

The CPA is an Association of Commonwealth Parliamentarians who, irrespective of gender, race, religion or culture, are united by community of interest, respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms, and by pursuit of the positive ideals of parliamentary democracy.

The Association's mission is to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. It seeks to build an informed parliamentary community able to deepen the Commonwealth's democratic commitment and to further co-operation among its Parliaments and Legislatures. This mission is achieved through a Strategic Plan which ensures CPA activities continue to meet the changing needs of today's Parliamentarians.

CPA programmes provide the sole means of regular consultation among Commonwealth Members, fostering co-operation and understanding and promoting the study of and respect for good parliamentary practice. This role is endorsed by Commonwealth Parliaments and Heads of Government. In 2003, governments bound themselves to an underlying set of Commonwealth principles based on a CPA initiative with legal professionals to define the proper relationships between the arms of government.

The CPA pursues its objectives by means of:

- Annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences, Regional Conferences and other symposiums
- Interparliamentary visits
- Parliamentary Seminars and Workshops
- Publications, notably *The Parliamentarian*, conference documentaries and newsletters on CPA activities and parliamentary and political events, and
- Parliamentary Information and Reference Centre research and communications.

Active CPA Branches now exist in 175 national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments, with a total membership of approximately 17,000 Parliamentarians.

The Members of the Legislature in which a Branch is formed are entitled to become Members of that Branch. For a Branch to qualify it must be a legislative body, thus both national and state or provincial Parliaments as well as the Legislatures of dependent territories may be members.

The Presiding Officers of legislative Chambers are normally the Branch Presidents, while the Leaders of the parliamentary parties are Vice-Presidents. The Clerk or Secretary-General of the Legislature usually acts as the Secretary of the Branch. Every Branch is autonomous and the affairs of most Branches are managed by an Executive Committee, elected annually by Members and usually representative of all main parties or groups. Many Branches require their Members to pay an annual subscription and many permit Members to apply for associate status on ceasing to belong to the Legislature.

CPA Branches are currently grouped geographically into nine Commonwealth Regions for representation on the CPA Executive Committee and for the organization of regional conferences and seminars on parliamentary practice and procedure. The Regions are: Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic; India; Pacific, and South-East Asia.