



# 47TH REGIONAL CPA-CAA REPORT

September 5 - 13, 2025



## About CPA-CAA

The Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic (CAA) Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association comprises of the 19 Legislatures, including national Parliaments like Trinidad & Tobago and Barbados, subnational Legislatures like Nevis Island and territorial Legislatures such as Montserrat and Turks and Caicos.

The CPA CAA Region has its own Constitution which was established in 2008. The Region is governed by its own Executive Committee which gives direction to the Regional Secretariat and its programmatic work. The CPA CAA Region has an Annual General Meeting made up of delegates attending the Regional Conference.

The current CPA Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic Regional Chairperson is:

*Hon. Patricia Deveaux, MP*  
*Speaker of the House of Assembly Nassau,*  
*New Providence, The Bahamas Email:*  
*hoa@bahamas.gov.bs*

The CPA CAA Regional Secretariat is currently based in the Guyana Parliament. The current CPA CAA Regional Secretary is:

*Mr. Sherlock Isaacs*  
*Clerk of the National Assembly*  
*Parliament of Guyana, Parliament Office*  
*Public Buildings Brickdam, Stabroek, Georgetown*  
*GUYANA*

**The 47th Regional Commonwealth Parliamentary Association -  
Conference of the Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Region of the (CPA-CPA)  
5-13 September, 2025**

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**OVERVIEW**

The 47th CPA Regional Conference of the Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic (CAA) Region was hosted by the Parliament of the Bahamas and included:

- CPA Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic Regional Executive Committee
- CPA Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic Region Annual General Meeting
- 47th CPA Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic Regional Conference - workshops and presentations
- 15th Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) - including CWP CAA Regional Steering Committee
- 18th CPA Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic Regional Youth Parliament

**The structure of the conference was as follows:**

6 September, 2025

**CWP Meeting**

Session 1: CWP Steering Committee Meeting

Session 2: Topic: ***“W.A.Y.S – Women and Aspiring Youth in Service in Democracy – Youth and Women in Regional Governance”***

Presenter: Sen. The Hon. Erecia Hepburn-Forbes  
*(The Bahamas)*

Session 3: **“Gender Responsive Budgeting”**

Presenter: Hon. Pia Glover-Rolle  
*(The Bahamas)*

7 September, 2025

**CWP Meeting (cont'd)**

Session 4: Topic: **“Empowering Women in Politics: Strategies for Establishing an All-Women’s Caucus and Engaging Non-Elected Women Leaders”**

Presenter 1: The Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks  
*(Cayman Islands)*

Presenter 2: Ms. Benite Dibateza  
*(Gender Lead, CPA Headquarters)*

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Session 5: Topic: **“Legislative Scrutiny from a Gender Perspective”**  
Presenter: The Hon. Lisa Rahming, MP

**Meeting of the CAA Executive Committee**

**Chairperson of CPA Executive Committee meeting with members of the Regional Executive Committee**

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8 September, 2025

**Opening Ceremony**

Session1: 47th CAA Regional Meeting (Session 1)  
Topic: **“Regional Parliamentary Cooperation and Coordination to Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)by 2030”**

Moderator: Sen. The Hon. J. Lashell Adderley

Presenter 1: Hon. Lanein Blanchette  
*(St. Christopher andNevis)*

Presenter 2: Hon. Jamahl Strachan, MP  
*(The Bahamas)*

Session 2: **“The Separation of Powers – An Independent Parliament”**

Moderator: The Hon. Pia Glover-Rolle, MP

Presenter 1: The Hon. Alfred Sears, MP  
*(TheBahamas)*

Presenter 2: The Hon. D. Ezzard Miller  
*(CaymanIslands)*

**Deputy Secretary General’s meeting with Clerks and Branch Secretaries**

9 September, 2025

Session 3: **“Evaluating the Role of Parliaments in Regional Recovery and Resilience, inspired by Local Responses to COVID-19 and Climate Change”**

Moderator: Mr. Iram Lewis, MP *(The Bahamas)*

Presenter 1: The Hon. Thea Garcia Ramirez *(Belize)*

Presenter 2: Mr. Alex Storr *(The Bahamas)*

Session 4: **“The Prevalence of Sexism, Harassment and Violence Against Women in Parliaments across the Caribbean and the Americas”**

Moderator: Sen. The Hon. Ja’Ann Major

Presenter 1: Sen. The Hon. J. Lashell Adderley  
*(The Bahamas)*

Presenter 2: Hon. Thea Garcia-Ramirez *(Belize)*

Session 5: **“Parliaments’ Role in Countering Misinformation and Regulating Emerging Digital Technologies including Artificial Intelligence (AI)”**

Moderator: Sen. The Hon. Erecia Hepburn-Forbes

Presenter 1: Sen. The Hon. Michela Barnett-Ellis  
*(The Bahamas)*

10th September, 2025

Session 6: **“Financing Parliament–Budgetary Restraints”**

Moderator: The Hon. D. Ezzard Miller

Presenter 1: Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks  
*(Cayman Islands)*

10th September, 2025

**Annual General Meeting Briefing for Youth Parliamentarians**

11th September, 2025

**Tour**

12th September, 2025

**Youth Parliament**

The 47th Conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA-CAA) was successfully hosted by Bahamas Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, under the theme: '**Deepening of Regional Democracy – An Independent Parliament**'. The conference was held from 5th -13th September, 2025 and saw over 80 delegates from across the Region.

Delegates were warmly welcomed by the Bahamian hosts, and the hospitality extended was exceptional. Beyond the formal sessions, delegates were immersed in the vibrant Bahamian culture and came to truly appreciate the pride they hold in their national identity.

The representatives from the Cayman Islands Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association were:

1. Hon. D. Ezzard Miller, Speaker – *Head of the Delegation*
2. Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, Minister of Health, Environment & Sustainability-*Delegate*
3. Hon. Pearlina McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker - *Observer*
4. Ms. Heather Bodden – *Observer*
5. Mr. Roy Tatum - *Observer*
6. Ms. Nordra Walcott, Assistant Clerk – *Delegation Secretary*
7. Youth Parliament Deputy Premier – Mr. Jordan McDonald; and
8. Youth Parliament Leader of the Opposition – Mr. Raldayne Thomas

Caribbean leaders, during their remarks, underscored the democratic challenges faced by jurisdictions in the Region and urged delegates to use the topics selected for discussion to take workable solutions and best practice back to their own Parliaments.

CPA Deputy Secretary- General, Jarvis Matiya led the CPA Secretariat delegation for the regional conference.

Ahead of the Regional Conference, the 15th CAA Regional Conference for Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) took place. Delegates from across the Region were welcomed by The Bahamas Minister of Labour and Public Service, **Hon. Pia Glover-Rolle, MP** and the Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal, **Hon. Lisa Rahming, MP** who discussed the empowerment of women in politics, biases faced by female politicians and strategies to get more women involved in governance.

The CWP Regional Conference and the Regional CWP Steering Committee meeting were chaired by the Caribbean Region's representative on the CWP International Steering Committee, **Hon. Rochelle Forde, MP**, Speaker of the House of Assembly of St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Addressing challenges faced by women Parliamentarians, Speaker Hon. Patricia Deveaux stated:

*“We all face barriers as Parliamentarians, both men and women. From my personal experience, I can attest that female Parliamentarians face unique challenges. However, we have made significant strides with women now leading many of our institutions, including the Offices of Governor-General, the House of Assembly, the Senate and the Royal Bahamas Police Force.”*

Acting Prime Minister Chester Cooper addressed the conference with a keynote focused on the erosion of public trust in democratic systems. He noted that parliaments must evolve to address:

- The rapid impacts of technology, such as AI and social media;
- Climate-related challenges and natural disasters; and
- Migration pressures and socioeconomic instability.

He challenged legislators to become more proactive, accessible, and transparent in their roles.

The President of the Senate of The Bahamas, Senator Hon. Julie Lashell Adderley welcomed delegates to the CPA Regional Conference saying: “*Our Parliamentary system is one of the oldest in the Region. During the course of the Regional Conference, we will discuss matters relating to the Constitution, legislation and the social and economic issues that face us as a Region.*”

### ***Empowering Women in Politics: Strategies for Establishing an All-Women’s Caucus and Engaging Non-Elected Women Leaders.***

The Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks presented on “***Empowering Women in Politics: Strategies for Establishing an All-Women’s Caucus and Engaging Non-Elected Women Leaders***”.

She advised that the “presentation was inspired by information from the CPA Parliamentary Academy Course on ‘Effective Women’s Parliamentary Caucuses’.”

This session included additional sessions on women and aspiring youth in service, in democracy, gender responsive budgeting and legislative scrutiny from a gender perspective.

The CPA Gender Lead provided a brief update to the CAA Regional CWP Steering Committee on the CPA gender and CWP activities. In the wider CAA Conference, a session was held on *The Prevalence of Sexism, Harassment and Violence Against Women in Parliaments across the Caribbean and the Americas*. In this session many of the female parliamentarians shared their experiences dealing with harassments, including mechanisms that are in place in their parliaments to combat harassment, as well as best practice from across the Regions in tackling sexism, harassment and abuse those women in parliaments face. Out of these meetings, it was agreed that there should be regional campaign to raise awareness about the importance of women’s political participation, targeting both the public and political institutions.

### ***The Separation of Powers –An Independent Parliament***

The Hon. D. Ezzard Miller presented on “**The Separation of Powers – An Independent Parliament**”. During his presentation, he explained the three role, difficulties and importance of the three branches of Government. Durng his presentation, Honourable. Miller said “One of the great myths of politicians is that the Legislative branch (Parliament) is supreme, often justified by the logic that Parliament enables the Cabinet and funds the Judiciary. A much nobler position to take as Politicians is that there are three equal branches of Government, but each should have the necessary levels of independence while recognizing that all three branches are co-dependent.”

“I would advise those who have not passed enabling Legislation to separate Parliament to give it serious and favourable consideration.” Stated Hon. Miller.

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=td3dgcGLJn4>

### ***Financing Parliament–Budgetary Restraints***

The Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks also presented on “**Financing Parliament – Budgetary Restraints**”. During her presentation, she stated that “*This topic is not merely vital, but it is the lifeblood that sustains our legislative bodies as we strive to enhance our effectiveness in serving the needs of the people we represent. [...] We cannot have a vibrant democracy if our parliaments are starved from resources.*”.

*Minister Ebanks-Wilks closed her contribution saying “It is only when a Parliament has the authority to manage its own finances, that it can prioritise its needs effectively. This independence not only enhances the efficiency and responsiveness of legislative bodies, but it improves democratic processes, participatory democracy and the participation of women in parliament. By fostering an environment where citizens feel engaged and empowered, Parliament then becomes a place where all citizens want to follow and understand.”.*

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btnHY8LTZEO&t=2208s>

### ***Capacity Building and Training***

The need to establish a series of workshops focused on capacity building for women parliamentarians, covering topics such as legislative drafting, public speaking, and advocacy strategies was also discussed. Additional discussions included the need and importance of having support networks, as well as the importance of a mentorship programme connecting experienced women politicians with new entrants to politics.

### ***Monitoring Progress on Gender Equality***

The discussions were all along with the implementation of a framework for regular reporting on gender equality within parliaments to assess and adjust strategies for improving women’s political representation. The discussions also ensued on the need to collaborate with other organisations. It was discussed that there is a need to foster partnerships with civil society organisations, international bodies, and educational institutions to enhance programmes focused on women’s political engagement and leadership.

### ***Key Outcomes and Action Items***

In addition to the established action items from the conference, an important motion was passed to establish a Regional Disaster Response Committee. Below are detailed summaries of the key discussions and agreed action items:

#### ***1. Gender Equality and Women’s Representation***

Launch a mentorship programme aimed at supporting women aspiring to enter politics. This programme will pair experienced female politicians with emerging leaders to foster skills and networks.

**2. *Separation of Powers and Parliamentary Independence***

Creating a working group to monitor and report on threats to parliamentary independence across member states. This group will compile best practices for safeguarding parliamentary autonomy and share findings with all CPA members. It was suggested that Artificial Intelligence could be used to provide a regional central resource of shared information.

**3. *Evaluating the Role of Parliaments in Regional Recovery and Resilience, inspired by responses to COVID-19 and Climate Change***

A Regional Disaster Response Committee was established to enhance preparedness and coordination among member states in the event of natural disasters. This committee will develop a comprehensive disaster response framework, share resources, and facilitate training for parliamentary staff on disaster management. It was discussed and agreed on the need to formulate a "Climate Action Parliamentary Network" to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among member states on climate-related legislation, focusing on comprehensive climate policies tailored to the Caribbean and Atlantic contexts.

**4. *Establishment of the Committee to review the Stipend of the Regional Secretariat***

During the AGM discussion ensued on whether or not the stipend for the regional secretariat should be increased. It was agreed that a committee consisting of Speakers Miller, Francis and Lister would review this subject matter and report their findings.

The Hon. Pearlina McGaw-Lumsden stated that “As a first-time Member of Parliament—and as a woman—the start of the conference in The Bahamas felt uncertain. However, what unfolded throughout the week was a powerful and transformative experience.” “I appreciated the opportunity to attend and connect with colleagues across the Caribbean; and I was reminded of the benefits of these regional gatherings. Experiencing the hospitality of the Bahamas allowed me to appreciate that nation’s charms, people, history, and politics — and to reflect on areas from which we could learn. At the same time, comparing experiences with a variety of colleagues also gave me an even deeper appreciation of what we in the Cayman Islands do equally well, if not better.” Stated Mr. Tatum. “It was an encouraging and inspiring week where we were given much to consider and find solutions for challenging times. The experience has expanded our horizons and now we embrace new opportunities” added Ms. Heather Bodden.

***Youth Parliament***

**Youth Parliament Deputy Premier, Mr. Jordan McDonald, and Youth Parliament Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Raldayne Thomas,** participated in the 18th CPA-CAA Youth Parliament. This year’s Regional YP debate resolves that “*this Regional Youth Parliament wishes to make recommendations to CARICOM on ways it can get leaders of industrialised nations to reduce carbon footprint.*”

Youth Parliamentarians debated climate change and the urgent actions needed to address it, with our YPs standing head and shoulders above all other participants—a truly proud moment.

Most speakers emphasised that tackling this issue requires collective involvement and the provision of adequate financing, regardless of how small an island’s contribution may be to the devastating effects of climate change. However, our very own Jordan took a different approach, arguing that corruption must first be eliminated, as no meaningful financing or solutions can succeed while corruption is present. Both **Jordan McDonald** and **Raldayne Thomas** expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to represent the Cayman Islands as Youth Parliamentarians and further stated that connecting with other young leaders left them inspired and hopeful about the future of the region.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRrPUjq3Cc8&t=5091s>

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### **Cayman Islands’ Delegation**



**Back row (L-R):**

Ms. Nordra Walcott; Hon. Pearlina McGaw-Lumsden; Mr. Roy Tatum

**Front row (L-R):**

Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks; Mr. Raldayne Thomas; Hon. D. Ezzard Miller; Ms. Heather Bodden; Mr. Jordan McDonald.

### *Conclusion*

The outcomes of the 47th Regional Conference of the CPA reflect a strong commitment among member states to enhance parliamentary democracy, address pressing challenges such as climate change, and promote gender equality in governance. The establishment of the Regional Disaster Response Committee particularly highlights the proactive approach necessary to respond effectively to natural disasters in the region. While there's a popular saying that "It's better in The Bahamas," Speaker Mr. Ezzard Miller reminded us all, with pride and good humor, that "while it may be 'better' in The Bahamas—it is the **best** in the Cayman Islands."

