

## CPA Press Release

For immediate release, 8 March 2017

### Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians highlight gender equality and increasing women’s representation in parliaments for International Women’s Day 2017

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) have been marking International Women’s Day 2017 by highlighting gender equality and increasing women’s representation in Parliaments. International Women’s Day (8<sup>th</sup> March) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity, with the theme for 2017 calling for both women and men to ‘Be Bold for Change’.



To mark the occasion, the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Hon. Dato’ Noraini Ahmad MP, Parliament of Malaysia, spoke on behalf of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians by releasing a video message. In her message, Hon. CWP Chairperson stressed the importance of reaching the Commonwealth target of 30% female representation in Commonwealth legislatures and the vital role of networks such as the CWP to achieve change.

To view a video of her message visit the following link <http://bit.ly/2ITHdWX>. You can also find the video message on the CPA Secretariat YouTube channel: [www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube](http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/youtube).



To mark International Women’s Day 2017, the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians were represented by UK Parliamentarian, Baroness Elizabeth Berridge at a high-level panel discussion on International Women’s Day hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat at Marlborough House in London, UK.

Baroness Berridge sought to reaffirm the Commonwealth’s commitment to gender equality and gender inclusiveness in political processes, whilst also

highlighting the need to address the use of political violence against women. A fundamental barrier to women’s political participation, she spoke of the direct impact political violence against women has on democracy. Baroness Berridge also highlighted the role that Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians has played in raising awareness of the issue and set out the recommendations made by CWP on how parliamentarians, society and the Commonwealth can look to tackle the problem, such as looking at national legislation to domesticate important provisions contained in international treaties, obligations and UN declarations that are crucial to the protection of women against political violence.

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The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland QC officially launched *Peace in the Home: Ending domestic violence together*. The new initiative will aim to help bring down rates of domestic violence in the Commonwealth. Established in collaboration with public agencies, human rights institutions and civil society, *Peace in the Home: Ending domestic violence together* is part of a larger strategy focused on 'A Peace-building Commonwealth' – the 2017 theme for the Commonwealth. The programme includes a package of special measures and toolkits to help Commonwealth members build capacity for a multi-sectoral approach to ending domestic violence.

*"While women are disproportionately affected as victims of domestic abuse, this stubborn stain on our communities is no respecter of gender, location or social or economic status. When we understand that 38 per cent of women murdered globally were killed by an intimate partner, this should shock us all into action. This is why I will remain steadfast in my commitment to address this issue,"* said Commonwealth Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland. This new initiative will continue through the Commonwealth year and is expected to culminate in February 2018 with a Commonwealth accord on ending violence.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians across the nine regions of the Commonwealth celebrated International Women's Day with a wide range of events and activities. One example was in Australia where CWP Australia Regional Chair, Jenny Aitchison MP opened a new exhibition titled '*Our women in Parliament - a fit place for women*' at Parliament House in New South Wales, Australia to mark International Women's Day 2017. To view a video of the opening please [click here](#).

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians from the CWP Australia Region also participated in a morning session organised by the YWCA Canberra at the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly, during which 90 leaders from various sectors discussed women in leadership.

Another example was the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Canadian Region who continued their commitment to the '*Daughters of the Vote*' programme, where young women from every federal riding in Canada are invited to the Canadian Federal Parliament and provincial legislatures on International Women's Day to share and discuss their vision for the future of Canada. The Canadian Federal Parliament hosted 338 young women from across Canada in the House of Commons chamber who sat in their Members seats for a special debate on International Women's Day. More information on '*Daughters of the Vote*' can be found here <http://bit.ly/2m1GKBW>.

Many other activities took place across the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians network for International Women's Day and you can find more information at [www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwp](http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwp).

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network provides a means of building the capacity of women elected to parliament to be more effective in their roles; improving the awareness and ability of all Parliamentarians, male and female, and encouraging them to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role - legislation, oversight and representation and helping parliaments to become gender-sensitive institutions.

For further information about the work of the **Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians** (CWP) please visit [www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwp](http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cwp) or contact the CPA Secretariat via [hq.sec@cpahq.org](mailto:hq.sec@cpahq.org).

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#### Notes to Editors

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The **Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)** was founded in 1989 to increase the number of female elected representatives in Parliaments and legislatures across the Commonwealth and to ensure that women's issues are brought to the fore in parliamentary debate and legislation.

The **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)**, now in its 105<sup>th</sup> year with HM The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth as its Patron, exists to develop, promote and support Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and to implement the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The CPA is an international community of over 180 Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures working together to deepen the Commonwealth's commitment to the highest standards of democratic governance. Parliaments, their Members and officials learn from each other through CPA activities: Annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences, Regional Conferences and other symposiums; Interparliamentary visits; Parliamentary Seminars and Workshops; Publications including *The Parliamentarian*, the Journal of Commonwealth Parliaments; and the Parliamentary Information and Reference Centre.

Visit [www.cpahq.org](http://www.cpahq.org) for further information. Images are available on request.

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