COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (SCOTLAND BRANCH)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING THURSDAY 18 JUNE 2015

DRAFT MINUTES

1. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) opened in Committee Room 4 at 12.45 pm and was chaired by the Rt Hon Tricia Marwick MSP, Presiding Officer and President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Scotland Branch.

Attendance

2. The following Members of the Branch were in attendance: James Dornan MSP; Linda Fabiani MSP; Murdo Fraser MSP; Hanzala Malik MSP; Rt Hon Tricia Marwick MSP; Liam McArthur MSP; Margaret McCulloch MSP; Jamie McGrigor MSP; Alison McInnes MSP; Anne McTaggart MSP; Margaret Mitchell MSP; Tavish Scott MSP; Elaine Smith MSP; and Sandra White MSP.

3. The Branch 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.

4. The Branch President reminded Members about the death last October of Dr William Shija, former Secretary General of the CPA. She expressed her confidence that the Branch would establish a positive relationship with his successor.

5. The Branch President noted the Branch’s excellent record regarding the participation of female Members in CPA conferences and other events, as detailed in the annual report.

6. The Branch President welcomed Kettie Musukwa and Isabel Tambala as observers at the AGM, and introduced them to Members as clerks at the National Assembly of Malawi undertaking a four-week study programme at the Scottish Parliament. She also noted that Deputy Presiding Officer, Elaine Smith MSP, led a delegation to Malawi in February 2015.
Agenda Item 1: Apologies

7. Apologies were received from: Roderick Campbell MSP; Annabelle Ewing MSP; Patricia Ferguson MSP; Kenneth Gibson; Rob Gibson MSP; Annabel Goldie MSP; Hugh Henry MSP; Cara Hilton MSP; Alison Johnstone MSP; Ken Macintosh MSP; Stewart Maxwell MSP; Margaret McDougall MSP; Siobhan McMahon MSP; Duncan McNeil MSP; Nanette Milne MSP; Graeme Pearson MSP; and Kevin Stewart MSP.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes from the 2014 AGM

8. The Minutes of the 2014 AGM, which took place on Thursday 19 June 2014, were proposed by Sandra White MSP and seconded by Tavish Scott MSP. The Minutes were agreed to.

Agenda Item 3: The Report and Accounts for 2014-15

9. The Reports and Accounts for 2014-15 were proposed by Tavish Scott MSP and seconded by Margaret Mitchell MSP. All Members present were content. The Branch President invited comments from Members on the Annual Report and the activities which the Branch has supported over the course of the year.

10. Margaret McCulloch MSP spoke about her visit to Dhaka to attend the 26th Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar. Ms McCulloch found the seminar to be a rewarding experience as it covered a number of interesting and relevant topics.

11. Ms McCulloch had hoped to have the opportunity to discuss the issue of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) with other delegates but found that, as each day was occupied with structured sessions, the only free time was during meals. She deemed this an inappropriate time for discussions on FGM issues although she was able to obtain links to international organisations with an interest in this issue which would be useful.


13. Ms McCulloch recommended that the CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee should continue to apply to attend similar CPA events.

14. The Branch President expressed the hope that Ms McCulloch’s enthusiasm about the seminar would encourage Members to apply for similar opportunities.

15. James Dornan spoke briefly about the CPA Scotland branch delegation visit to Malawi in February 2015. Mr Dornan had been a member of this delegation and this was his first visit overseas under the auspices of the CPA. He was struck by the disparity of resources which existed in the parliaments of Scotland and Malawi. He highlighted that he felt the Scottish Parliament was well-resourced in comparison to its Malawian counterpart.
16. Mr Dornan stated that the relationship was “a partnership of equals” and was perceived in this way by the Malawians. It was evident from everyone the delegation met in Malawi that there was genuine warmth towards the relationship with Scotland.

17. Mr Dornan also spoke about the 4 workshops which the members of the delegation delivered to the Chairs of Committees at the National Assembly. He felt that the workshops had gone well and he was impressed with the interaction between members of the delegation and the Malawian Members of Parliament. He thanked David McGill (the former Head of Chamber Office and Reporting) for his contribution to the workshops Undertaking committee inquiries and the Role of the committee clerk and research in committee work.

18. Mr Dornan mentioned that one day had been set aside to visit projects supported by groups in Scotland including Open Arms Infant Home and a school supported by Mary’s Meals. The visit to Matinda primary school was of particular importance to him as this school was supported by Holyrood Secondary school in his constituency.

19. Mr Dornan also spoke about the flood ravaged areas the delegation had witnessed south of Blantyre. He felt that the visits to projects outside Blantyre were sanitised in comparison with some areas in Malawi and the delegation had not seen the worst affected areas. He mentioned his visit to Bvumbwe Juvenile Prison where almost 200 boys were incarcerated and highlighted that many boys were imprisoned because their families could not afford to pay $20 which would release them on bail. He praised Sister Anna Tomassi for her work with young offenders and recognised the contribution from Scots in supporting the project.

20. Sandra White MSP spoke about the significant contribution Patricia Ferguson MSP has made in her role as Chairperson of the British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Group to strengthen the network of women parliamentarians particularly in the BIMR region. Ms White mentioned that Ms Ferguson had been appointed Vice-Chair of the international CWP Steering Group for the second year running and continued to influence and contribute to decisions to promote women parliamentarians and issues affecting women throughout the Commonwealth.

21. Ms White informed members that she had attended the BIMR CWP Annual Conference which had taken place in Gibraltar. She explained that the Conference had transcended all expectations. The topics discussed had included how social media was being used as a form of violence against women and girls and emphasised that men were also victims. Delegates were so impressed with the content of this session that the BEC had agreed to replicate the session at a seminar for all branch members in September 2015.

22. Ms White also mentioned that during the conference delegates were informed that recent research had suggested that the financial impact resulting from domestic abuse was encouraging government departments to scrutinise this area further.
23. Ms White spoke briefly about the forthcoming Commonwealth Plenary Conference which was due to take place in Islamabad and of the benefits Members could derive from attending CPA events. She encouraged members to apply to attend conferences in the future.

24. Margaret Mitchell MSP informed members that she had attended the BIMR conference which had taken place in Limassol, Cyprus in May along with Patricia Ferguson MSP and Sandra White MSP. Mrs Mitchell gave an overview of the conference. She explained that the delegation met with Lynda Burns, Deputy High Commissioner, for a briefing about the political scene in Cyprus. Due to the close proximity of Cyprus to Libya and Syria in particular, mass immigration to Cyprus had taken place which was causing pressures within the country in terms of resources.

25. Mrs Mitchell informed members that the theme of the conference was ‘Parliaments in the Face of Contemporary Challenges’ and identified two main themes: ‘Parliaments and Unemployment’ and ‘Parliaments and Accountability’, as areas which the Cypriot hosts felt posed some of the most pressing and challenging issues faced by parliaments today.

26. The discussions in the formal conference sessions were open and interesting. Delegates explored how issues such as youth unemployment, codes of conduct and the broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings affect CPA parliaments in the context of current, regional and global developments. There were fruitful and open discussions on the relevant challenges and opportunities facing parliamentarians.

27. Mrs Mitchell reported that the Scottish delegation contributed fully to all plenary sessions and workshops.

28. Mrs Mitchell reported back to members on matters discussed at the BIMR Annual General Meeting which had taken place within the conference programme. The main matters to note were the recruitment process for the Secretary-General post.

29. Mrs Mitchell informed members that the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) would be held in Malta in November 2015 and the theme of CHOGM 2015 would be ‘Adding Global Value’. She also mentioned that the CPA UK Branch would be sending delegates as observers. Delegates from the Crown dependencies and overseas territories felt that they would be at a disadvantage if they were not represented. It was agreed that there is value in the territories being part of the civil society fora at CHOGM and the matter would be raised with the Commonwealth Coordination Team at the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

30. Mrs Mitchell also provided an update on the tensions around general governance issues which had built up over the years between the CPA Secretariat and the then Chair of the CPA. A new Secretary-General would be appointed in the coming months. A new Chair of the CPA has already been appointed and it was hoped that there would be renewed co-operation in the future.
31. Other matters discussed at the BIMR AGM had included the agreement that CPA BIMR Members should have a coordinated communication channel to use in between meetings. The regional secretariat would provide further information in due course. Delegates at the meeting had re-affirmed that the way that CPA used its money should be thoroughly scrutinised.

32. Mrs Mitchell spoke about the concern of some branches, particularly Malta and Cyprus, over the high numbers of migrants arriving in their countries and the impact this was having on resources. It had been agreed that the UK Branch would arrange with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to hold future meetings for the three sovereign branches within BIMR to discuss this issue and other matters pertaining to membership of the EU.

33. Mrs Mitchell finished by saying that the conference had been excellent and it had been a privilege to attend. The Scottish delegation enjoyed the chance to share experiences and learn from their Commonwealth colleagues across the region.

### Agenda Item 3.1: Consideration of the Scotland Branch forward plan for May 2015 – March 2016

34. The Branch President asked Members if they were content with the proposals set out in the draft Forward Plan. All Members present were content.

### Agenda Item 4: Election of Branch Executive Committee

35. Patricia Ferguson MSP, Margaret Mitchell MSP, Tavish Scott MSP, and Sandra White MSP were nominated and elected as Members of the CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee for the period 2015-16.

36. Tavish Scott MSP mentioned that this AGM would be the last one in session 4. On behalf of the BEC Mr Scott thanked the Branch President for her support over the years. Mr Scott also spoke about his hopes that governance issues within the CPA were becoming easier to manage. He had met Dr Chaudhry, the new chair of the CPA, in Cameroon and described her as an impressive and able Chairperson.

37. Mr Scott had noted that migration has been a topic of conversation during the CPA Annual Conference which had taken place in Cameroon in September 2014. He went on to urge branch members to participate in Branch activities which provided access to influential figures and excellent networking opportunities.

### Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business

38. Anne McTaggart MSP was invited to use the remaining time to describe her experience attending the 12th Canadian Parliamentary Seminar in Ottawa in May 2015.

39. Ms McTaggart commented that the seminar was a wonderful learning opportunity and that the experience will stay with her for a long time. She noted that CPA
Scotland Branch was well-respected by Canadian parliamentarians and complimented UKIRO on the support provided for the visit.

40. The Branch President thanked Members for sharing their experiences and noted that raising awareness of the CPA and other organisations would be high on the agenda for the induction programme for new Members in Session 5. She brought the meeting to a close and thanked Members for attending.

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