



**REMARKS AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF  
THE 38TH CONFERENCE ON DIPLOMATIC  
TRAINING—VALLETTA,  
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**BY**

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**SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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Dr. The Hon. Michael Frendo, Speaker of the Malta House of Representatives

Hon. Ministers

Members of the Malta House of Representatives

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to sincerely thank you, Mr. Speaker, for inviting me to participate at this 38<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the International Forum on Diplomatic Training during my first working visit to this beautiful island country of Malta. I further thank you very much for your wonderful reception and hospitality since my delegation and I arrived in Valetta last night.

Mr. Speaker, this Forum is another opportunity for me to work with members of the Commonwealth and the international community at large, having recently ended our annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. I am delighted to note Malta's longstanding contribution to the Commonwealth. This country has worked extensively

to promote the type of programmes that are useful and essential to our member nations. In the area of 'Democracy and Small States', Malta has hosted a number of workshops designed to assist legislatures of small states in the development of their capacity to play a full role in global partnership. I wish to thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, as well as the members and the government of Malta for the several contributions so far made by your legislature and the government at large.

Mr. Speaker, at the Parliamentary Conference in Nairobi, members seriously addressed themselves to the issues and problems facing Parliament and Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Challenges for parliaments in matters such as peace-building, natural disaster management, sustainable development of energy and environment, accountability and oversight in the era of the internet, global water and food crisis, managing migration and the plight and protection of migrant workers, were seriously discussed and deliberated on. Among these issues, I think, of particular relevance to small states such as Malta, the Small Branches Conference and the Final Plenary discussed the 'Commonwealth Initiatives in handling

migration issues in small states' and 'the challenges of climate change and sovereignty in small states'. I noted, with appreciation, that in the discussion on handling migration issues, Malta was well-represented by the Hon.Dr. Alfred Sant, MP., at the conference in Arusha, Tanzania, last year, and Hon. David Agius, MP., in Nairobi, Kenya, this year.

Mr Speaker, there are several other issues beyond those I have just cited. They continue to engage Commonwealth parliaments and governments bilaterally and multilaterally. They involve small and large nations, as well as developed and developing countries. Many of these issues will still be wanting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Similar to the objective of the International Forum on Diplomatic Training, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conducts programmes to build and strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians to effectively carry out their legislative and oversight functions. Parliaments are some of the democratic institutions with large turnovers, in most cases, ranging from 30 – 80 per cent at every general election. I always therefore liken the CPA's activities to a large online school of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, constantly

servicing itself to standardize parliamentary systems of its members and engaging the international community in contemporary matters of global concern.

In the area of parliamentary reform and strengthening, the CPA has worked since 2006 to formulate benchmarks for democratic legislatures. The benchmarks have so far been used by a number of small and large Commonwealth legislatures to improve the mechanism of parliamentary practice. The benchmarks are proving to be useful in making legislatures more efficient, effective and cost-effective. The benchmarks are being emulated by several parliamentary practitioners, with changes made to suit historical and cultural factors of individual legislatures and countries. Also, a number of our partners, such as the World Bank Institute, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), AWEPA, National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) in the Pacific have, by and large, acknowledged the usefulness of our benchmarks in the development of better parliamentary standards beyond the Commonwealth.

In the area of global engagement, I am happy to inform you that the CPA has been an active partner in the

global search for solutions to problems such national and international conflict, terrorism, disaster management, climate and environment management, and the pursuit to realize the Millennium Development Goals. Commonwealth parliamentarians have been keen, and diplomatic, in the promotion of global peace. They have actively engaged to advocate for a new and more equitable global economic and fair trade system. Our members have also actively participated to propose solutions to what is termed as '21<sup>st</sup> Century Diplomacy', in which developing and small nations seek to be heard and respected, as they continue to mature as participants in global partnership. Indeed, diplomacy, cooperation and partnership are factors that promise to give us a better world. Again, I am informed that the government of Malta has supported diplomatic training through DiploFoundation for more than 10 years now. This activity has greatly assisted small and developing countries in their quest and need to strengthen their diplomatic corps for global engagement. It should heralded and remembered.

I wish to venture to suggest that the good work often done by career diplomats is similar to what parliamentarians do. A good diplomat constantly seeks

to improve the relations of her nation or country with others. The process requires methodical and careful execution. I am further informed that a good diplomat must totally be faithful to his country, serving with full dedication, sincerity, integrity, loyalty, courage, confidence and humility, among several other personal qualities. It appears to me that these qualities would not be had by a diplomat without further relevant acquisition of skills and knowledge. In a fast changing world of international engagement and interest, a good diplomat, similar to a good parliamentarian, must be focused. For certain, diplomats and parliamentarians are constantly guided by local legislation and the provisions of international agreements and law, in which case parliament has to play the key role of passing relevant legislation, ratifying international agreements, and overseeing government implementation of the laws.

In recent years, I believe that diplomats have worked hard, even behind the scenes, to facilitate agreements on World Trade. Going beyond the Doha Round of Negotiations has been difficult, primarily because developing countries feel marginalized in the price mechanism of their goods and services. Further,

controversial as it may be among scientists, the issue of climate change continues to dominate among contemporary global problems. With a change of heart by the United States, accepting that climate change was indeed a real global problem on the environment, the world is now bracing for a solution beyond the Kyoto Protocol and Copenhagen. Again, small and big countries; developed and developing countries will need the skills of diplomats and the acumen of parliamentarians to work it out in Cancun, Mexico, this November. It seems to me that we need the assistance of career diplomats at this time to facilitate these discussions, skilfully engaging the participation of politicians, parliamentarians, and civil society to quickly find and agree on the solution.

I have further been informed that a good and effective diplomat, like a good and effective parliamentarian, must keep pace with global events through reading, acquisition of new language skills if possible, widening of contacts with scholars, intellectuals, journalists, politicians, businessmen, the clergy, and other members of society. This approach creates additional opportunities for engagement and influence. In small states in particular, it would pay well to have diplomats



and parliamentarians work to guide and influence the national leaders on matters that open up, expand and refine relations with non-traditional partners, particularly if such efforts provide for possibilities of economic and human resource advantages. It seems to me that the world is hungry for leadership to remove bias and discrimination, create investments, train and value the human resource in productive employment and the provision of essential services. Globalization will not be positively fruitful without globalized cultural norms. If we take the example of international migration, which has plagued countries such as Malta, we see that the problem is compounded by both the economic impoverishment of sending countries as well as the slow global response to poverty alleviation. The centuries-old capital flight from developing countries to industrialized countries will continue to disturb the peace of both sides because of perceived better lives somewhere in world. The Ramphal Centre recently presented a useful study as a starting point in the discussion of Commonwealth initiatives in handling migration issues. The study has noted, among other things, that:

**“The modern Commonwealth is a product of the migration of its peoples, and the wise management of this powerful, human force is one of the greatest challenges for development and governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Improved communications have revolutionized the scope of this movement since the 1960s, the age of colonial independence, and the sum of millions of individual decisions have led to wealth and safety for some, anxiety and xenophobia for others.”**

Most of us hope that, as the Heads of State and Government noted at the CHOGM in Port of Spain in Trinidad and Tobago in November last year, the issue of migration in the Commonwealth calls for **“...protection gaps in countries of origin, transit and destination, and ... the strengthening of existing global mechanisms to effectively address the protection of migrants.”** We therefore need to deploy our joint efforts and resources to manage the matter to our advantage. I also expect that the issue of migration will feature prominently in the work of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), which was established by the Heads of State and Government last year to examine ways and means to strengthen the

Commonwealth, making it relevant to future generations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In these efforts, the CPA has not lagged behind in launching a Working Party to examine its structure and programmes so as to stay relevant and effective for the service of its members.

Mr. Speaker, I am also convinced that good and effective diplomat, similar to a good and effective parliamentarian, is a great asset to his country, particularly his people. In fact, some political scientists define 'good politics' is the pursuit of the people's welfare, while 'bad politics' is the pursuit of self-service of an individual. We may therefore conclude by making reference to the effect that a good and effective diplomat, constantly being trained and training himself, similar to a good effective parliamentarian, is a great asset to one's country or society. He or she has the responsibility to assure the public that there is 'value for politics' and public service.

I am delighted to further note that the Commonwealth Secretariat, which is one of our key partners in parliamentary training, continues to support the diplomatic training scheme for the benefit of member

nations, small and large. Our members, particularly those in the Caribbean, Africa, the Pacific and other developing nations, continue to benefit from the training to gain diplomatic proficiency as an economic and political instrument in the circumstances of their regions and culture. Similar to the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the additional contribution by countries such as Malta, through the Commonwealth-Malta Third Country Training Programme, established in 1995, as well as India, Malaysia and others, make the much-needed expansion of the diplomatic training in the umbrella of the Commonwealth community. This aspect of joint support and partnership will continue to be relevant in the century ahead.

Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen, once again, I wish to thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to be among these friends from within and without the Commonwealth Community and look forward to further useful interaction while in this beautiful country and thereafter.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.