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**Topic IV Assistance to Parliaments of
New and Emerging Democracies**

As parliamentarians we should surely recognise that the most important help we can give new and emerging democracies is the understanding that harnessing the power of the legislatures is the best way harness the power of the legislature to bring benefits to— individual citizens, families, those least able to look after themselves.

By way of illustration, let me mention the United Kingdom's involvement with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, in which our European partners Malta and Cyprus are also very active.

A common language helps: it makes easy—

- (a) informal communication between elected Members from different countries and
- (b) the development of a shared sense of the democratic ethos, in which so much depends on standards of parliamentary behaviour.

The CPA is a diverse brotherhood, bringing together some of the most successful countries in the OECD with some of world's poorest nations; and one of the world's most populous nations with several of the most isolated island communities. Sharing, and learning from each other, is the typical CPA activity — far removed from a teacher/pupil relationship.

I would argue that standards are often more important than material resources in making a Parliament work.

There has to be a willingness to listen to the point of view of others, and equally a willingness to allow the legitimate rights of the majority to prevail when discussion is concluded.

It has to be clearly understood that personal enrichment is not the point of entering politics.

Values actually matter.

If good governance is the key to advancement, three things are required—

State Capability: the ability and authority of leaders, governments and public organisations to get things done;

Responsiveness: how leaders, governments and public organisations behave in responding to the needs and rights of citizens;

Accountability: the ability of citizens to hold leaders, governments and public organisations to account.

We can play our part as national parliaments to support the strengthening of other parliaments, but better as partners than professors.

Often the expertise about how parliaments work lies within the institutions themselves, but much of the funding seems to go to those organisations most skilled in extracting funds under the arcane rules of the European Commission.

There does seem to be a case for further work on how national parliaments can share information about their work with new and emerging democracies, to prevent wasteful overlap and duplication of effort.

Above all we ought to approach assistance to parliaments of new and emerging democracies in a spirit of humility not condescension, remembering none of us is perfect.