



## COMMUNIQUÉ

### 14<sup>TH</sup> PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM HELD AT LIVINGSTONE, ZAMBIA FROM 28 APRIL TO 3 MAY 2003

1. The 14<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the SADC Parliamentary Forum was held in Livingstone, Zambia under the theme ***“The Role of Parliaments in Strengthening Institutions of Democracy in SADC”***.
2. The Assembly was fully attended by representatives of eleven (11) out of the twelve (12) SADC Parliaments as follows:

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| Angola     | Namibia      |
| Botswana   | South Africa |
| Lesotho    | Swaziland    |
| Malawi     | Tanzania     |
| Mozambique | Zambia       |
|            | Zimbabwe     |

3. The majority of Parliamentary delegations were headed by Presiding Officers (namely Speakers or Deputy Speakers). The delegations comprised Members of Parliament from both ruling parties and opposition and they included Gender representation. Also participating were specially invited guests including a five (5) person delegation from ECOWAS Community Parliament led by its Speaker Prof. Ali Diallo; the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Hon. Denis Marshall, QSC and Hon. Mahfoudha Alley Hamid of the East African Legislative Assembly. Resource persons came from the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), UNDP, AWEPA, Foundation for Democratic Process, the Public Affairs and Parliamentary Support Trust (Zimbabwe) and the Canadian Parliamentary Centre.
4. The Plenary Assembly was officially inaugurated by the President of the Republic of Zambia, His Excellency Levy P. Mwanawasa, S.C. on Monday 28 April 2003. In his speech, President Mwanawasa underscored that Parliamentarians are custodians of peace, security, stability, democracy and good governance at all levels of society. He called on parliamentarians to redouble their efforts in the fight against corruption and in addressing the challenges posed by globalisation. Noting that corruption undermines sustainable economic development, President Mwanawasa challenged

parliamentarians to ensure that the SADC Protocol on Corruption is ratified by their parliaments, including the domestication of the principles contained therein in their national laws.

5. Noting that parliamentarians should have a critical role in the formulation and implementation of regional development and integration strategies, President Mwanawasa challenged parliamentarians to work for the transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a regional parliament with full legislative powers. The President stated that Zambia fully supports the transformation of the Forum into a regional Parliament.
6. On the issue of the Pan African Parliament, the President urged member states of the African Union to hasten the ratification of the protocol on the Pan African Parliament as a useful anchor for regional assemblies.
7. In her address, the Chairperson of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, Hon. Speaker Ntlhoi Motsamai of Lesotho, observed that parliaments and parliamentarians are the backbone of any sustainable democracy. She therefore challenged SADC Parliaments to ensure that the laws that they pass reflect the will and aspirations of the people. The Chairperson recalled the history, mandate and vision of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, including the long-term objective of becoming a Regional Assembly with legislative functions, among other critical functions of the parliament. Noting that the pace of ratification of protocols of SADC had been painstakingly slow, Speaker Motsamai observed that a Regional Assembly would significantly accelerate integration in the region. She emphasized the need for a Regional Assembly to complement the work of SADC Heads of State at national and regional levels as well as in the context of the African Union and the Pan African Parliament.
8. The Chairperson recalled the 1997 SADC Declaration of Gender and Development and challenged SADC member states to redouble their efforts in ensuring that the objectives and targets contained therein are achieved by the year 2005. She also emphasised that gender equality was a central pillar of democracy and should therefore remain on the agenda of all parliaments and SADC member states. Speaker Motsamai called for a concerted and coordinated effort in the fight against HIV/AIDS, particularly in so far as it impacts on socio-economic and political development of the region.
9. In his welcome address, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia, Hon. Amusaa K. Mwanamwambwa noted that the role of parliaments in strengthening institutions of democracy could not be underplayed. He observed that parliaments were constitutionally entrusted with the crucial mandate of legislating and overseeing the work of the Executive. He observed that the failure by parliaments to execute these tasks could seriously compromise democratic governance in many of the fragile democracies in the SADC region

## **Role of Parliaments in Strengthening Democracy**

10. The deliberative session on the role of parliaments in strengthening institutions of democracy focused on three sub themes, namely the relationship between parliament and other institutions of democracy, policy analysis for democracy and good governance and the role of regional parliamentary assemblies in strengthening democracy. Delegates also deliberated on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as well as the African Union Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance.
11. It was unanimously agreed and resolved that Parliaments have a central role in strengthening and advancing other institutions of democracy starting with the institution of Parliament itself. In order to dispense its constitutional mandate, Parliament must be adequately supported in terms of human, financial and material resources. Only then can it be able to fulfil the wishes of the nation.
12. While noting that most of the Constitutions of SADC Member States espoused the values of good governance and democracy, the Assembly emphasized the need to translate these commitments to action. It was agreed that the role of parliament in this process could not be overemphasised.
13. The Assembly identified free, fair and transparent electoral systems and practices, a well-resourced Parliament, independent judiciary, vibrant media and active civil society as some of the critical factors underpinning a sustainable democracy.
14. The Assembly found the role and experiences of the ECOWAS Community Parliament particularly in the areas of election observation, conflict management and peace building to be instructive. In particular, the Assembly noted with appreciation the efforts of the ECOWAS Community Parliament in the search for peace in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia.
15. Delegates further resolved and called for the of redoubling efforts aimed at strengthening institutions of democracy in Parliaments, government and commissions, especially, those dealing with election, anti-corruption, human rights, and gender equality. The Assembly also called on political parties (both ruling and opposition) as well as Civil Society Organisations and media to embrace a democratic culture and practices especially transparency, tolerance and commitment to gender equality. The Assembly reiterated the commitment of the SADC Parliamentary Forum to gender equality and called on all SADC Member States to ensure that the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development is implemented in full.
16. The Assembly recognised that peace, sustainable development, poverty eradication and the challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic were intrinsically intertwined with the rights of peoples to participate fully in the governance of their countries.

17. Delegates voiced serious concern about the emerging unilateralism at the international level demonstrated by the unjustified invasion of the sovereign State of Iraq by the United States and Britain without any regard for the role of the United Nations and International Law. In stating this principle, the delegates were in no way condoning dictatorship.
18. **Proposed Establishment of a SADC Parliament**

The Plenary Assembly recalled that the establishment of the SADC Parliament was envisaged in line with its Constitution and the decision of the SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government of 1997. The Plenary Assembly therefore unanimously resolved to accelerate the pace for the expeditious establishment of the SADC Parliament by Summit in close consultation with the other SADC organs. The contribution that will be made by the SADC Parliament would be pivotal in accelerating the implementation of SADC programmes and in multiplying the direct benefits of regional cooperation to the people by Parliaments and parliamentarians throughout the region as well as contributing to peace building, democratic governance, gender equality and the harmonisation of regional laws. The Assembly undertook to intensify consultations on the mandate, composition, relations with other SADC organs and the Pan African Parliament, funding arrangements and modalities for the overall transformation of the Forum into a Parliament.
19. The establishment of a SADC Parliament was overdue since most SADC organs were created in the 1990s and in the light of the decision to establish the Pan African Parliament, which envisages anchoring with regional parliaments. The Plenary benefited from briefings from the Speaker of the ECOWAS Community Parliament (which was established in the year 2000) as well from the East African Legislative Assembly.
20. The Plenary Assembly also approved its budget for the year 2003/2004. The Assembly expressed satisfaction that the current modest contributions by member Parliaments cover the core operations of the Forum.
21. In line with its Engendering Parliaments programme, the Plenary Assembly approved the establishment of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus as a Standing Committee of the SADC Parliamentary Forum. Pursuant to this resolution, the Constitution of the SADC Parliamentary Forum will be amended to provide for an additional female Member (Chairperson of the National Women's Parliamentary Caucus) from each of the Member Parliaments. Excluding the Presiding Officer, this brings the 50% the minimum number of female representatives each parliament may elect to the SADC Parliamentary Forum.
22. The Assembly expressed appreciation to the donors who continue to fund some of its programme activities as well as the institutions that continue to cooperate with the Forum. In this regard, the Plenary Assembly welcomed the address by the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Hon. Denis Marshall, who addressed the Plenary Assembly

alongside several representatives of other regional and international organisations.

23. The Plenary Assembly unanimously thanked the President of the Republic of Zambia, the Speaker and Members of the Parliament and staff; and the people of Livingstone and Zambia as a whole for the warm welcome extended to the delegates.
24. The 15<sup>th</sup> session of the Plenary Assembly will be held in Maseru, Lesotho in November 2003.

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**Dr. Kasuka Mutukwa**  
**Secretary General**  
**Done at Livingstone, Zambia**  
**3 May 2003**