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Speaker Woods Attends Annual CPA Small Branches Workshop

Thursday, April 30th, 2026 — The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Valerie Woods, has concluded her participation in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Small Branches Workshop on “*Strong and Independent Parliaments in Small Jurisdictions*”, held in Malé, Maldives from April 27th – 29th, 2026.

Speaker Woods attended the workshop in her capacity as Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches Network, which convenes an annual in-person workshop for parliamentarians from small Commonwealth jurisdictions. This year’s workshop was jointly hosted by the CPA and the parliament of the Maldives, the People’s Majlis, with support from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The workshop brought together parliamentarians from Seychelles, Samoa, St. Lucia, Cayman Islands, Isle of Man, Tasmania, the Australia Capital Territory and the Maldives to discuss key challenges faced by small legislatures-particularly in maintaining the separation of powers and safeguarding institutional independence.

In her role as Chairperson, Speaker Woods, in her welcome remarks, emphasized that while small jurisdictions may face constraints in scale and resources, they carry the same constitutional responsibilities and democratic obligations as larger states. She noted that the workshop was convened in direct response to concerns raised within the Network, especially the challenge of maintaining a clear and effective separation of powers, an essential pillar of democratic governance.

Over the three-day programme, delegates participated in expert-led sessions, peer-to-peer exchanges, and practical exercises that focused on upholding the doctrine of separation of powers across the executive, legislature, and judiciary; strengthening the independence of parliamentarians; enhancing law-making processes and parliamentary accountability; and improving financial oversight, including the scrutiny of national budgets and public expenditure.

The workshop also highlighted the importance of the Latimer House Principles, the set of international guidelines adopted by Commonwealth nations since 2003 on the separation of powers of the three branches of government and their respective roles. The role of Public Accounts Committees, civil society, and independent oversight institutions in promoting transparency and good governance were also discussed.

The workshop also served as a platform to strengthen relationships within the Small Branches Network, which comprises 50 small legislatures across the CPA, reinforcing continued cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and mutual support among member parliaments.

Speaker Woods departed Belize on April 23rd, 2026, and is scheduled to return on May 2nd, 2026. Her participation in the workshop was facilitated and fully funded by the CPA Headquarters.

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