THE ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS WITH AFRICA (AWEPA)

Background

At the meeting of the CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee, which took place in March, Members requested that the Branch Secretary contact the Member who was responsible for co-ordinating activity between MSPs and AWEPA. The Branch Secretary was to contact the Member with a view to providing a position paper, for discussion at a future meeting, in relation to the co-ordination of AWEPA activity within the Scottish Parliament. The paper on AWEPA at the March meeting is provided at Annex A (below).

Current Position

The Branch Secretary contacted the Member who stated that he has had no contact with AWEPA since the meeting in November and no MSPs have approached him with regard to joining AWEPA. Since the meeting in March, the head of UKIRO has spoken with Mr Jeff Balch who represented AWEPA at the meeting with Members in November.

Mr Balch confirmed that AWEPA is involved in a range of parliamentary strengthening programmes across Southern Africa with a focus on the provision of independent, factual, budgetary information with legislatures in Southern African legislatures and scrutiny on the effectiveness of international development aid expenditure within recipient countries. AWEPA is also seeking to strengthen the degree of co-operation, in Southern African countries, between audit committees within legislatures and the public audit authorities.

Mr Balch indicated that he was keen to see an AWEPA section formed within the Scottish Parliament. In addition, he also noted that AWEPA would be keen to cooperate with the Scottish Parliament, with regard to parliamentary strengthening projects within this financial sphere, with regard to the National Assembly of Malawi.

Specific details of the form co-operation would take and the assistance that AWEPA would offer was sought. Mr Balch indicated that their programmes of support in Southern Africa, including Malawi, were currently being developed and that he would have specific details of the programmes AWEPA would be undertaking by October this year. Mr Balch suggested that it would be helpful to have a further discussion in October regarding the specifics of the activity that AWEPA would be undertaking. In the interim, Mr Balch agreed to contact UKIRO officials should AWEPA plan to
undertake any activity in Malawi prior to October but indicated that, at present, they have no plans to do so.

**Decision**

Members are invited to:

- Discuss whether further co-operation with AWEPA should be sought through seeking more information, in October 2014, on the specific forms of support AWEPA could offer.

UKIRO
May 2014
ANNEX A - THE ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS WITH AFRICA (AWEPA)

Purpose

1. At the meeting of the Branch in September 2013, the Branch agreed to invite AWEPA’s Director of Research and Evaluation, Dr Jeff Balch, to a future meeting of the Branch. This paper provides an update on engagement with AWEPA since September 2013 and proposes that a further paper be brought to a future meeting of the Branch outlining some options for engagement with AWEPA. The paper on AWEPA which was provided for the meeting in September and provides background information on the role of AWEPA can be found at Annex A.

UKIRO Engagement with AWEPA since September 2013

2. Following the September meeting of the Branch, the Branch Secretary became aware that the Rt Hon Alex Fergusson MSP was hosting an informal reception, at which Dr Jeff Balch of AWEPA would be present, on 27 November 2013. The purpose of the reception was for MSPs to hear about the role of AWEPA and how MSPs could become involved in the work of AWEPA which is aimed at strengthening parliamentary democracy in Africa. Members of the Branch agreed that attendance at the reception was a suitable alternative to AWEPA being required to attend a CPA Scotland Branch meeting.

3. The reception was attended by 7 MSPs including Patricia Ferguson MSP. Dr Balch gave a presentation on the work of AWEPA and indicated that AWEPA would welcome the creation of a Scottish Parliament section within AWEPA. Given that the Scottish Parliament’s engagement with African legislatures has tended to be focussed on Malawi, it was suggested that the CPA Scotland Branch could be an appropriate mechanism for supporting Scottish Parliament engagement with AWEPA.

4. It was agreed at the reception that UKIRO should continue to have a dialogue with AWEPA about how the Scottish Parliament and / or individual MSPs could become involved with AWEPA. In broad terms, AWEPA works with a number of legislatures in Southern Africa focused on Development Effectiveness. This support takes a variety of forms including strengthening financial and budgetary oversight; strengthening sectoral oversight committees; and facilitating joint monitoring teams (JMTs) to assess development relations. Common to these different elements, is an approach based on peer learning and experience exchange. AWEPA stress that their experience in this field points to the mutually reinforcing nature of cooperation
and partnerships, and assumes a two-way street in terms of learning by members and staff.

5. AWEPA in particular are keen to assist the Scottish Parliament in the work that they undertake in partnership with the National Assembly of Malawi. Since the reception on 27 November, UKIRO has engaged in discussions with Dr Jeff Balch to the possible form that any possible co-operation may take. In particular, Dr Balch has stressed that they are willing to accept any model of co-operation that the Scottish Parliament considers appropriate. In relation to Malawi, AWEPA is suggesting that they could provide logistical and financial support in terms of the technical assistance and capacity building activities provided by the CPA Scotland Branch to the National Assembly of Malawi. Dr Balch has noted that:

“Other AWEPA sections, notably in the UK and Irish Parliaments, have expressed an interest in establishing JMTs with Malawi, and AWEPA is currently discussing a multi-annual cooperation framework with the Malawi Parliament related to the above elements. We would be very happy to work on a coordinated approach with the Scottish Parliament. Perhaps already by May 2014, when post-election missions will be undertaken, we can consider how our separate initiatives can be woven together to make them stronger” (Personal communication with UKIRO, 7 January 2014).

Decision

6. Members are invited to:

- note the on-going discussions that are taking place with AWEPA,
- offer some initial comments on the potential for co-operation with AWEPA; and
- agree that a more detailed paper outlining possible options for engagement with AWEPA be brought to a future meeting of the Branch.

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