COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
(SCOTLAND BRANCH)

6th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 13 June 2007

MINUTES

The Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) opened in the Debating Chamber at 1.03pm and was chaired by Mr Alex Fergusson MSP, President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Scotland Branch (“The President”).

Attendance

The following Members of the Branch were in attendance: Bashir Ahmad MSP; Bill Aitken MSP; Alasdair Allan MSP; Keith Brown MSP; Bill Butler MSP; Aileen Campbell MSP; Jackson Carlaw MSP; Roseanna Cunningham MSP; Patricia Ferguson MSP; Alex Fergusson MSP; Murdo Fraser MSP; Kenneth Gibson MSP; Andy Kerr MSP; Rt Hon Jack McConnell MSP; Jamie McGrigor MSP; Ian McKee MSP; Duncan McNeil MSP; David McLetchie MSP; Nanette Milne MSP; Margaret Mitchell MSP; Alasdair Morgan MSP; Alex Neil MSP; Hugh O’Donnell MSP; Mr Jamie Stone MSP and Andrew Welsh MSP.

The President welcomed the Members and noted that the quorum for the AGM of one twelfth of the membership of the CPA Scotland Branch (“the Branch”) had been met.

Agenda Item 1 – Apologies

Apologies were received from Richard Baker MSP, Ted Brocklebank MSP and Karen Gillon MSP.

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes from the 2006 AGM

The Minutes of the Branch’s fifth AGM, which took place on 13 September 2006, were proposed by Roseanna Cunningham MSP and seconded by Mr Jamie Stone MSP.

The Minutes were agreed to.
Agenda Item 3 – The Report and Accounts for 2006/07

The Reports and Accounts for 2006/07 were proposed by Mr Jamie Stone MSP and seconded by Roseanna Cunningham MSP.

The President opened the debate on the Report and Accounts.

Jamie McGregor MSP reported to the AGM on his participation in the British Islands and Mediterranean Region (“BIMR”) annual conference which took place in Malta in April 2006. The Maltese government and people greatly appreciated the decision of the CPA to hold such a prestigious conference on their island nation. It was generally felt that this was a mark of recognition by the wider community of the Commonwealth of the long and proud history of the Maltese nation and the role it has played in defence of democracy. No greater example of this exists that the hardships suffered by the people of Malta during the 1940 to 1942 siege of Malta by Axis forces during World War II.

Bill Aitken MSP spoke of the very important role the CPA fulfils in promoting and championing parliamentary democracy amongst Commonwealth countries. Recalling his attendance at the CPA Annual Plenary Conference in Bangladesh in October 2003 he saw how, despite various politically problems, Bangladesh was striving hard to develop and grow its parliamentary democracy. This was an example of how nations around the Commonwealth can take advantage of the opportunities afforded by membership of the CPA to examine different models of democracy, such as the UK, and meet with fellow parliamentarians.

In closing the debate on the Report and Accounts Mr Jamie Stone MSP began by paying tribute to two former MSPs and Members of the Executive Committee. Lord James Douglas Hamilton, who stood down from the Scottish Parliament at the 2007 election, was commended for his dedication and commitment to the work of the Branch. His hosting of CPA events was always performed with an style and elegance which was all he own, and will be sorely missed. Tribute was also paid to Dr Sylvia Jackson for her work with the Branch, especially for her dedication to the Parliament’s relationship with Malawi. It was noted that she was instrumental in securing funding from the CPA Secretariat to support the Scotland/Malawi Technical Assistance Project currently being carried out by the Branch.

Mr Stone reported that in September 2006 he attended the 52nd Annual Plenary Conference of the CPA in Abuja, Nigeria. This was a very rewarding experience and a great example of the work of the CPA.
Finally Mr Stone expressed regret that he was unable to attend the recent BIMR meeting held at the Northern Ireland Assembly in Belfast in May 2007. This was owing to the hiatus caused to the work of the Branch as a result of the Scottish Parliament election. The hosting of the BMIR conference in Belfast was another historic event and highlighted the great strides made in the peace process in Northern Ireland and the positive role the CPA can play in this.

Roseanna Cunningham MSP wound up the debate by joining Mr Stone in paying tribute to former Members of the Executive Committee for their work and dedication to the Branch. She stated that Scotland has as much to learn from other Commonwealth countries as they can learn from Scotland. Indeed, Ms Cunningham reflected on the success and popularity of the CPA, and the wider community of the Commonwealth, as highlighted by the fact that the Republic of Mozambique has joined the Commonwealth even though it has no historic link with Britain and was not formally a member of the British Empire. This says a lot for the esteem in which the work of the Commonwealth and the CPA are held.

In closing the debate Ms Cunningham noted that work by Members of the Branch did not just consist of attending overseas conferences and meetings. Many Members have hosted CPA events in their own constituencies and this was to be commended. It highlighted and promoted the work of the Branch and the CPA in general and provided a valuable forum by which the aims of the Branch could be fulfilled. This was especially true in the work of Members in facilitating and hosting visiting CPA delegations from abroad in their own constituencies, such as the recent visit to Scotland by Members of the National Assembly of Malawi. Ms Cunningham expressed the hope that the excellent working relationship established between the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly of Malawi during Session 2, would continue in Session 3. This, she believes, will require hard work on the part of the Members of the Branch so as to ensure the resources and commitment of Members are available to carry on this work.

The Reports and Accounts for 2006/07 were agreed to.

**Agenda item 4 – Election of the Executive Committee for the year 2007/08**

The President informed the Members that, as only four valid nominations had been received for election to the four positions available on the Executive Committee of Branch; there was no need therefore to proceed to a vote. As such Members agreed that Ted Brocklebank MSP; Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Karen Gillon MSP and Mr Jamie Stone MSP be elected as Members of the Executive Committee for 2007/08.

The President congratulated the newly elected Members.
Agenda Item 5 – Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

The meeting closed at 1.16pm

Margaret Neal
Branch Secretary
13 June 2007