



CPA Secretary General, Stephen Twigg's speech at Opening Ceremony of the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (#67CPC) in New South Wales

Wednesday 6 November 2024

[Protocols observed]

I am delighted to be here with you in Sydney for the 67th CPC and to have this opportunity to thank our amazing hosts this week – the Parliament of New South Wales. Vanessa and her team have done a brilliant job hosting this Conference.

2024 is a momentous year for the CPA. After decades of debate and discussion, we are finally on a firm path to achieving a new international legal status in the United Kingdom. Government legislation was announced in the King's Speech in July. Our Bill has passed through the House of Lords, received Second Reading in the House of Commons and is now in its Committee Stage there.

When we meet in Barbados next year, we will have a new international legal status. This will align us with our colleagues in the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie.

I am indebted to those who have worked so hard over many years to make the case for this transformative change.

The CPA has not sought this change for its own sake. International status will bring exciting new opportunities to enhance the voices of Commonwealth Parliamentarians and strengthen the role of our organisation:

- Within the Commonwealth itself
- In other international organisations including the United Nations
- And, at a regional and sub regional level

By ending charitable status and gaining international status, the CPA membership will have more freedom and flexibility to decide your own priorities and to advocate for democracy, good governance and human rights.

Last week in Samoa, I was pleased to join others in representing the CPA at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. I congratulate Hon Shirley Botchwey, the Foreign Minister of Ghana, on her election as the new Commonwealth Secretary-General and I thank Baroness Patricia Scotland for all she has done as the current Secretary-General and wish her well for the future.

Tomorrow, at the General Assembly, you will elect our next Chairperson, and I am pleased that we have three strong candidates. There will be important decisions on CPA Status that will enable us to make a smooth transition from being a charity to our new legal status. And, we will announce this year's winners of the Parliamentarian of the Year awards.

I congratulate Hon. Valerie Woods, Speaker of the National Assembly of Belize on her election as the new Chair of Small Branches. Our three networks play a vital role in the CPA. The CWP Conference is now held annually and the CPwD outreach event has become a feature of our week reflecting our shared commitment to women's political leadership and disability inclusion.

Let me take this opportunity to thank CPA Branches and Regions for your engagement throughout the year. It has been a busy 2024 with Good Governance Benchmarks assessments, technical assistance work, the Commonwealth Youth Parliament, Academy residencies, a Conference on Artificial Intelligence, regional conferences, the CWP Workshop, the Small Branches Workshop and the work of our disabilities Capital Investment Fund.

It is great to see so many participants here in Sydney this week. I am confident that together we will deliver a successful, enjoyable and united 67th CPC.

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