

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and International Committee of the Red Cross (Status) Bill

- This Bill will enable the Government to treat the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in a manner comparable to that of an international organisation of which the United Kingdom, or His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, is a member.
 - This will enable both bodies to continue to operate fully in the United Kingdom, ensuring the CPA can continue to promote parliamentary democracy and governance across the Commonwealth, and that the ICRC can continue to deliver its humanitarian mandate to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and provide them with assistance.
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What does the Bill do?

- While both the CPA and the ICRC operate in the UK and internationally, neither are formally recognised as international organisations. This creates risks to their ongoing operation in the UK. The Bill will therefore:
 - **change the status of the CPA and ICRC.** enabling both organisations to be treated in a manner comparable to an international organisation of which the United Kingdom, or His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, is a member. Such treatment includes the conferral of the legal capacities of a body corporate; the provision of privileges and immunities commensurate with its functional needs in respect of the organisations and limited staff; and the application of relevant statutory provisions relating to international organisations.
 - **enable specific privileges and immunities to be conferred on the CPA and ICRC.** These will be limited to the privileges and immunities determined on the basis of functional need for each organisation. The actual suite of privileges and immunities to be accorded, including relevant exceptions and limitations, will be specified in an Order in Council following the passage of this Bill.
 - **ensure that confidential information provided by the ICRC can remain confidential.** The Bill will allow for certain confidential information that is held by the UK Government and that was obtained from the ICRC to be exempt from legal disclosure requirements. This exemption applies to any disclosure requirement imposed by an order of a court or tribunal in proceedings (except criminal proceedings) or a statutory provision or other rule of law. This reflects the ICRC's standard working method of

confidentiality designed to protect its staff and operations in active conflict zones. This will enable ICRC to engage in bilateral dialogue with the UK knowing the information shared will be treated confidentially and supports the Committee's ability to have confidential dialogue with conflict parties, maintain its humanitarian access and protect the security of its staff.

Territorial extent and application

- The Bill will extend and apply UK-wide.

Key facts

- Neither the CPA or ICRC is an inter-governmental organisation (one of which the UK Government or another government is a member). Instead, they have their own unique constitutional arrangements reflecting their specific international mandates.
- The CPA is an unincorporated association established by parliamentarians and is composed of branches within national and sub-national legislatures across the Commonwealth. It is currently headquartered in the Parliamentary estate and draws its staff from across the Commonwealth, working closely with its over 180 CPA branches in nine geographic regions.
- The ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent organisation with a humanitarian mandate to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and to provide them with assistance. Through the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC has unique legitimacy to engage all parties to conflicts and has unparalleled access to vulnerable groups in conflict situations. The ICRC is frequently the only agency operating at scale in many conflicts.
- Changing the status of the ICRC will allow it to operate in the way that it is already able to in over 110 states, including all permanent members of the United Nations Security Council other than the UK.
- The UK has a long-standing programme partnership with the CPA. The Government currently provides funding to the CPA and its regional branch, CPA-UK, to support a number of projects in Africa and the Indo-Pacific. For 2024/25 the Government is providing £196,000 to CPA and £235,000 to CPA-UK.
- Over three years to March 2025, the Government will provide £144 million in un earmarked core funding to the ICRC, £48 million a year. In 2023 total UK support was £132 million including bilateral funding, keeping the UK among the largest donors to the ICRC.