place on a wide range of themes: accountability and transparency during and after disaster management, parliamentary practices and legislation, supporting diverse communities, the use of technology in risk management, the economic impact of preparation and recovery, and the significance of effective preparations.

“I thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to engage with several academics and experts,” commented Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, Speaker of the Cayman Islands Parliament. “In particular, I valued the session on understanding vulnerable communities and their capacities, as well as the session on making decisions quickly during disasters and the role of Parliament in the decision-making process.”

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin served as a panelist for the afternoon session on 24th May, and gave a presentation on “Democracy and Disasters”. The former Premier spoke on the importance of parliamentary resilience and ensuring that legislatures have a strong

democratic process for responding in a timely manner to disasters. Providing case studies from Cayman's past, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the catastrophic Hurricane Ivan, Hon. Sir McLaughlin outlined the efficacy of Cayman's emergency legislation and the rigorous processes that are in place across the Government for responding to crises.

"Participating in this CPA workshop made me proud of the Cayman Islands," said Hon. Sir McLaughlin. "We are one of the only CPA Small Branches Overseas Territories that already has the legislative infrastructure in place to effectively manage disasters without declaring a state of emergency."

Several Acts exist in the Cayman Islands that address the environment and disaster management, including the *Disaster Preparedness and Hazard Management Act (2019)*. This legislation established the National Emergency Notification System, a National Disaster Fund, emergency shelters, and a National Mitigation Plan.

The Auditor General of the Cayman Islands recently issued two public interest reports that review the country's sustainability performance and economic impact of the pandemic. Such analysis displays the proactive nature of the government's systems and the constitution as methods of continually improving and preparing for the financial and legislative requirements of the future.

The CPA's Small Branches network represents Commonwealth jurisdictions with populations under one million persons, and seeks to empower these Parliaments through cooperation and advocacy.