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(1) Ninth Annual Centre for Democratic Institutions Pacific Parliamentary Dialogue

The 9th Annual Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) Pacific Parliamentary Dialogue was held in Goroka, Papua New Guinea from 11 to 13 December. The theme this year was The Role of Parliament in Managing Conflicts. The CPA Secretary-General, Dr William Shija, was invited by the organizers to participate as a resource person and he gave a presentation on the role of Parliaments in peace-building, based on the work of the CPA Study Group convened in 2004. Participants used the sessions to explore how to address issues in conflict-affected societies and through this improving governance in Pacific countries. The Parliamentary Dialogue is intended to facilitate discussions by Pacific Parliamentarians on issues of common interest and to allow them to study parliamentary practice in the region. A particular focus of this year's dialogue was on political and economic developments in Papua New Guinea. The meeting was attended by leading Parliamentarians from Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, New Zealand, Australia and Timor-Leste. As part of his trip to Papua New Guinea, Dr Shija, accompanied by Mrs Luseane Chesham, was also able to pay a visit on the Queensland Branch in Brisbane where he met with Deputy Speaker Hon. John English, MLA, Members Hon. Stuart Copeland, MLA, and Hon. Carolyn Male, MLA, and parliamentary staff.

(2) Meeting of CPA Regional Secretaries

More effective outputs from CPA events, possibly including Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference communiqués to be sent to Commonwealth governments, and closer collaboration among CPA regions were discussed when senior parliamentary officials representing seven of the CPA's nine Regions met in London in January. Meeting at the Secretariat in London on 7 and 8 January, CPA Regional Secretaries discussed with Secretary-General Dr William F. Shija and Secretariat staff how the Secretariat and the Regions could plan and work more closely to improve CPA events and services ranging from the annual Conference to the provision of communications and research services and the preparation of a programme to mark the CPA centennial in 2011. The Canadian and Asian Regions were unable to be represented at the meeting.

(3) Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth

The 19th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) was held in London, United Kingdom, from 2 to 6 January. The CPA Secretary-General attended the gathering as a guest of the organizers and was able to meet with many Speakers and parliamentary staff from CPA Branches during the four days. Since 1969, the CSPOC has gathered together the Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth national Parliaments every two years. Topics discussed at the Conference included Privilege and the Right of Reply, Standard and Ethics for Parliamentarians, and Parliament's Relations with the Public.

(4) SADC-PF Workshop on Parliamentary Standards

From 19 to 21 November, the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF), with support from the United Nations Development Programme, held a workshop on developing parliamentary standards for the region in Pretoria, South Africa. The meeting gathered MPs from the countries in the region and a team of resource persons to begin a process that will eventually lead to the adoption of a set of parliamentary standards by SADC-PF. The CPA Secretary-General, Dr William F. Shija, was invited to act as one of the resource persons at the workshop in recognition of the leading role taken by the CPA in developing benchmarks for democratic Parliaments. The CPA's benchmarks provided the basis for discussions at the workshop as participants reviewed how they might apply to SADC national Parliaments. The Secretary-General then travelled to Uganda to attend the CHOGM from 21 to 25 December.

ENDS
