



28th Commonwealth Speakers' Conference Strengthening Parliamentary Dialogue

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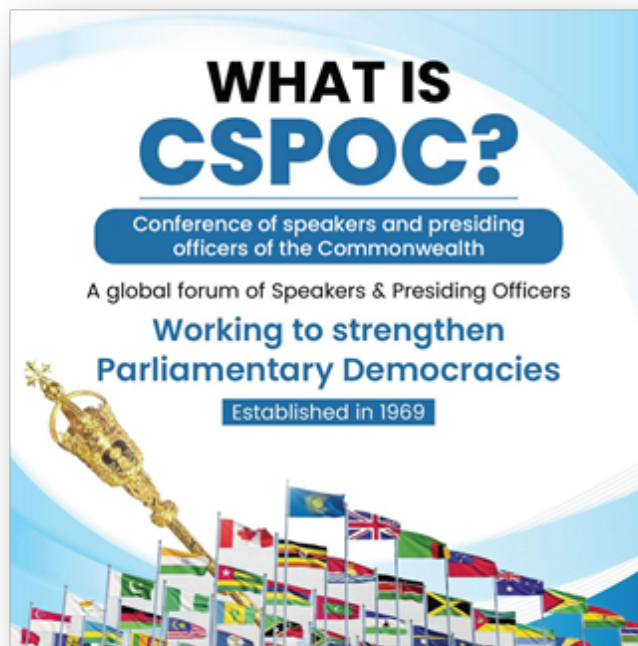
Key Takeaways

- **India hosted the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) in New Delhi from 14–16 January 2026.**
- **Established in 1969, the 28th CSPOC held in New Delhi brought together 61 Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth - a historic participation.**
- The Conference provided a high-level forum for deliberations on the evolving role of legislatures in strengthening democratic governance and constitutional institutions.
- **India chaired the CSPOC Standing Committee in Guernsey (January 2025),** shaping the agenda and institutional direction for the 2026 Conference.
- **The 2026 CSPOC themes focused on AI, social media, security, and public engagement,** reflecting evolving challenges to parliamentary functioning and democratic resilience.

Introduction

The **Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC)** is a high-level parliamentary forum of the Commonwealth of Nations, bringing together Speakers and Presiding Officers of national legislatures from **53 national parliaments** of sovereign states of the Commonwealth, as well as **14 semi-autonomous parliaments**. It provides a structured platform for dialogue among presiding officers representing diverse constitutional, legal, and parliamentary traditions.

The Conference functions as an **independent parliamentary body** and has no formal affiliation with either the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) or the Commonwealth Secretariat, though its membership overlaps with Commonwealth parliamentary institutions and its proceedings align with the broader parliamentary ecosystem.



CSPOC is convened biennially, with a Standing Committee meeting held in the intervening year to review institutional matters, finalise the agenda, and take organisational decisions for the subsequent Conference, ensuring continuity and sustained engagement among member parliaments. **India has been an active participant in this process and has hosted the Conference on four occasions, 1970-71, 1986, 2010, and 2026, reflecting its sustained engagement and leadership within the Commonwealth parliamentary framework. The 29th Conference will be held in London in 2028.**

Historical Origin and Legal Framework

The Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) was established in 1969 on the initiative of Lucien Lamoureux, who was then the Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada. The initiative emerged from a recognised need among Commonwealth presiding officers for a structured, non-political forum dedicated exclusively to parliamentary leadership, procedure, and institutional integrity. CSPOC was thus conceived to address this specific institutional gap, fostering collective understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms and supporting the role of presiding officers in maintaining neutrality and procedural integrity.

Standing Rules Framework

CSPOC operates under **Standing Rules** adopted and periodically reviewed by the Conference, forming its **internal legal framework** governing **composition, functioning, and decision-making**.

Key Provisions

- Membership limited to **Speakers and Presiding Officers** of national parliaments of **independent sovereign Commonwealth states**.
- In case of parliamentary dissolution, the **last serving Presiding Officer** continues representation until a successor is elected.
- **Deputy Speakers or equivalent** may participate as substitutes with full rights, **except eligibility for Standing Committee membership**.
- Rules prescribe procedures for **agenda setting, conduct of proceedings, quorum, voting, and tenure of office bearers**.

The Standing Rules are **reviewed by the Standing Committee** between Conferences and **amended by the full Conference**, ensuring **institutional continuity** while responding to **emerging parliamentary challenges**.

Aims and Functions of CSPOC

CSPOC operates with a focused mandate, reflecting the constitutional responsibility of Presiding Officers to uphold **impartiality** in parliamentary democracy.

Core Aims: The Conference maintains, fosters, and encourages **impartiality and fairness** on the part of Speakers and Presiding Officers; promotes knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms across the Commonwealth; and strengthens legislative institutions through the structured exchange of experiences and best practices.

Functional Role: It provides a platform for dialogue on parliamentary procedure, ethics, institutional safeguards, and administration. Although its outcomes are non-binding, they exert significant normative influence on Commonwealth parliaments.

Contemporary Relevance: CSPOC continues to adapt to emerging priorities, including digital transformation (such as the application of AI), public engagement, member wellbeing, and safeguarding institutional autonomy and credibility.

Institutional Structure and Governance

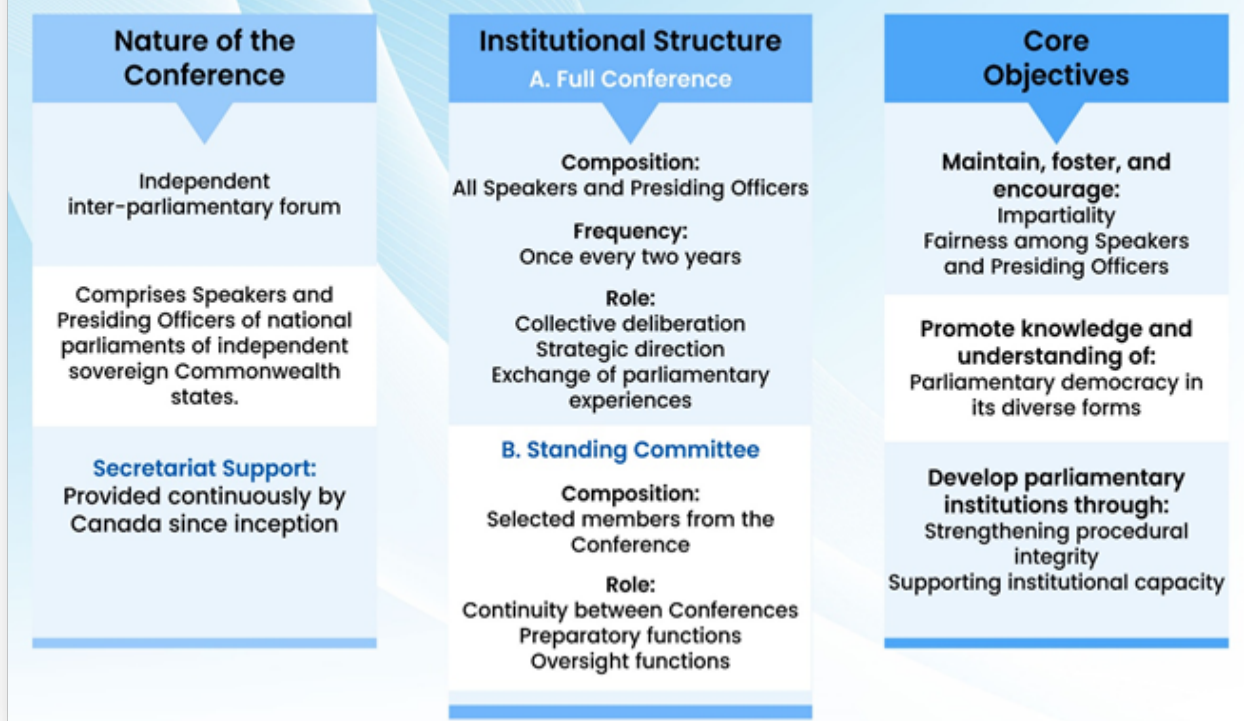
CSPOC's institutional framework is designed to ensure continuity, regional balance, and effective coordination between biennial Conferences. Governance is exercised primarily through a Standing Committee, supported by a permanent secretariat.

Standing Committee: The Standing Committee serves as the principal governing body between Conferences. It determines the venue and timing of future Conferences, proposes agenda themes, reviews the Standing Rules, and oversees the organisational, administrative, and logistical arrangements, thereby ensuring continuity and strategic direction during intersessional periods.

Composition and Representation: The Committee is chaired by the Speaker or Presiding Officer of the lower house of the next host Parliament and includes regional representatives reflecting the geographic diversity of the Commonwealth, along with ex officio members drawn from past, current, and future hosts. The Standing Committee is composed of 15 members. A quorum of five members is required for decision-making.

Secretariat Support: Since its inception, Canada has provided secretariat services, ensuring institutional stability and continuity.

Institutional Framework of CSPOC



India's Role in CSPOC

India has maintained a sustained and substantive engagement with the CSPOC, reflecting its long-standing parliamentary traditions and active participation in Commonwealth parliamentary forums.

India as Host of the 28th CSPOC (2026)

India hosted the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth in New Delhi from 14 to 16 January 2026. The Conference was organised under the chairmanship of Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla. Speakers, Presiding Officers, and accompanying delegates were accorded a traditional welcome upon arrival in Delhi, reflecting India's ethos of Atithi Devo Bhava. **The Conference, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Samvidhan Sadan**, underscored the national importance attached to the event and its parliamentary character.

The **28th CSPOC brought together 61 parliamentary leaders from 42 Commonwealth countries and four semi-autonomous parliaments**, marking it as one of the largest editions to date and underscoring sustained confidence in CSPOC as a credible and relevant parliamentary forum.

Agenda Priorities for the 28th CSPOC



The agenda for the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC), held in New Delhi from 14–16 January 2026, was framed around contemporary challenges facing legislatures and modern democratic practices. Key themes addressed during the conference included:

- The role of **artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools** in parliamentary functioning.
- The impact of **social media** on parliamentary discourse and institutional authority.
- Enhancing public understanding of **Parliament and safeguarding democratic institutions**.
- **Security, health, and wellbeing** of Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff.

India's Role in the Standing Committee

In the preparatory phase, the Hon'ble Speaker of the Lok Sabha chaired the **CSPOC Standing Committee meeting held in Guernsey in January 2025**, reaffirming India's leadership role in shaping the Conference agenda and institutional direction.

Thrust of the 28th CSPOC (India)

India informed the meet that AI and social media had enhanced the efficiency of democratic institutions but had also led to challenges such as misinformation, cybercrime, and social polarisation.

It emphasised the collective responsibility of legislatures to address these issues through ethical AI and transparent, accountable social media frameworks, while responsibly harnessing technology to protect democratic values.

The 28th CSPOC focused on the application of Artificial Intelligence and social media in parliamentary functioning to enhance efficiency, transparency, inclusivity, and public engagement.

India informed the COSP meet that through collective efforts of Parliament and the Government, obsolete laws had been repealed, welfare-oriented legislations enacted, and people-centric policies framed, accelerating India's progress towards Viksit Bharat and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

India highlighted the crucial role of Parliamentary Standing Committees, or “mini-Parliaments,” in scrutinizing the Budget and legislation, urging Presiding Officers to strengthen these Committees to enhance parliamentary functioning.

India highlighted that women were not only participating but leading across sectors, noting that the President of India and the Chief Minister of Delhi were women, and that about 1.5 million women representatives formed nearly 50 percent of elected leaders in rural and local bodies, an achievement unmatched globally.

India’s Contemporary Standing and Its Relevance to CSPOC, Global South



India shared with the global leaders that it has used its democratic strength, and institutional capacity to bring benefit to its own people and the global community. It is largest producer of vaccines, supplying medicines and vaccines to over 150 countries, second in steel and rice, and has the third-largest aviation market, fourth-largest railway network, and third-largest metro rail system.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while inaugurating the conference, earlier, emphasised that India has turned diversity into the strength of its democracy and that democratic institutions provide “stability, speed and scale”, where “democracy means last-mile delivery” and rests on deep roots of debate and dialogue. India works with a spirit of public welfare, ensuring benefits reach every individual without discrimination. He shared that due to this spirit of welfare, 25 crore people have come out of poverty in recent years. He asserted, “In India, democracy delivers”.

Within the CSPOC framework, these attributes position India as a **credible, norm-contributing parliamentary democracy**, capable of bridging tradition and institutional transformation. As the Prime Minister has noted, India “*strongly raises the concerns of the Global South on every global platform,*” reinforcing its role at CSPOC as a partner in strengthening legislatures across the Commonwealth and the wider Global South. During its G20 Presidency as well, India placed the priorities of the Global South at the centre of the global agenda, the PM added.

Conclusion

At the valedictory session on January 16, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla formally handed over the chairmanship of the 29th CSPOC to Rt. Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the UK House of Commons, and extended best wishes for the success of the next conference in London. CSPOC serves as a vital non-

political forum for strengthening parliamentary democracy across the participating countries. By enabling presiding officers to uphold impartiality, procedural fairness, and institutional integrity, CSPOC promotes collective parliamentary leadership. Through its biennial Conferences and intersessional Standing Committee work, it supports sustained dialogue, institutional learning, and coordinated responses to emerging legislative challenges. India's hosting of the 28th CSPOC in 2026 highlights its parliamentary heritage and commitment to democratic values, with a focus on technology, public engagement, and institutional resilience.

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