

## SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT UK AND INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

### Executive summary

1. This paper invites the SPCB to agree the draft *Scottish Parliament International Strategy* for Session 4. This new strategy takes into account the challenging financial climate and, unlike previous strategies, provides a set of specific UK and international priorities for the Parliament to focus on. This new approach should allow the Parliament to target its resources more effectively and to obtain better value for money.
2. If the SPCB approves this new strategy it is also proposed that an annual review should be undertaken, outlining the outputs achieved each year, from the activities set out in the Strategy. This annual review would help to inform any possible ongoing changes required in the direction of the strategy, over the lifetime of this parliamentary session.

### Issues and Options

3. Budget reductions will continue to impact on the operational budgets that support this strategy, with significant further savings still to be made over the next 3 years. However the strategy attached sets out a focused programme of activity that can be delivered within this reducing budget.
4. Understandably, many Members and officials may have a view on what should be included, but supporting every idea would clearly be impractical with the limited resources at our disposal. It is important therefore to ensure the budget is used to support corporate activity which has the best chance of producing good outcomes for the Parliament. It is also key that activities are parliamentary focused as a whole. As such, this strategy provides a stronger emphasis on partnership working in future to build more sustainable international relationships, which can deliver a clearer concentration of outcomes than those under our previous more wide spread approach. The draft strategy does not exclude other activity, but helps us to define where most resources can be best committed.
5. This area of work can attract a good deal of interest in terms of public perception and our parliamentary reputation. An improved outcomes based approach would help to more visibly show our progress and achievements. Using the strategy as a focus for activity across the parliament, we could better demonstrate the collective value this work supports. Also, by publishing the strategy's intentions in advance, we can make clear to outside organisations our approach and the firm reasons why we are supporting activity in particular subject areas or countries.

## **Resource Implications**

6. There are no new financial or resource issues, other than the planned and on-going reduction in budgets held by the UK and International Relations Office (UKIRO) and staff resource (across the Parliament). The operational budgets held by UKIRO for supporting all types of activity under the strategy is profiled to potentially reduce by £72,000 from 2010-11 to 2013-14 (i.e. a 39% overall decrease in 3 years).

## **Dependencies**

7. Clearly any strategy of this sort is subject to external political and parliamentary factors. The yearly evaluation approach proposed does leave options open for on-going change to the five-year strategy, if there are compelling or policy reasons for doing so.

## **Governance issues**

8. There are no particular governance issues relating to the decisions being taken. The policy of UKIRO is to continue to make Members and staff aware of their environmental obligations, in terms of any travel options. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out.

## **Publication Scheme**

9. This paper will be published, according with the SPCB's Publication Policy.

## **Next steps**

10. Delivery of the strategy depends on buy-in from those across the organisation, as many will help deliver the partnership elements of it. If the strategy is approved by SPCB a communication plan to further inform stakeholders on the strategy will be put into action.

## **Decision**

11. SPCB is invited to:

- discuss/endorse the strategy at [Annex A](#).
- agree to an annual evaluation of the Strategy to help inform future years of the strategy.

## **SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT UK AND INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY: SESSION 4**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. This paper sets out a suggested *Scottish Parliament UK and International Strategy* for our engagement in session 4. It builds on the strategies from previous sessions of Parliament, but seeks to set future activity within the challenging financial reality that now exists. In particular, it aims to set a more specific focus on engagement, across the Parliament, to help make the best use of all resources available.

### **PURPOSE AND AIMS**

#### Purpose

2. It is important to note that this strategy outlines the best way in which the limited resources of the Scottish Parliament can be corporately used to support international engagement. It should not be confused with the policies, more substantial resources and broader assistance available from Government, NGOs and other sources.
3. This strategy helps to support our goals of being an open Parliament, willing to learn from, and assist, other legislatures and areas of civil society and supports the development of our relations with peoples and cultures of other countries.
4. At a more practical level the strategy also:
  - Sets out a clear framework for the type of activity that can be supported (and, perhaps just as importantly, what is not).
  - Makes the parameters of our support clear and understood, to a range of individuals and organisations, external and internal, with an interest in our approach.
  - Allows us to set out our priorities in terms of activity and countries/regions and illustrate why these areas are strategically important to us.
  - Illustrates where the personnel, financial and research resources that support the strategy can be best focused and informs our budget planning processes.
  - Allows us to record measures for the success (or otherwise) of the activities under the strategy and to indicate how these will be effectively evaluated.

- Allows us to forward plan a pipeline of visits, projects and events, while still being able to leave sufficient space to take on further supply-and-demand tasks, as they develop, during each year.

## Aims

5. Given the wide spectrum of opinion on what should or could be supported, it is helpful to set out, clearly, some defining aims that can underpin the strategy. These four interwoven aims, below, provide a framework for the type of activities that would fall within the strategy and which could be taken forward:

- 1) **Parliamentary focused** – being certain that any activity identified helps to support the development of the Parliament as an institution and the professional development of both MSPs and staff.
- 2) **Partnership** – identifying where we may be able to capitalise from working with other organisations, to share resources and, where appropriate, jointly-deliver similar activities.
- 3) **Supporting Scotland** – through the participation of the Parliament, aim to support activities that could bring wider economic benefit and added value to Scotland.
- 4) **Reputational value** – recognising that certain types of activity pro-actively support the Parliament’s institutional and international reputation or, conversely if not undertaken, may lead to dissatisfaction with our external relations.

## **APPROACH**

6. Given limited resources, it is important to concentrate on those areas which are the key strategic priorities for the Parliament. That does not exclude other activity, but it helps us to define where a large proportion of our resources can be best committed in the coming years.
7. Adapting to the use of a more focused strategy, which has been consulted on, understood and agreed across the whole Parliament, will also allow our UK and International Relations Office (UKIRO) to more closely monitor and report on the range of engagement we assume within the UK and internationally.
8. As part of that, an improved evaluatory approach it is also suggested, with an annual review of the strategy being undertaken. In light of any major impacts or developments in the political landscape, this yearly review would consider if changes are required to refine the strategy. By adopting a less static approach than those used in the previous three sessions the

yearly review would help the strategy to remain relevant over a five year term, a longer session than those experienced to date. In this way we can help to reposition the strategy to better react to geo-political events - for example, we may find there is a growing demand to support democracy building in the Middle East, following recent political change within some countries in that region.

9. Clearly all areas we support will have to be carefully timetabled and planned over this longer 5-year session, to make sure we can meet all the commitments set out and avoid bottle-necks in activities running concurrently.

10. Taking all that into account and reflecting the four aims set out under paragraph 5, the sections below outline an intended approach that can be advanced during the period of the strategy. For ease, these are split into the following international strands:

- UK/Europe
- North America
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Asia and the Middle East
- Australasia

11. Across these strands our activity will of course vary, both in terms of the levels of resource we commit and when we are in the best position to deploy resources.

12. UKIRO and SPICe will also aim to strengthen the gathering of intelligence and work with others from across the Parliament, external agencies and networks, to help source subjects of emerging policy and to find developing or novel procedures of note to assist our own development as a Parliament. We will also use information gathered to find opportunities for Members and officials to share experiences and learn from developments relevant to their areas of interest and expertise.

13. At official level, we will continue to seek opportunities across the strands that may exist to support any secondments, internships, knowledge transfer or other job-related opportunities to help further international links and our professional skills.

#### UK/Europe

14. Our commitment to our role within the UK, and Europe as a whole, continues to be a key priority and will remain so during the full term of the Session. It is firmly within the interests of the Scottish Parliament to maintain and foster interests and relationships across the institutions of the United Kingdom, the existing (and developing) European Union and the representatives of Europe's Member States and regions.

15. As our closest located partners, there are a number of ways we can effectively and efficiently learn from the common experiences and professional development opportunities that the UK and other parts of Europe offer.

16. As with all strands of activity however, priorities must be identified and a number of specific actions are proposed below. These activities are in line with our key aims and reflect the continued need for strong participation. Under each action we have set out which aims the action will predominantly support.

- We propose to continue to play a key role within the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)<sup>1</sup>, to help foster goodwill and participative dialogue between ourselves and the other bodies represented – the United Kingdom Parliament, the Irish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, the Northern Ireland Assembly, the High Court of Tynwald and the States of Guernsey and Jersey. Through our agreed membership of five MSPs and four alternate Members we will participate in the bi-annual Plenary Sessions and in three BIPA Subject Committees (covering European Affairs; the Economy and Environmental and Social Issues). It is also proposed that we assist in raising the profile of the BIPA amongst our own Members by offering to host a future BIPA Plenary Conference during Session 4 and encouraging BIPA Committees to meet in Scotland. We will also support stronger links between the work of BIPA and its governmental equivalent body, the British Irish Council. (*Supporting Aims 1, 2 & 4*).
- The Presiding Officer will continue to liaise closely with her counterparts across the United Kingdom. As part of a regular dialogue she will attend/host a twice yearly meeting with the Presiding Officer in Wales and the Speaker in Northern Ireland, with the Speaker of the House of Commons also now participating once yearly. These Presiding Officer meetings offer the various UK institutions the opportunity to discuss a range of issues of mutual interest at the highest political level and we are aware the other UK legislatures are keen to see these exchanges continue and develop. (*Supporting Aims 1, 2 & 4*).
- Following the UK General Election in June 2010, there was a notable increase in the number and types of visit from UK Government Ministers to the Scottish Parliament. This strategy envisages that the number of inward visits will continue and we may, as a result, see additional joint-activities develop further. From recent experiences that engagement is likely to continue to be handled as Committee-to-Committee interaction; through arrangements made directly at a political level between MPs and MSPs, or as part of the development of a wider visit programme, facilitated by UKIRO officials. (*Supporting Aims 1 & 2*).

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<sup>1</sup> [www.britishirish.org/](http://www.britishirish.org/)

- It is suggested that, as a Parliament, we aim to build on relations developed with the Houses of the Oireachtas in Ireland in Session 3. The Oireachtas is one of our nearest sister Parliaments and is, we understand, keen to see relations between the institutions develop early in this Session. There is much we can learn from their policies and practices and, in addition, it is suggested we focus on learning from any future changes they undertake in the areas of parliamentary and economic reform. (*Supporting Aims 1 & 2*).
- It is also proposed that we look at developing a direct partnership during 2011-12 with a parliament(s) from Eastern Europe, looking to emerge as a European Union candidate country. To do this we will hold discussions with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WfD) who have indicated there is strong interest in working with the Scottish Parliament from some countries in the Western Balkans region. By trying to build a sustainable relationship with one (or more) such country over this session it is hoped this will bring a more focused and lasting approach to building a particular relationship with a specific and relevant part of Europe. Criteria for determining such a partnership could include size and population; the type of political system and/or political history and any relevant or past links to the work we already undertake or are interested in developing further. All decisions to move forward on this relationship should fit with the aims of the strategy. (*Supporting Aims 1 & 2*).
- It is suggested that we continue to monitor and participate in the work of a number of key bodies within Europe. We will continue to engage with the Conference of Presiding Officers of Regional Legislative Assemblies of Europe (CALRE)<sup>2</sup> and we will participate, and keenly follow developments, through the Scottish representation at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (Congress) of the Council of Europe (CLARE)<sup>3</sup> and the Committee of the Regions (COR)<sup>4</sup>. (*Supporting Aims 1, 2 & 4*).
- It is envisaged that we monitor the European Union's forward work plan regularly and engage with each of the rotational Presidency's of the EU. This will allow us to anticipate and re-act to developments and legislation emanating from Europe. The Committee Office will implement the Parliament's European Strategy which outlines a process for engagement with, and scrutiny of, the EU legislative process. (*Supporting Aims 1 & 4*).
- Finally, key to our work with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association early in this session, we propose hosting the CPA's British Isles and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Conference during June 2012 at the Scottish Parliament. This will raise the profile of the good work of the CPA with our Members in Scotland and, in turn, further raise the

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<sup>2</sup> [www.calre.be](http://www.calre.be)

<sup>3</sup> [www.coe.int/t/congress/presentation/default\\_en.asp?mytabsmenu=1](http://www.coe.int/t/congress/presentation/default_en.asp?mytabsmenu=1)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cor.europa.eu/>

profile of the Scottish Parliament with those who are participating from across the BIMR membership and other parts of the world<sup>5</sup>. (*Supporting all 4 Aims*).

## North America

17. The USA and Canada remain key partners from which we can learn and offer support. Scotland has very strong links with North America in terms of business, tourism and culture (both in modern times and through our historical connections). These help to underpin previous parliamentary benefits that have been forged through working with both federal and sub-state parliaments, within these highly developed democracies.

18. It therefore makes sense to build on links already in place and to seek to strengthen and find further opportunities to co-operate with the politicians and people of North America. However, given the large geographical area involved and the resources at our disposal, it is important that, as with all our activity, work is tightly focused. This strategy therefore proposes the following programme of North American activity:

- It is proposed that we continue to work with the Scottish Government in supporting the annual Scotland Week activity in both the USA and Canada, through our representation at this annual awareness raising programme of events, celebrating Scotland, each April over the next Session. The future style and format of this approach from the Scottish Parliament will be determined following the conclusion by the SPCB of a review of Scotland Week activity by UKIRO and Scottish Government officials. This review was a recommendation in the Europe and External Relations Committee Report on the Scottish Government's International Relations Strategy in March 2011. (*Supporting all 4 Aims*).
- It is further suggested that we better utilise our associate membership of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)<sup>6</sup> in the USA. The NCSL is a nationwide body involving members from each of the USA's state legislatures. The body meets in rotating venues across the USA - twice a year at Spring and Fall sessions and annually at its Legislative Summit each August. A bi-partisan organisation, as well as supporting the legislators and staff of the USA's 50 states, commonwealths and territories, the NCSL also has a large number of international associate members. The Scottish Parliament's associate membership entitles us to send representatives to participate as part of the NCSL's International Program, covering all aspects of the work of the NCSL, including that of its 12 Standing Committees. The International Programs Team at NCSL work with the other international partners of the NCSL (such as Quebec) to develop suitable programmes for engagement in the NCSL calendar. UKIRO and SPICe will provide further research early in the new Session on the issues being taken forward by the cross-state Standing Committees of

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/bicameral/cpa-home/bimr/about-the-bimr/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ncsl.org/>



the NCSL to seek parallels and learning opportunities for our own Committees within Scotland. (*Supporting Aims 1 & 2*).

- It is proposed that we continue to support the Scottish Caucus in the US Congress and seek to find new ways, within existing budgets, to maximise engagement with its members. Suggestions have included the establishment of a Cross Party Group on North America; twinning some of our MSPs with counterparts on the Caucus, and/or facilitating visits from Caucus members to Scotland. Activity on this would be discussed further with interested parties from late 2011 and beyond. (*Supporting Aims 1, 2 & 3*).
- The Scottish Parliament has had a significant amount of contact with the Federal and Provincial and Territorial legislatures in Canada since 1999. While that contact has been fruitful, it has been rather scatter-gun in approach. It is therefore proposed that, through analysis by SPICe and UKIRO and in discussion with the Committee Office, the feasibility and desirability of taking forward joint thinking and working with a specific Canadian provincial legislature(s), is explored, early within the Session. (*Supporting Aims 1 & 2*).
- Finally, it is proposed that UKIRO continue to work with colleagues in the Parliament, and in the relevant consulates, to develop relations with North America around our own key events. Such work could also benefit our trade, commerce and cultural links with both the USA and Canada. One early such possibility could be to give the Parliament's Business in the Parliament Conference a North American focus. Other future events and opportunities would be explored during the five year Session. (*Supporting Aims 1, 2 & 3*).

### Sub-Saharan Africa

19. Scotland has a close bond with Malawi, both historically and in recent times and a concentrated part of our activity in sub-Saharan Africa over the last 5 years has focused around Malawi. From 2006 to 2008 the Scottish Parliament, via the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Scotland Branch (CPASB), undertook a Technical Assistance Programme (TAP) in partnership with the National Assembly of Malawi (NAM)<sup>7</sup>. This programme provided the NAM with advice and assistance on a range of areas including the development of their Standing Orders; strategic planning and legislative scrutiny.
20. Building on this work, the CPA Scotland Branch in Session 3 agreed the parameters of a new Technical Assistance Programme (TAP2). This programme runs from 2011 until 2013 and is focused on areas such as budget scrutiny and working with the media. Through these technical assistance programmes the CPASB has been at the forefront of developing parliamentary democracy as part of Scotland's wider

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.parliament.gov.mw/assembly.php?mode=pro>

engagement with Malawi. The Scottish Parliament does not provide direct financial assistance to Malawi but instead provides support through parliamentary focused advice and assistance to the NAM. The programme benefits parliamentarians and officials in both our legislatures.

21. Going forward, it is proposed that Malawi remains the core focus of our activity in sub-Saharan Africa. Through the development of the TAP2 programme and the various initiatives outlined below, the Scottish Parliament can provide valuable assistance to a mutually young legislature which is keen to enhance its democratic capabilities. That said, there is some scope to broaden out our activity in this part of the world, mainly through the auspices of the CPA and through the work of the CPASB Special Envoy. The following programme is therefore proposed:

- Through the February 2011 visit of the former Presiding Officer and contact at official level, a detailed TAP2 work plan was agreed and developed with the NAM towards the end of Session 3. This work plan uses a mix of inward and outward visits to deliver training and facilitate dialogue and exchange in a number of areas (*and supports the new Aims 1, 2 & 4*) in:
  - procedural matters
  - the legislative programme and budget scrutiny
  - legal affairs
  - corporate challenges
  - communications – covering strategy, broadcasting and media relations
  - engaging citizens with parliament.
- Following the success of a pilot Parliamentary Pairing Initiative (PPI) between ten MSPs and ten NAM Members last year, it is proposed to launch a further PPI late in 2011. Such initiatives provide valuable Member to Member contact which we know from feedback is greatly appreciated, particularly by members of the NAM. (*Supporting Aims 1, 2 & 4*).
- From January-March 2011, CPASB ran a pilot parliamentary internship programme offering an opportunity for an official from the NAM to undertake a detailed study of our work and practices within the Scottish Parliament. The intern also visited the devolved parliaments in Wales and Northern Ireland to help with comparative study. Following the success of this pilot it is proposed to provide funding, via CPASB, for a further 2 years, to allow interns from the NAM to visit in 2012 and 2013. This activity will segment with the lifetime of the current TAP2 programme. (*Supporting Aims 1, 2 & 4*).
- The year 2013 will be an important one for Malawi as it celebrates the 200th Anniversary of David Livingstone's birth on 19 March. It is proposed that the Scottish Parliament engages with the NAM and with the Scottish Government to explore the possibility of holding

appropriate commemorative event(s) here in Scotland. (*Supporting Aims 2 & 3*).

- More widely, the CPASB is committed, through an agreement with the Secretary General of the CPA, to provide some one-off technical assistance to both Swaziland and The Gambia, if, or when, the need arises. It is proposed that this commitment be met where possible and within existing resources. (*Supporting Aims 1 & 2*).
- In June 2010 the singer and campaigner Annie Lennox OBE was appointed as the CPASB Special Envoy. In this capacity she has a special interest in our activities within Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS and women's issues. She visited Malawi in February 2011 with the then Presiding Officer and they reported back to MSPs in person the outcomes of the visit in March. The envoy has access through our parliamentary links and networks which helps us to inform and link to other tasks she undertakes with Oxfam, the United Nations, the Red Cross and Comic Relief, amongst others. Moving forward we propose that future activity for the Special Envoy during the years 2011 to 2014 should focus on the good practice identified in Malawi and, through the auspices of the CPASB, disseminating and sharing that good practice with nearby southern African countries experiencing similar problems. Future activities will also be agreed to continue to help the Special Envoy and CPASB and raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and women's issues, with politicians across the CPA's unique world-wide network. (*Supporting Aims 1, 2 & 4*).

### Asia and the Middle East

22. Asia and the Middle East are geographically large and diverse areas and, over the last decade, the Scottish Parliament's contact with these parts of the world has been sporadic. The size and disparate nature of both this continent and this region presents challenges, particularly given the resources available. However, there are specific areas where the Scottish Parliament is well placed to engage, to add value and to offer expertise. The following programme of Parliamentary activity is therefore proposed:

- Over the last 10 years, the Scottish Parliament has worked with colleagues at a UK level to support the John Smith Fellows programme. This programme is aimed at the next generation of leaders in independent republics within Asia that were formerly part of the former Soviet Union - young people working in politics, local government or civil society with an established interest in promoting democratic reform and proven ability. Most recently it has also piloted an extension of the programme to include a Fellow in 2011 from Iraq. It is proposed that we continue supporting this annual programme throughout this new Session and welcome any decision

made to extend its activity with future Fellows drawn from the Middle East. (*Supporting Aims 2 & 4*).

- The National People's Congress of China came to the Scottish Parliament last year in a study visit by members of its Hong Kong Basic Law Committee. This experience highlighted the interest China has in gaining a greater understanding of constitutional reform in the UK, with a specific focus on how the Scottish model could be of assistance to China in its relationship with Hong Kong. We would look to continue and build support for this type of activity with China in future, helping where we can, as a parliament, to support other efforts being taken forward at a governmental level through the Scottish Government's China Plan. (*Supporting Aims 2, 3 & 4*).
- As key members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association network, we work with democracies represented in the Indian sub-continent. It is proposed that we continue to pursue and support opportunities where there are common links to learn and develop from each other in the field of parliamentary and democratic development. Future research or developments would determine when any activity could be best undertaken during the session. (*Supporting Aims 1 & 2*).
- As mentioned in the strategy previously, we will continue to monitor developments in the democratic processes within the Middle East with a view to considering any requests for assistance – it is expected any such activity would fall within the second half of this parliamentary session. (*Supporting Aims 1, 2 & 4*).

### Australasia

23. Scotland has strong historical and cultural ties with Australia and New Zealand and their interest in Scotland remains high. In New Zealand we have, arguably, the most similar parliamentary system to Scotland in the world and the New Zealand Parliament has shown interest in deepening our engagement following the successful visit of a cross party Scottish delegation there in 2009. It is suggested that engagement with the Commonwealth countries within Australasia continues to be a priority, with particular emphasis on sharing experience with Australia and New Zealand given our strong historical ties and similar parliamentary systems. In terms of specific activity it is proposed that:

- We build on links made during the 2009 to both the Australian state and federal parliaments and the Parliament of New Zealand. A number of recommendations from the report of this visit remain active and can be followed up at official level during the early life of this new parliament.

- We continue to support the large number of inward visits from these legislatures, throughout the Session, looking to secure the maximum value from the programmes developed. (*Supporting Aims 1 & 2*).

## **CONCLUSION**

24. The SPCB is invited to consider the strategy as set out above and the recommendation of an annual report and review of the strategy, to maintain its relevance over the five-year parliamentary session.