

PRESS RELEASE

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Presiding officers, parliamentarians, and clerks gather for an online meeting on virtual parliamentary sittings during the COVID-19 pandemic

On Friday, May 1, 2020, ParlAmericas and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) held an online meeting on virtual parliamentary sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic for presiding officers, parliamentarians, and clerks of English-speaking parliaments in the Americas and the Caribbean.

Parliamentary officials from 17 parliaments in the region attended the meeting virtually. The expert panelists—the Honourable Juan Watterson, Speaker of the House of Keys of Tynwald, Parliament of the Isle of Man; Luiz Fernando Bandeira de Mello, Secretary General of the Board of the Senate of Brazil; and Matthew Hamlyn, Strategic Director of the Chamber Business Team of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom—shared valuable insights into the experiences, as well as technical and political challenges, of implementing virtual sittings and committee meetings in their respective legislatures.

The panelists' presentations were followed by a discussion period facilitated by the meeting Chair, Senator Ranard Henfield (The Bahamas), Vice-President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network for the Caribbean, who emphasized that “parliamentary representation is an essential service and it must go on—especially when our people are dealing with a health and economic crisis.”

The Honourable Brigid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Trinidad and Tobago, ParlAmericas Board Member and CPA International Executive Committee Member, delivered closing remarks, thanking the panelists and participants for a “great dialogue on the current issues facing our legislatures. The spaces for collaboration provided by ParlAmericas and the CPA are particularly valuable in these difficult times to support democracy and good governance throughout this hemisphere and beyond.”

For further information on the work of ParlAmericas, visit www.parlamericas.org and follow @ParlAmericas on social media. For more information on the CPA, visit www.cpahq.org and follow @CPA_Secretariat on Twitter.

The CPA has also launched a toolkit for parliaments on delivering parliamentary democracy during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic—visit www.cpahq.org/cpahq/coronavirus to download a copy.

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ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the inter-American system. Composed of the 35 national legislatures in North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, ParlAmericas promotes cooperative political dialogue, facilitates the exchange of good legislative practices, and produces tailored resources to support parliamentarians in their work. The International Secretariat of ParlAmericas is headquartered in Ottawa, Canada. For more information, visit www.parlamericas.org or write to info@parlamericas.org.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) exists to develop, promote, and support parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and to implement the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The CPA is an international community of around 180 Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures working together to deepen the Commonwealth's commitment to the highest standards of democratic governance. Visit www.cpahq.org for more information.