

11:00-12:30, Wednesday 23 rd October			
Intersectional Political Leadership: Empowering Underrepresented Voices			
Location	LTC 1, Samoa Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration Court House		
Session Running Time	1 hour – Main Session 30 mins – Q&A		
Speakers	Facilitator/time keeper	Stephen Twigg , Secretary-General, CPA Secretariat	
	Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hon. Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Member of the Parliament of New Zealand 	
	Panellists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Steve Letsike, MNA, Member of the National Assembly of South Africa and Chairperson of The Commonwealth Equality Network Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua, MP, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji Dr Sruti Mohapatara, Disability Inclusion Expert and Chief Executive Officer of Swabhiman Bernard Wagner, Mayor of Belize City 	
Session Summary	<p>This panel discussion will examine the significance of inclusion and representation of marginalised groups. The session will explore the systemic barriers that hinder their participation and evaluate strategies to enhance their voices in decision-making processes. Through real-life examples, attendees will gain insight into the intersectional nature of political leadership and the urgent need for greater representation and inclusivity in politics.</p> <p>Women in Commonwealth countries are showcasing leadership, with 55 Parliaments meeting the target of 30% or more women parliamentarians (SDG 5.5). Additionally, on average, 27% of seats in local government are occupied by women. However, they face sexual harassment and online abuse, risking discouragement of young women from public office. Young people across the Commonwealth are active in governance, with several countries achieving significant representation in decision-making bodies (SDG 16.7.2). Yet, discrimination and limited resources hinder their political engagement. People with disabilities in the Commonwealth have made strides, with some achieving substantial representation in governmental bodies (SDG 10.2). However, stigmatisation persists, challenging the goal of genuinely inclusive democracies.</p> <p>Some countries have achieved milestones in achieving the representation of LGBTI+ individuals in political decision-making, aligning with SDG indicators for inclusive societies. Despite these advancements, challenges such as discrimination and lack of legal protections persist, highlighting the ongoing need for further progress towards full and equal participation of the LGBTI+ community.</p> <p>Various Commonwealth countries have showcased achievements in engaging women, persons with disabilities, and the LGBTI+ community. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2024 provides an ideal platform to exchange best practices and address obstacles hindering minorities from attaining leading political roles.</p>		
Suggested Format	TIME	NAME	DURATION
	11:00	CPA staff member: Housekeeping	5 mins
	11:05	Chair: Introduce the session format and briefly introduce the speakers and the topics they will cover in their presentations.	5 mins
	11:17	Presentation Speaker: Ms Steve Letsike , MNA, Member of the National Assembly of South Africa and Chairperson of The Commonwealth Equality Network	10-15 mins

	<p>Possible presentation topic(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Advancing LGBTI+ Inclusion</u>: Highlighting the importance of addressing discrimination and legal barriers to ensure full participation of LGBTI+ individuals in politics, aligning with SDG goals on inclusive societies. ▪ <u>Intersectional Leadership</u>: As a South African parliamentarian, emphasising the need for intersectional approaches in policy-making that uplift marginalised groups, including women and people with disabilities, to foster genuine democratic representation across the Commonwealth. 	
11:29	<p>Presentation Speaker: Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua, MP, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji</p> <p>Possible presentation topic(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Gender Equality in Leadership</u>: Highlighting the need to strengthen female representation in politics across Commonwealth countries, sharing insights on experience as one of the women leading in Fiji's Parliament and promoting SDG 5.5 goals. ▪ <u>Overcoming Gender Barriers</u>: As Deputy Speaker, discussing the importance of creating supportive environments that encourage women's political participation while addressing challenges such as sexual harassment and online abuse that deter women from entering politics. 	10-15 mins
11:41	<p>Presentation Speaker: Dr Sruti Mohapatara, Disability Inclusion Expert and Chief Executive Officer of Swabhiman</p> <p>Possible presentation topic(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Inclusive Policy-Making</u>: Emphasising the need for policies that ensure people with disabilities are actively included in decision-making, aligning with SDG 10.2 to reduce inequalities across the Commonwealth and the wider globe. ▪ <u>Accessibility and Representation</u>: The importance of creating accessible political spaces and resources, sharing best practices from work in India to empower persons with disabilities and ensure their full representation in governance. 	10-15 mins
11:53	<p>Presentation Speaker: Bernard Wagner, Mayor of Belize City</p> <p>Possible presentation topic(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Local Governance and Representation</u>: The role of local councils in driving inclusive governance, sharing how local governments can create more accessible, participatory systems for marginalised groups, aligning with SDG 16.7. ▪ <u>Community-Centered Leadership</u>: Discussing the importance of local leadership in promoting gender equality, disability inclusion, and LGBTI+ rights, drawing from his experience as Mayor of Belize City to illustrate how grassroots efforts can support national and Commonwealth-wide progress on representation. 	10-15 mins

	12:30	The Chair should then facilitate a Question-and-Answer element of the session, allowing attendees to ask questions and make remarks on the session topic.	30 mins
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