

Delegation Visit to South Africa

REPORT SUMMARY

20-23 March 2023



PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

On 20-23 March 2023, CPA UK organised its first delegation visit to the Parliament of South Africa in over a decade. This visit reaffirmed the relationship between our two parliaments and strengthened the connections between Members. The timing was also significant, with both countries looking ahead to General Elections.



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

The programme consisted of two days of meetings with civil society and two days in the parliament. The civil society engagements, some of which the South African and British High Commissions facilitated, gave the UK members a better understanding of the issues facing South African Members and provided a focus for the parliamentary meetings.

CPA UK is grateful for the support of the South African Parliament in creating a programme that allowed UK members to engage with the Deputy Speaker and Secretary of the National Assembly, as well as senior figures in different political parties.

CPA UK DELEGATION

The Rt. Hon David Mundell
MP (Delegation Leader)

Lyn Brown MP

Karin Smyth MP

The Lord Oates

Jacob Loose, Africa
Regional Programme
Manager, CPA UK



The delegation meeting with Mr Solomon Lechesa Tsenoli, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

Delegation Visit to South Africa

FULL REPORT

COUNTRY PROFILE

South Africa

Population: 60.6 million

Capital: Cape Town

Head of State: President
Cyril Ramaphosa

Type of Legislature:
Bicameral

**Members of National
Assembly:** 400

**Members of National
Council of Provinces
(NCOP):** 90

**Speaker of National
Assembly:** Nosiviwe
Mapisa-Nqakula MP

Speaker of NCOP: Amos
Masondo MP



The CPA UK Delegation in the Parliament of South Africa standing by a statue of His Excellency Nelson Mandela.

Engagement between UK and South African Members

The South African Parliament is undertaking a significant building reconstruction project after a fire in January 2022 burned down a substantial part of the parliamentary complex. The aim is to complete the project in 2025. In the interim, the National Assembly is sitting in City Hall (pictured on the next page), with committee sessions in a hybrid format.

The UK delegation viewed the temporary chamber during a sitting of the National Assembly. This temporary location has a theatre auditorium layout with Members predominantly giving their contributions from a stage at the front. Some argue that this theatre layout is not conducive to debate and that the venue setup limits public access. The reconstruction of the parliamentary complex provides an opportunity to consider improvements to the design and accessibility of the buildings.



A sitting of the National Assembly in Cape Town's City Hall.

The UK Parliament is going through its own substantial reconstruction and renewal process. The UK is currently conducting this reconstruction while parliament is in situ but may have to decide whether to move temporarily to an alternative venue during future works.

Both parliaments are also facing upcoming General Elections. For South Africa, there is a possibility that the election outcome is a coalition government. This outcome would mark a significant moment for the country, as the African National Congress has been in power since the first post-apartheid elections in 1994. A closer election result is also likely to mean that parliament has more influence.

There is an appetite in the South African Parliament to learn from other countries' experience of coalitions, and some Members have recently taken part in a study tour to visit the parliaments of Denmark and Germany. Two members of the UK delegation, David Mundell and Lord Oates, played a role in the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition of 2010-15. The UK delegation was also able to share their recent experience of a hung parliament (2017-19) and the influential role of backbenchers during this period.

CPA UK & SOUTH AFRICA

**Bilateral engagements
between parliamentary
officials, September 2020 -
ongoing**

CPA UK and the Core Business Support Division at the Parliament of South Africa have facilitated a series of virtual engagements between clerks, managers, IT staff, engagement officers, and other parliamentary staff from both legislatures. Participants share examples of good practice and their experiences, covering issues such as public outreach and external communications.

**Provincial Legislatures of
Mpumalanga and
KwaZulu-Natal visit to
Westminster, November
2017**

CPA UK hosted a delegation from the Provincial Legislatures of Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, for a benchmarking exercise on parliamentary practice and procedures in the UK Parliament.

Parliaments & Crises

In recent years, the UK and South African Governments have had to respond to the COVID-19 and climate crises. Parliaments in both countries have a vital role in holding their governments accountable for the progress they are making against their commitments.

The UK delegation visited the laboratory of Afrigen Biologics, a company based in Cape Town that has successfully established a COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing process. Dr Petro Terblanche, founder of Afrigen, made the case that producing mRNA vaccines on the continent of Africa would facilitate a more rapid vaccination response to future pandemics. At the official inauguration of the laboratory in April 2023, Dr Terblanche said, “We have grown our capability and capacity to meet the highest quality standards of mRNA vaccine development, serving the objective of building sustainable capacity in low and middle-income countries to produce mRNA vaccines”.

Legislation to respond to the climate crisis has been a focus of the South African and UK parliaments. A key topic of conversation was the ‘just energy transition’ in South Africa from coal towards renewable energy sources. Citizens are concerned this transition will increase high unemployment rates. Another issue is that most companies specialising in renewable energy



The CPA UK delegation on tour of Afrigen Biologics & Vaccines.

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Citizens are concerned this energy transition will increase unemployment rates that are already high. Another issue is that most companies specialising in renewable energy production are in Western countries. As with vaccine production, there is a need to consider more investment in domestic renewable energy companies.

Partly shaped and influenced by this visit, Lord Oates is leading a new policy inquiry into UK-Africa Partnerships for Just Transitions for the Africa APPG. The APPG is receiving evidence and will produce recommendations for the UK government in Spring 2024.

Human Rights

The visit coincided with Human Rights Day on 21 March. On Human Rights Day, citizens remember the apartheid-era Sharpeville massacre of 1960, when the police killed 69 peaceful protesters. The UK delegation met with Rev'd Michael Weeder, the Dean of St. George's Cathedral, who was mentored by the Most Rev'd Desmond Tutu and was one of the leaders during the anti-apartheid struggle. Rev'd Weeder told the delegation about the history of Cape Town as a melting pot of ideas with people from all over the world and the role of churches as a meeting point during the apartheid era.

Rev'd Weeder kindly gave the UK delegation a tour of St. George's Anglican Cathedral. Hanging in the cathedral is a colonial-era Union Jack, which the Rev'd Weeder has decided to keep as a reminder of South Africa's past.



The UK delegation attended a National Assembly debate for Human Rights Day. As well as discussing historic human rights abuses, members highlighted current human rights issues in South Africa. Several members highlighted the tragic story of a four-year-old who drowned in a pit toilet in a school in Eastern Cape and called for safety provisions in schools.

The UK delegation attended a celebration for the 10th anniversary of Justice Desk, an organisation set up to defend human rights. The delegation met the organisation's founders and youth ambassadors working to empower and educate young girls and boys. There was also a fantastic performance from a youth choir, including from survivors of rape and gender-based violence.



The CPA UK delegation meeting with Rev'd Michael Weeder at St George's Cathedral (left) and Gender Dynamix at their office in Cape Town (right)).

South Africa has a progressive constitution on LGBTQIA+ rights. The UK delegation visited the offices of Gender DynamiX, the first Africa-based organisation to focus on trans rights. The Executive Director, Liberty Glenton, highlighted that the 2003 constitutional amendment on sexual orientation has allowed South Africa to navigate some of the international debates on trans rights.



The delegation meeting with Mr Solomon Lechesa Tsenoli, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

Impact & Next Steps

During the visit, there was enthusiasm on both sides for a reciprocal delegation from South Africa to be hosted in the UK Parliament to be hosted in the UK Parliament by CPA UK.

The delegation visit strengthened the UK-South Africa relationship at the federal and national levels, with several further engagements since. CPA UK has engaged with the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature and the National Assembly Rule Committee.

The upcoming elections in South Africa and the UK are an opportunity for further engagement. Before the elections, CPA UK will engage virtually with clerks and officials from the South African parliament. After the elections, CPA UK hopes to bring together newly elected members from both parliaments to share their experiences as they get to grips with their new roles and to discuss topics of shared interest, such as the 'just energy transition'.

Report by Jacob Loose
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