



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

International Relations: Overview of activity, May - 31 December 2021

3 February 2022

Reference: SPCB (2022) Paper 05

Executive summary

1. The International Strategy agreed by the SPCB in September 2021 stated that the International Relations Office (IRO) would produce a twice-yearly overview of the core international work undertaken by the Scottish Parliament. Normally the report would cover a six-month period but this report, for completeness, covers all activity since the Scottish Parliament election in May 2021 until 31 December 2021. No decision is being sought by the SPCB.

Issues and options

2. Annexed is a list showing the activity in the period of this report and the discussion topics.
3. In March 2020, all planned inward and outward international visits were cancelled by the IRO. While there was an easing of restrictions last year which allowed face to face meetings in the building to take place (particularly around the time of COP26), there have been no outward visits since October 2019. Virtual meetings have become a regular method of holding meetings, conferences etc. This alternate format allowed the Presiding Officer to have initial meetings with her counterparts in other legislatures with which the Parliament has strong friendships e.g. Lower Saxony, Quebec, Bavaria, New Zealand. Hopefully these will provide the foundation for in person face to face meetings in 2022 and beyond.
4. As discussed previously with the SPCB, in considering its new International Strategy, a key benefit from this focus on developing direct friendships and relationships with other legislatures and organisations allowed the IRO to quickly and easily approach others interested in the

same or similar policy, procedural or corporate issues. For example, the Presiding Officer's virtual meeting with her counterpart at the New Zealand Parliament allowed for the sharing of experiences and knowledge on the parliamentary response to COVID-19 and other procedural and corporate matters e.g. the approaches taken by the New Zealand Parliament around promoting the mental wellbeing of Members and staff. The key task for the IRO is to make the SPCB's focus on 'interparliamentary co-operations' work at a practical level, generate ideas around new ways of working and share experience, knowledge and practices.

5. Other international work managed by the IRO includes supporting the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Scotland Branch and the Scottish delegation to the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly. The composition of both is below:
 - CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee: Jeremy Balfour MSP, Sarah Boyack MSP, Stuart McMillan MSP (Branch President: Presiding Officer)
 - BIPA: Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP, Willie Coffey MSP, Ross Greer MSP, Pauline McNeill MSP, Tess White MSP

Governance

6. The IRO is responsible for the development and implementation of the International Strategy. While it facilitates most inward, outward and virtual international visits, it is not involved in every such engagement e.g. those undertaken by committees as part of an inquiry or by MSPs on cross party groups. This paper therefore does not reflect all international activity taking place, only that supported by the IRO.
7. The current International Strategy built on the experiences and practices applied by the Parliament in developing its international relations approach. The continued link of the Strategy to the Parliament's Strategic and Delivery plans and the focus on the procedural, corporate and policy interests of the institution allows the IRO to better plan activity, provides a more efficient link to resources and secure practical benefits. In short, allowing the Parliament to more easily identify what it wants to do, why, and when.

Resource implications

8. There are no resource implications arising from this paper. All activity was accommodated from within the IRO budget.

Publication Scheme

9. This paper will be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme. The IRO is considering how it might better present to the SPCB the information annexed to this paper e.g. through the use of infographics.

Decision

10. The SPCB is invited to note the activity undertaken across the period from May to end December 2021.

International Relations Office

January 2022

Annex

Inward activities

18 November 2021: Jack Hillmeyer, Consul General of the United States: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Topical issues in Scotland and the USA
- Work of the Scottish Parliament

10 November 2021: Annette Lind MP, Vice President of the Nordic Council and Kristina Háfoss, Secretary General of the Nordic Council: Meeting with the Presiding Officer at joint COP26 event

- Role of parliaments and parliamentarians in the scrutiny of government climate policies
- Climate emergency and net zero transition

10 November 2021: Members of the California State Senate: Meeting with members of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

- COP26
- Energy, climate emergency and net zero transition

9 November 2021: Thekla Walker MP, Baden-Württemberg Minister of the Environment, Climate and Energy: Meeting with members of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

- COP26
- Energy, climate emergency and net zero transition

5 November 2021: Stephen Twigg, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA): Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Work of the CPA and CPA Scotland Branch
- Climate emergency and net zero transition

5 November 2021: Senator Rosa Galvez, Canadian Federal Parliament: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- COP26, climate emergency and net zero transition
- Topical issues in Scotland and Canada

5 November 2021: Benoit Charette MNA, Quebec Minister of the Environment: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- COP26, energy, climate emergency and net zero transition
- Topical issues in Scotland and Quebec

5 November 2021: Mohamed Nasheed, Speaker of the Maldives Parliament: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- COP26, climate emergency and net zero transition

5 November 2021: Samuelu Teo, Speaker of the Tuvalu Parliament: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- CO26, climate emergency and net zero transition

2 November 2021: The Hon Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- COP26, climate emergency and net zero transition
- Topical issues in Scotland and Bangladesh

28 October 2021: Dr Gabriele Andretta, President of the State Parliament of Lower Saxony: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Practices, policies and procedures of both parliaments
- Encouraging diversity in parliament
- Interparliamentary relations

7 October 2021: João Vale de Almeida, Ambassador, Delegation of the European Union in the UK: Meeting with Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP

- Topical issues in Scotland and the EU
- Work of the Scottish Parliament

6 October 2021: Dr Andreas Zimmer, Consul General of Germany: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Interparliamentary relations (Federal and Lander)
- Topical issues in Scotland and Germany

29 September 2021: H.E. Angela Ponomariov, Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova: Meeting with Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP

- Topical issues in Scotland and Moldova
- Work of the Scottish Parliament
- Interparliamentary relations

28 September 2021: Jane McCulloch, Consul General of Ireland: Meeting with Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP

- Interparliamentary relations
- Work of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)

23 September 2021: H.E. José Pascual Marco, Ambassador of Spain: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Topical issues in Scotland and Spain
- Work of the Scottish Parliament
- Interparliamentary relations

16 September 2021: H.E. Sophie Katsarava MBE, Ambassador of Georgia: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Topical issues in Scotland and Georgia
- Work of the Scottish Parliament
- Interparliamentary relations

Virtual activities

23 November 2021: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities meeting: Attended by Jeremy Balfour MSP

18 November 2021: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, British Islands and Mediterranean Region Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee meeting: Attended by Sarah Boyack MSP and Elena Whitham MSP

8 October 2021: François Paradis MNA, President, National Assembly of Quebec: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Practices, policies and procedures of both parliaments
- Interparliamentary relations

30 September 2021: Rt Hon Trevor Mallard, Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Practices, policies and procedures of both parliaments
- Interparliamentary relations

27 September 2021: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, International Executive Committee meeting: Attended by Stuart McMillan MSP

21-22 September 2021: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, British Islands and Mediterranean Region Annual Conference, Belfast: Attended by Sarah Boyack MSP and Stuart McMillan MSP

14 September 2021: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Scotland Branch AGM: Chaired by the Presiding Officer (as Branch President)

13 September 2021: Dr Gabrielle Andretta MdL, President of the State Parliament of Lower Saxony: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Practices, policies and procedures of both parliaments
- Interparliamentary relations

7 September 2021: Ilse Aigner MdL, President of the State Parliament of Bavaria: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Interparliamentary relations
- Topical issues in Scotland and Bavaria

16 June 2021: Jane McCulloch, Consul General of Ireland: Meeting with the Presiding Officer

- Work of the Scottish Parliament
- Interparliamentary relations