UPDATE ON CPA GOVERNANCE AND BIMR ISSUES

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to ask Members of the Branch Executive Committee to discuss, agree, note and decide on a number of matters in relation to the British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR).

2. A range of issues will be raised at the BIMR Annual General Meeting in the Falkland Islands next month. These will relate primarily to funding of future BIMR conferences and the election process for CWP representatives. If changes are to be made in these areas it would require amendments to the constitution of the BIMR. Further information is provided in the paragraphs below and within the attached annexes.

3. Members are asked to:
   a) Note that CPA Australia Branch decided that it would cease to be a member of the CPA with effect from 31 December 2012.
   b) Note CPA Papua New Guinea has also withdrawn from the CPA.
   c) Note that the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons raised these issues at a meeting of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers’ Conference in Namibia earlier this month.
   d) Note that there is a regional CWP fund available however bids from the region must be submitted by 31 January 2013. Furthermore, Members are asked to consider and agree that the Branch Secretary should write to the Regional Secretary and request that an extension to this deadline should be requested.
   e) Decide if it is in order to amend the constitution, on this occasion, given that delegations are reduced and Cyprus Branch will not be present at the BIMR Conference in the Falkland Islands.
   f) Discuss the proposed amendment to the BIMR Constitution, dealing with the election of a Regional CWP Representative, and agree a course of action. Members are also asked to note that a response must be submitted by 1200 Thursday 31 January 2013. A draft of the proposed amendment is attached at Annex A.
   g) Consider and agree whether or not to accept the e-election process for the CWP Steering Group representative is also included within Annex A.
h) Note that staff support to the incoming Regional CWP Representative will be provided by Victoria Bower, Communications Officer, CPA UK Branch subject to agreement by all Branches.

i) Agree on a line for the Scottish delegation to take at the AGM which will be held in the Falkland Islands in relation to future funding and duration of BIMR conferences.

j) Decide whether or not to raise concerns about consultation with UK devolved Branches on issues which affect their status within the CPA and/or budget, directly with Regional Representatives at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

CPA Membership

4. The CPA Australia Branch decided that it would cease to be a member of the CPA with effect from 31 December 2012. The reasons, of the CPA Australia Branch, for this decision are outlined in Annex B. According to the BIMR Regional Secretary, Sir Alan Haselhurst has replied robustly expressing his disappointment.

5. According to the BIMR Regional Secretariat, the Australian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were content with the withdrawal as it was based largely on accountability issues. It is understood that the Australian State branches would not withdraw, as yet, because involvement in the CPA is a way for the State legislatures to interact in the international arena.

6. CPA Papua New Guinea has also withdrawn. According to the Regional Secretariat, the Pacific Region has been frustrated with CPA HQ for some time, not least because of subscription issues. In recent years the Pacific branches have been unable to afford their subscriptions and have therefore not come to Commonwealth Plenary Conferences (CPCs) as the rules dictate. However, other branches from Africa and Asia have attended either with cash in hand, past the deadline, or without paying their subscriptions and have been allowed access. The Pacific Region apparently, also has a concern with the CPA regarding that region’s perception of the equality of treatment of branches and regions. A copy of the withdrawal letter is attached at Annex C.

7. Accordingly, the BIMR Regional Secretary has advised that Sir Alan Haselhurst will therefore attend the BIMR in the Falkland Islands and provide delegates with an update on the current situation.

8. The CPA UK Branch is sending a delegation to Papua New Guinea in February and will discuss this matter with counterparts.

9. CPA Canada region, whilst sharing the general concerns expressed by CPA Australia, believes changes can best be effected by remaining a member of the CPA.
30 January 2013

10. The Canadian Federal delegation which visited the UK, including the Scottish Parliament earlier this month, discussed this matter with Sir Alan Haslehurst.

11. The UK Deputy Speaker raised the matter in the margins of a meeting of the Steering Committee of Commonwealth Speakers & Presiding Officers’ Conference (CSPOC) in Namibia on 3 January 2013. It is expected that there will be an update at the BIMR on the outcome of these informal discussions.

12. The Regional Secretary has asked that all BIMR Branch secretaries brief their Executive Committees on these matters and have requested comments, reactions and any action requests as soon as possible.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)

Regional CWP Representative – E-Election Process for 2013

13. At the Regional AGM in June 2012 it was agreed that as the next AGM to take place in the Falkland Islands in February 2013 would be a reduced AGM. With some branches not being present. It is important that a Regional CWP Representative is elected before the CWP Conference (to be held during the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Johannesburg 28 August – 5 September 2013). It was also agreed that the Regional Secretary would e-mail Branches with options for a process to conduct a CPA BIMR e-election. An election process is required to elect a Regional CWP Representative, to serve for three years, standing down prior to the next elections for CPA CWP Chairperson at CPC 2016. It is proposed that the e-election will take place at 1200 on Tuesday 26 March 2013. Please refer to Annex A for further information about the process.

Election of future BIMR CWP Representatives

14. In order to provide an election process, for future CWP representatives, it will be necessary to amend the BIMR Constitution to include a section dealing with this area. The Regional Secretary has requested agreement and / or amendments to the Constitution to the actions detailed in paragraph 9.06 of Annex A by 1200 on Thursday 31 January 2013.

Regional CWP Strengthening Programmes

15. The December 2012 meeting of the CPA Coordinating Committee decided that detailed plans and proposals for Regional CWP Strengthening Programmes were needed. The CPA Secretary-General’s letter about the CWP Steering Committee, dated 21 December, is attached at Annex D. You will note that the timings for bids for money from the CWP are required by 30 January 2013. Clearly this timescale is not achievable. The Branch Secretary has suggested that the Regional Secretary should seek approval, from the regional representatives, to request an extension to this deadline.
30 January 2013

Funding of BIMR Conferences

16. At the last AGM in Scotland there was discussion about the future funding of BIMR conferences. The Regional Secretary has produced a draft paper a copy of which is attached at Annex E. The Regional Secretary anticipates a change to the BIMR constitution. Please note that the amendment not only covers the funding issue, but also a reduction in the length of the annual conference. A copy of the Regional Secretary’s proposed amendment is also attached at Annex F.

17. It is pertinent to note that Cyprus will not attend the AGM in February and also that some delegations will be smaller than normal. At the time of writing this paper, the Regional Secretary was waiting for the thoughts of Cyprus Branch to the suggested proposals as set out in the paper. The Regional Secretary further suggests that it should be put to delegates at the AGM that any decision reached on this matter should be ratified by the Cyprus Branch in absentia.

18. The Scotland Branch Secretariat advise that the CPA Scotland Branch continues with the line already expressed during the Annual General Meeting, held in Edinburgh in June 2012. The Scottish delegation which comprised all Members of the Branch Executive Committee were strongly in favour of retaining the status quo. It is recommended that, in any case, the Branch Executive Committee agree on a line for the Scottish delegation to take at the AGM which will be held in the Falkland Islands in relation to future funding and duration of BIMR conferences. A copy of the current constitution is attached at Annex G.

Other issues

Decision-making in BIMR

19. Further to the information above regarding representation at the BIMR Conference, a criticism the Secretary has discussed with delegates at CPA conferences previously, regarding the governance of the CPA, is the length of time it takes to make decisions. In BIMR the decision-making body is the AGM and in 2013 it is an unrepresentative AGM. This is due to Cyprus not being present in the Falkland Islands and secondly not all Branches will have their full complement of Members present. The Regional Secretary intends to circulate a further draft amendment to the BIMR constitution which will enable e-decisions to be made.

20. Members may wish to consider if it is appropriate to amend the constitution at the 2013 AGM, without an open and transparent discussion, at which not all Branches will be fully present.

21. The BIMR constitution has been in existence for around 9 years. Given the proposed substantial changes to the constitution, Members may wish to consider recommending to the Regional Secretary, that consideration should be given to establishing a working party to examine whether or not these changes are required to be made at the 2013 AGM. The opportunity
could also be taken to identify other sections of the Branch constitution which may require amendment to ensure that the BIMR governance arrangements are of the highest standard. If this proposal was discussed and accepted at the AGM in 2013, the constitution could be amended at the AGM which will be held in Cardiff in 2014.

Commonwealth Plenary Conferences (CPC) – Format and Papers

22. The Secretaries from the devolved UK Branches wrote to the Regional Secretary in December 2012 highlighting issues in relation to the delay in presentation of CPA Papers at CPCs, timely distribution of the CPA accounts, and the lack of papers provided by the Regional Secretariat for BIMR regional meetings. The BIMR Regional Secretariat has provided papers for the BIMR AGM and intends to write to CPAHQ on the issues concerning papers for future General Assemblies.

Decisions by the International Executive Committee affecting devolved UK Branches

23. One other issue raised in the letter referred to in paragraph 19, was the failure of the BIMR representatives to consult and inform Branches in advance of significant changes which affect both the status and finances of the Branches. It is recommended that the Scottish delegation raise this concern directly with Regional Representatives at the Falkland Islands to ensure there is no recurrence of this situation in the future.

Secretary, CPA Scotland Branch
The Scottish Parliament
Email: margaret.neal@scottish.parliament.uk