

**COMMONWEALTH HANSARD EDITORS ASSOCIATION  
– AFRICA REGION (CHEA-AR)**



CHEA-AR

**11TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE  
OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH HANSARD EDITORS ASSOCIATION  
– AFRICA REGION (CHEA-AR)**

**REPORT**

**ACCRA, GHANA**

**11<sup>TH</sup> – 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2025**

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## BACKGROUND

The 11th Biennial Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association - Africa Region (CHEA-AR) Conference was hosted by the Parliament of Ghana and Ghana Branch from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2025. The theme for the Conference “Charting the Future of Hansard: Embracing Innovation and Technology for Enhanced Parliamentary Reporting in Africa”. This topic was selected in line with the rapid technological change and increasing public demand for transparency in governance and the urgent need for Hansard practitioners to adapt to new tools, such as artificial intelligence and digital archiving, while preserving the authenticity and institutional memory that the Hansard represents.

The Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association – Africa Region (CHEA–AR) is a professional body that brings together Hansard editors and practitioners from across the African continent. Its mission is to promote excellence in parliamentary reporting, foster collaboration among member countries, and safeguard the integrity of legislative records.

The biennial conference serves as a flagship event for the Association, providing a forum for capacity building, peer learning, and the exchange of best practices in Hansard production. Over the years, CHEA–AR conferences have addressed emerging trends and challenges in parliamentary reporting, with a focus on maintaining accuracy, impartiality, and accessibility of records.

This year’s gathering brings together delegates from the five CHEA–AR blocs—Western, Eastern, Central, Southern, and Islands which signifies a united commitment to strengthening parliamentary democracy across Africa. The conference also provides an opportunity to acknowledge the work of Hansard officers and practitioners, whose behind-the-scenes contributions remain essential to the functioning of democratic institutions.

The thematic areas of the conference include the opening ceremony, three plenary sessions, one breakout session, 16 presentations, launching of CHEA-AR website, drafting of Conference Resolution and Communiqué.

## DAY ONE: OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony of the 11<sup>th</sup> Biennial CHEA-AR Conference was held on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2025 at the Alisa North Ridge Hotel, Accra.

### WELCOME REMARKS BY THE HOST EDITOR

The Host Editor and Vice President of CHEA-AR, Alhaji Adam Iddrisu gave the Welcome Remarks. Alhaji Adam Iddrisu in welcoming delegates, observers and participants to the Conference expressed his sincere gratitude to the Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin and the Clerk to Parliament, Mr Ebenezer Ahumah Djietror for giving approval for the Parliament of Ghana to host the 11<sup>th</sup> Biennial Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association – Africa Region (CHEA – AR) in Accra. He further acknowledged Leadership of Parliament and Management of the Parliamentary Service for gracing the occasion with their presence.

He emphasised that while the Hansard is rooted in tradition, it must adapt to the changing world. He identified new technologies, such as real-time transcription, artificial intelligence, advanced editing software, and digital publishing as some of the opportunities that today's Hansard practitioners must take advantage of to enhance speed, accuracy, accessibility, and long-term preservation.

He added that the conference offers the platform for commonwealth parliaments within the Africa Region to share their perspectives and experiences on the successes and challenges confronting parliamentary reporting and production of parliamentary debates and explore ways to collectively surmount the challenges.

Alhaji Iddrisu noted that the conference would feature 16 papers covering topics such as AI-assisted transcription and editing of parliamentary proceedings, the Hansard's role in social media, technology in indexing the Bound Volume, ethics in Hansard reporting, its importance to CSOs and research, and public access to the Hansard, among others.

He concluded by urging participants to promote thoughtful dialogue and reinforce their shared commitment to excellence in Hansard reporting and parliamentary transparency.

## REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF CHEA–AR

The President of the Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association – Africa Region, Mr Steven K. Banda, welcomed participants to the 11th Biennial Conference. He expressed condolences to the Parliament and Government of Ghana over the loss of eight lives in a helicopter crash on Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2025, and led the gathering in observing two minutes' silence in their memory and other departed souls.

He thanked the Rt Hon Speaker for giving approval for the hosting of the conference. He further expressed his gratitude to the Mr Speaker, the Clerk to Parliament and Leadership of Parliament for their support and the warm reception and hospitality extended to them.

He noted that the conference brought together delegates from all five CHEA–AR regions – Western, Eastern, Central, Southern, and Island Regions and was optimistic that the discussions would be insightful and instructive. He was confident that participants would leave the conference more knowledgeable, better informed, and enriched by the exchange of ideas.

## REMARKS BY THE CLERK TO PARLIAMENT

The Clerk to Parliament, Mr. Ebenezer Ahumah Djietror, expressed Ghana's warm welcome to delegates from across Africa. He noted that hosting the conference reflects Ghana's strong commitment to strengthening the Hansard and advancing parliamentary transparency across the continent.

He highlighted the importance of the Hansard and emphasised its role as a key instrument for promoting transparency, enabling media scrutiny, serving as a valuable reference for Members of Parliament, academia, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

The Clerk to Parliament emphasised the global shift and underscored the need to invest in cutting-edge technologies to enhance parliamentary reporting and documentation, strengthen democracy, and improve legislative processes.

He highlighted the importance of digitizing the Hansard to provide timely and consistent access to parliamentary proceedings for citizens, researchers, and stakeholders both locally and globally. He noted that digitization also ensures easy storage, faster retrieval,

and long-term preservation of the records for future generations. He further emphasized that digitization enables the integration of AI, speech-to-text transcription and intelligent search, enhancing both accuracy and efficiency. This transformation, he noted, is essential for keeping our reporting systems aligned with the evolving demands of modern legislation.

He stated that the Parliament of Ghana has begun adopting and deploying modern technologies, including the integration of AI for recording, transcribing, and editing of Parliamentary proceedings.

He concluded by commending all Hansard practitioners for their participation and urged African Parliaments to chart a new path that embraces innovation, promotes accountability and transparency, and strengthens the foundation of parliamentary democracy across the continent.

## REMARKS BY THE HON MINORITY LEADER

The Hon Minority Leader, Osahen Alexander Afenyo-Markin, began his remarks by expressing condolences and offering prayers for the victims of the recent helicopter crash.

He provided a brief history of the *Hansard* as the official record of parliamentary proceedings, describing it as “the custodian of truth” and “institutional conscience” of Parliament as well as a source of verifiable facts. Drawing from personal experience, he cited two court cases: *Benjamin Eyi Mensah v Electoral Commission* and *Alexander Afenyo-Markin v The Speaker of Parliament*. In these cases, *Hansard* records were instrumental in assisting judges to reach landmark decisions.

He described the Hansard as an indispensable tool for Members of Parliament. According to him, the Hansard provides clarity, affirms facts, and offers a reliable basis for verifying events in the House. He also emphasised that the *Hansard* strengthens parliamentary debates by grounding arguments in documented facts and supplying justifications for positions taken. In his view, the Hansard plays a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making in Parliament.

He also acknowledged the potential of technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their work. He called for continuous capacity building and training for *Hansard* staff, with adequate budgetary allocations to support these initiatives.

The Minority Leader commended and celebrated *Hansard* reporters and editors for their vital contribution to strengthening democracy, despite their work often going unseen and underappreciated. He observed that their efforts preserve the authenticity of parliamentary records in an age marked by rapid information flow and widespread misinformation.

He described them as archivists of democracy, guardians of legislative integrity, and defenders of institutional memory, underscoring the indispensable nature of their role in safeguarding the credibility of Parliament's work.

The Minority Leader also proposed that *Hansard* reporters and editors accompany delegations of Rt Hon Speaker and Members of Parliament on official international travels and conferences, noting that their work should extend beyond Plenary and Committee proceedings.

He concluded his remarks by expressing appreciation to the Rt Hon Speaker for his transformational leadership in taking the Parliament of Ghana to the next level. He further conveyed his admiration for Mr Speaker's commitment and support for capacity building for leadership of Parliament and staff of the Parliamentary service as well approving hosting of conferences in spite of limited fiscal space.

He concluded with the hope that the conference would produce practical outcomes to further enrich and enhance parliamentary work.

## REMARKS BY THE HON MAJORITY LEADER

The Hon Majority Leader, Mr Mahama Ayariga commenced his remarks by welcoming the delegates to the Conference and noted that the Conference was taking place at a time when the nation was mourning the demise of the eight (8) gallant heroes who lost their lives through a helicopter crash.

He emphasised that Hansard is an important parliamentary document in democratic governance. He acknowledged that the Hansard is the first document that a newly elected parliamentarian is introduced to when one gets elected to the House and as a result, Hansard practitioners are very central to the sustenance of parliamentary democracy and effective and efficient functioning of Parliament.

He noted that the various technological advancements have made it imperative for Hansard practitioners to be abreast with the use of technology in their work. He further observed that the adoption and utilisation of AI tools can make the work of Hansard practitioners easy while enhancing their efficiency. He also emphasised that social media tools such as *twitter*, *Instagram* and related media which could be deployed in disseminating Speaker's rulings and directives to the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies without necessarily making those directive on the floor of the House.

Notwithstanding the challenges, he advised Editor of Debates and Directors of Official Report to invest in building capacity of their staff to acquire the requisite skills, knowledge and abilities for the production of the Hansard.

He stated that the operationalisation of the Parliament Television (Parliament TV) brings real-time coverage of parliamentary proceedings to the public and as such, the Hansard churned out must reflect the true record of proceedings of the House, because if there were deviations, it would affect the integrity and accuracy of the Hansard.

He entreated Hansard practitioners to leverage on existing technology to help educate and incite the public, especially the youth in the works of Parliament. He was of the view that Hansard left on its own may never be read by the youth but the interest and passion of the youth in parliamentary functions could be harnessed through the use of existing technology.

He concluded by calling on the delegates and participants to use the conference as a platform to interact and share best practices and explore available technologies in making their work effective and efficient. He also urged them to make time to enjoy the Ghanaian hospitality that will be offered.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GHANA

The Speaker of Parliament of Ghana, Rt. Hon Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin opened the session by expressing his delight at Ghana's hosting of the 11th Biennial CHEA-AR Conference. He noted that his engagements with various Parliaments across the continent had heightened his appreciation for the significance of this gathering and therefore when the request to host the conference was brought to his attention, he quickly approved it.

The Speaker informed the delegates, observers and participants of the demise of eight gallant heroes and called for a minute's silence in their memory and other departed souls.

Drawing from his tenure in Parliament since January 1993, the Speaker recalled the frequent interactions he had with Hansard officers and his involvement in the evolution of the Official Report Department in the Fourth Republic. He noted that in the early years, Hansard officers in Ghana were sent to the United Kingdom, India, and other jurisdictions for capacity building.

He underscored the importance for Hansard work to keep pace with advancement in technology and innovation. Referring to parliamentary traditions, he cited the *Magna Carta* as an early milestone in democratic governance and emphasised the critical role Hansard officers play in strengthening humanity's democratic journey. The latest edition of *Erskine May* (2019) was highlighted as a valuable guide for parliamentary reporting.

The Speaker acknowledged that Ghana's *e-Parliament* initiative had faced significant challenges, with support from external partners such as the World Bank not yielding the desired results due to incompatibilities between systems used in European and Commonwealth Parliaments. He stressed that such initiatives must be spearheaded by the respective Parliaments.

He noted that Hansard practitioners are different from traditional public servants due to the uniqueness of their skills, training and profession. He emphasised their role as parliamentary specialists, not merely recorders or transcribers. He referred to Standing Orders 48 (3) to (5) of Parliament of Ghana to underscore that Hansard is prepared under

the Speaker's authority. He cautioned against the premature release of draft Hansard documents, as it undermines consensus-building and the institution's integrity.

The Speaker admonished Hansard practitioners against permissive biases in reporting and highlighted the heightened risks of misinformation, disinformation and fake news. He reiterated that without Hansard practitioners, Parliament's work would be fundamentally compromised.

Mr Speaker informed the conference that in order to tap into the professional skills of Hansard practitioners in addition to their core functions, he has directed the Clerk to Parliament to include Hansard officers in all parliamentary delegations to local and international conferences.

In promoting the use of local language in parliamentary proceedings, the Speaker called on delegates and participants to appeal to their national parliaments to deliberately work towards the adoption of local languages in parliamentary debates and other business of the House to foster societal development. He noted that the colonial legacy had left most with African parliament with foreign official languages.

He stated that democratic institutions in Africa are being strengthened, with citizens demanding greater accountability. He emphasised that the weakness of democracy often reflects the weakness of Parliaments, which remain the primary link between citizens and governance. The Speaker called for sufficient budgetary allocations to support Hansard officers' training and capacity building programmes. He explained that the Budget Committee would prioritise resources for key divisions and departments within the Service.

The Speaker noted that global governance is under threat and encouraged partnerships that strengthen parliamentary systems globally. Drawing from his personal experience in sourcing archival Hansard records for his autobiography, he emphasised the need for technological innovation in storage and retrieval. He described Hansard as an essential resource for verifying parliamentary statements and protecting members from false accusations.

He identified the security and integrity of digital Hansard records, the ability to provide editors and staff with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to effectively utilise

new technologies and addressing potential digital divide between different countries and regions and ensuring that all members of the Association benefit from innovation and technology are some of the challenges identified. He pledged to transform Parliament before leaving office, with Hansard officers as key beneficiaries.

He reiterated that efforts are made to deploy machines and algorithms, Hansard practitioners must not forget about the human expertise behind the transcripts, noting that innovation must go hand-in-hand with training and development. He urged African Governments and Parliaments to invest in the tools, skills, and capacities that Hansard officers deserve.

In closing, the Speaker affirmed that the future of parliamentary democracy in Africa depends on institutions that are transparent, responsive, and forward-looking, with Hansard practitioners at the centre of this development. By embracing innovation and technology, Parliaments can enhance reporting, transparency, and be accountable to the people.

He encouraged delegates to use the conference as a platform to exchange ideas, undertake bold conversations and enduring partnerships.

## SESSION TWO: PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

### PRESENTATION 1: DR ZANETOR AGYEMAN-RAWLINGS, MP

#### **THE HANSARD AND SOCIAL MEDIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FROM A MAJORITY PERSPECTIVE**

Dr Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings, Hon Member of Parliament for Klottey Korle made a presentation on the topic “The Hansard and Social Media: Challenges and Prospects for a Member - Majority Perspective”.

Dr Agyeman-Rawlings highlighted the indispensable role of the Hansard in parliamentary democracy, the emerging influence of social media on legislative communication, and the technological opportunities and challenges facing Hansard departments. She emphasised the critical role of the Hansard Department in preserving parliamentary

proceedings and underscored that Hansard serves not only as an accurate and permanent record of legislative debates, but also as a legal document admissible in court. This institutional impartiality, she noted ensures that Hansard remains a non-partisan resource, preserving the integrity of parliamentary history while enabling legislators to account for their work.

She noted that while social media offers unprecedented opportunities to reach constituents, it poses risks with particular reference to misrepresentation of parliamentary debates through selective sound bites taken out of context. She stressed that Hansard departments must leverage technology to counter misinformation, positioning official reports as the authoritative source for accurate legislative records.

Dr Agyeman-Rawlings entreated Hansard practitioners to create awareness and also use social media tools to educate MPs and the public on the value of the Hansard. She further urged collaboration among Commonwealth African Parliaments to make Hansard more accessible to the academia, civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders.

She stressed on modernising the workflow in the production of the Hansard and recommended the integration of artificial intelligence and other digital tools to improve efficiency and reduce the workload on the staff.

Drawing from her personal experience, she recounted how access to Hansard records has enhanced her ability to engage with constituents on social media by providing accurate and verifiable information.

#### Questions and Answers Session

At the end of the presentation, the following questions and suggestions were made:

- What mechanism can be put in place to ensure that the House comply with the agreed adjournment time?
- What measures can be put in place to avoid MPs sometimes adopting unfamiliar process in correcting the Hansard on the floor?
- There should be a dedicated Parliamentary Communication Department to create awareness and amplify the visibility of the Hansard.

- Commonwealth Hansard Desks should be established to encourage knowledge-sharing and networking.
- What should be the approved mode of accessing and distributing the Hansard?
- Relying on social media as the sole source of disseminating information on the Hansard could lead to potential misinterpretation by diverse audience.

The following responses were given:

- Correcting Hansard on the floor of Parliament was intended to promote transparency and ensure legal validity.
- The process leading to continuous sitting without compliance with the agreed adjournment time could be reviewed.
- There should be a balanced strategy in closing the information gap and also mitigating the effect of misinformation.
- In Ghana's Parliament, both hardcopy and softcopy Hansards are accessed and distributed. However, there is long-term plan to transition fully to paperless.

### Recommendations

At the end of the session, the following recommendations were proposed.

- Hansard departments must embrace technological advancement by integrating AI and other digital tools, supported by sufficient resources.
- There should be sustained efforts to engage MPs, ensuring they understand Hansard's work and value.
- The establishment of Hansard desks across Commonwealth Parliaments will encourage and promote collaboration.
- Policies governing corrections should be reviewed to strike a balance between efficiency and transparency, with MPs encouraged to use official channels rather than relying solely on correction on the floor the House.
- Hansard's public profile should be enhanced through strategic and responsible use of social media to mitigate misinformation risks.

## Conclusion

The session noted that Hansard is not merely a record-keeping function but a pillar of democratic accountability. The evolving media landscape demands that Hansard practitioners deploy technology, engage proactively with legislators and the public, and collaborate across national and Commonwealth boundaries to safeguard the integrity of parliamentary records while ensuring their continued relevance in an era of rapid information exchange.

## SESSION THREE: DELEGATES MEETING – CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS

### REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT OF CHEA-AR (2022 – 2025)

(MR STEVE KATAWA BANDA, CHIEF EDITOR OF HANSARD, PARLIAMENT OF MALAWI)

#### **Introduction**

The President in his report stated that CHEA-AR is a subsidiary of CHEA International which was established at Westminster, UK in 1984 and is divided into six regions – Arica, Canada, Asian-Indian Ocean, Caribbean-South Atlantic, Australia-Pacific and Europe.

CHEA-AR is sub-divided into five sub-regions namely: East, Central, West, South and the Island blocs.

#### **Objective of CHEA-AR**

He stated that the primary objective of CHEA-AR is to serve the interest of parliamentary democracy by enhancing the quality of all parliamentary reporting through sharing of technical and other information through benchmarking of Hansard staff, and attendance to CHEA-AR Biennial Conference.

He emphasised that the Association is open to all Hansard staff of all Commonwealth African Parliaments.

#### **Leadership Structure**

In relation to the hierarchy and structure of the CHEAR-AR, he stated that the headquarters is in South Africa. He further stated that the Association has a president, a

vice-president, secretary/treasurer and assistant secretary, five regional representatives and three ex-officio members. The Executive Committee Members serve two-year terms.

### **Executive Committee (ExCO) Activities**

He mentioned the activities of the Executive Committee (ExCO) and stated that ExCO met in May 2023 at Mpumalanga, South Africa and came up with the following resolutions:

1. To reach out to inactive member countries to increase participation;
2. Selected Ghana to host the 11<sup>th</sup> CHEA-AR Biennial Conference in October, 2024;
3. Establish sub-committees for website development, statutory instrument review and CHEA-AR souvenir creation;

In 2024, a new Executive Committee meeting was held in Uganda and the following resolutions were made:

1. To establish an international dollar account to address challenges in transferring resources to support host parliaments;
2. Provide financial support of ZAR50,000 to parliaments hosting ExCO meetings; and
3. Provide financial support of ZAR150,000 to parliaments hosting CHEA-AR biennial conferences.

Additionally, the Executive Committee –

1. Initiated the development of the CHEA-AR official website to improve communication and resource sharing;
2. Reviewed the Strategic Plan and Code of Conduct subject to adoption by the Conference; and
3. Attended a regional event in Nigeria (2023) and an annual event in Kenya (2025).

### **Challenges**

The President identified the following as some of the challenges confronting the Association:

1. Delayed Biennial Conference:
  - a. Unable to hold the biennial conference in October, 2024 due to the death of the Vice President from the Parliament of Ghana;
  - b. Lack of volunteers to host the Conference after Ghana initially excused herself;
2. Failure of some parliaments to recognize and support participation in CHEA-AR activities;
3. Erratic payment of membership subscription fees which affects the financial stability of the Association; and
4. Inactive regional blocs limit continental representation.

## **Opportunities**

The President outlined the following as the opportunities available to the Association:

1. Advocacy for Parliaments to budget for CHEA-AR conference attendance and annual subscription fees;
2. CHEA can organise on-line training opportunities for its members to share ideas and best practices;
3. Encourage members to explore possibilities of ploughing back CHEA-AR financial resources to member countries; and
4. Lobby inactive members to participate in CHEA-AR activities to strengthen the Association.

## **Conclusion**

Mr Steve Banda expressed appreciation to all who had supported CHEA-AR through these challenging years. He commended the Parliament of Ghana for accepting to host the 11<sup>th</sup> Biennial CHEA-AR Conference amidst global challenges. He also thanked all the Executive Committee members, especially Alhaji Adam Iddrisu of Ghana for standing in after the loss of the Vice President. Finally, he thanked all member countries for their attendance and participation in this year's CHEA-AR Biennial Conference.

## **REPORT BY THE SECRETARY/TREASURER**

The Secretary/Treasurer, Ms Euphraat Hopane mentioned that CHEA-AR Secretariat is headquartered at the National Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. It continues to operate under the merged roles of Secretary and Treasurer, a structure adopted to streamline financial and administrative processes.

On membership, she stated that an updated subscription status list was circulated to members with details provided in the shared list.

Ms Hopane mentioned that in terms of activities, the period under review featured several key events. She listed the following:

- i. That the 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference was successfully held in Malawi.
- ii. That the Executive Committee (ExCO) convened on multiple occasions, including from 21–27 May 2023 at the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature in the Republic of South Africa, on 25 March 2024 via a virtual platform, from 22–26 July 2024, and most recently from 07–09 August 2025.

- iii. That efforts are ongoing to address the persistent challenge with payment of subscription fee.

She presented the financial report, covering the period from November 2022 to 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2025 which reflects activities across two main accounts. The Business Current Account was opened with a balance of ZAR131,853.30 on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 and closed at ZAR48,691.71 as of 6<sup>th</sup> August 2025. She explained that major expenditures from this account included ZAR50,000 in support of Malawi (November 2022), ZAR25,000 in support of the Mpumalanga Legislature (May 2023), transfers to the Marketlink Account of ZAR105,000 (May 2023) and ZAR324,843.04 (July 2025), as well as a deposit of ZAR61,438.75 to Wow Digital in August 2023.

According to Ms Hopane, the other account was the Marketlink/Investment Account opened with ZAR626,784.35 on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 and closed at ZAR1,164,423.97 on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2025. She indicated that key inflows comprised transfers from the Business Account, proceeds from souvenir sales totaling ZAR22,495.89, and accrued interest. In total, CHEAR-AR funds as at 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2025 amounted to ZAR1,213,115.68.

She enumerated several challenges which included the following:

- i. Identifying a host country for the next conference;
- ii. Navigating stringent financial regulations regarding international transactions, which require central bank approval;
- iii. Completing the audit of CHEAR-AR accounts;
- iv. Establishing and integrating social media handles into the organisation's website;
- v. Addressing issues related to the code of conduct and setting up a disciplinary committee;
- vi. Creating incentives for Executive Committee members who volunteer for specific roles;
- vii. Addressing the low rate of subscription fee payments; and
- viii. Decoupling the role of the secretary from the treasurer.

#### Comments by Delegates

A delegate acknowledged the Executive for the establishment of a CHEA-AR website and making the Association visible on all social media platforms, noting that these efforts demonstrated technological progress.

He observed that the Association is largely dormant, with conferences being held once biennially. He therefore proposed for a periodic online training programmes and seminars to enable members to reconnect, network, and share experiences throughout the year.

He raised concern over subscription fees being paid in US dollars while the Association's account is in South African Rand, resulting in avoidable currency conversion losses. He suggested opening a US dollar account, with signatories rotated among host countries.

A delegate acknowledged the President's report on the Association's developments and challenges, but noted the lack of timely information-sharing. He urged the Executive Committee (ExCO) to provide regular updates, including annual reports and subscription fee records, rather than wait for the biennial conferences.

He highlighted communication as a major challenge facing the Association. He further pointed out that some of the issues raised were procedural while others had constitutional implications, such as subscription fees and conference expenses, which are provided for in the Constitution. He therefore called for a thorough review of the Constitution and Strategic Plan of the Association to help address those issues.

A delegate expressed concern about the non-payment of subscription fees by some member parliaments since 2017 and wanted to know whether the Association had plans to address the issue. He observed that no organisation can survive without consistent payment of membership subscription fees and urged the ExCO to act proactively to safeguard the Association's sustainability.

#### Responses from the ExCO Members

The President of CHEA-AR also acknowledged the proposal on training initiatives and stated that the matter had been discussed at the last ExCo meeting and would soon be rolled out in collaboration with member Parliaments to identify the training needs of their officers.

On the US dollar account, he explained a resolution was adopted at Rwanda Conference held in 2024, however, regulatory restrictions in South Africa delayed its implementation. He noted that alternative options had been explored during the Ghana ExCo meeting, and the matter would be resolved appropriately.

He admitted challenges in regular information-sharing, citing the dual role of the Secretary as Treasurer, which creates heavy workload. The possibility of separating these roles would be considered by delegates. He also noted that communication is routed through Clerks to Parliament, which contributes to delays.

The treasurer/secretary agreed to share ExCo meeting resolutions going forward. She explained that the Constitution provides for financial support upon ExCo approval and that members owing over three years' subscriptions are deemed "not in good standing," with penalties applicable.

The President noted that review committees had been set up to update the Strategic Plan and Code of Conduct and these documents would be scrutinised during the conference. He further noted that the review of Constitution of the Association had not be considered and that at the appropriate time, a sub-committee would be constituted to re-examine it.

A delegate also questioned the sustainability of the Treasurer/Secretary dual role, and propose that there should be a permanent administrative position akin to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's model.

A delegate emphasised the need for specificity in addressing issues, including decoupling the Treasurer/Secretary roles. He queried whether a decision on the dollar account would be taken immediately and suggested moving the account outside South Africa to avoid restrictions. He also endorsed proposals for a disciplinary committee made up of two members from ExCo and two members each from the blocs. He also raised the issue of incentives for ExCo members, such as waiving the payment of participation fees when attending conferences.

A delegate called for consensus-building on the issues raised and suggested that the decisions and recommendations be communicated to respective national Parliaments.

The President thanked delegates for their contribution. He however, confirmed that these matters were discussed at the ExCo Meeting and gave assurance that the issued would be tabled for voting and subsequent resolutions on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2025.

### Hosting of Next CHEA-AR Conference

The Parliament of Uganda was confirmed as the next Parliament to host the CHEA-AR Conference. Accordingly, Mr Moses Bwalutum, the Editor of Debates, Official Report Department of Uganda was appointed the Vice President of CHEA-AR.

### Handing over of Presidency

Alhaji Adam Iddrisu, the Vice President and the host Editor was elected as President of CHEA-AR. In his acceptance remarks, he thanked the conference for the honour and pledged to deliver on the trust and confidence reposed in him. He acknowledged the numerous challenges confronting the Association and promised to work with the Executive Committee and the delegates to make the Association vibrant and attractive on the continent.

## DAY 2 – PRESENTATIONS

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12<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2025

### PRESENTATION 2: ALHAJI ABU DAHAMANI ISSAKA

#### **ETHICS AND ACCURACY – NAVIGATING HANSARD REPORTING IN THE TECHNOLOGICAL ERA BY ALHAJI ABU DAHAMANI ISSAKA, FORMER EDITOR OF DEBATES, PARLIAMENT OF GHANA**

##### **Introduction**

The former Editor of Debates, drawing on his over two-decade experience, explored the historical evolution of Hansard, the ethical imperatives guiding parliamentary reporting, and the challenges and opportunities presented by emerging technologies.

##### **Evolution of the Hansard: UK and Hansard Department of Ghana**

He traced the origins of *Hansard* from T. C. *Hansard's* reprinted newspaper accounts in the UK to the current, more advanced systems. He outlined the evolution of Hansard reporting in Ghana, moving from shorthand and manual typewriters to digital workflows and near paperless processes.

##### **Ethical consideration in parliamentary reporting and production of the Hansard**

Alhaji Issaka stressed that ethical reporting in Hansard requires neutrality, confidentiality, professional integrity, accountability, timeliness, and teamwork. He described accuracy as the cornerstone of the Hansard, ensuring a faithful yet clear reflection of parliamentary debates.

He further recounted a personal experience from his tenure as Editor of Debates, where a Member of Parliament requested that he removes portions of the proceedings from the parliamentary debates without the Speaker's knowledge. He refused, stating that such an action could not be taken without the Speaker's authority, particularly when the report had not yet been approved by the House. He urged Editors of Debates to remain firm and principled, upholding ethical standards and doing what is right regardless of external pressures.

He highlighted why ethics and accuracy are more critical in the digital age. He mentioned that mistakes can spread rapidly and public trust depends on record integrity and in his view, Hansard officers act as custodians of parliamentary truth. He enumerated that ethical risks in digital workflows to include premature release of unapproved drafts, over-reliance on automation without human oversight, poor version control, and loss of human editorial judgement.

While acknowledging the benefits of AI and digital tools, he cautioned that technology must complement—not replace—human expertise. He cautioned that speed must be balanced with thoroughness while maintaining audit trails and ensuring editorial safeguards.

He further intimated that leadership and institutional policy were key to fostering ethical standards which must be backed by regular policy reviews, staff training, and Africa-wide best practice frameworks.

## **Conclusion**

He concluded by reaffirming that the Hansard is not merely a transcript but a vital democratic record and emphasised that technology should enhance its integrity, not endanger it, and innovation must always be anchored on ethics, accuracy and preservation of public trust.

## Questions and Answers Session

At the end of the presentation, the following questions were asked:

- i. Rosemary Ssembajwe, Deputy Editor of Uganda Parliament and David Nyaugacha of Kenya National Assembly asked how the confidentiality of the Official Report can be achieved in digital age *vis-a-vis* live streaming of proceedings on social media and other platforms.
- ii. David Nyaugacha of Kenya National Assembly asked how an Editor may navigate political pressure to expunge some portions of the Official Report.

The following responses were provided by the presenter:

- i. Confidentiality with regard to the Official Report relates to keeping the proceedings of investigative committees and committees of inquiry confidential before the report of such committees are made public and not what happens in House because that is public.
- ii. With regard to accuracy, what is usually streamed does not represent the Official Report because the streaming is not based on any parliamentary in-house style or guidelines. The Official Report is what is approved on the floor of the House and not what is streamed live on social media platforms and thus must be accurate and reflect proceedings of the House.
- iii. Editors of Debate must discuss political pressures from Members of Parliament with the Speaker. They must also insist on getting a written instruction before making any changes.
- iv. The presenter also bemoaned the lack of interest in the Official Report, especially by the public which remains a major challenge in promoting democracy.

## PRESENTATION 3: PROF. SEIDU MAHAMA ALIDU

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HANSARD TO ACADEMIA IN A DIGITAL WORLD, PROF. SEIDU MAHAMA ALIDU, FORMER HEAD, POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

#### **Introduction**

Prof. Alidu, in his presentation highlighted that Parliament, as an arm of Government, is indispensable in promoting democratic governance. He espoused that Parliament's recognition as a "House of Records" is largely anchored on the key role that Hansard officers play in documenting parliamentary proceedings for future decision making and posterity. He noted that without the Hansard, Parliament will be deficient in carrying out its legislative, oversight, representational and information dissemination functions since the Hansard is the cornerstone of legislative memory and transparency.

#### **Relevance of the Hansard to the Academia**

Pertaining to the relevance of Hansard to academia, he observed that the Hansard serves as the primary data source for research. This is because the Hansard is a factual, accessible, and multi-sectoral public document with minimal ethical restrictions. He further mentioned that the Hansard serves as a channel for tailored dissemination of research findings to inform policy and also seeks to preserve the parliamentary genome of legislative intent, policy framing, and rhetorical strategies. He also stated that Hansard functions as a democratic barometer for evaluating legislative openness and responsiveness, and it equally supports research in linguistics, law, media studies, history, and beyond political science.

#### **Scope of the Hansard**

He noted that the Hansard provides extensive records on cabinet composition, parliamentary membership, economic policy debates, governance statements, oversight activities, parliamentary rulings, legislative processes, and procedural details such as dates, times, and presiding officers.

## **Deployment of technology in the production of the Hansard**

The presenter noted that technology has called for the need to transform how the Hansard is produced and circulated. He stated that the Hansard must be stored and circulated in such a form that researchers can access it everywhere they are and as such, are not limited by time and space.

He further observed that a number of challenges affect parliaments quest to produce Hansards timely. One of the major challenges is the ability to keep pace with new technologies. He also noted that the demand placed on officers by Members of Parliament (MPs) is also another challenge.

In addressing these challenges, he called for the need to establish a regional digitisation initiatives with standardized and multilingual databases. He also advocated for an open-access portal to democratise scholarly access while calling for the capacity building initiatives for officers.

## **Conclusion**

The presenter concluded by highlighting that in the digital era, the Hansard is more than a record—it is an enduring instrument of knowledge, accountability, and intellectual progress. By modernising access and leveraging technology, academia can enrich research, strengthen governance, and deepen democratic ideals based on the Hansard that will inure to the benefit of the people who are the true owners of the Hansard.

## **Questions and Answers Session**

Mr John Kofi Tuglo from Ghana noted that the open access portal to parliamentary Hansard is of primary concern since the Hansard would have to be adopted by the House as true record of proceedings and the final publication authenticated by the Clerk to Parliament. Therefore, to achieve open access portal where the authenticated Hansard could be accessed by the academia, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and other stakeholders, there was the need for stronger collaboration between Parliament and academia so that the approved Hansards could be made available at libraries of these institutions for CSOs and other stakeholders to access. He further called for capacity building to enhance the knowledge and skills of officers towards achieving the open access portal project.

### Response by Presenter

On whether there is the need to cite the Hansard during academic exercise, the presenter answered in the affirmative noting that the Hansard is an authoritative work and must therefore be cited as is done with every academic work.

On the collaboration and information sharing between Parliament and academia, he noted that they usually share any information and work that are undertaken with the Hansard. He stated that this has been the practice and that Parliament and the Department of Political Science have always had a collaborative relationship with each other. He promised that such collaboration and information sharing will be captured in his handing over note to ensure continuity.

## PRESENTATION 4: DR. RASHEED DRAMAN

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HANSARD TO CSOS AND RESEARCH IN A DIGITAL WORLD BY DR. RASHEED DRAMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ACEPA**

#### **Introduction**

Dr Draman in his presentation highlighted the evolving challenges Parliaments face amid heightened public scrutiny, shifting political dynamics, and rapid digital communication. He emphasised that the Digital Hansard has evolved beyond a mere verbatim record to become a vital pillar of democracy—serving as a tool for accountability and a valuable resource for Civil Society Organisations and researchers.

#### **Key Highlights and Observations**

The presentation covered key areas as follows:

- a. The Accountability Gap.
- b. Hansard as a Tool for Accountability.
- c. Empowering the Fifth Estate.
- d. Ways Digital Hansards Make an Impact.
- e. The Power of Digital Access.

## **The Accountability Gap**

Dr Draman pointed to a “black hole” created by the lack of reliable data on Members of Parliament’s decisions and voting patterns. He noted that public understanding of the reasons behind parliamentary decisions is limited, a challenge worsened by voice votes that conceal the depth of debate.

## **Hansard as a Tool for Accountability**

Dr. Draman noted that the *Hansard* captures debates, arguments, and underlying motivations, ensuring Members of Parliament are held accountable and fostering transparency in governance.

## **Empowering the Fifth Estate**

Dr. Draman highlighted that Civil Society Organisations, researchers, and journalists rely on the Hansard to address critical questions, such as:

- a. Are Members of Parliament fulfilling campaign promises?
- b. Are laws aligned with public interest?
- c. Is parliamentary discourse improving or declining?
- d. Who influences legislative processes?

## **Ways Digital Hansards can make an Impact**

Dr. Rasheed Draman outlined some key ways in which digital Hansards make an impact, including:

- a. Tracking promises against performance;
- b. Monitoring accountability and integrity;
- c. Enabling long-term research;
- d. Supporting investigative journalism;
- e. Advancing legal and rights advocacy; and
- f. For civic education.

## **The Power of Digital Access**

Dr. Draman emphasised that digital *Hansards* helps to:

- a. democratise access to information.

- b. remove bureaucratic barriers.
- c. lower research costs.
- d. encourage thematic expertise.
- e. foster cross-border collaboration.

Dr. Rasheed Draman urged Hansard Officers to view themselves not just as record keepers, but as custodians of democratic memory, enablers of accountability, and partners in nation-building. He called for investment in timely, searchable, and accessible Hansards to empower citizens, support research, and enhance transparency in governance.

#### Questions and Answers Session

Mr. Drisu Gobina (Nigeria) expressed concern over the gap between campaign promises and actions taken once candidates assume office. He noted a widespread misconception about the mandates of Members of Parliament and the expectations of citizens, observing that voters often base their choices on campaign pledges. He stressed the need for Civil Society Organisations to educate citizens on the true mandates of MPs.

Dr. Draman acknowledged the significant challenge of ensuring Members of Parliament fulfil all their campaign promises. He emphasised the need for extensive public education to help citizens distinguish between what is feasible and what falls outside the mandates of MPs.

Mr. Gobina noted that in Nigeria, the Hansard is automatically approved and adopted upon production, with no further approval process for legal interpretation, research, or policy formulation.

Dr. Draman explained that in Ghana, the Hansard becomes an official record only after it has been produced, verified, and formally adopted on the floor of the House.

## PRESENTATION 5: MR SAMMY OBENG

### **EASING PUBLIC ACCESS TO HANSARD IN AN ERA OF PARLIAMENTARY MODERNISATION BY MR SAMMY OBENG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK AFRICA (PNA AFRICA)**

#### **Introduction**

Mr Obeng began his presentation by introducing delegates and participants to his organisation, Parliamentary Network Africa (PN Africa) which is a civil society organisation dedicated to fostering open, transparent, accountable, and citizen-inclusive legislatures across the continent. He stated that the organisation's work includes convening and connecting parliamentary monitoring civil society organisations throughout Africa, promoting the concept of Open Parliaments, and conducting comparative studies of African legislatures. One of PN Africa's flagship initiatives is the Africa Open Parliament Index (OPI), which evaluates parliamentary openness and accessibility.

#### **The Importance of Hansard to CSOs and other Non-Parliamentary Stakeholders**

In this presentation, Mr. Obeng underscored the crucial role of the Hansard, the official verbatim record of parliamentary proceedings for both parliamentary and non-parliamentary stakeholders. He argued that parliamentary information, including Hansards, belongs to the public and that easing access to these records aligns directly with citizens' right to information. He further emphasised the need for collaborative efforts between parliamentary Hansard departments and ICT teams to modernise and expand access. He stated that only three (3) out of the 16 member countries of the CHEA Africa Region had legislations on access to information.

He stated that Hansards are more than transcripts; they are custodians of parliamentary transparency and accountability, serving as windows through which citizens can observe the workings of their legislatures and as lenses into the historical, present, and future record of parliamentary activity. For many African citizens, Hansards remain the only means of discerning MPs' voting patterns, ideological positions, and engagement in

debates. Mr Obeng challenged practitioners to view Hansards not merely as records but as the fulcrum around which parliamentary democracy revolves.

### **Ease of Accessing the Hansard**

Mr Obeng pointed out to participants that public ownership of parliamentary information is central to easing access. For Hansards to meet the benchmark of public accessibility, they must be complete, accurate, and timely. They should be broadly available to the public without discrimination, accessible through multiple channels, and provided in formats that allow for re-use and republication. Historical Hansards should be securely and centrally stored to enable access to the complete parliamentary record across years. This aligns with international standards, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Indicators on Democratic Parliaments (Dimension 1.3.8 – Records Keeping) and the Declaration of Parliamentary Openness (Indicators 1, 11, 12, and 13).

Modernising parliamentary processes requires rethinking access to Hansards. Mr Obeng called for inter-departmental collaboration particularly between ICT, Hansard, and public engagement teams to ensure that Hansards are not only produced but also usable in modern formats. He noted that livestreaming alone cannot substitute for a structured and searchable Hansard record. Citizens must be made aware of where and how to find Hansards, and the records should be provided in open, structured, non-proprietary formats that are easily processed by computers for analysis and reuse.

He proposed that Hansards be made available both online and offline, encompassing historical and current records. He invited participants to imagine a Hansard database that could search filtered keywords across years, track MP debate patterns and consistency, and compare thematic discussions across countries in the CHEA-AR network.

He went to show a graph of countries that had updated Hansards on their various websites. Some countries had gaps in relation to updating their websites with Hansards. Countries such as Somalia updated their website as far back as 2023 while Nigeria had no Hansards on their official website.

## Conclusion

He concluded his presentation by recommending to parliaments to treat Hansards as living tools of democracy and parliaments in the commonwealth should invest in the technology and collaboration needed to make them accessible, and affirm the principle that parliamentary information belongs to the people.

## Questions and Answers Session

Mr Steven Mwanga from Uganda wanted to know if there were CSOs that make it a point to rank the comments made by MPs. Mr Gobina Drisu, from Nigeria thanked Mr Obeng and stated that his observation about the Nigerian Hansard being inaccessible was factual. He thanked the Clerk and outgoing President of the Nigerian National Assembly for their work in making the National Assembly more open and accessible to citizens. He admonished PN Africa and other CSOs to continue to enlighten citizens on the role of Members of Parliament and Parliament as a whole. He asked what was the exercise and process in terms of bringing the Hansard to the public.

Rosemary Ssembajue from Uganda wanted to know if it was the role of the Hansard department to educate the public on the Hansard.

In his response on ranking Members of Parliament, Mr Obeng noted that CSOs such as Mzelando Trust in Kenya, *Odekro* in Ghana ranked the work of Members of Parliament. He noted this ranking was done in order to promote transparency and accountability. He further stated that if Parliament is aware of these tools, it can work together with civil society to make tangible outcomes and called for partnerships between civil society and Parliaments.

In his response to the representative from Nigeria, he thanked him for verifying the fact about the Hansard not being accessible and he noted that this was not due to backlogs since the Hansard department of the National Assembly had done its part by churning out Hansards, but the National Assembly had failed to make it available.

In his response to Rosemary Ssembajue, he noted it was not the role of the Hansard department to provide education on the Hansard, he stressed on the need for inter

department collaboration to promote education on the Hansard, Beyond inter departmental collaboration, he suggested that there should be partnerships with civil society organisations working in this area to promote the education on the Hansard.

## PRESENTATION 6: MR. LESLIE NII TEI ADDICO

### **DEMONSTRATION OF AUTOMATIC TRANSCRIPTION BY MR. LESLIE NII TEI ADDICO, DIRECTOR, ICT, PARLIAMENT OF GHANA**

#### **Introduction**

He started his presentation by explaining that automatic transcription referred to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) in the conversion of spoken language into written text without human intervention. Parliaments around the world are adopting AI transcription systems to streamline documentation.

Mr Addico pointed out that in the context of Parliaments, this technology is revolutionizing how proceedings are documented, especially during Plenary and Committee sittings and stated the statistics of the usage of same in Parliaments around the globe. According to the IPU World e-Parliaments Report, 20 per cent of Parliaments across the globe are now using this technology for transcription, 10 per cent for translation and 15 per cent for Cybersecurity. A further 44 per cent plan to use AI for transcription in the future.

On the evolution of transcription in Parliaments, he walked participants through the various transcription methods from the traditional method to AI-assisted transcription tools. He noted that traditional transcription involves the use of stenography machine, shorthand, manual editing, digital tape recording and play back functions, the use of transcription software such as FTR, VIQ, Netscribe, Sliqscribe with annotation and indexing facilities. He noted that AI Assisted transcription had to do with the use of AI to automatically convert spoken language to text. He mentioned Neuralink and the future of transcription through the use of neurotechnology, particularly Neuralink, which holds the potential to transform transcription methodologies by introducing brain-computer interfaces (BCI) that eliminates reliance on conventional audio input.

He further outlined the following core technological requirements for automatic transcription as follows:

1. Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR): Converts speech to text in real time.
2. Speaker diarisation: Distinguishes and labels different speakers.
3. Speaker classification: Identifies speakers by name or role using trained models.
4. Noise filtering: Removes background sounds like music or chatter for clarity.
5. Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG): Enhances contextual accuracy by referencing relevant documents.
6. High Fidelity Audio Conference System

In his demonstration of the Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), Mr Addico mentioned that the Amazon Transcribe software system is a fully managed, ensures automatic speech recognition (ASR) service that makes it easy for developers to add speech to text capabilities to their applications. It is powered by a next-generation, multi-billion parameter speech foundation model that delivers high accuracy transcriptions for streaming and recorded speech. These include features such as automatic punctuation, custom vocabulary, automatic language identification, speaker diarisation, word-level confidence scores, and vocabulary filters. He also added that a cost of 14.44 cents per hour for the first 250,000 minutes, an average of 1625 hours of sittings for both Plenary & Committees for a year will cost USD 2,340.

## **Recommendations**

He proposed the following recommendations:

- Adopt AI-powered transcription tools such as Amazon Transcribe, Google Cloud Speech to Text, IBM Watson Speech-to-Text, and Microsoft Azure Speech Services.
- Upgrade recording equipment to ensure high-fidelity audio capture in the Chamber and committee rooms to improve transcription accuracy.
- Ensure a human-AI collaboration by establishing a hybrid transcription model.
- Enhance accessibility and transparency through real-time publication to enable live or near-live access to proceedings for citizens, journalists, and researchers.

- Ensure multilingual support through the use of translation-integrated transcription systems.
- Adopt policy and standards development by establishing transcription quality benchmarks to define acceptable error rates, turnaround times, and formatting standards.
- Adopt data protection and integrity in the production of the Hansard.
- Foster inter-parliamentary collaboration in sharing best practices and tools across legislative bodies.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, he stated Parliament must adopt AI-assisted and emerging technologies such as ASR, speaker diarisation and contextual AI to ensure that outputs remain accurate, relevant, and user-centered. He also touched on the need to enhance inter-parliamentary collaboration to foster quality, innovation and consistency in the production of the Hansard.

## **PRESENTATION 7: PROF. NYOKABI KAMAU**

### **THE CPST BEYOND 2030: OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICAN PARLIAMENTS BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR PARLIAMENTARY STUDIES & TRAINING, KENYA, PROF. NYOKABI KAMAU**

#### **Introduction**

Prof. Kamau commenced her presentation by stating that the Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST) serves as a hub for continuous learning, capacity building, and research for Members and staff of Parliament, legislative assemblies, and other stakeholders.

On the mandate and strategic direction of the Centre, she noted that the mandate of the Centre is to serve as a continuous learning platform for Parliament members, staff, and stakeholders among others.

She further noted that vision of the centre is to be a global centre of excellence in legislative studies for democratic governance while its mission is to enhance capacity,

create new and relevant knowledge for members and staff of Parliament, legislative assemblies, and the public.

She highlighted that the Centre adopts a dual training approach that entails demand-based training tailored to the specific needs of the departments and offices within parliaments and supply-based training that is structured and in alignment with the CPST annual calendar.

Pertaining to the long-term goals of the Centre which is encapsulated in the CPST Beyond 2030 Manual, she stated that the Centre is undergoing significant structural and institutional developments to be abreast with innovation. She noted that the Centre has commenced some remarkable collaborative initiatives with renowned globally-acclaimed educational and non-educational institutions such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (Unitar), McGill University, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the University of Nairobi and added such partnerships and affiliations would go a long way to train legislative staff.

She stated that the Centre has rolled-out a research fellow programmes that entails Internships, Research Fellowships and Senior Research Fellowships that comes with varying levels of requirements. She also briefed participants on the current development with the Centre where it has established a journal called the *Journal of Governance and Legislative Studies (JGLS)* that publishes works undertaken by individuals who enroll in the Research Fellowship Programmes.

She stated that the Centre would be hosting a Webinar Series on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2025 from 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. East African Time (EAT) to discuss “The Role of Legislators in Driving Healthcare Financing” and entreated all the participants to participate.

## **Conclusion**

In concluding her presentation, she noted that CPST is poised to become a global leader in legislative studies, driven by innovative training programmes, strategic partnerships, and state-of-the-art infrastructure. Its commitment to excellence and democratic governance will ensure relevance in Kenya and beyond.

## Questions and Answers

Steven Mwanga from Uganda recommended that countries on the continent that have parliamentary training institutes should harmonise their programmes and activities so that they can be incorporated into the training programmes of Hansard departments across the continent.

Mrs Rebecca Kamega from Uganda also recommended that the parliamentary training centres and parliaments as a whole must ensure that disability-friendly programmes and activities are included in the activities of these institutes.

## Responses

In responding to the comments made above, she noted that all the concerns raised are genuine and as such, will be taken on board in the future planning of the training programmes of the Centre.

## PRESENTATION 8: ERNEST DAFOUR PHD,

### **THE NEED FOR STANDARDISATION AND HARMONISATION OF TRAINING OF HANSARD OFFICERS IN AFRICA IN THE AGE OF AI – TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AFRICAN HANSARD ACADEMY BY ERNEST DAFOUR PHD, HEAD OF PARLIAMENTARY TRAINING INSTITUTE, PARLIAMENT OF GHANA**

## **Introduction**

Dr Darfour mentioned how the Official Report helped him in his academic journey. He underscored the Hansard's central role in preserving legislative history, enhancing transparency, and ensuring accountability, while noting that training standards for Hansard officers vary widely across Africa, leading to inconsistent quality.

He questioned whether Africa currently has structured and competency-based training programmes or a formal institutions dedicated to such training, and regular assessments to identify skills gaps

## **Diagnosis of Current Hansard Training**

The presentation examined the current state of training, highlighting that while some parliaments, such as Kenya has formal programmes, others rely largely on informal, on-the-job learning. He cited Ghana's six-month preparatory training at the Government Secretarial School and stated that such training lacks standardised on-the-job training as focuses more on administrative skills rather than practical parliamentary practice and procedure.

Dr Darfour further outlined challenges in area of standardisation, including inconsistent quality of transcripts, slow adaptation to technology, limited AI literacy, and resource constraints.

## **Recommendations**

He proposed the following recommendations:

- Establish core competencies and continent-wide benchmarks, aligned with global best practices, to promote consistency, mobility of skills, and mutual recognition.
- Adopt transformative potential of AI including speech-to-text tools, machine learning for terminology accuracy, AI-assisted editing, and real-time translation in multilingual legislatures.
- Standardised training framework covering parliamentary procedures, verbatim reporting, AI integration, editing and proofreading, ethical considerations, and continuous professional development.
- Parliamentary Training Institute should institutionalise Annual Hansard Officers' Training Programme or Hansard Academy for African parliaments, supported by a harmonised curriculum, certification standards, regional collaboration, and pilot programmes.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, he emphasised that standardisation, combined with AI, could significantly improve accuracy, efficiency, and credibility in parliamentary reporting, and that investing in Hansard training is an investment in legislative transparency. He reiterated that a parliament's voice is only as clear as the record it keeps.

### Questions and Answers Session

After the presentation, a participant asked about the need to harmonise parliamentary training institutes across the continent.

In response, he advocated for the establishment of Hansard Academy at central location to coordinate training activities in member Parliaments. He also stressed the need to harmonise the content of Hansard training courses to achieve standardisation and consistency in parliamentary reporting across Africa.



## **DAY THREE - PRESENTATIONS AND PLENARY SESSION**

### **PRESENTATION 9: ALHAJI ADAM IDDRISU, ESQ**

#### **THE NEW HANSARD PRACTICE: ANALYSIS OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GHANA, BY ALHAJI ADAM IDDRISU, EDITOR OF DEBATES, CHAMBER REPORTING SERVICES, GHANA**

#### **Introduction**

The Presenter covered the following areas in his presentation:

- Organisational structure;
- Recruitment and training of Hansard officers;
- Production process of the Hansard;
- Adoption procedures in the House; and
- Technological and logistical challenges faced in parliamentary reporting.

#### **Organisational Structure**

He stated that the Parliamentary Reporting Services subdivision is headed by a senior director, known as a Senior Principal Assistant Clerk (SPAC) which falls directly under the purview of the Assistant Deputy Clerk (ADC), Parliamentary Proceedings. The Assistant Deputy Clerk (ADC), Parliamentary Proceedings, is the divisional head who also reports directly to the Deputy Clerk, Legislative Management Services (LMS). He noted that the LMS is a Service area that also reports directly to the Clerk to Parliament.

He informed delegates that the Department of Official Report has evolved and now delineated into three (3) Offices namely:

- Chamber Reporting Office – responsible for the production of the Hansard.
- Editing Office – provides editorial services to the subdivision and the wider Parliamentary Service.
- Committee Reporting Office – produces verbatim reports of committee proceedings.

He noted that each of the Offices is headed by Director, known as Editor of Debates.

## **Recruitment and Training of Hansard Officers**

Alhaji Iddrisu indicated that recruitment begins at graduate-entry level with progression through promotion and appointment-based systems. He stated that the recruitment process entails public advertisement, aptitude testing, and in-person interviews. Candidates must have a First Class or a minimum of Second Class Upper Honours in English or Linguistics from a recognised university. Successful candidates are taken through a six-month training programme covering specific subjects including English and Business Communication, Typewriting, Parliamentary Practice and Procedure, ICT, and the Production of the *Hansard*. He observed that the training also includes internships within Parliament and participation in final examinations. Progression to a Deputy Editor (Deputy Director) position and above is by appointment and requires significant experience and a Master's degree from a recognised university.

## **Production Process of the Hansard**

Alhaji Iddrisu outlined the production process of the Hansard as follows:

- 10-Minutes take with the aid of audiovisual gadgets.
- Reporters transcribe the recorded audio files and produce the transcripts.
- Transcripts sent to First-Line Editors who listen to the audios and effect the necessary corrections.
- Second-Line Editors review the transcript received from the First-Line Editors and make corrections without the audios.
- Pre-Validators, usually Deputy Editors conduct detailed proofreading for formatting, attribution, and quality assurance.
- Typesetters format the document into the acceptable standard.
- Editor of Debates undertakes final validation.

He briefed delegates on the ongoing automation project aimed at ensuring that the Hansard goes paperless and soft copies sent electronically to Members of Parliaments.

The presenter emphasised that until the House adopts the prepared Hansard, whatever is produced is a draft copy and not the certified copy of proceedings. He elaborated on the fact that the authority to expunge anything from the Hansard lies solely with the Speaker or whoever is presiding at the given time.

## **Deployment of Technology**

Alhaji Iddrisu briefed delegates that the use of AI has become commonplace with the advent of technology, however, the Parliament of Ghana is yet to officially adopt the use of any AI tool in its work. He stated that plans are underway to ensure the full integration and adoption of AI in the work of Hansard officers.

## **Challenges**

He enumerated the following as some of the challenges confronting the Hansard Department:

- Managing large volumes of debates under strict timelines.
- Ensuring security and confidentiality while maintaining public accessibility.
- Implementing robust verification and cross-referencing mechanisms.
- Efficiently integrating parliamentary documents such as Bills, Statements, and Reports into the Hansard.

## **Conclusion**

In concluding his presentation, Alhaji Iddrisu underscored the Hansard's critical role as the authoritative record of parliamentary proceedings. He highlighted the dedication, rigorous processes, and technical expertise required to produce an accurate and timely record, while acknowledging the pressing need for technological investment and logistical improvements to sustain excellence in parliamentary reporting.

## **PRESENTATION 10: MR GODWIN VIFA SEWORNU**

### **HANSARD IN THE AI WORLD – EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF HANSARD, AI, AND NEW MEDIA IN AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICES BY GODWIN VIFA SEWORNU, HANSARD REPORTER OF PARLIAMENT OF GHANA**

## **Introduction**

The Presenter covered the following areas in his presentation:

- The negative impact of AI
- Relevance of Manual transcription
- Advantages of deploying AI
- Challenges

## **Negative Impact of AI**

He mentioned that the rise of AI would lead to the loss of jobs including jobs of Hansard officers by 2030. Therefore, measures should be put in place to integrate AI in the work of parliamentary reporting and production of Hansard in order to remain relevant.

## **The relevance of the traditional manual transcription**

He noted that the traditional manual transcription has served as a critical process for transparency, accountability, integrity and preservation of historical documents. He, however, noted that to ensure that there is real-time transcription and production to ensure public access to parliamentary debates (transparency), hold elected officials accountable for their statements (accountability), and preserve legislative history for future reference (historical record), integrating AI would fast-track the process and lead to fostering greater participation, legislative transparency and citizen engagement across Africa. He gave example of Kenya and South Africa Parliaments using AI-assisted tools with human review to produce the Hansard.

## **Advantage of deploying AI**

He cited the following as some of the benefits of integrating AI in the production of the Hansard:

- Automated transcription tools can process a variety of accents and languages with greater speed and accuracy;
- Reduction in the turnaround times.
- AI-powered indexing and semantic analysis make parliamentary data more searchable and accessible;
- Facilitate dissemination of Hansard content through interactive websites, social media, and multimedia formats.

## **Challenges**

Mr Vifa identified the following as some of the challenges:

- Infrastructure deficits such as inadequate AI tools.
- Unreliable power supply, and limited internet access.
- AI still struggles with nuance, necessitating human oversight.
- Limited technical skills among parliamentary staff, risks of automation bias, cybersecurity concerns.
- Inadequate policy frameworks for AI governance further complicate the transition.

## **Recommendations**

He proposed the following recommendations:

- Improving infrastructure through robust transcription software, 360-degree cameras, and faster internet;
- Build staff capacity through digital literacy and AI training;
- Develop clear policies for ethical AI use;
- Foster public-private partnerships with technology companies and academia.
- Promote remote working for nursing mothers, position the Editors of Debates among Clerks-at-the-Table for efficiency

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, he stated that while AI will significantly reshape the work of Hansard officers, it also offers opportunities to focus on higher-value tasks such as data analysis, interpretation, and ensuring transparency. Embracing AI as a collaborative tool, rather than a replacement, will enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and accessibility of parliamentary proceedings in Ghana and across Africa.

## **PRESENTATION 11: MR JOSEPH TETTEY**

### **REWRITING THE RECORD: HANSARD IN THE AGE OF AI AND INSTANT MEDIA BY MR JOSEPH TETTEY, HANSARD REPORTER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GHANA**

## **Introduction**

In his presentation, he examined the evolving role of Hansard reporting in an era dominated by digital disruption, AI technologies, and instant media consumption.

Key points discussed included:

1. Digital disruption and misinformation challenges
2. Role of AI in Hansard reporting
3. Reimagining the Hansard as a dynamic public record
4. Recommendations for modernization and collaboration

## **Digital disruption and misinformation challenges**

He noted that over the centuries, Hansard has served as the cornerstone of parliamentary documentation and continues to preserve institutional memory through the official record of parliamentary proceedings in the form of debates for future generations. However, in today's digital landscape, the traditional Hansard faces unprecedented challenges to its relevance and authority such as definitive record to digital obscurity, viral clips and AI summaries which overshadow official records, short attention spans and the prioritization of speed and accuracy to visibility, fragmentation of information which juxtaposed viral content to verified records and erosion of trust in official records.

## **Role of AI in Hansard Reporting**

He emphasised that the opportunities for the use of AI has to do with real-time transcription (for example, Whisper, Otter.ai), speaker identification, indexing, summarization, NLP-enhanced accessibility. He further pointed out that despite technological advances, AI is a tool, not a replacement for skilled Hansard professionals because human oversight remains critical for accuracy, neutrality and context. Therefore, editorial judgement, contextual knowledge and linguistic sensitivity cannot yet be replicated by machines.

African parliaments face unique challenges in adapting Hansard systems to the digital age such as misinformation, low visibility and technological gaps. With misinformation, AI could be distorted to proliferate false information about parliamentary proceedings. Low visibility in the form of limited awareness and access to Hansard records. Technological gaps present us with insufficient infrastructural funding for digital transformation.

Some strategic opportunities or approaches to modernize Hansard services and enhance their relevance in the digital age were discussed as follows:

1. Modernise platforms: modern-friendly, searchable transcripts with multimedia integration
2. Discoverability: verified clips and summaries on social media platforms, linking back to the old record.
3. Collaborate: partner with media, civic technology and fact-checkers.

4. Use AI tactically: automate low-risk tasks, improve internal efficiency.

He noted that African legislatures have made significant progress in modernizing parliamentary records through innovative partnerships. In South Africa, the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) is an independent (public-private partnership model) platform that provides searchable records, committee reports and parliamentary analysis. Kenya has the Mzalendo (citizen-engagement focus) which is a platform with MP profiles, voting records, and simplified parliamentary information and serves as an 'eye on parliament'. Ghana's *Odekro* (data-driven accountability) is a parliamentary monitoring platform with MP performance metrics and simplified bill tracking.

## **Recommendations**

In a bid to adopt a practical approach to implementing modernized Hansards across African parliaments, some recommendations were proffered.

1. Pilot AI projects: Start with small-scale AI transcription and summarization tools to demonstrate value.
2. Public Engagement: develop strategies to help citizens understand Hansard's value
3. Invest in Training and Infrastructure: Build capacity for digital skills and necessary technical.
4. Foster Inter-Parliamentary Collaboration: Share resources, best practices and technology solutions across borders.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, he made an urgent call to action with respect to the future of parliamentary records. In an era where digital distortion threatens truth, the Hansard must evolve, not retreat into the margins of history and we must embrace a vision where we reclaim the voice of the Hansard, embrace technology and safeguard democracy.

## **Question and Answer Session**

In response to the question about how possible it was for Ghana's Hansard to be available on the *Odekro* platform but not on the official website of the Parliament of Ghana, Mr

Tettey said this might probably be due to the situation where the website until recent times, had not been updated on regular basis, or probably, as a result of *Odekro's* experience in this space which sets them ahead of updating records online.

## PRESENTATION 12: NANA AGYEMANG-PREMPEH

### **HANSARD IN THE AGE OF AI AND NEW MEDIA: CHALLENGES, PROSPECTS AND A PATH TO ENDURING RELEVANCE BY NANA AGYEMANG- PREMPEH, HANSARD REPORTER, PARLIAMENT OF GHANA**

#### **Introduction**

In his presentation, he examined how Hansard can maintain its relevance amid rapid technological change, rising public scrutiny, and the proliferation of new media. He argued that Hansard must evolve beyond its traditional role to become an interactive, AI-enabled platform that supports open parliament initiatives, strengthens participatory democracy, and combats misinformation and disinformation.

He traced *Hansard's* evolution from its secretive beginnings to its status as a symbol of legislative transparency, highlighting key technological milestones—from shorthand and typewriters to AI-powered transcription. He added that while AI offers significant opportunities, such as semantic search, sentiment analysis, automated summaries, and legislative drafting support, its adoption in African parliaments faces barriers including the digital divide, financial constraints, limited staff training, cybersecurity risks, and ethical concerns.

He stressed that while new media platforms offer immediacy and accessibility, they also risk distorting parliamentary records through algorithmic bias, misinformation, disinformation, and deep fakes. He reaffirmed that the procedural and editorial integrity of the Hansard is vital to safeguarding parliamentary truth.

#### **Recommendations**

He made the following key recommendations:

- a. Invest in human capital through AI-focused training and editorial standards.

- b. Innovate and diversify products such as bulletins, research outputs, and sentiment analysis for targeted audiences.
- c. Monetise services including paid compilations for Members of Parliament and subscription-based publications to generate internal funds.
- d. Strengthen inter-departmental collaboration in areas such as ICT, media relations, and cybersecurity.

## **Conclusion**

He concluded his presentation by stressing that Hansard should go beyond being a historical record, proactively safeguarding parliamentary integrity, leveraging AI strategically, and innovating to improve transparency, accessibility, and citizen engagement.

## **PRESENTATION 13: MS ADU-MENSAH AND MS AKLI**

### **FROM SHORTHAND TO SILICON: THE FUTURE OF HANSARD REPORTING IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE BY MS JESSICA ADU-MENSAH AND MS ANN-MARIE AMA EDEM AKLI, HANSARD REPORTERS, PARLIAMENT OF GHANA**

## **Introduction**

The presenters described how parliaments are evolving and working towards deploying technology, especially the use of AI to provide proceedings with greater speed, transparency, and accessibility. They emphasised that the central challenge lies with striking a balance between technological efficiency and the indispensable human qualities of interpretation, nuance, and editorial judgement.

## **Historical Context**

The presenters took delegates through the history of the official report, from 18<sup>th</sup> Century in UK, through the phase of shorthand, stenography and audio recordings. They noted that each technological shift has increased accuracy and accessibility, culminating in today's digital platforms and collaborative tools.

## **The Role of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

They stated that AI now offers significant opportunities as follows:

1. Speed and efficiency in transcription and data retrieval.

2. Inclusion through translation into local languages and dialects.
3. Accessibility enabling persons with disabilities to engage with parliamentary material.
4. Enhanced transparency by supporting rapid publication and intelligent search functions.

### **Limitations of AI**

They noted that in spite of the merits of using AI, the technology has its own limitations such as the struggle with recognition of accents, dialects, sarcasm, humour, and legal nuances. They also raise concerns of bias, data security, and accountability. These shortcomings underline the irreplaceable value of human oversight.

### **The Human–AI Hybrid Model**

They disclosed the emerging consensus on the fact that AI should act as an assistant rather than a substitute. They emphasised that AI cannot do it all, there is the need for the human interphase to safeguard accuracy, interpret context, and exercise editorial authority. They mentioned countries such as Estonia, Finland, Portugal, Brazil, Wales, Singapore, and parts of Africa which have deployed technology but they all retain human oversight to ensure that issues of in-house style and procedure are complied with.

### **Ethical and Democratic Considerations**

They noted that embedding AI in Hansard reporting requires attention to bias, privacy, and accountability. While AI can expand inclusion and transparency, poor implementation risks reputational damage, legal exposure, and erosion of public trust.

### **Limitations of AI as a transcription tool**

The presenters identified among others, the following limitations in the use of AI for transcription:

1. Accents and dialect issues – when the dialect of the speaker is too strong, AI records the nearest possible words to the sounds. For instance “Offense so” instead of “Offinso”;
2. Bias concerns;
3. Security breaches – Not all meetings should be transcribed with AI; and
4. Ascribing wrong names to different speakers.

### **Recommendations**

In ensuring that Parliaments across move smoothly in the phase of AI, they recommend that there should be future priorities including sustained staff development, workflow designs optimizing, human–AI collaboration, and the establishment of clear ethical frameworks. They further recommended that, technological progress must not compromise

democratic values because parliamentary reporting will always require the interpretive and contextual skills that only humans can provide.

## **Conclusion**

They concluded by emphasizing that AI is effective, but there is the need for a balance. AI is reshaping Hansard reporting, but its role is complementary, not substitutive. A carefully managed hybrid model offers the most sustainable path forward—preserving the human touch while harnessing the efficiency of emerging technologies.

## **Questions and Answers Session**

A delegate from Sierra Leone expressed her love for Shorthand and back-up magnetic tape recording and compared her experience with the current AI software in use – Expresscribe. She admitted that with the AI, the work is easier and the burden is lighter, reducing the turnaround time and the energy spent.

## **PRESENTATION 14: MS JACQUELINE NUNANA TOPPAR**

### **MODERNISING GHANA’S HANSARD: A CASE FOR LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS IN AI, TECHNOLOGY, AND NEW MEDIA INTEGRATION BY MS JACQUELINE NUNANA TOPPAR**

## **Introduction**

She focused her presentation on the urgent need to adopt technological innovations in *Hansard* production while putting in place strong legal policy and framework to protecting the authenticity, accuracy, and integrity of parliamentary records.

She outlined the current challenges such as manual transcription which causes delays in publication, limits accessibility for the public, and places heavy workloads on editorial teams and called for use of AI tools for speech-to-text systems, cloud archiving, and integration with new media platforms to transform *Hansard* production.

## **Legal Policy and Framework**

She cautioned that in spite of the benefit of AI, without a clear legal policy and framework, such innovations could introduce significant risks—ranging from transcription inaccuracies and cybersecurity threats to ownership disputes, misinformation, and a possible loss of editorial independence.

Drawing on comparative experiences from jurisdictions such as the UK and Canada, she observed that successful modernisation efforts require strong governance structures, legislative backing, human editorial oversight, robust data protection measures, and systems to ensure long-term accessibility. She also underlined the importance of safeguarding data sovereignty and ensuring that Parliament retains full control over its official records.

## **Recommendations**

She proposed the following recommendations:

- i. Enact legislation to formalise Hansard production and define its legal status.
- ii. Establish parliamentary media and technology policy.
- iii. Strengthen cybersecurity protocols for Hansard systems.
- iv. Implement a two-tier publication process with provisional and verified versions.
- v. Create a searchable, publicly accessible online Hansard archive to increase transparency.

## **Conclusion**

She concluded by emphasising that robust legal and policy framework should be put in place so that member Parliaments could leverage technology to enhance transparency, preserve institutional memory, and maintain the authenticity, credibility, and accountability of parliamentary records in the digital era.

## **Questions and Answers Session**

Ms Rosemary Ssemajue from the Parliament of Uganda, highlighted that the *Hansard* derives its legal basis from the Constitution, which establishes Parliament, and from the Standing Orders of Parliament, therefore, proceedings streamed online or shared via social media lack the authority and accuracy of the official Hansard record.

Ms Toppar acknowledged the constitutional foundation for the *Hansard* but noted there is no specific legislation governing its production in most of the member Parliaments. She recommended the introduction of subsidiary legislation to formally regulate the processes involved in producing the Hansard.

Ms Euphraat Hopane from the National Parliament of South Africa stated that South Africa Parliament operates under a policy that guides the online publication of its Hansards. She further mentioned that the process is undertaken in collaboration with the Information Communication Technology (ICT) department to ensure proceedings are accurately published on the Parliament's website.

## PRESENTATION 15: MS GIFTY HAJA SUMANI

### **CHARTING THE FUTURE OF HANSARD: EMBRACING INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY FOR ENHANCED PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING IN AFRICA, MS GIFTY HAJA SUMANI, HANSARD REPORTER, PARLIAMENT OF GHANA**

#### **Introduction**

The presenter explored the topic for the Conference and called for urgent need to modernise parliamentary reporting across African Parliaments and Legislatures. She went on to argue that the Hansard is far more than a transcript—it is the mirror of parliamentary democracy, the conscience of the Chamber, and the permanent, authoritative record that sustains accountability and transparency.

She further stated that many African parliaments still rely on outdated, labour-intensive methods despite the availability of advanced technological tools. She likened the final Hansard to a folklore that arrives long after debates have lost their relevance, and noted that the delays erode the vibrancy of parliamentary discourse, obscure transparency, and disconnect citizens from their representatives.

She therefore advocated for parliamentary reporting that is instantaneous, accessible, and comprehensive public record through the use of available AI-powered tools such as Sonix, Trint, Turboscribe, Netscribe, Otter.ai, Descript, Happy Scribe, and Verbit. She further stated that these tools could be customised to recognise African accents, dialects, and indigenous languages, ensuring inclusivity and precision in records.

#### **Challenges**

She identified the following some of the challenges affecting the production of Hansard across the continent:

- Slow turnaround times.
- Inadequate staffing of reporters and editors.
- Insufficient technological infrastructure.

- Bureaucratic bottlenecks.
- Resistance to change and entrenched mindsets.

She reiterated that these weaknesses must be addressed decisively to keep pace with public expectations and democratic obligations.

## **Recommendations**

In addressing these challenges, she made the following proposals:

- Establish a Commonwealth Hansard Innovation Network for Africa.
- Develop a shared technology assessment framework.
- Create a regional training programmes for digital skills.
- Secure a funding partnerships for technological modernisation.
- Foster cross-border collaboration to accelerate reform.

## **Conclusion**

In concluding, she noted that the Hansard is not just a transcript—it is the memory of democracy. She reiterated that if democracy speaks, the Hansard must listen and record in real time, fully, and accessibly. She charged that the time for innovation is not tomorrow—it is now.

## **Question and Answer Session**

Mrs Carol Bekezulu from South Africa gave a brief overview on how the South African Parliament has adopted the use of AI tools in the transcription of parliamentary debates. She noted that the Parliament of South Africa has adopted a speech-to-text recognition AI tools which are still be modified due to the accents of legislators in the House. She stated that the South African Parliament is advancing the adoption of AI tools in their work, while surmounting novel challenges.

The presenter in responding to the comments commended the innovative approach by the South African Parliament and asked that Africa must take the initiative by developing African-led AI tools that is tailored to the needs of the Parliaments of Africa.

## **PRESENTATION 16: MR EBENEZER ARTHUR**

**CHARTING THE FUTURE OF HANSARD – EMBRACING INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY FOR ENHANCED PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING IN AFRICA BY MR EBENEZER ARTHUR, HANSARD REPORTER, PARLIAMENT OF GHANA**

## **Introduction**

Mr. Arthur in his presentation highlighted that the Hansard no longer holds a monopoly as the official record of Parliament due to the emergence of social media platforms and livestreaming tools. He stressed that in this new environment, accuracy must be non-negotiable, leaving no room for errors. Inaccuracies, he warned, would not only undermine the credibility of Hansard but also push Members of Parliament and the public towards alternative, and sometimes less reliable, information sources.

## **The Enduring Significance of Hansard**

He noted that although citizens today have access to numerous alternative channels for following parliamentary proceedings, Hansard remains unrivalled as the official, unbiased, and comprehensive record of debates and decisions. Its value as a historical and procedural document is undisputed.

However, the rise of competing sources demands that Hansard departments:

- Maintain exceptional accuracy in reporting.
- Ensure minimal turnaround times for producing final reports.
- Exercise strict limits on editorial discretion.

The concept of “near-verbatim” reporting must be clearly defined and rigorously implemented; final Hansards must be made publicly accessible as quickly as possible.

Mr. Arthur reiterated that errors or delays in Hansard production could erode public trust and drive stakeholders to rely more heavily on real-time but unverified social media content.

## **Technological Evolution of Hansard Production**

He outlined a brief historical background of the Hansard and noted that it reflects the broader transformation of communication technology. The historical background was traced from the global to the African context as follows:

### **Global milestones:**

1774 – Earliest forms of parliamentary reporting.

1812 – Hansard recognised as the formal record of proceedings.

### **African context:**

Colonial Era: Production relied on UK expatriates using Pitman shorthand.

Post-Independence: Transition to local staff; manual letterpress printing was common.

Mid-20th Century: Handwritten transcription gave way to typewriters.

1960s–1980s: Analogue recording systems introduced alongside shorthand.

1990s: Computers and word processing software adopted.

2000s: Digital audio recording fully replaced analogue methods.

### **Current Workflow**

He also took participants through the stages of the production in the modern era which typically follows these stages:

- Digital recording of proceedings.
- Transcription of segmented audio by reporters.
- Merging, editing, proofreading, and typesetting of transcripts.
- Verification and adoption before publication and archiving.

Mr. Arthur emphasised that in this era of advanced technology, slow production is unacceptable. Hansard departments must leverage modern tools to meet the pace of information consumption. He further urged the management of parliaments across Africa to invest in the resources necessary for the Hansard to remain relevant in a fast-paced digital world.

### **The Role of Hansard Departments in Embracing Innovation**

He further pointed out that Hansard departments are increasingly integrating new technologies into their workflows. These include:

**Transcription:** Adoption of AI-powered speech-to-text applications using deep learning algorithms for rapid and accurate conversion of audio and video into text.

**Editing:** Use of audio-text synchronisation features to precisely correct mis-hearings, attribute speakers accurately, and resolve discrepancies.

**Publishing & Archiving:** Deployment of enhanced online publication systems and secure cloud storage to ensure accessibility and preservation.

### **Recommendations**

In a world where technology has made certain jobs lose their relevance, he proposed the following recommendations for Hansard departments to sustain relevance:

*Build staff competence in AI tools* – The Inter-Parliamentary Union’s Centre for Innovation in Parliament recommends experimenting with generative AI for summarisation, translation, and debate record creation.

*Diversify outputs* – Expand services to include social media summaries, translation and interpretation services, and audio forensic analysis.

### **The Pivotal Role of CHEA-AR**

Mr Arthur underscored the leadership role of the Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association – Africa Region (CHEA-AR) in shaping the future of Hansard by investing in effective coordination, that is identifying technological gaps and securing donor funding to ensure uniform progress across member countries and ensuring standardization, that is developing an International Hansard Reporting Guide to establish consistent quality standards, drawing inspiration from the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Without such coordinated support, he cautioned, disparities in technological adoption would persist, leaving some departments at a permanent disadvantage.

### **Conclusion**

In concluding his presentation, he mentioned that Hansard remains a cornerstone of parliamentary democracy. Its continued relevance hinges on the sector’s ability to embrace innovation, adapt to evolving technologies, and maintain the highest standards of accuracy. CHEA-AR’s role in coordinating, standardising, and guiding technological integration across Africa is indispensable to ensuring Hansard remains a trusted and timely record for generations to come.

## **AMENDMENT OF THE CHEA – AR CONSTITUTION**

### **The following amendments were made to the Constitution**

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#### **INTERPRETATION**

Under the Interpretation column, Mr Mteteleli Mangcunyana from Eastern Cape Legislature of South Africa moved that the word “**Editors**” should be added and defined as follows:

“**Editors:** Parliamentary Editors, Reporters, Proofreaders, Printers, Audio visual officers and other Hansard practitioners.”

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **SECTION 2 – OBJECT**

Mr Nthethe Kori of Lesotho moved that the **Object** of the Association be amended to include **research and development**.

The new rendition reads:

“The Object of the Association is to serve the interests of parliamentary democracy by enhancing the quality of parliamentary reporting through the regular exchange of technical information, research and development and personnel among Parliaments.”

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **SECTION 3 – MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 3(a):** Mr Stephen Mwanga of Uganda moved that the **Membership** be amended to include **State Legislatures and Hansard Staff from Regional Parliaments**.

The new rendition is as follows:

“Section 3(a) Membership of the Association shall be open to Editors of national Parliaments, State/Provincial/County Assemblies/Legislatures/Councils and Hansard staff from the Sub-Regional and Regional Parliaments of Commonwealth in Africa.”

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **SECTION 6 – THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Section 6(a)(iii):** The President of CHEA-AR, Alhaji Adam Iddrisu moved that the position of the “**Secretary**” should be decoupled from that of the position of a “**Treasurer**”. It was further proposed that the position “Treasurer” should be changed to “Financial Secretary”.

The new rendition reads as follows:

- a. The Executive Committee of the Association shall comprise”  
The President  
The Vice President  
The Secretary  
The Financial Secretary .....

*Question put and amendment was agreed to.*

## **SECTION 7 – ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Section 7.2:** The President of CHEA-AR moved that the subsection be amended to read ‘**The Secretary is the administrator of the Association. He/ She keeps the records of the Association**”.

This is consequential with the amendments from subsection 6(a)(iii).

**Section 7.2:** The President of CHEA-AR moved that there should be a new subsection under **Section 7** to define the role of the **Financial Secretary** as follows:

- i. The financial secretary shall keep proper books and accounts of CHEA- AR.**
- ii. The financial secretary shall table the annual financial report before the plenary for approval and adoption.**

*Question put and amendment agreed*

## **Section 7.5 – EX OFFICIO MEMBERS**

The amendment was moved for the ex officio members to be part of the Executive Committee and act as the members of the Council of State to the Executive Committee.

The proposed rendition is as follows

**“The three (3) other members are part of the Executive Committee and act as the council of state members”.**

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **Composition of the Executive Committee – New proposal**

Mr Stephen Mwanga of Uganda moved that a representative each of recognised Hansard Associations in Africa, such as that of Hansard Association of Kenya be part of the Executive Committee.

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **SECTION 8 – FUNCTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Section 8(1)(f):** An amendment was moved for the subsection to be consequential to amendments made under Article 6. The new rendition:

**“That the Financial Secretary shall maintain proper accounts and books of accounts for CHEA-AR and ensure that information and accountable documents are made available to the plenary Biennial Conference.”**

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **SECTION 10 – MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Section 10(a):** Mr Nthethe Kori from Lesotho proposed for the insertion of a new subsection as follows:

**“...at least two (2) virtual meetings annually”**

The new rendition will read as follows:

“Section 10(a) The Executive Committee shall meet in-person at least once, and at least two (2) virtual meetings annually.”

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

**Section 10(d):** Mr Stephen Mwanga from Uganda the section should be amended to read as follows:

**“The Biennial Conference shall select the host country, with consideration given to regional balance.**

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **SECTION 11 – DECISION MAKING**

### **Section 11(f)**

Mrs Rosemary Ssembajwe of Uganda proposed the introduction of a new subsection (11(f)) to read:

**“Ex-officio Members shall not vote.”**

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **SECTION 12 – SOURCES OF FINANCE**

### **Section 12.4 – Bank Account**

**Section 12.4(a):** Mr Stephen Mwanga proposed that the subsection should be amended by the inclusion of the words:

**“... and the account shall be in United States Dollars.”**

The new rendition will read as follows:

“The Bank accounts of the Association shall be maintained at a bank agreed upon by the Executive Committee and the account shall be in the United States Dollars.”

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

**Section 12.4:** The President of CHEA-AR, Alhaji Iddrisu proposed the insertion of a new subsection as **Section 12.4 (c)** to read:

**“The Executive Committee shall develop modalities for accessing funds from the account.”**

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **SECTION 14 – HEADQUARTERS OF THE ASSOCIATION**

**Section 14(a):** Mr Stephen Mwanga (Uganda) proposed that the Secretariat of the Association be change from South Africa to another country.

*Question put and amendment negatived.*

## **SECTION 15 – CONFERENCE**

**Section 15(a):** Mr Mwanga from Uganda proposed that the subsection be amended by the deletion of the words: **“of the official reports”** and replaced with the words **“and other Editors”** in line 1 and the deletion of the word **“national”** in line 2. So the new rendition will read as follows:

**“The plenary Biennial Conference shall consist of the heads and other editors of member parliaments in commonwealth parliamentary member states.”**

*Question put and amendment agreed to*

## **SECTION 19 – OFFENCES AND SANCTIONS**

### **Section 19.2 – Misuse/misappropriation of the Association’s resources**

The President of CHEA-AR proposed the following words in lines 3 to 5 be deleted:

**“The member shall be expelled from the Association if such offence is repeated”**

And replaced with the following:

**“...shall be investigated by the Disciplinary Committee and if found culpable, be reported to the Police of the said culprit for further legal actions.**

Mr Mwanga of Uganda also proposed that the insertion of the words **“the said individual shall also be reported to the Parliament of the country for the necessary disciplinary actions.”**

Mr Gobina of Nigeria also proposed the insertion of the words: **“the Association shall use all legal means available to retrieve the misappropriated resources for the Association.”**

The new rendition is as follows:

“A member who misuses or misappropriates the resources of the Association entrusted to his/her care commits an offence and shall be investigated by the Disciplinary Committee of the Association and if found culpable, shall be reported to the member Parliament and the Police and shall be prosecuted for the offence committed. The Association shall also use all legal means available to retrieve the misappropriated resources.”

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **SECTION 20 – AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION**

**Section 20(a):** The President of CHEA-AR proposed that in line 2, the words “**at least 3 month**” be replaced with “**at least one month.**”

Mrs Rosemary Ssembajwe further proposed that the words: “**The Executive Committee (ExCo) or a member Parliament**” to precede the proposed amendments.

The new rendition reads as follows:

“The Executive Committee or a member Parliament shall propose amendments to the Constitution which shall be submitted to the Secretary at least one month before the Biennial Conference.”

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

**Section 20 (c):** The President of CHEA-AR proposed that the subsection be broken into two to read:

“**c. The proposed amendments shall be put to vote and adopted by a simple majority during the conference.**”

“**d. The adopted amendments shall form part of the Constitution.**”

*Question put and amendment agreed to.*

## **OTHER DELIBERATIONS**

### **REGISTRATION OF NEW MEMBERS**

On the registration of new members of the Association, Mr Drisu Gobina (Nigeria) enquired about how registration of members of the Association is done. In response, the President indicated that the Senate and the House of Representatives in Nigeria can register as separate independent members, and the National Assemblies in other member countries could also be encouraged to do same.

### **INCENTIVES TO SERVING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (ExCO) MEMBERS**

The plenary agreed to the proposal to give incentives to the Executive Members (ExCo) of the Association for their commitment and dedication to duty.

However, plenary was unable to complete decision on the mode of incentives as proposed as follows:

- Whether or not ExCo Members should be exempted from the payment of conference participation fees?
- Whether or not the Association will pay for the cost of hotel accommodation during the biennial conference?
- Whether or not the Association will pay for the cost of return air ticket during the biennial conference?
- Whether or not a fixed sum of money be given to ExCO Members to cover the cost of hotel accommodation or return air ticket or both?

*(See final decision at page 66 – proceedings of Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2025.)*

## **ELECTIONS OF EXECUTIVES COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The plenary agreed that both the Financial Secretary and Assistant Secretary be elected at plenary. *(See final decision at page 66 – proceedings of Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2025.)*

## **REWARDING EXITING EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

The decision to reward exiting ExCO Members had been deferred to Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2025.

### **DAY FOUR – TOUR DAY**

Delegates and participants, on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2025 toured the Parliament of Ghana (Chamber of Parliament and Parliament Museum), the James Town Fishing Harbour, Ussher Ford Prison, National Museum, and the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park.

### **DAY FIVE – WEBSITE, OTHER DELIBERATIONS AND CLOSING**

#### **15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2025**

#### **SESSION ONE: LAUNCH OF CHEA-AR WEBSITE**

Ms Euphraat Hopane, Secretary of CHEA-AR and the Chairperson of the CHEA-AR Website Development Committee took participants through the work done by the Committee. She provided participants with a background on the establishment of the website and stated that the website was developed by WOWW Digital, an IT firm contracted by the Executive Committee in 2023.

Ms Hopane outlined the various sections of the website, as agreed by the Executive Committee:

- **About Page** – Contains a brief history of the Hansard and CHEA-AR.
- **Members Page** – Lists all Member Parliaments of CHEA-AR with their email addresses and provides an application form for Parliaments interested in joining, with submissions directed to the CHEA-AR email.
- **Conferences Page** – Features information on past and upcoming conferences.
- **Gallery Page** – Showcases photographs from past conferences and will be updated with images from the 11th Biennial Conference.
- **Resources Page** – Includes an interactive blog for engagement.
- **Documents Page** – Hosts documents such as the CHEA Strategic Plan and Code of Conduct; the amended CHEA Constitution will be uploaded once finalised.
- **Contacts Page** – Enables direct email communication with the Secretariat.

She further noted that the team is working on linking the website to official social media platforms and the handles. A video presentation from WOWW Digital was played, highlighting the percentage of work completed so far.

#### Questions and Answers Session

During the discussion, Mr Moses Bwalatum (Uganda), a member of the Website Development Committee, sought guidance on preferred social media platforms, noting that the committee was considering X (formerly *Twitter*) and *Facebook*, with the possibility of adding others such as *YouTube*. He also confirmed that focal persons would be designated for the website and that ownership rights would be transferred to CHEA-AR once development was completed.

Mr. Bwalatum mentioned the issue of website maintenance costs and indicated that the cost would be borne by the Association. He further proposed hosting sample Hansards from member countries on the site. Mr Nthethe Kori (Lesotho) supported the proposals

and inquired about the guidelines for uploading content on the site. Mrs Modester Sekeleza suggested appointing volunteers from various Member Parliaments to serve as website administrators, who shall be responsible for uploading activities from their respective jurisdictions. Dr Mangcunyana congratulated CHEA-AR on the successful establishment of the website and expressed hope that future generations would add further value and innovation to both the platform and the Association's overall work.

In her closing remarks, Ms Hopane assured participants that all administrators would receive guidance on content uploading and thanked members for their support throughout the development process.

The session concluded with Mr Stephen Katawa Banda (Malawi), former President of CHEA-AR, formally declaring the website launched.

## SESSION TWO: CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTIONS AND COMMUNIQUE

The proceedings were moderated by the Senior Principal Assistant Clerk in charge of the Parliamentary Reporting Subdivision, Ms Anita Quartey-Papafio.

During this session, the conference broke out into regional teams to draft resolutions that were debated upon.

## RESOLUTIONS

The following were the resolutions adopted by the conference:

The Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association – Africa Region having held its 11<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference in Accra, Ghana do hereby resolves as follows:

1. That the 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association – Africa Region be held in Uganda in 2027.
2. Correspondence be written to the Clerk, Parliament of Uganda, informing him of the hosting of the 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference in Uganda in 2027.

3. That correspondence be written to Clerks of relevant Parliaments, Legislatures and Assemblies to facilitate the attendance of the Executive Committee Members to meetings of the Association.
4. That the Association holds, at least, two in-person Executive Committee Meetings in 2026 and 2027.
5. That the Executive Committee organises virtual capacity training programmes for members of the Association.
6. That correspondence be written to the Clerks of the Parliaments/Legislatures/Assemblies of the newly elected Executives of the Association informing them of their elections.
7. That correspondence be written to South Sudan, Cameroon, Zanzibar, Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature, Northern Cape Provincial Legislature, Western Cape Provincial Legislature, Rwanda, Burundi and Free State Legislature.
8. That the Parliament of Liberia be invited as an observer-member of the Association.
9. That correspondence be written to ex-observers and regional parliaments/legislatures/Assemblies such as Pan African Parliament, SADC PF, ECOWAS to formally join the Association.
10. That the Association collaborates with parliamentary training institutes, particularly that of Ghana and Kenya to offer customised training programmes for Hansard officers.
11. That a reminder be made to member Parliaments to pay their subscriptions in good time.
12. That the Executive approves the activities and budget for the year 2025 to 2027.
13. That correspondence be written to international Parliamentary bodies to recognise the Association.
14. That parliamentary conferences such as the IPU, CPC, and PAP permit clerks to hold their conferences alongside; similarly, Hansard Reporters and Editors conferences like CHEA-Int. and CHEA-AR should be granted the same opportunity.

## Announcement of the Country to host the next Conference

Following Monday's meeting, it was unanimously agreed that Uganda would host the 12th Biennial CHEA-AR Conference in 2027.

The leader of the Ugandan delegation, Mr Moses Bwalatum, accepted the decision on behalf of his country and assured the conference that Uganda would do its utmost best to deliver a successful event. He also called for the support and cooperation of all member countries.

## COMMUNIQUÉ

The Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association – Africa Region, having held its 11th Biennial Conference in Accra, Ghana, from 11th to 15th August, 2025, hereby resolves as follows:

1. That countries/provinces/states of Africa invest in technological infrastructure, systems, software and tools to improve the Hansard Reporting of their Parliaments / Legislatures / Assemblies;
2. That Parliaments/Legislatures/Assemblies continuously develop the capacities of their Hansard officers and practitioners especially in modern technologies to enhance parliamentary reporting in Africa;
3. That Parliaments/Legislatures/Assemblies should collaborate to standardise the production of the Hansards;
4. That Parliaments/Legislatures/Assemblies should standardise the training of Hansard officers;
5. That Parliaments/Legislatures/Assemblies should facilitate and support the hosting, attendance and participation in CHEA-AR Conferences;
6. That the Parliaments/Legislatures/Assemblies should improve the turnaround time in the preparation, production and publication of the Hansard;
7. That Parliaments/Legislatures/Assemblies should effectively adopt and adapt appropriate technologies including artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance the production of the Hansard; and
8. That the Parliaments/Legislatures/Assemblies should make Hansards readily available and accessible to the public.

## VOTE OF THANKS THE PRESIDENT OF CHEA-AR

Alhaji Adam Iddrisu expressed his gratitude to all participants for their attendance and to everyone who contributed to the successful organisation of the conference. He wished delegates and participant success in all their future endeavours.

## CLOSING REMARKS

The Assistant Deputy Clerk in charge of Parliamentary Proceeding Division, Ms Abigail Aba Hanson, delivered the closing remarks on behalf of Deputy Clerk in charge of Legislative Management Services, Mr Camillo Pwamang. She commended the conference for bringing together some of the finest professionals in the *Hansard* field.

She noted that over the past few days, participants had engaged resource persons on topics such as *Hansard* reporting in the age of Artificial Intelligence and accessibility to the Hansard without impediments. Delegates shared ideas, exchanged best practices, and explored innovative approaches to strengthen parliamentary reporting across Africa.

She urged *Hansard* professionals to continue converting parliamentary debates and committee proceedings into enduring records that uphold accountability and preserve institutional memory. She applauded their dedication, purposeful deliberations, and diversity of perspectives, stressing their importance in advancing the profession continent-wide.

In closing, she expressed appreciation for the relationships and networking that took place during the conference and encouraged sustained collaboration and innovation. She extended Ghana's warm hospitality and on a lighter note remarked that she was hopeful that the delegates enjoyed the country's famed "jollof rice". She wished all participants safe travels and God's blessings.

## Election of New Executive Committee (ExCO) Members

The following members were elected as the new ExCO members to represent the five (5) Regional Blocs of CHEA-AR.

- 1) Alhaji Adam Iddrisu (President of CHEA-AR)
- 2) Moses Bwalatum (Vice President of CHEA-AR)
- 3) Nthethe Kori from Lesotho (Southern Bloc)

- 4) Hanifa Masaninga from Tanzania (Eastern Bloc)
- 5) Malala Mangala-Hamanyati from Zambia (Central Bloc)
- 6) Drisu Gobina from Nigeria (Western Bloc)

There was no representative from the Islands because none of the members attended the conference.

### **Incentivising the Outgoing Executive Committee**

The conference agreed that an amount of US\$1,000 be paid to each Executive Committee member of CHEA-AR as a package for completing their term of office. This maiden incentive will commence with the outgoing Mr Banda-led Presidency and his Executive Committee members.

### **Election of Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Financial Secretary**

The Conference ceded the election of the Secretary, Financial Secretary and Assistant Secretary to the new ExCO members and they are expected to report to member parliaments accordingly.

### **CLOSING**

The Conference was accordingly declared closed after the closing remarks was delivered on behalf of the Deputy Clerk, LMS.