



National Assembly of Belize

Office of the Clerk

P.O. Box 139, Belmopan, Cayo District, Belize Central America
Tel. (+501) 822-2141/2142 or 2144
E-mails: ClerkNA@bna.gov.bz CEO.NationalAssembly@bna.gov.bz
www.nationalassembly.gov.bz

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PRESS RELEASE

Speaker Woods appointed the new regional Chairperson for Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians for the Caribbean, Americas, and Atlantic Region

The **Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)** is the network of women members of parliaments in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). It works on a regional basis with each of the CPA's nine (9) regions coordinating programmes, conferences, and meeting among parliamentarians. Belize falls within the Caribbean, Americas, and Atlantic Region. The chair of the region's Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians is rotated every three years to the Speaker of the Parliament. Hon. Valerie Woods, Speaker of the House of Representatives, is the new appointed Chairperson for the CWP Caribbean, Americas, and Atlantic Region.

The objective of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians' network is to:

- Build the capacity of women elected to parliament to be more effective in their roles.
- Improve the awareness and ability of parliamentarians, male and female, to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role, including legislation, oversight, and representation.
- Help parliaments to become gender-sensitive institutions.

The mission statement of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians states "*The CWP, as an integral part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, is to work for the better representation of women in Legislatures and for the furtherance of gender equality across the Commonwealth.*"

In her opening remarks on 5th October 2021, at the 7th virtual roundtable on gender sensitive Parliaments in the Caribbean, Speaker Woods emphasized that "*as a Region, we must strive to promote gender sensitive Parliaments in the 21st century and adopt gender sensitive practices and policies*". Speaker Woods further commented that "*the number of female parliamentarians represented in the region is still below the international standard and target of 30%*". It is noted that, in Belize, excluding the presiding officers of the National Assembly, women parliamentarians account for 12.9% of the elected Members in the House of Representatives while the Senate with four (4) appointed women Senators represent 30.7%. Speaker Woods has stated "*to ensure parliaments become gender-sensitive, the participation of male parliamentarians and parliamentary staff is required and encourages members of parliament in the region to be proactive and bold in working together in strengthening our parliamentary institutions*".

Speaker Woods now chairs the Caribbean, the Americas, and the Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians for the next three (3) years.

For more information on the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians network, visit the website www.cpahq.org

National Assembly

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