



CONSTITUTION

OF THE

ASSOCIATION OF

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

BRANCHES OF THE CARIBBEAN, THE AMERICAS

AND THE ATLANTIC REGION

(As amended by the Annual General Meeting of the Association at its 31st meeting in Barbados on Wednesday 19th July, 2006)

(As amended by the Annual General Meeting of the Association at its 33rd meeting in Anguilla on Tuesday 2nd July 2008)

**(CONSTITUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION BRANCHES OF THE
CARIBBEAN, THE AMERICAS AND THE ATLANTIC REGION)**

1. **NAME**

The name of the organization shall be "**The Association of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Branches of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region**", hereinafter referred to as "**the Association**".

2. **DEFINITIONS**

(1) Unless otherwise provided in or required by this Constitution, any terms used shall have the same meaning as in the Constitution of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

(2) The following definitions shall apply specifically to this Constitution:

"Branch Representatives" mean those representatives nominated to the Regional Executive Committee according to arrangements approved from time to time by the Annual General Meeting pursuant to Article 13(1) of this Constitution.

"Chairman" and "Vice Chairman" mean persons elected to serve in those capacities for the Association and the Executive Committee.

"Region" means all those territories within the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region which have a Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, excluding those Branches whose membership is in abeyance.

"Secretary/Treasurer" means the Secretary/Treasurer of the Branch in which the Regional Secretariat is located, or his nominee, who for the time being is carrying out the functions of Secretary/Treasurer of the Association.

"Secretariat" means the Secretariat established for the Region.

3. **PURPOSE OF THE ASSOCIATION**

The purpose of the Association is to provide a forum to promote the aims and objectives and implement the activities of the Association and the Branches in the Region.

4. **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The aims and objectives of the Association are to promote knowledge of the respective Constitutions, as well as the legislative, economic, social and cultural aspects of parliamentary democracy, with particular reference to the Commonwealth countries in the Region. These objectives may be pursued by:

- (a) holding regional conferences which, as far as possible, shall be held annually in a Member Country as decided by the Executive Committee in consultation with the branches;
- (b) arranging meetings, seminars and study groups on a regional or inter-regional basis;
- (c) exchange of visits to study matters of common interest within the Region;
- (d) publication of journals, reports of conferences and seminars, and other papers relevant to the aims and objectives of the Association;
- (e) dissemination of reports on the activities of the branches in the Region; and
- (f) such other actions as may be deemed necessary to realize the aims and objectives of the Association.

5. **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of the Association shall be open to all registered and active branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in the Region.

6. **TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

- (1) A Branch may terminate its membership of the Association by written notice to the Secretary/Treasurer, and where Membership is terminated or in abeyance the obligations of the Branch up to the date of the termination of membership shall nevertheless be binding on the Branch and shall be discharged by the Branch in question. Subject to any other determination of the Executive Committee, a Branch shall not be restored to Membership unless those obligations have been satisfied.
- (2) The Executive Committee shall declare a Branch to be in abeyance where it is satisfied that the legislature from which the Branch was formed has ceased to function as a parliamentary body.

7. **SECRETARIAT**

- (1) The Secretariat shall have its offices in any territory within the Region as may be determined by the Annual General Meeting from time to time, but in any case; this shall be decided in accordance with Article 8.

- (2) Membership fees payable by each Branch shall be waived in respect of the Branch in which the Secretariat has its offices for the time being, to assist in offsetting administrative fees and other expenditure reasonably incurred in the conduct of affairs related to the Secretariat's work.
- (3) The Secretariat shall:
 - (a) maintain close liaison with the branches of the Region;
 - (b) act as a dissemination point for Branches for material and information received from other regions of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Regional Executive Committee and the Secretariat of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association;
 - (c) undertake all duties and responsibilities assigned to it by the Executive Committee and/or the Annual General Meeting.

8. **SECRETARY/TREASURER**

- (1) Persons being proposed for the post of Secretary/Treasurer shall first be nominated by their own Branch.
- (2) The Secretary/Treasurer shall be elected in accordance with the arrangements for the time being approved by the Annual General Meeting.
- (3) The term of office of the Secretary/Treasurer should not exceed 3 years.
- (4) The duties of the Secretary/Treasurer shall include:
 - (a) acting as liaison between the Secretariat of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Branches in the Region, as well as between other regions and the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region;
 - (b) ensuring that all Branches of the Association are kept abreast of all meetings, conferences, seminars and other events, by giving them due notice as stipulated under this Constitution;
 - (c) working with branches in the Region in coordinating the different activities of the Association;
 - (d) making suitable arrangements for the accounts of the Association to be maintained and audited for each financial year, and presenting them to the Executive Committee and the Annual General Meeting;
 - (e) performing the duties of Secretary to the Executive Committee, in accordance with Article 16 of this Constitution; and
 - (f) carrying out other duties as may from time to time be assigned by the Executive Committee and the Annual General Meeting.

9. REGIONAL CONFERENCE

- (1) There shall be a Regional Conference of the Association to be hosted ordinarily each year by a Branch of the Association.
- (2) Each Branch shall be entitled to two delegates; however a Branch with a higher entitlement of delegates for a Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference shall have that entitlement at a Regional Conference.
- (3) In addition to its normal entitlement of delegates, the host Branch shall be permitted to send an equal number of additional delegates, but those additional delegates shall not be entitled to vote.
- (4) Delegates will only be entitled to vote if their branches have satisfied the requirements for membership in accordance with Article 5 and if their regional membership fees have been paid in full in accordance with Article 15(2).]
- (5) Executive Committee Members shall be entitled to attend as voting delegates.
- (6) Each delegation may be accompanied by a Secretary.
- (7) Observers may also attend on the invitation of the host Branch.
- (8) The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association or his nominee may attend a Regional Conference as an Observer on the invitation of the host Branch, after consultation with the Executive Committee.

10. REGIONAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The final authority for the policy and management of the affairs of the Association shall be vested in the Annual General Meeting, which shall comprise the Association's Executive Committee and all delegates who are entitled to attend and vote.

(1) MEETINGS

- (a) An Annual General Meeting of the Association shall be held on the occasion of every Regional Conference.
- (b) The Executive Committee may convene a Special General Meeting at any time during an Annual Regional Conference or during an Annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Plenary Conference to consider matters of urgent importance to the Association.

(2) NOTICES

- (a) All notices required to be given under this Constitution shall be in writing.
- (b) The Secretary/Treasurer shall notify all branches of the dates and venue of each Regional Conference and Annual General Meeting as soon as they have been determined, and in any case, not less than sixty days before the Conference and the Annual General Meeting.

- (c) Subject to Article 18, notice of any business which a Branch proposes to bring before an Annual General Meeting shall be given by that Branch to the Secretary/Treasurer not less than forty-two days prior to the date of the meeting. If the Branch is not represented at that meeting the proposed business of which it has given notice shall lapse unless another Branch, by notice to the Secretary/Treasurer by the first day of the Conference, adopts that business as its own.
- (d) The Secretary/Treasurer shall, not less than twenty-eight days before the date fixed for the Annual General Meeting, send to each Branch and to each member of the Executive Committee, notice of the date, time, place, Minutes and Financial Report and the agenda of such meeting. .

(3) AGENDA

The agenda of the Annual General Meeting shall include:

- (a) Minutes of the previous meeting;
- (b) Matters arising from the Minutes;
- (c) Consideration of the report of the Executive Committee;
- (d) Statement by the Secretary/Treasurer on the management and financial position of the Regional Secretariat and presentation of the audited financial statements;
- (e) Consideration of business proposed by the Executive Committee;
- (f) Consideration of business in respect of which Branches have given notice;
- (g) Consideration of future venues for Regional Conferences and Seminars;
- (h) Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Association;
- (i) Nomination of Regional Representatives; and
- (j) Any other business.

(4) QUORUM

The quorum of the Annual General Meeting shall be one-third of the number of branches in the Association, whose membership is not in abeyance.

(5) CHAIRMANSHIP

The Association's Annual General Meeting shall be presided over by:

- (a) the Chairman of the Association;
- (b) in the absence of the Chairman, by the Vice Chairman;

- (c) in the absence of both the above, by the most senior Regional Representative who is willing to preside over the Meeting; or if none of the above is available,
- (d) by any delegate chosen by the Meeting.

(6) VOTING

- (a) All decisions by the Annual General Meeting shall be by a vote of a majority of members present and entitled to vote.
- (b) The Chairman of a general meeting shall have a casting vote but not an original vote.
- (c) Nominations for Regional Representatives and for Branch Representatives shall be made by individual branches according to the arrangement approved from time to time by the Annual General Meeting.

(7) ELECTIONS

- (a) The Annual General Meeting shall normally elect as Chairman of the Association a person nominated by the Branch which is the host of the next Regional Conference, and as Vice Chairman a person nominated by the Branch which will host the Regional Conference after that and they shall take office at the end of the Annual General Meeting at which they were elected.
- (b) Where a Chairman or Vice Chairman is not elected at an Annual General Meeting in terms of (a) above, the Annual General Meeting may elect any member of a Branch to hold the position until the requirements of (a) above can be satisfied.
- (c) The Chairman of the Association, until a substantive Chairman is elected, shall be the person nominated by the Branch hosting the Regional Conference at which this Constitution is adopted, and if that Branch declines the nomination, a member of another Branch shall be elected.

(8) REPORTS

28 days prior to the Annual General Meeting minutes and financial reports shall be submitted to respective branches.

11. REGIONAL SEMINARS

- (1) (a) A Regional Seminar shall ordinarily be held in the Region for all Parliamentarians at least every second year to be hosted by one of the branches in the Region. The Seminar shall normally consist of not more than two delegates from each Branch, with the exception of the host Branch which may be represented by up to four delegates.
- (b) Members of the Executive Committee shall be invited to attend.
- (2) Observers may attend Regional Seminars on the invitation of the host Branch.

12. **REGIONAL CONFERENCES OF PRESIDING OFFICERS AND CLERKS**

- (1) There shall ordinarily be held a Regional Conference of Presiding Officers and Clerks once every two years, to be hosted by one of the Branches in the Region, and this may take place at the same time and venue as a Regional Conference or Seminar.
- (2) The delegates to the Conference shall consist of Presiding Officers and Clerks of each Branch in the Region, except where the Presiding Officer is the Governor, then the delegate may be appointed by the Governor.
- (3) The host Branch may be represented by up to three delegates.
- (4) Observers may be invited by the host Branch to attend.

13. (A) **REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES**

- (1) The Region shall be represented on the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association by three regional representatives one of whom shall retire each year after serving a three-year term in accordance with Article 23(1) and 23(2) of the Constitution of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.
- (2) Persons being proposed as regional representatives shall first be nominated by their own Branch and their nomination to the General Assembly of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association shall be made in accordance with the arrangements for the time being approved by the Annual General Meeting.
- (3) It is the function of regional representatives to represent the views and concerns of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region at Executive Committee meetings of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.
- (4) In representing the interest of the Region, the regional representatives shall:
 - (a) actively consult with Branches within the Region, keeping them informed of developments within the Executive Committee and the Association; and
 - (c) maintain close liaison with the Branches within the Region through direct contact with the Branches.

13.(B) **REGIONAL CHAPTER OF COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE CARIBBEAN, THE AMERICAS AND THE ATLANTIC**

There shall be the establishment of the Regional Chapter of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region whose chairperson shall sit on the Executive Committee.

14. **RESPONSIBILITY FOR EXPENSES OF HOSTING REGIONAL CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS**

- (1) The financial arrangements for the hosting of Regional Parliamentary Conferences shall be as determined from time to time by the Annual General Meeting of the Association.
- (2) The financial arrangements for the hosting of the Biennial Conference of Presiding Officers and Clerks shall be as determined from time to time by the Annual General Meeting of the Association.

- (3) Financial arrangements for the hosting of a Regional Seminar shall be determined by the proposed host Branch in consultation with the Executive Committee before any notice of the Seminar is circulated to branches and those financial arrangements shall be communicated to each Branch with the first notice of the Seminar.
- (4) Where a Branch proposes to host a conference and to make financial arrangements different from those in (1) and (2) above for such a conference, the Branch shall consult the Executive Committee and thereafter proceed as in (3) above.

15. **FINANCE**

(1) **FINANCIAL YEAR**

The financial year of the Region shall commence on April 1st and end on March 31st of each year” (as amended on July 2, 2008)

(2) **BUDGET**

The Executive Committee shall determine the annual budget of the Region and shall determine the annual membership fee of each Member Branch, which shall be due and payable on or before but in any event before the holding of the Annual General Meeting.

(3) **SOURCES OF FINANCING**

The finances of the Region shall accrue from the following sources:

- (a) Annual assessments levied on branches;
- (b) Voluntary contributions from branches, governments, agencies and individuals in the Region;
- (c) Grants from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Capital Working Fund;
- (d) Various fund raising activities approved by the Executive Committee; and
- (e) Any other source approved by the Executive Committee or the Annual General Meeting.

(4) **ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT**

- (a) It shall be the duty of the Secretary/Treasurer to make arrangements for the accounts of the Association to be maintained and audited for each financial year and to present the audited accounts to the Executive Committee and the Annual General Meeting.
- (b) The Executive Committee or the Annual General Meeting may request that the accounts be audited at any other time as may be deemed necessary.
- (c) It shall be the responsibility of the Executive Committee to invite tenders and make the selection for the initial appointment of an Auditor and for all subsequent appointments.

16. **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**(1) **COMPOSITION**

The Members of the Executive Committee shall be:

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Immediate Past Chairman of the Association, Chairman of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, the three Regional Representatives, one representative from each of the six Branches elected by the Annual General Meeting.

The Secretary/Treasurer or his nominee will be Secretary to the Executive Committee.

(2) **POWERS AND DUTIES**

The Executive Committee shall be responsible for giving directions to the Regional Secretariat and ensuring that the decision of the Annual General Meeting and any Special General Meeting are implemented, and shall be answerable to the Annual General Meeting. It shall:

- (a) submit to the Annual General Meeting reports and other submissions stipulated in Article10(3) of this Constitution;
- (b) present a draft programme of activities of the Association; and
- (c) prepare the agenda of Regional Conferences and the Association's Annual General Meeting.

(3) **MEETINGS**

(a) The Executive Committee shall meet at least once a year prior to the Annual General Meeting to review the arrangements for the Regional Conference, to prepare the agenda for the Annual General Meeting, and to consider any other matter concerning the Region. The Executive Committee may also meet at the time of the holding of the Regional Conference and hold consultative meetings at the time of the meeting of the annual Plenary Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and at regional conferences or seminars.

(b) The Secretary/Treasurer shall, so far as is practicable, not less than twenty-one days before the date of a scheduled meeting of the Executive Committee send to each of the members a notice giving the date and place of such meeting and of the business to be transacted.

(4) **QUORUM**

(a) The quorum for a meeting of the Executive Committee shall be four members, of whom one shall be the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman or the Immediate Past Chairman, one Regional Representative or their nominees.

(b) A Regional Representative may be represented by an Alternate.

(5) CHAIRMANSHIP

The Chairman of the Association or in his absence the Vice-Chairman shall preside over Executive Committee meetings and if they are both absent then the Immediate Past Chairman or the senior Regional Representative present shall preside.

(6) DECISIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

(a) Decisions at meetings of the Executive Committee shall be arrived at by consensus and in the event of failure to reach consensus then by the vote of a majority of members present and voting.

(b) The Chairman of the Executive Committee shall have a casting vote only.

17. BRANCH OBLIGATIONS

(1) Every Branch in the Region shall provide the following information to the Regional Secretariat:

(a) A copy of the Constitution of the Branch;

(b) A current list of the Branch members, listing separately life and associate members;

(c) Dates of National Day/Republic Day or Independence Day;

(d) Copies of Standing Orders and list of Sessional Committees of Parliament, their powers and functions;

(e) Annual reports and other reports of meetings, conferences and particular activities held by the Branch; and

(f) Any other information of a parliamentary nature which may be requested by the Association's Executive Committee.

(2) It shall be the duty of every Branch to implement the decisions made by the Association at any General Meeting.

18. AMENDMENT

(1) This Constitution may be amended at an Annual General Meeting but not otherwise.

(2) An amendment to the Constitution may only be proposed by the Executive Committee or by a Branch, and if proposed by a Branch, that Branch must notify the Secretary/Treasurer at least forty-two days prior to the Association's Annual General Meeting at which it is to be submitted.

(3) In every case whether the amendment is proposed by a Branch or by the Executive Committee, the Secretary/Treasurer shall communicate the proposed amendment to every Branch not less than twenty-eight days before the Annual General Meeting.

- (4) No amendment shall be valid unless at least two-thirds of the delegates present and entitled to vote at the meeting vote in favour of the amendment.

19. **DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION**

- (1) Notice of a Resolution to dissolve the Association shall be given to the Secretary/Treasurer at least six months before an Annual General Meeting and the Secretary/Treasurer shall circulate the notice to all Branches and Executive Committee Members within fourteen days after he receives it.
- (2) A Resolution for dissolution of the Association shall not be passed unless in the vote thereon at an Annual General Meeting it is supported by the votes of the delegates of not less than three-fourths of the branches of the Association.

20. **ADOPTION OF THIS CONSTITUTION**

This Constitution shall come into effect when the delegates at a Regional Conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region so resolve.