



**Cymdeithas
Seneddol y
Gymanwlad**

Senedd Cymru

**Commonwealth
Parliamentary
Association**

Welsh Parliament

Report of the
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference
6-12 October 2025
Bridgetown, Barbados



Photo: *Alun Davies MS & Natasha Asghar MS outside the Parliament of Barbados.*

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Background, Summary and Highlights.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) is the annual meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). It is one of the largest Commonwealth meetings, bringing together some 500 Parliamentarians representing over 180 parliamentary Branches, from across the Association's nine Regions.

The 68th CPC took place between 06-12 October 2025 in Bridgetown, Barbados. The Conference theme was "***The Commonwealth: A Global Partner***".

The CPA Wales (Senedd) Branch, as part of its fee structure, was invited to send one delegate with the option of being represented by additional conference "observer" participants.

The Senedd delegation consisted of Natasha Asghar MS (Voting Delegate), Alun Davies MS (Conference Observer) and Al Davies (CPA Senedd Acting Branch Secretary)

The 68th CPC incorporated the [9th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians \(CWP\) Conference](#), as well as the election of the new CWP Chair, **The Hon. Catherine Fife, MPP** (CPA Ontario Branch)

Natasha Asghar MS Chaired a Conference Workshop on "***National Parliaments vs Provincial, Territorial and Devolved Legislatures: Protecting and Preserving the Separation of Powers***"

James Evans MS was awarded the CPA's [2025 New Parliamentarian Award](#).

The Senedd was grateful for the invitation to a reception hosted by His Excellency Simon Mustard, High Commissioner to Barbados, at the HC Residence.

Report by Natasha Asghar MS



Photo: Natasha Asghar MS representing the Senedd at the 68th CPC General Assembly.

As someone who loves being a member of the CPA I've been fortunate to visit some amazing places this term and when an opportunity came to go to Barbados to attend the CWP election (which I had heard was an incredible experience) I just had to see it for myself. Aside from the fact October is deemed "hurricane season" nothing was going to dampen the mood of this conference and as soon as I got there the CWP were ready for action.

The CWP is an arm of the CPA that is there to support, encourage and inspire women from all across the world to unite together and galvanize other women to enter politics and stay there regardless of their personal and professional struggles. The all-day women's session included the election and covered a number of issues in an array of panel discussions and focus groups.

Topics covered:

- 1) *Is there a place for gender sensitive parliaments being legislated into law? Frankly, I am a believer in a meritocracy system, and ownness should be placed on political parties instead of the political institution itself.*
- 2) *How hard it can be for some women to be heard in a male dominated profession.*
- 3) *What can be done to encourage more women to enter politics*
- 4) *How the layouts of certain parliaments are not family friendly or even physically easy to access for those with mobility issues.*

With more than 120 female delegates present it was clear from the outset that many countries sadly have more stronger misogynist attitudes to contend with and changing in some cases very traditional mindsets will have to begin from a wide range of areas including education (at all levels). Sadly even in 2025 cultural attitudes in some countries remain a large barrier for many women entering the political arena and if they do many feel that they are made to feel "less than" even though they fought an election and were duly elected, just like their colleagues. Evidently we still have a long way to go in achieving true equality for women in politics across the world and it really made me appreciate my own colleagues in Wales who have always shown me the utmost respect.

After participating in all of the sessions, I am confident that through more dialogue and better understanding it can be achieved. Many were amazed at the progressive nature of the Welsh Parliament and everyone was impressed by the work of our cross party women's caucus, which works successfully uniting women from all political parties in the Welsh Parliament to work together for the common good.

There was also a nail biting election for the CWP Chair position and after three rounds of voting I was delighted to see Catherine Fife MPP from Canada win the coveted position of CWP chair and I have no doubt she will do an excellent job in her new role and on behalf of the Welsh branch wish her all the very best.

Workshop Sessions

From Day 2 until the end of the week there were a number of sessions with panel discussions and I thoroughly enjoyed attending all of them- Even with the intense levels of humidity, it did not dampen the mood to learn from other countries about their issues and struggles in areas of mutual interest. It was clear from the outset that CPA countries face a number of challengers from food insecurity, diversity, the aftermath of the pandemic and political insecurity. Sadly challenges are not border specific so I always find it insightful to see how other countries are handling issues and challenges to help their economies thrive because without a strong economy all of the things we want such as better healthcare, education, roads etc can all be possible when we are able to fund them adequately.



Photo: Natasha Asghar MS Chairing a CPC Workshop

I was honoured to be asked to Chair a group session called ***National Parliaments vs Provincial, Territorial and Devolved Legislatures: Protecting and Preserving the Separation of Powers***. It was a great opportunity to learn about issues from other Parliaments and jurisdictions, In my introduction I shared a brief history and layout of the Senedd, how devolved matters can create confusion amongst the public and the frustrations that come with the Barnett formula and regardless of our political views on it, there is a common belief that it needs to be relooked at. My fellow panellists Chair of India's Rajya Sabha Hon Harvinash Narayan Singh spoke about progress that India has made when it comes to their diversity, inclusion and tech advancements. Alongside, Lydia from the CPA who spoke in depth about the Latimer House principals and how important it is for CPA members from each institution exercising "*responsibility and restraint*" in the exercise of power within its own constitutional sphere so as not to encroach on the legitimate discharge of constitutional functions by the other institutions.

Many members contributed but the biggest element of feedback taken was that we need to find collective solutions to problems we are encountering. Naturally with so many different countries forming the CPA our issues, powers and funds are significantly different, so going forward we said it may be thoughtful to have sessions where we raise the issues and form groups to find collective solutions according to political institutions that are similar in size and function.

I thoroughly enjoyed Om Birla, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Chairperson of the CPA regions' speech alongside his panel discussion on tech .He spoke passionately about

India's historic decision to reserve one third of their seats in Parliament and state legislatures for women and how historically India was dependant on food security, in 2025 they are seen as a trusted partner for global food. He spoke in depth about AI and tech within Indian politics, especially the potential it has to make democratic institutions more transparent and efficient. During his contribution he said one line that really resonated with me *"We must ensure that technology remains a tool to serve humanity, not to dominate it,"*

As a huge advocate for tech, I see the importance of technology and AI however it is imperative that we use it sensibly, ethically and do not take away the human essence that is still required within many roles and collectively as a CPA ensure that our legislatures are up to speed with the law when it comes to AI, because as it is developing at an incredible speed it is in our best interests to see the laws of our respective countries is in line with what is yet to come.

At the end of the week I was proud of represent Wales at the AGM. A number of speakers came to the stage from various parts of the world to share their experiences, feelings and topics they wishes to cover going forward. Many said they wanted to discuss the conflict in Israel and Palestine to try and find a way forward for a peaceful resolution by using the CPA as NATO style body. Others spoke about their experiences within the CPA, some raised their political careers and a few aired the struggles they are encountering in a post Covid world.

It was deeply insightful and heartening to see politicians from all corners of the globe coming together to patiently listen to each other, understand shared frustrations and pledge to work together for a better long term outcome for us all.

ExCo

One element of CPA that we do not often talk about is ExCo (short for Executive Committee) of the CPA. It is the main governing body of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and is responsible for the overall control, direction, and management of the Association's activities and business such as strategic management, financial oversight, accounting and reporting, representation and supporting the Secretariat.

Traditionally the ExCo meets just before and after the General Assembly and holds a second meeting midway between General Assemblies in a different Commonwealth jurisdiction, this time it was in Barbados.

Due to Covid, Scotland held on to their seat on ExCo for a few extra years. So during the conference in Barbados I was honoured to take the baton on behalf of Wales from Stuart McMillan MSP in who has done an excellent job as one of three regional representatives for the CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) on the international CPA Executive Committee (ExCo) and I look forward to understanding more about the role, responsibilities and remit of ExCo going forward.



Photo: *Natasha Asghar MS and Members of the new CPA International Executive Committee.*

Visits

During our time at the conference were filled with intense sessions from morning until evening, it was a pleasure to be welcome by the Prime Minister and President of Barbados for an inaugural reception with some moving speeches, excellent dancers and entertainment.

This was followed by a dinner reception at the Prime Minister's residence for a beautiful reception and Award ceremony, honouring members of the CPA from around the world.

Another evening, the British High Commissioner HE Simon Mustard was kind enough to invite us to his residence and it was interesting to hear his perspective on Barbados as he had only been in the role for a few months. All of these events left me truly inspired and grateful for this global exchange of ideas in Barbados.

Report by Alun Davies MS



Photo: Alun Davies MS and Natasha Asghar MS with other Members of the BIM Region.

Introduction

This was the first time that I have attended the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC). It is certainly an impressive international forum bringing together parliamentarians from across the world. One of the most striking features of the event for myself as a first-time delegate was its diversity, together with a commitment to dialogue and learning from each other.

This CPC was rooted in the organisation's ongoing commitment to strengthening democratic institutions, fostering good governance, and addressing the shared challenges faced by nations across the Commonwealth. This report seeks to provide an overview of my contributions and learning for us in Wales. It was also the first CPC to have taken place since the changes to the CPA's legal status and as such there were the beginnings of a dialogue on how this new international status can help facilitate furthering the Commonwealth's influence on the world stage.

Conference Overview

The conference's agenda was curated to facilitate plenary sessions, thematic workshops, bilateral meetings, and informal cultural exchanges. This multifaceted approach enabled parliamentarians to engage not only in substantive policy debates but also in smaller forums which encouraged and enabled mutual understanding, learning across different cultures and legislative traditions.

The opening ceremony featured addresses from both the President and Prime Minister of Barbados, and then the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth amongst others. The ceremony emphasised the enduring importance of multilateralism and collective action in confronting contemporary global and regional issues but also the leaders from Barbados also sought to emphasise the importance of reparations in addressing the legacy of colonialism. Their remarks set the tone for a week characterised by some

robust debate and a shared commitment to learning and advancing the principles underpinning the Commonwealth as a whole.

Key themes and discussions

Throughout the conference, several thematic pillars emerged as focal points of discussion:

- **Resilience and Post-Pandemic Recovery:** Delegates deliberated extensively on the strategies required to recover from the profound societal and economic impacts wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the conversation centred on strengthening public health infrastructure, supporting economic revitalisation, and addressing the social, economic and global inequalities that the pandemic so starkly exposed.
- **Climate Change and Sustainable Development:** As a small island developing state, Barbados played a leading role in highlighting the acute vulnerabilities faced by such nations. The conference addressed the urgent need for global cooperation on climate adaptation and mitigation, the mobilisation of international climate finance, and the role of parliaments in promoting sustainable development goals. I met with several delegates from the Pacific Islands states who are especially concerned that climate change will have an existential impact on them and do not believe that this is taken sufficiently seriously in the Global North.
- **Good governance and parliamentary reform:** I attended several seminars and workshops which addressed the imperative for transparency, accountability, and institutional reform. Case studies from various member states illustrated best practices in legislative oversight, citizen engagement, and the modernisation of parliamentary procedures. It was good to learn that Wales is one of the states with a good record on developing robust and powerful parliamentary oversight of the executive.
- **Youth engagement and gender equality:** Recognising the value of inclusive governance, the conference dedicated significant attention to the promotion of youth participation and gender equity within parliamentary processes. Delegates discussed obstacles to representation and identified strategies for empowering marginalised groups to actively contribute to public life. This is again a sphere where the Welsh experience could actively inform states who are now beginning to address these issues. It is also an area where there are some significant cultural differences between some commonwealth countries.

- Technology and digital transformation: In an era of rapid technological advancement, the adoption of digital tools within parliamentary settings emerged as a topic of considerable interest. Discussions explored the potential of technology to enhance legislative efficiency, ensure cybersecurity, and bridge the digital divide across the Commonwealth. I attended a fascinating presentation on the place of artificial intelligence in parliamentary work and I am clear that this is an area where we all need to learn to understand the opportunities as well as the potential dangers.

Conclusion

Members with more experience than I considered this CPC to have been a good and important part of a journey for the CPA. The CPA's budget was agreed with little disagreement and there were a number of important debates on the future direction of the CPA and how to use its new status. These debates will continue and develop over the coming years. In this way the deliberations and resolutions reached during the conference are expected to have a lasting impact on parliamentary practice and international cooperation across the Commonwealth.

Conference Concluding Statement and Resources.

68th CPC: Conference Concluding Statement

The **Conference Concluding Statement** for the 68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) which took place in Bridgetown, Barbados from 5 to 12 October 2025, hosted by the Parliament of Barbados and CPA Barbados Branch is available at the [CPA website](#) or [by clicking here](#).

A full round up of all of the conference news and workshop reports from the 68th CPC will be published as an online supplement to the CPA Journal, *The Parliamentarian* out in December 2025.

68th CPC: Images

Images from the events of the 68th CPC are available to view and download at the [CPA's Flickr page](#). Image credit: *CPA Headquarters/Parliament of Barbados*.

68th CPC: Videos

A **highlights video** from the 68th CPC via the [CPA You Tube channel](#).

To watch the **3rd CPA Lifaka Lecture** by the Prime Minister of Barbados, Hon. Mia Amor Mottley, SC, MP – please view the video at the [Barbados Parliament YouTube channel](#).

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