

# CPA UK

## Annual Review

2023 - 2024



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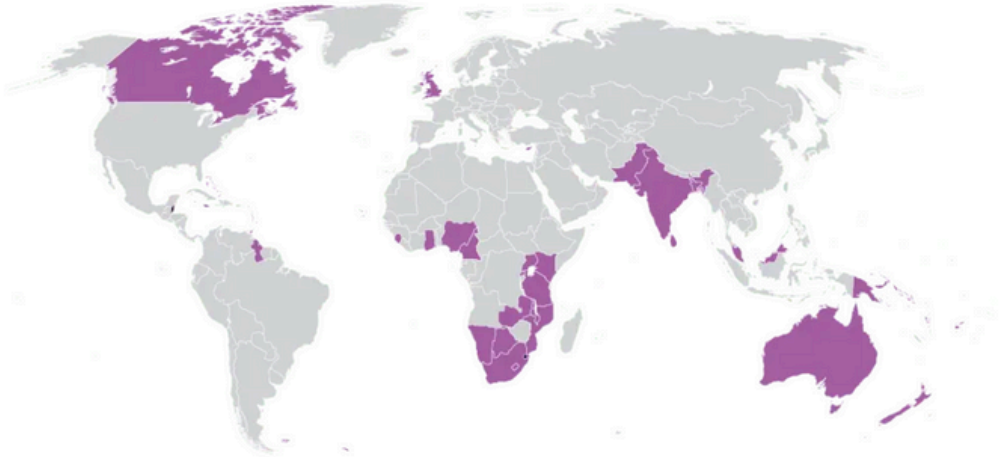
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# Inter-Parliamentary Engagement

## Over 500 delegates across 56 legislatures

Over 500 Members and parliamentary officials across 56 legislatures from the Commonwealth, Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and Devolved Legislatures participated in our programmes.

\*



**52%**

Of the participants in our programmes were women.

**48%**

Of the participants in our programmes were men.

**105**

Members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords participated in one or more activities.

\* Map is indicative of all CPA branch members as of 23-24

# Message from the Acting Chair

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If you are new to Parliament or are picking up the CPA UK annual review for the first time you may not know our long history, based in Westminster for over 100 years, bringing parliamentarians together from across the Commonwealth to share skills and knowledge, collaborate on matters of shared interest and strengthen interparliamentary relations.

We are a Member-led organisation and we need MPs and Peers to represent the UK parliament both at home and abroad. Whether taking part in outward delegations to parliaments across the world – from Sierra Leone to Canada; from Sri Lanka to Fiji; from Belize to The Gambia – or sharing expertise at conferences we host in Westminster, we hope you will join us in our mission to strengthen parliamentary democracy around the world.

It's a unique opportunity to travel and to meet with counterparts facing shared issues and challenges, not only in other Commonwealth parliaments, but also from across the benches in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Every delegation is different and in our selection process we maintain gender and party balance.

This review provides a snapshot of our action in 2023-2024. You will see that the brilliant staff in the CPA UK office have delivered a range of excellent and meaningful programmes, engaging partner parliaments from every region of the Commonwealth. We hope you will join us in the coming years of this parliament to build friendships across the parliaments of the Commonwealth.

George,



**Lord Foulkes**

Acting Chair, CPA UK



# Message from the Chief Executive

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I took over as Chief Executive of CPA UK at the start of 2024, halfway through the period this annual review covers. My predecessor was also a former member of the Diplomatic Service, the exceptional and much-missed Jon Davies, who led the organisation until the end of 2023.

I already had a sense of the organisation's stellar reputation from all the High Commissioners I'd spoken to, but nothing could have prepared me for the passion and skill with which the staff I have the pleasure of working with go about their roles, from delivering our annual flagship programme, Westminster Seminar, in the UK Parliament, to briefing and accompanying delegations of UK members as they engage with their peers from across the Commonwealth.

I would like to thank Dame Maria Miller and the rest of our outgoing Executive Committee, who have made me feel at home from the moment I started the role. I look forward to working with a new Committee, which will be elected in the Autumn for the term of this new parliament.

I hope that you, the reader, enjoy this review of our activities over the past year – it paints a strong and representative picture of the work we do at CPA UK and the impact it has. None of it would be possible without support from Members in our parliament, and I strongly encourage you, whatever your seniority, party and experience, to contact us and sign up for our programmes in the year ahead.

With all best wishes,



**Sarah Dickson**  
Chief Executive, CPA UK



# Reflections on CPA UK from the Outgoing Chair

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It has been a great privilege to serve as Chair of CPA UK over the past year during a period where we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the modern Commonwealth in style. This Annual Review has many examples of the first-class work of the CPA UK membership.

As someone who has campaigned for championing women's voices in politics and wider society for many years, I would like to highlight one of my favourite events. In October I was delighted to attend the CPA UK's impactful Workshop tackling modern slavery in supply chains and gender-based violence, in partnership with the Parliament of Kenya. I was struck by how closely the challenges we face in the UK parliament are shared by others throughout the world, and excited by the opportunity to address them alongside a diverse and impressive group of delegates. It gave me the perfect chance to observe the CPA UK in action and I am pleased to say that its reputation for excellence is not exaggerated.

Throughout my time as CPA UK Chair it has been my strong desire to see the UK's commitment to the Commonwealth demonstrated, and so in early 2024 I sponsored a Bill in Parliament to change the wider CPA Headquarters' status to that of an international parliamentary organisation, moving away from its current status as a UK-based charity. I understand that government has taken up this Bill and the new parliament will have the opportunity to renew this vital task to safeguard the Headquarters of the CPA's continued presence in London.

I wish CPA UK, the parliamentarians who will pick up the baton of leading the organisation after the Election, and all our partners across the Commonwealth an excellent year ahead.

Best wishes,

**Dame Maria Miller**  
Chair, CPA UK (2022-2024)





**Westminster Seminar 2024**



**UK Delegation Visit to New Zealand & Fiji**



**Namibia National Assembly and National Council of Provinces Visit, Westminster**



**Strengthening Parliamentary Action to Address Gender-Based Violence and Modern Slavery in Supply Chains, Parliament of Kenya**

# Celebrating 75 Years of the Modern Commonwealth

In March CPA UK celebrated Commonwealth Day and the 75th anniversary of the signing of the London Declaration, which marks the creation of the modern Commonwealth, with a ceremony in Portcullis House.

Organised by our co-President, Mr Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, the event was attended by Speakers and representatives from across the Commonwealth, featuring a flag-raising ceremony and procession – in which CPA UK colleagues took part - and performances of traditional music and dance from Kenya.

It was a unique opportunity to observe the diversity and scope of the Commonwealth, assembled in one space for a common purpose, with representatives from legislatures as diverse as the Falkland Islands, Canada, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Grenada in attendance.



"The Commonwealth family is strongest when we are connected, through friendship. As I have said before, the Commonwealth is like the wiring of a house, and its people, our energy and our ideas are the current that runs through those wires.

"Together and individually, we are strengthened by sharing perspectives and experiences, and by offering and borrowing the myriad ways we have each tackled the challenges of our time."

His Majesty King Charles III, Commonwealth Day Message



# Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy

Commonwealth Day also coincided with the start of the 72nd Westminster Seminar, our annual flagship programme, which brings parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth together to share their experiences and discuss democratic practices, procedure and parliamentary accountability.

This year sixty-four delegates joined, representing every region of the CPA. After attending the Commonwealth 75th anniversary celebrations they took part in five days of interactive discussions on topics ranging from the role of the Speaker to holding the Executive to account to addressing gendered challenges in elections.



Delegates from smaller and devolved legislatures travelled to Cardiff at the end of the week to meet fellow parliamentarians from the Senedd.

The 2024 Westminster Seminar on Effective Parliaments was welcomed as an opportunity for colleagues to meet for the first time, providing a space for peer-to-peer learning to enhance their roles and further build on their understanding of the Westminster parliamentary system.



# Post-Election Seminars

Providing support for newly-elected members, particularly in parliaments without formal induction programmes, is a key means by which we assist the building of stronger democracies.

## ***Sierra Leone & Lesotho***

This year we delivered successful Post-Election Seminars for new members in Sierra Leone and Lesotho. In both places, UK parliamentarians discussed with their hosts parliamentary practice and process. All delegates shared their experiences and discussed the challenges faced working as a legislator, and considered ways those can be overcome.



# Linking Westminster with the Commonwealth

Parliamentary strengthening was an important topic in a series of bilateral programmes designed to build stronger relationships with key partner legislatures.

## **Ghana**

In April Rt. Hon. Alban Kingsford Bagbin MP, Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana, visited Westminster and met UK parliamentarians, including the Speaker, to discuss parliamentary procedure, accountability through committees, and ministerial obligations and responsibilities.



## **Namibia**

In December we organised a programme focussing on parliamentary procedure, member conduct and committees for eighteen Namibian parliamentarians from both the National Assembly and National Council

## **Fiji**

We hosted a group of clerks from Fiji to explore how the UK Parliament conducts committee inquiries.



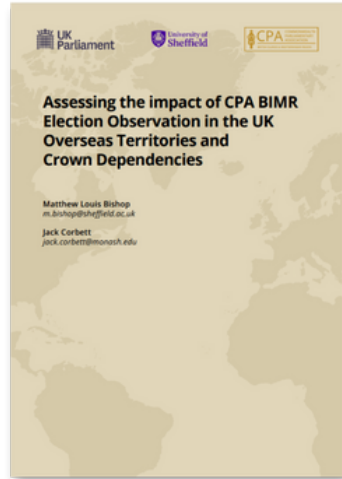
**“The experience we gained from the UK Parliament has enabled us to capture the best practices and implement it back in our legislature.”**

**Komal Kushboo,**  
Senior Clerk to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, Parliament of Fiji

# Elections

Since 2011, in our role as secretariat for CPA's British Islands and Mediterranean Region (CPA BIMR), we have delivered nineteen election observation missions (EOMs) to UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.

Over the last year, to assess the impact of our election work, we commissioned an independent report from two Academic Fellows, Dr Matthew Bishop (University of Sheffield) and Professor Jack Corbett (Monash University).



Having shadowed CPA BIMR Election Observation Missions and interviewed a range of stakeholders from across the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, the Fellows concluded that: ***"the main finding is that these missions are overwhelmingly valuable and effective,"*** whilst offering a set of valuable recommendations for future missions.

In March 2024, we held the report launch where UK parliamentarians and other stakeholders were able to question Dr Bishop about his and Professor Corbett's findings and recommendations.

## **Five forms of impact**

**Providing legitimacy**

**Facilitating pluralism**

**Shaping reform agendas**

**Raising awareness about international best practice**

**Enhancing skills transfer between Commonwealth politicians, election officials and the wider community**

# Elections

Our election observation work continued with a mission to the British Virgin Islands general elections in April 2023. The observers concluded that the British Virgin Islands Election Day was orderly, peaceful and well-run, voting on Advance Polling Day proceeded smoothly, and that the legal framework in place offers a sound basis for democratic elections, whilst also highlighting the lack of progress on campaign financing reform.



In Westminster we ran a course for parliamentarians in the CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region, to increase participants' understanding of the process of election observation, the role of election observers and CPA BIMR Election Observation Missions.



# UK Overseas Territories Project

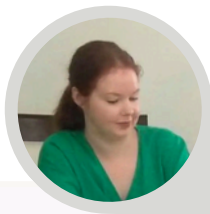
The UK Overseas Territories Project focuses on enhancing good governance and oversight of public finances across UK Overseas Territories, and is funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

## UK Overseas Clerk Leadership Group Workshop

This year we hosted the UK Overseas Clerk Leadership Group Workshop in partnership with Tynwald in the Isle of Man, with clerks from Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falklands Islands, Montserrat, St Helena and Turks and Caicos participating in a week-long programme.

## Public Accounts Committee Clerk Attachments

In addition, we hosted a delegation of the Public Accounts Committee of the Turks and Caicos Islands for a four-day visit, and facilitated clerk attachments between Tynwald and Montserrat, and the Falkland Islands and St Helena.



“The assignment sounded like a unique opportunity to apply my skills as a Committee Clerk in the context of another small parliament.”

Francisca Gale,  
Research and Scrutiny Support Manager of Tynwald

## Regional and Pan-Commonwealth Events

A delegation of UK parliamentarians represented CPA UK at the 2023 Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held in Accra, Ghana, in October 2023. They were led by CPA UK Chair Dame Maria Miller MP, with representatives from the three largest parties plus a cross-bench Peer.

The Conference was opened by the President of the Republic of Ghana HE Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, who urged Commonwealth parliamentarians to mark the 10th Anniversary of the Commonwealth Charter by recommitting to its values and principles.

CPA UK's delegates participated in a busy programme of workshops covering a range of topics. Rt Hon. Karen Bradley MP chaired a lively and interactive youth roundtable at the Parliament of Ghana on the role of the Commonwealth in international security and peacebuilding.



CPA UK delegates also made important contributions to workshops on gender quotas in Parliament and on the Commonwealth Charter and its commitment to protecting human rights.

The Conference was preceded by governance meetings, at which the key issue of CPA's legal status was at the centre of deliberations.

Human rights were central topics of discussion. During a series of meetings, the UK delegation unanimously asserted its commitment to fundamental human rights and equalities as set out in the Commonwealth Charter, which meant that no one should ever be treated differently regardless of gender, sexuality, race, religion, political belief or other characteristic.

# British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference

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The 52nd British Islands and Mediterranean Region Conference on Inclusive and Sustainable Parliaments welcomed over forty delegates from across the region to Westminster in April 2023.

Held in the UK Parliament, the programme brought together several themes on which regional parliamentarians had been working over recent years. This included taking part in a committee hearing exercise on meeting climate change commitments, to highlight good practice in parliamentary scrutiny.

Hearing from experts and parliamentarians from across the region, delegates discussed the importance of diverse and inclusive parliaments and the role they play in strengthening democracy through broader representation and providing a platform for a diversity of views and lived experiences. Standards and behaviour were key topics, and delegates learned about how different legislatures apply and monitor codes of conduct, and registers of interests.





# Youth Engagement

2023 was the Commonwealth year of youth, reflecting the fact that over 60% of the Commonwealth's population of 2.5 billion are under thirty years old.

In this spirit, we organised and hosted an interactive Youth Engagement in Parliament event for young people across the UK, designed to inform them about the avenues they can take to engage with Parliament and why their voices are important in the political sphere.



## ***Pakistan***

We also welcomed a delegation from the Youth Parliament of Pakistan, and a group of Malaysian young leaders, to Westminster, with topics ranging from gender equality and representation, devolution and bilateral relations.



“These initiatives are a pillar of strength when it comes to nurturing meaningful relationships and promoting mutual understanding between our two nations. They also symbolise a commitment to strengthening the bridge of friendship between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, while empowering the youth to play an instrumental role in shaping the future of their countries.”

Ubaid Qureshi,  
Delegation Leader and President of the Youth Parliament of Pakistan

# Strategic Priority Themes

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## **Women in Parliament**

As part of our ongoing work to support women in parliaments and advance gender-related priorities across the Commonwealth, we sent a delegation to the 2024 British Islands and Mediterranean Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference in Malta, which has recently implemented a mechanism to ensure more women are elected to its parliament.

The programme was scheduled to coincide with International Women’s Day which brought added pertinence and enthusiasm to discussions which focused on tackling gender inequality, increasing women’s representation in



elected bodies and advocating for gender-sensitive parliaments. There was also an online session with young women from delegates’ own jurisdictions who made impactful contributions on the issues most affecting them and their female compatriots.

## ***The Gambia***

Our delegation visit to The Gambia in February 2024 focused on the recently-formed gender committee, the setting up of which can in part be attributed to CPA UK’s Post-Election Seminar in 2022.

## ***Kenya***

In June 2023 an all-female delegation of UK parliamentarians visited Nairobi, Kenya, and engaged with the 102-strong Kenya Women’s Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), exploring gender-based themes and building a stronger connection between women parliamentarians in the two parliaments.

# Strategic Priority Themes

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## Security

In a world of increasingly complex and immediate threats, the evolving role that parliaments play in tackling and anticipating national security concerns is more important than ever.

In November last year we hosted the Commonwealth Conference on Parliamentary Scrutiny and Oversight of National Security. Focusing on scrutiny and oversight, the conference explored global trends in national security, including topics such as conflict resolution and peacebuilding, cybersecurity and climate change.

Our bilateral programmes also reflected the increasing importance of international partnerships in guaranteeing collective security.



### ***Australia***

Discussions with a delegation from the Parliament of Australia in November 2023 centered around how the UK and Australia can partner to tackle common threats.

### ***Fiji & New Zealand***

Shared security concerns in the Pacific region were high on the agenda during bilateral visits to Fiji and New Zealand in June.

# Strategic Priority Themes

## Public Accounts Committees and Trade Workshop

We looked at where our priority themes intersect and complement each other, which led to the organisation of our first cross-thematic Public Accounts Committees and Trade Workshop with the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago in February 2024.

Bringing together committee chairs, members and clerks, from the UK and the Caribbean, this workshop facilitated peer-to-peer discussions on how to enhance effective scrutiny of government spending and trade policy. Delegates also strengthened their networks across the region in the areas of public financial scrutiny and trade.



## Trade

At the June 2023 Women and Trade Westminster Workshop gender provided another lens through which to evaluate the role parliaments play in trade deals and scrutiny. The programme brought together women parliamentarians for a three-day Workshop designed to strengthen their knowledge of international trade and to discuss the specific impact of trade agreements on gender equality, poverty alleviation and the economic empowerment of women in the Commonwealth.

## *Jamaica & Canada*

Trade relations with the UK were central to discussions during bilateral visits to Jamaica and Canada in 2023, with the latter set against the backdrop of ongoing trade negotiations between the UK and Canada.

# Strategic Priority Themes

## Public Accounts Committees

Continuing our work to strengthen Public Accounts Committees (PACs), we co-hosted an African Regional Workshop in partnership with the National Assembly of Zambia at the end of October.

Attended by twenty-three parliamentarians and parliamentary officials from eight legislatures across Africa and the UK, the Workshop covered key topics including cross-party collaboration in a PAC context, effective questioning techniques, and preparing for committee inquiries. The Workshop was also an opportunity to build regional networks to enable ongoing peer to peer support.



**“Each time we meet, we come away revitalised. We often have more in common with each other across nations and across the Commonwealth, than we do with parliamentarians in our own jurisdictions”.**

**Dame Meg Hillier MP,  
Leader of the CPA UK delegation and Former Chair of the UK PAC**

## **CPA UK Project:**

### **Strengthening Parliamentary Action to Address Gender-Based Violence and Modern Slavery in Supply Chains in partnership with the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

‘Strengthening Parliamentary Action to Address Gender-Based Violence and Modern Slavery in Supply Chains’ is a multi-year project delivered by CPA UK. It aims to increase the ability of parliamentarians to effectively address modern slavery in supply chains and gender-based violence (GBV) and, subsequently, to bring about a reduction in forced labour and violence against women and girls (VAWG).

The project’s first year ran from March 2023 to April 2024. In November 2023, CPA UK delivered an awareness-raising workshop in Nairobi which sought to increase understanding of both modern slavery in supply chains and GBV, of good practice in developing legislation to combat these issues, and to establish a strong network, connecting parliamentarians with local experts on these issues.



The workshop was attended by almost fifty parliamentarians from twelve Commonwealth legislatures. Data we collected from participants showed a 43% increase in understanding on GBV and a 26% increase on modern slavery in supply chains.

The second year of the project is now underway and we are grateful to the FCDO for their continued partnership.

## Finance

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CPA UK had an income of £2,907,071 which included an annual grant-in-aid payment of £2,090,212 from the UK Parliament (70% House of Commons, 30% House of Lords).

The UK Overseas Territories Project received funding of £529,302 from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

The Project on Strengthening Parliamentary Action to Address Gender-Based Violence and Modern Slavery in Supply Chains project received funding of £197,685 from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.







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