



COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Cayman Islands Branch



68th Commonwealth
Parliamentary Conference

5-12 OCTOBER 2025 | BARBADOS

About the CPC

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) is the annual Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). It is the largest annual gathering of Commonwealth Parliamentarians, who come together to discuss global parliamentary and political issues. Each year, the Conference is hosted by a different Commonwealth Parliament.

The annual CPA Small Branches Conference and Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference were added in 1981 and 2007 respectively. They are both held in the margins of the CPC. The Regional Champions of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network also meet during the Conference.

The purpose of the CPC is to promote knowledge and understanding of parliamentary systems, foster co-operation, and strengthen parliamentary development across Commonwealth nations.

The CPC allows for the sharing of ideas and the exchange of best practices, helping to make parliamentarians more effective and fostering a greater sense of shared responsibility for addressing common challenges.

The current CPA Secretary-General is:

*Mr. Stephen Twigg
CPA Headquarters Secretariat
Richmond House
Houses of Parliament
London, U.K.*

Cayman Islands Branch delegation included:

- Hon. **Kenneth Bryan**, JP, MP – Head of the Delegation
- Hon. **Katherine Ebanks-Wilks**, MP - Delegate
- Hon. **Joseph Hew**, MP - Observer
- Mrs. **Patricia Priestley** – Delegation Secretary *and* SOCATT



L-R: Hon. Joseph Hew; Mrs. Patricia Priestley; Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks; Hon. Kenneth Bryan.
At the Conference venue: Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Center (LESC), Two Mile Hill, St Michael, Bridgetown, Barbados.

*** Hon. Johany Ebanks, JP, MP, was registered to attend as an Observer; however, due to illness he was unable to attend. A Doctor's note was provided on 5th October, 2025.**

The 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC)
Held in Bridgetown, Barbados
5th – 12th October, 2025

The conference theme was *'The Commonwealth: A Global Partner'*.

The conference was hosted by the **Parliament of Barbados** and **CPA Barbados Branch**.

Over 500 Parliamentarians and parliamentary officials representing Parliaments and Legislatures from across the Commonwealth were in attendance. Speakers, Members of Parliament and Parliamentary staff representing the 9 regions of the CPA:- Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands & Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas & Atlantic; India; Pacific; and South East Asia were present.

Guests were warmly welcomed by their hosts: CPA President (2024-2025), Senator Hon. **Reginald Farley**, JP, President of the Senate of Barbados; Hon. **Arthur Holder**, MHA, SC, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Barbados and the Prime Minister of Barbados, Hon. **Mia Mottley**, SC, MP.

It was the second time that the CPA Barbados Branch has hosted the event – the previous time was the 35th CPC in 1989.

The 68th CPC included a number of conferences, meetings and events which the Cayman Islands Branch delegation attended (both together and separately) to ensure best representation at simultaneously occurring gatherings, namely the:

- **41st CPA Small Branches Conference**
- **9th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference**
- **Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) network meeting**
- **CPA General Assembly**
- **CPA CAA Regional Meeting**
- **59th Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) meetings**
- **Plenary, Small Branches and CWP Workshops; and**
- **Receptions, Opening & Closing Ceremonies and other special events.**

41st CPA Small Branches Conference:

Theme *‘Shaping the Future for CPA Small Branches: Strengthening Parliamentary Independence and Capacity in Small Jurisdictions’*



Commonwealth Parliamentarians met to examine how to shape the future for CPA Small Branches and to strengthen Parliamentary Independence in small jurisdictions.

The conference discussed strategies to meet the unique developmental needs of the CPA’s smallest Legislatures through key thematic workshops that helped to build parliamentary capacity for Members and parliamentary staff while also creating greater opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, parliamentary strengthening and cooperation across the network.

Of the almost 180 Branches of the CPA, 50 Branches are classified as ‘Small Branches’ with a population of under 1 million people. Examples of CPA Small Branches include Commonwealth countries such as Malta and Tonga, as well UK Overseas Territories such as the Cayman Islands and Turks & Caicos, and also states and provinces within larger countries like Northwest Territories in Canada or the Northern Territory in Australia.

The Cayman delegation participated in all the **CPA Small Branches Sessions** which included the following:

- **Opening Session:** *Shaping the Future for Small Branches.*

Participants examined strategies for addressing the distinctive challenges faced by smaller jurisdictions. Discussions emphasized cooperation, sharing of resources, and improving democratic resilience.

- **Workshop A:** *Navigating Challenges, Exploring Priorities - World Café Dialogue.*

This session followed a **World Café Dialogue** format, encouraging interactive exchanges on key themes such as:

1. Strengthening connections between small parliaments through shared tools and information;
2. Building resilient and accountable parliamentary systems; and
3. Advancing digital parliaments and e-governance.



Hon. Kenneth Bryan sharing from Cayman’s perspective.

- **Workshop B:** *Public Accounts Committees: Roles, Challenges and Solutions.*

Key discussion points included:

1. Enhancing PAC effectiveness within Westminster systems;
2. Oversight of government budget projections and expenditure;
3. Reporting standards and accountability mechanisms; and
4. Addressing structural and resource constraints in small jurisdictions.

Hon. Joseph Hew summarized the first day of meetings, as follows:

“The Cayman Islands was noted as being comparatively advanced in parliamentary operations. Interactive discussions offered valuable insights into financial oversight challenges - particularly regarding the preparation of budgetary projections by Ministries of Finance without adequate parliamentary review. The session underscored the important role of the Auditor General in scrutinizing financial projections prior to performance audits.”

- **Workshop C:** *Work-Life Balance and Mental Health for Parliamentarians in CPA Small Branches.*

This session focused on the human dimension of parliamentary service, addressing:

1. Mental health support systems, including counselling and hotlines;
2. Effective scheduling to balance professional and personal responsibilities;
3. Career transition and life after Parliament;
4. Civil service policies for former Members of Parliament; and
5. Gender-sensitive parliamentary environments.

- **Workshop D:** *Human Rights and the Legacy of Colonial Laws.*

Discussions explored the lasting impacts of colonial legal systems in small jurisdictions, including:

1. Judicial development and reform;
2. Rights to privacy and freedom of expression; and
3. The continuing influence of Westminster conventions and UK policy frameworks.

Hon. Joseph Hew summarized the second day of meetings, as follows:

“Delegates shared similar challenges regarding work-life balance and mental health among parliamentarians. There was broad consensus on the need for continued professional development and institutional support. The afternoon’s debate on human rights and the Israel–Palestine conflict was particularly passionate and reflected diverse perspectives across the Commonwealth.”



Hon. Hew with Member from Turks & Caicos.

The Cayman Islands delegation attended the following **Plenary Workshops**:

- **CPC Workshop A:** *Strengthening our Institutions to Support Democracy.*

Participants examined standards and structures that ensure effective democratic governance, emphasizing:

1. Non-partisan, professional parliamentary staff;
2. Support from parliamentary service commissions;
3. The interdependence of representation, legislation, and oversight; and
4. The establishment of independent boards to guarantee parliamentary autonomy.

- **CPC Workshop B:** *Building Trust and Transparency in Democracy: Financial Transparency in Parliaments and Elections.*

Key topics included:

1. Ensuring transparency in campaign financing;
2. Promoting financial openness as a foundation of democratic legitimacy; and
3. The role of Public Accounts Committees in fostering accountability.



Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks speaking with CWP delegates from Africa.

9th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference:

Theme: *Parliaments since Beijing +30: Progress, challenges and the road ahead for gender equality*

Women Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth held their 9th CWP Conference in Barbados to discuss women's representation in Parliaments, gender sensitisation and quotas amongst a wide range of topics. The main theme of the conference was highlighted 30 years since the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China in 1995, where the United Nations (UN) adopted the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on gender.

The 9th CWP Conference also brought together Members of Parliament to discuss equal representation in Parliaments through a series of workshops and governance meetings including four learning and development workshops for delegates. The host Branch of Barbados also held an open debate session during which women Members, including Honourable Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, provided contributions from the floor.

Over 100 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and delegates attended the conference from across the Commonwealth.

Delegates at the CWP Conference also elected a new Chairperson for the CWP network – Hon. **Catherine Fife**, MPP (CPA Ontario Branch). It is the first time that a woman from the CPA Canada Region has held the role. Hon. Catherine Fife was the CPA CAA Region's preferred candidate in the absence of a nominee from the CAA Region.



CWP Steering Committee representing the nine CPA Regions.

Following the 9th CWP Conference, the **CWP Steering Committee** met in Barbados.

Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks was invited to attend as Alternate CWP CAA Region Representative.

The CWP Steering Committee Members discussed activities for the year ahead as well as key themes for future conferences and meetings. The CWP Conference was previously triennial (every three years) but in 2023, CWP Members agreed to hold an annual conference to be held in the margins of the CPC.

CWP/CPwD Joint Workshop: *Overcoming the Barriers to the involvement of Women with Disabilities in Politics.*

Panellists from Scotland, New South Wales and Barbados shared personal, structural and cultural challenges they have encountered on the road to elected office - from inaccessible political party systems and campaign infrastructure to broader issues of gender discrimination. The dialogue promoted empathy and raised awareness to support political participation of women with disabilities across the Commonwealth.



Hon. Ebanks-Wilks spoke with panellist Ms. Kerry-Ann Ifill of Barbados. She is the first female and first visually impaired President of the Senate of Barbados.

CPA Caribbean, Americas & Atlantic (CAA) Regional Meeting:

On Thursday the delegation separated with Honourable Kenneth Bryan and Honourable Katherine Ebanks-Wilks beginning the day attending the **Cayman Islands Standing Business Committee Meeting** (via zoom). They then joined Honourable Joseph Hew at the **CPA CAA Regional Meeting**.

Hon. Hew noted that, “the Regional Meeting was well attended, with all elections duly ratified. Jamaica was identified as a potential host nation for the next CAA Regional Conference, pending final approvals”.

59th Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SOCATT) meetings:

Mrs. Patricia Priestley attended two full days of meetings of the **Society of Clerks at the Table (SOCATT)**.



The 59th Meeting of the Society-of-Clerks-at-the-Table (SoCATT) took place in the margins of the 68th CPC in Barbados. The meeting brought together Parliamentary Clerks and parliamentary staff from Commonwealth Parliaments to discuss the latest legislative practices and to share best practice. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Pedro Eastmond, Clerk of the Parliament of Barbados as host Parliament.

Presentations were made during the two-day meeting by a number of different Parliamentary Clerks on a wide range of subjects including the role of Clerks in strengthening and transforming Parliament, a Clerk's perspective of governance in Parliament, utilising technology and AI in Parliaments, development of procedure and privilege, and the impact of procedural and administrative reforms in Legislatures.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Society's accounts for 2024 and proposals for the agenda for the 60th SoCATT General Meeting to be held in 2026 were agreed.

The meeting included an official tour of the Parliament of Barbados, a welcome reception and a formal dinner hosted by the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr. Pedro Eastmond.



Belize and Antigua & Barbuda Parliament Clerks with Mrs. Priestley.

CPA General Assembly Meeting:

On the final day of the conference, Honourable Kenneth Bryan attended the **CPA General Assembly Meeting** and summarized the key decisions, as follows:

1. Approval of the nomination of Senator Hon. Sue Lines, President of the Senate of Australia (Australia Federal) as the new CPA Treasurer for a three-year term. The role holder oversees the finances of the Association and works closely with the Trustees and Finance team at the CPA.
2. Delegates approved the new CPA Strategic Plan 2026-2029 which sets the priorities for the Association for the next three years.
3. Delegates were updated on the progress of the new legal status akin to an international, interparliamentary organisation following the UK Parliament passing the 'Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and International Committee of the Red Cross (Status) Act 2025' and progress on the UK Government's secondary legislation.
4. Delegates were also updated on changes to the CPA's structural changes and the creation of the CPA Charitable Funds (CPACF).
5. Delegates approved the 2024 CPA Annual Report (including the audited Financial Statements), the CPA Membership Report, the CPA Budgets and Financial Management Reports.
6. Delegates endorsed reports from the three CPA networks - the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) and the CPA Small Branches.
7. The 2025 CPA General Assembly also approved the Chief Pleas of Sark as a new CPA Branch. One of the smallest Legislatures in the Commonwealth, the CPA Sark Branch joins the CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIM).
8. Delegates also looked ahead to the next Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference – the 69th CPC to be hosted by the CPA South Africa Branch and Parliament of South Africa in 2026, following their approval as the next host Branch.
9. The CPA General Assembly also included a topical debate on 'The Commonwealth – A Global Partner' with presenters from CPA Branches.

Special events throughout the week included:

- An **Official Opening Ceremony and Welcome Reception**.



The Cayman Islands delegation sat alongside the Bermuda delegation.

- The **Emilia Lifaka Memorial Lecture** given by H.E. Hon. Mia Mottley MP, Prime Minister of Barbados who highlighted the Commonwealth's role in protecting democracy and the impact of climate change on small states.

Hon. Mia Mottley also urged the Commonwealth to lead by example and demonstrate that democracy, even in the most trying times, remains the fairest and most effective path to peace, prosperity and human fulfilment.

“Let us move forward hand in hand, with courage and conviction, to build a Commonwealth where democracy is not a privilege of the few, but the birthright of all. This is not simply the work of government but the work of all of our citizens, and those of us who will know better must guide and prepare, to allow those who may not yet be awakened to this reality, the opportunity to join us in this battle that truly will determine whether we progress or whether we regress into the domination of countries and individuals by a few. It is against this backdrop that we address how we secure the rights and aspirations of our people within the boundaries of our nations. How we protect them from the excessive power of any Executive or any Parliament. How we build democracies that deliver for every resident. We know what we must do. Let us do it together.”



H.E. Hon. **Mia Mottley** MP, Prime Minister of Barbados.

The CPA Lifaka Lecture was established in 2023 in memory of Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, the late Chairperson of the CPA International Executive Committee and Deputy Speaker of Cameroon. Hon. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka was a passionate champion of the CPA and served as CPA Chairperson from November 2017 until her untimely death in April 2021. The CPA Lifaka Lecture is intended to provide a fitting tribute to her work.

- The **Official Closing Dinner** during which Parliamentarians from Pakistan, Ontario, Jamaica and Wales were recognised and presented Commonwealth Parliamentarian of the Year 2025 Awards.
- **Official Tour Day** - the Cayman Islands delegation took this opportunity to network and exchange contact information with fellow delegates from across the Commonwealth.
- The **CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg** brought the 68th CPC to a successful conclusion and extended an invitation to next year's 69th CPC which will be hosted by the CPA South Africa Branch and Parliament of South Africa.

Honourable Joseph Hew’s overall reflection of the 68th CPC and conclusion:

“The conference was successful and informative, offering valuable perspectives on shared challenges among small branches. Despite attending as an Observer, the experience was enriching and provided actionable insights for strengthening governance and parliamentary effectiveness.

While the conference schedule was demanding - particularly due to the long travel times between venues, the sessions were engaging and well-organized. Networking opportunities were somewhat limited, likely due to delegates being accommodated across multiple hotels and logistical constraints.

In conclusion, the 68th CPC highlighted the importance of collaboration among small Commonwealth branches in strengthening democratic governance and transparency. Continued engagement through the CPA network remains essential for exchanging best practices, fostering institutional resilience, and promoting good governance across all jurisdictions.”

Head of the Delegation, Honourable Kenneth Bryan’s final closing statement:

“Our participation in the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) proved invaluable. It provided our delegation with a wonderful opportunity to further develop our understanding of democracy. The engagement by all delegates from the Cayman Islands in the workshops was excellent, and I believe it will continue to benefit our Parliament. I was also pleased to witness Minister Katherine Ebanks-Wilks’ recognition within the Women’s Branch. It was also wonderful to see the participation of our Assistant Clerk, Mrs. Patricia Priestley, demonstrating our commitment to developing our Parliament’s staff, to enhance service delivery.”

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