



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Report of the 55th British Islands and Mediterranean (BIMR) Conference

Gibraltar

17 June – 19 June 2026

Introduction

1. This is a short summary of the visit by the Scottish Parliament delegation to Gibraltar from 17 to 19 June 2026 for participation in the 55th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) British Islands and Mediterranean Regional (BIMR) Conference hosted by the Parliament of Gibraltar and CPA Gibraltar Branch. The CPA Scotland Branch was represented at this conference by Stuart McMillan MSP, supported by Steven Bell from the Parliament's International Relations Office (IRO).
2. A detailed report from the conference, including Minutes from the BIMR Annual General Meeting (AGM), will follow in due course from the CPA Clerks and placed on the IRO pages of the Parliament's website.
3. Stuart McMillan MSP wishes to place on record his sincere thanks to the Speaker of the Gibraltar Parliament, the Hon Judge Karen Ramagge Phillips GMH MP, and the Clerk of the Gibraltar Parliament, Phillip Borge McCarthy, for their outstanding hospitality and for arranging such a wide-ranging and interesting programme of plenary sessions, workshops and townhall discussions. The excellent logistical arrangements put in place for all delegates were also greatly appreciated.



(Stuart McMillan MSP was the CPA Scotland Branch delegate at the 55th BIMR Conference)

Background

4. The [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association](#) (CPA) is divided into nine geographic regions: Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean (BIM); Canada; Caribbean, the Americas and Atlantic

(CAA); India; Pacific; and South East Asia. The BIM region is made up of branches from Alderney, Cyprus, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, Malta, Northern Ireland, Sark, St Helena, Scotland, Wales and the United Kingdom.

5. The theme of the 55th Conference was “Modern Legislatures for Modern Challenges” with discussions focussing on the following: redefining the relationship between the European Union and the Commonwealth; future ready economies in small Mediterranean jurisdictions; youth parliaments and democratic continuity in 21st century legislatures; digital parliaments; allyship and representation in Parliament; advancing inclusion for LGBT+ individuals and accessible parliaments – modernising parliamentary procedures and processes.
6. In addition to the discussions and sessions on the above topics, the conference also included the BIMR Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Purpose

7. As with all International Relations Office outward visits, this visit met the aims of the Scottish Parliament’s International Strategy, namely:
 - to promote the Scottish Parliament, its practices and processes as an open, accessible, and participative legislature amongst other parliaments and international organisations.
 - to develop the Scottish Parliament’s reputation, skills, knowledge and abilities, through this work and its relations with other legislatures and organisations, to represent the people of Scotland in holding the Scottish Government and public bodies to account.
 - to provide opportunities for the continuous professional development of MSPs and officials through meetings and discussions with elected Members and officials in other legislatures and organisations; and
 - to showcase and develop the policy, procedural and corporate knowledge of MSPs and officials through international collaboration and engagement.

Programme Summary

8. Delegates were officially welcomed by the Speaker of the Gibraltar Parliament and President of the Gibraltar Branch of the CPA, the Hon Judge Karen Ramagge Phillips GMH MP. The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo KC MP, also welcomed delegates to Gibraltar following the Official Opening.
9. The first plenary session opened with a fireside chat with the Deputy Chief Minister, the Hon Dr Joseph Garcia CMG MP, entitled “Redefining Relationships: The European Union and the Commonwealth.”

10. This was followed by a session on “Future-ready Economies in Small Mediterranean Jurisdictions,” led by the Hon Sir Joe Bossano KCMG MP, Minister for Inward Investment, Enterprise, Telecommunications and the Gibraltar Savings Bank. Paul Frew MLA of Northern Ireland and Sarah Hudson of Sark also spoke on the panel. The session focussed on legislative frameworks supporting sustainable financial services; digital regulation and responses to emerging technologies; economic diversification and resilience in small jurisdictions; and balancing competitiveness, innovation and regulatory credibility.
11. The Speaker of the Gibraltar Parliament, the Hon Judge Karen Ramagge Phillips GMH MP, then chaired a plenary session on “Youth Parliaments and Democratic Continuity in the 21st Century”. The Speaker was joined by senior youth worker and youth symposium leader, Rebecca Figueras, together with the four team captains of the inaugural Gibraltar Youth Parliament debate teams: James Vinet, Ariana Gianani, Joshua Cuby and Isabella Azopardi. The session focussed on youth Parliaments as instruments of democratic literacy; youth engagement as a pipeline for future parliamentary participation; integrating youth perspectives without diluting parliamentary authority; and sustaining democratic continuity amid social and technological change.
12. A further session examined digital Parliaments and the use of artificial intelligence. The workshop discussion was led by the Clerk to the Gibraltar Parliament, Phillip Borge McCarthy. Sharing their perspectives on the panel were Steve Aiken MLA, Deputy Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, and Robert Mercer MLC of Tynwald, Isle of Man. Gibraltar parliamentarian, the Hon Joelle Ladislaus MP, also took part on the panel. The session focussed on digital tools in legislative procedure and scrutiny; safeguards, institutional memory and procedural integrity; and digitalisation as support to parliamentary work, not substitution.
13. The first Townhall discussion was titled, “Allyship and Representation in Parliament: Advancing Inclusion for LGBT+ Individuals.” The session was chaired by Adam Price MS, the Welsh Government’s Cabinet Minister for Enterprise, Connectivity and Energy. The Cabinet Minister was joined by Rico Jacob Chace of the Consortium of LGBT+ Voluntary and Community Organisations, Jayne Ozanne OBE of Guernsey and Stuart McMillan MSP. Stuart McMillan MSP took part in the panel as a result of a late cancellation by one of the panellists and spoke from the perspective as an ally to the LGBT+ community.

Stuart McMillan MSP said,

“It was a pleasure taking part in this panel having been present at various discussions on this important issue and also having initial dialogue with Adam Price MS in the past.

“The discussion was wide ranging but also highlighted there remains a job to be undertaken in our region to engage and improve outcomes for colleagues from the LGBT+ community”.



(Jayne Ozanne OBE, Adam Price MS, Rico Jacob Chace & Stuart McMillan MSP)

14. The final session of the conference was a townhall discussion titled, “Accessible Parliaments: Modernising Parliamentary Procedure and Process Beyond Brick and Mortar” The session was chaired by Dr Marie Tidball MP of the United Kingdom Parliament. She was joined on the panel the Hon Atrish Sanchez MP from Gibraltar; Jarvis Matiya, Deputy Secretary-General of the CPA; and Jenny Victory, Head of the Gibraltar Disability Office.
15. As noted above, the BIMR AGM formed a substantial part of the conference proceedings and a separate note from that meeting, and the decisions taken at it, will be published separately by the CPA Clerks. Stuart McMillan MSP remains the regional representative on the Constitutional Working Group and he provided a report on their latest draft sent to the CPA Executive Committee.

International Relations Office
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