SPCB Review of the Scottish Parliament UK and International Strategy

Purpose

This paper provides some background information on the SPCB review of the Scottish Parliament’s UK and International Strategy.

UK and International Strategy

The SPCB agreed the Parliament’s UK and International Strategy in November 2011. This was the first occasion on which the Scottish Parliament had agreed a Strategy to deal with the international relations of the Parliament and it is intended to be implemented over the course of the current Parliamentary session. When the Strategy was agreed, the SPCB also decided that the Strategy should be subject to annual review which would cover the international work that had been undertaken over the year and progress on implementation of the Strategy.

The Strategy considers the work of the CPA Scotland Branch in relation to a number of geographic areas however the main mention of the role of the CPA Scotland Branch relates to the Branch’s work with the National Assembly of Malawi. The text of the Strategy with regard to this relationship is provided at Annex A to this paper.

SPCB Review

The most recent review of the Strategy, by the SPCB, took place on 27 November 2013. Given the importance of the work of the CPA Scotland Branch to the UK and International Strategy the SPCB agreed to suggest that it may be useful to suggest to the Branch that Linda Fabiani MSP and Paul Grice attend a future meeting of the Branch to discuss the recent review of the Strategy. In particular, at the SPCB’s meeting on 27 November it was suggested that a discussion about the Scottish Parliament’s engagement with the National Assembly of Malawi be reviewed given that the Technical Assistance Programme (TAP 2) came to an end in 2013.

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Annex A – Extract from the UK and International Strategy

Sub-Saharan Africa

Scotland has a close bond with Malawi, both historically and in recent times and a concentrated part of our activity in sub-Saharan Africa over the last 5 years has focused around Malawi. From 2006 to 2008 the Scottish Parliament, via the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Scotland Branch (CPASB), undertook a Technical Assistance Programme (TAP) in partnership with the National Assembly of Malawi (NAM). This programme provided the NAM with advice and assistance on a range of areas including the development of their Standing Orders; strategic planning and legislative scrutiny.

Building on this work, the CPA Scotland Branch in Session 3 agreed the parameters of a new Technical Assistance Programme (TAP2). This programme runs from 2011 until 2013 and is focused on areas such as budget scrutiny and working with the media. Through these technical assistance programmes the CPASB has been at the forefront of developing parliamentary democracy as part of Scotland’s wider engagement with Malawi. The Scottish Parliament does not provide direct financial assistance to Malawi but instead provides support through parliamentary focused advice and assistance to the NAM. The programme benefits parliamentarians and officials in both our legislatures.

Going forward, it is proposed that Malawi remains the core focus of our activity in sub-Saharan Africa. Through the development of the TAP2 programme and the various initiatives outlined below, the Scottish Parliament can provide valuable assistance to a mutually young legislature which is keen to enhance its democratic capabilities. That said, there is some scope to broaden out our activity in this part of the world, mainly through the auspices of the CPA and through the work of the CPASB Special Envoy. The following programme is therefore proposed:

- Through the February 2011 visit of the former Presiding Officer and contact at official level, a detailed TAP2 work plan was agreed and developed with the NAM towards the end of Session 3. This work plan uses a mix of inward and outward visits to deliver training and facilitate dialogue and exchange in a number of areas (and supports the new Aims 1, 2 & 4) in:
  - procedural matters
  - the legislative programme and budget scrutiny
  - legal affairs
  - corporate challenges
  - communications – covering strategy, broadcasting and media relations
  - engaging citizens with parliament.

- Following the success of a pilot Parliamentary Pairing Initiative (PPI) between ten MSPs and ten NAM Members last year, it is proposed to launch a further PPI late in 2011. Such initiatives provide valuable Member to Member contact which we know from feedback is greatly appreciated, particularly by members of the NAM. (Supporting Aims 1, 2 & 4).
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- From January-March 2011, CPASB ran a pilot parliamentary internship programme offering an opportunity for an official from the NAM to undertake a detailed study of our work and practices within the Scottish Parliament. The intern also visited the devolved parliaments in Wales and Northern Ireland to help with comparative study. Following the success of this pilot it is proposed to provide funding, via CPASB, for a further 2 years, to allow interns from the NAM to visit in 2012 and 2013. This activity will segment with the lifetime of the current TAP2 programme.

The year 2013 will be an important one for Malawi as it celebrates the 200th Anniversary of David Livingstone’s birth on 19 March. It is proposed that the Scottish Parliament engages with the NAM and with the Scottish Government to explore the possibility of holding appropriate commemorative event(s) here in Scotland.

More widely, the CPASB is committed, through an agreement with the Secretary General of the CPA, to provide some one-off technical assistance to both Swaziland and The Gambia, if, or when, the need arises. It is proposed that this commitment be met where possible and within existing resources.

In June 2010 the singer and campaigner Annie Lennox OBE was appointed as the CPASB Special Envoy. In this capacity she has a special interest in our activities within Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS and women’s issues. She visited Malawi in February 2011 with the then Presiding Officer and they reported back to MSPs in person the outcomes of the visit in March. The envoy has access through our parliamentary links and networks which helps us to inform and link to other tasks she undertakes with Oxfam, the United Nations, the Red Cross and Comic Relief, amongst others. Moving forward we propose that future activity for the Special Envoy during the years 2011 to 2014 should focus on the good practice identified in Malawi and, through the auspices of the CPASB, disseminating and sharing that good practice with nearby southern African countries experiencing similar problems. Future activities will also be agreed to continue to help the Special Envoy and CPASB and raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and women’s issues, with politicians across the CPA’s unique world-wide network.