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(1) 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Delhi, India

More than 700 Parliamentarians, parliamentary officials and accompanying persons attended the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, from 21 to 30 September, in New Delhi and discussed "Delivering Democracy and Sustainable Development". Members argued that they must sensitize the public to the need for measures to reduce poverty, enhance respect for the rights of women, minimize the effects of pollution on the environment, including global water supplies, and resolve pressing issues as human trafficking. They should use of existing parliamentary procedures and adopt new processes to hold governments to account for the effectiveness of their policies. The Conference was preceded by the 27th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference of Members from Small Countries and the 1st Conference of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. At the Small Countries Conference, Members called for Parliaments to promote the advantages - and offsetting the disadvantages - of globalization. They advocated attacking the causes of illegal immigration and human trafficking in countries of origin so people are not susceptible to exploitation. Members also called for a shared code of responsible environmental behaviour. The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference considered strategies to remove barriers discouraging women from standing for elected office so all Assemblies will meet the Commonwealth target of having 30 per cent of their seats occupied by women by 2015. The role of women Parliamentarians in dealing with HIV/AIDS and poverty reduction was also debated.

(2) Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

The CPA Secretary-General, Dr William Shija, will attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kampala, Uganda, from 23 to 25 November. The CPA has a recognized status at CHOGM as a Designated Commonwealth Organization. The theme for CHOGM 2007 is "Transforming Commonwealth Societies to Achieve Political, Economic and Human Development". The CHOGM will be preceded by a two-day Foreign Ministers Meeting, sessions of which the CPA is usually also invited to attend as an observer. In recent years, the efforts of the CPA has had some success in gaining a formal and recognized status for the parliamentary community of the Commonwealth at the intergovernmental level. This has proved important both in ensuring governmental level support for the work of the CPA and providing a parliamentary input in the democracy and development mission of the Commonwealth.

(3) Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians

Ms Kashmala Tariq, MNA, a Member of the Pakistani Parliament since 2002, was elected Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians during the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in New Delhi. Ms Tariq, a corporate lawyer, will serve a three-year term as Chairperson of the CWP Steering Committee, succeeding Hon. Lindiwe Maseko, MPL, Chairperson of Portfolio Committees Chairpersons in Gauteng, South Africa. The Steering is composed of the Chairperson and one woman Parliamentarian representing each of CPA's nine geographic Regions. Ms Tariq promised to work with the CPA so the Commonwealth's 175 Parliaments and Legislatures ensure the equal participation of men and women in setting policies and passing legislation that reduce gender inequities and promote the rights of women. Ms Tariq sits on three standing committees in Pakistan's Parliament: Law; Justice and Human Rights; and Finance and Commerce. A graduate of the London School of Economics, she started her political career as a student activist. She is Executive Director of the Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights, a cross-party caucus of more than 60 Members of the Pakistani Parliament.

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