



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

REPORT

OF THE

**ZAMBIAN DELEGATION TO THE 54TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION OF THE
SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM , HOSTED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OF MAURITIUS IN PORT LOUIS, MAURITIUS, FROM 22ND TO 26TH
NOVEMBER, 2023**

**THEME: “THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN PROMOTING COORDINATION
FOR ENHANCED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RECOVERY PLANNING
IN THE SADC REGION”**

FOR THE THIRD SESSION OF THE THIRTEENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Published by the National Assembly of Zambia

FOREWORD

Honourable Madam Speaker, your delegation to the 54th Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC–PF), hosted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Mauritius in Port Louis, Mauritius, from 22nd to 26th November, 2023, has the honour to present its Report for the Third Session of the Thirteen National Assembly.

Plenary Assembly is an important calendar event for the SADC–PF, and the theme for the 54th Session was “*The Role of Parliaments in Promoting Coordination for Enhanced Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery Planning in the SADC Region.*”

A symposium, on the theme was held to enhance the capacity of Member of Parliaments to prepare for natural disasters from a multi-sectoral approach and to ensure a swift recovery that does the least damage to national economies. Plenary Assembly also adopted the Report of the Executive Committee on Policy and Administrative Matters and the Report on Financial Matters or the Treasurer’s Report, which dealt with a multiplicity of policy, administrative and financial matters of the Forum, including the transformation of the Forum into a SADC Regional Parliament. Other Reports considered and approved include the Standing Committee Reports and Members’ Motions.

Honourable Madam Speaker, the Delegation wishes to express its gratitude to you, and the Office of the Clerk of the National Assembly for the guidance and support rendered to it during the 54th Plenary Assembly Session.

Hon. Princess Kasune, MP
MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION

December 2023
LUSAKA

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1.0 MEMBERSHIP OF THE DELEGATION

The Delegation comprised the Rt. Hon. Nelly B K Mutti, MP, FAPRA (Leader of the Delegation); Hon. Princess Kasune, MP; Mrs Mutinta C Mazoka, MP; Ms Julien Nyemba, MP; Mr Kalalwe Mukosa, MP; Mr Victor Lumayi, MP; Mr Roy Ngulube, Clerk; Mr Sage Samuwika, Executive Assistant to the Hon Madam Speaker; Mr Dominic Mwinamo, Executive Assistant to the Clerk; Mr Temwa Nyirenda, Deputy Principal Clerk – Public and International Relations; Ms Carolyn Silenga, Aide-de-Camp; Ms Ifoma Mulewa, Research Officer; and Ms Betty Zulu, SADC–PF Desk Officer (Secretary to the Delegation).

2.0 BACKGROUND

Disaster and climatic risks were unprecedentedly on the increase with immense adverse impact on the ecosystem, food and water security, livelihoods and people’s lives. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, had, over the last decade experienced a number of climate-related hazards such as drought, dry spells, floods, and extreme temperatures, resulting in unparalleled casualty counts and unforeseen economic shocks.

Many SADC Member countries had subscribed to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2023) which aimed to provide a new perspective to disaster management by motivating for a pro-active rather than reactive approach to the onset of disasters, be it natural or man-made. The Sendai Framework *inter alia* envisioned reducing the global disaster mortality rate; mitigating economic loss that affected global Gross Domestic Product (GDP); and ensuring that countries were equipped with local and national risk reduction strategies.

According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, “*every dollar spent reducing risks can save fifteen in post-disaster recovery costs. Every dollar invested in making infrastructure disaster-resilient saves four that would otherwise have to be spent rebuilding.*”

Accordingly, Parliaments were at a vantage point with regard to monitoring measures for disaster risk reduction, especially that the constitutional functions of Parliaments empowered them to hold Governments to account on progress made regarding investments in Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Planning. It was thus of paramount importance that national Parliaments worked together with the Executive to domesticate Disaster Risk Reduction Frameworks such as the Sendai Framework as well as other environmental guidelines issued by the international community. This was in line with Parliament’s inherent role to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

Therefore, as institutions at the apex of the State, Parliaments had the mandate to enact enabling legislation and exercise consistent oversight in order to reduce inequalities and support gender mainstreaming in climate change responses such that disaster preparedness became an inclusive process for both men and women. Further, Parliaments should look into the existence of disaster risk reduction legislation, the establishment of a focal point for disaster management, the setting up of multi-stakeholder committees, the evaluation of departmental plans and programmes to deal with post-recovery well as the timeliness of interventions by emergency services, among others.

In view of the foregoing, the 54th Plenary Assembly deliberated on the regional aspect of disaster risk reduction and exchanged lessons and best practices on the consolidation of disaster reduction regimes and obstacles encountered, particularly that the geographical region was likely to face weather events of similar nature.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives and expected outcomes of the 54th Plenary Assembly of the SADC–PF were to:

- (a) promote inter-parliamentary cooperation, diplomacy and solidarity amongst SADC Member Parliaments, and celebrate the SADC identity;
- (b) take stock of the legislative frameworks for Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Planning;
- (c) deliberate on the role of Parliaments in ensuring Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Planning within SADC countries, including by domestication of the Sendai Framework;
- (d) consider avenues of cooperation between SADC parliaments to improve on existing regional frameworks for Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Planning;
- (e) commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25th November, 2023, and to discuss the importance of women’s participation in formulating Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Planning policies;
- (f) consider and approve Reports of Standing Committees, the Regional Women Parliamentary Caucus and other organs of the Forum;
- (g) consider motions and statements by Members of Parliament that were in line with the theme of the Plenary Assembly; and
- (h) promote inter-parliamentary policy among SADC member Parliaments with respect to shared values and common goals.

4.0 ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OR AFFIRMATION

New Members of the Forum from the Parliaments of Botswana, the Seychelles and Zimbabwe, took Oath and/or Affirmation of Adherence in line with Article 8(4) of the SADC–PF Constitution.

5.0 OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY

In her welcome remarks, H.E the Secretary General of the SADC–PF, Ms Boemo Sekgoma, expressed gratitude to the host country for the excellent logistical arrangements put in place for the delegates, and highlighted the importance of the Assembly concluding a productive year that concluded the Forum’s Strategic Plan (2019-2023). Ms Boemo stated that the Strategic Plan had been successfully implemented with the full support and active engagement of member Parliaments and all stakeholders, whose strategic efforts had been a commendable feat.

The Chairperson of the Regional Women’s Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC), Ms Regina Esparon, observed that the theme for the 54th Plenary Assembly was appropriate in the given circumstances as Southern Africa was among the most vulnerable regions in the world to

frequent and catastrophic disasters. She noted that climate change affected people, but not equally because during climate crises, women and girls experienced the greatest impact, which was amplified by pre-existing gender inequalities.

Ms Esparon said that it was encouraging that SADC had adopted the Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Plan and Plan of Action (2020-2030), adding that the Strategic Plan and Plan of Action was a critical statement that Member States needed to keep in the forefront of their deliberations because it recognised that the regional approach was justifiable as disasters did not respect territorial boundaries. In that regard, she called on Member States to galvanise efforts to collect information about disasters and disseminate it among multi-stakeholders to strengthen coordination mechanisms between institutional and legislative frameworks.

The President of the SADC–PF and Speaker of the National Assembly of Seychelles, Hon. Roger Mancienne, noted that the theme for the Plenary Assembly offered a significant platform for Members Parliaments to engage in comprehensive discussions and exchange insights regarding the pressing issue of climate change. He noted that it was incontestable that climate events had been having devastating effects on the lives of SADC citizens, with vulnerable groups, such as women and children, being the most severely affected.

The President called on Member Parliaments to renew their dedication to the principles of democracy, regional cooperation and peace to make a profound impact on the lives of the people of SADC and contribute to a more prosperous and harmonious Southern Africa.

In his remarks, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Mauritius, Hon Soorojdev Phokeer, GCSK., GOSK., stated that Mauritius had had its own share of challenges related to natural disasters, particularly flash floods, landslides and cyclones, which had caused significant damage. The Speaker observed that climate-related extreme catastrophes had become a growing concern for many countries in recent years due to on-going effects of climate change, and the unpredictable and extreme weather events were disrupting daily lives and causing significant damages to infrastructure and having a toll on the economies of the affected countries.

He added that in that regard, the theme for the 54th Plenary Assembly, which was cross-cutting with climate change and disaster preparedness, demonstrated, clearly, the trans-boundary nature of certain regional issues, which required parliamentarians of different jurisdictions to deliberate and exchange views for an enhanced and informed parliamentary delivery at the national level.

In his keynote address, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, and Leader of the House in the National Assembly of Mauritius, Hon. Dr. Pravind Kumar JUGNAUTH, acknowledged that occasions such as the 54th Plenary Assembly underscored the fact that while Members represented their respective countries and national Parliaments, they were united by a shared commitment to promote regional cooperation and solidarity in line with the SADC Agenda.

The Prime Minister observed the critical role that Parliaments played in addressing the growing challenges posed by natural disasters and climate change in the SADC region, including cyclones, droughts and floods, which had tragically claimed numerous lives and destroyed

property. He further emphasised that Parliaments, as institutions that were entrusted with the solemn duty to not only enact laws and shape public policies, but also to allocate resources judiciously, were central to addressing the challenges of disaster risk management, climate mitigation, and adaptation.

The Prime Minister reiterated that Parliaments had a central role in establishing and strengthening the vital link between Governments and the citizens they served. Therefore, the SADC–PF, as the apex regional parliamentary body, was an indispensable platform for advancing parliamentary cooperation in the SADC region. The Prime Minister urged the delegates to the 54th Plenary Assembly to formulate resolutions that would contribute to creating a safer SADC region; one that was conscious of the importance for climate change governance and disaster preparedness.

In conclusion, the Prime Minister restated the unwavering commitment by Mauritius to the principles and values of the SADC–PF, as the apex inter-parliamentary body of the region.

In delivering the Vote of Thanks, Hon Carolina Cerqueira, Speaker of the National Assembly of Angola, and Host for the 55th Plenary Assembly Session, reiterated the need for enhancing regional capacity to improve gender responsive risk reduction to mitigate the severity of impact especially on women and girls.

The Speaker expressed sincere gratitude to the National Assembly of Mauritius for hosting the 54th Plenary Assembly and the Mauritian Government for its hospitality and for all the necessary arrangements to ensure that delegates had a memorable meeting. As Host for the 55th Plenary Assembly Session, Hon Carolina Cerqueira pledged to choreograph a memorable Session.

6.0 SYMPOSIUM ON THE THEME “*THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN PROMOTING COORDINATION FOR ENHANCED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RECOVERY PLANNING IN THE SADC REGION*”

During the symposium, the President of the SADC–PF and Speaker of the National Assembly of Seychelles, Hon Roger Mancienne, gave the keynote address and indicated that the vulnerability of the SADC region and the globe as a whole was what necessitated Parliaments to ensure that there was investment in disaster preparedness. In that regard, Parliaments should expeditiously appropriate funds to address disasters, catalyze constituents to embrace recovery plans and to echo the voices of the affected people in these plans.

The President emphasised that the aspect of working on disasters was mandatory because it was evidently clear that there was a significant increase in the frequency of natural disasters. He called on Parliaments to apply planning processes to disasters before they actually happened. He mentioned that the symposium’s discussions on managing disasters required actionable outcomes such as strengthening coordination of interventions that were aimed at addressing disasters in the SADC region by identifying and harnessing expertise that could shape the destiny of the region’s response to disasters.

The Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management of the Republic of Mauritius, Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo, chaired the symposium session. Presentations were made as follows:

(a) Dr Prithviraj Booneedy, Acting Director of the Mauritius Meteorological Services

The presenter explained that Mauritius was prone to floods and storms in some parts but was also facing rising temperatures with decreased rainfall in other areas, which increased the chances of cyclone weathers. Hence, the meteorological department was investing in early warning systems and climate service; technology-cooperation metrological observation network; weather forecasting and warning capabilities, among others. The presenter shared some of the best practices as being improving its resilience; promoting timely information and better service delivery; enhancing the metrological observation networks; constant capacity building of staff; timely dissemination of warning to stakeholders such as media, among others.

The presenter further shared that the Mauritius Metrological Services was working on enhancing meteorological observations network, warning and forecasting capabilities; and upgrading infrastructure as well as modelling capabilities, to better understand the storm surges model and invest in limited area modelling.

(b) Mr Jacques Rudy Oh-Seng, Senior Environment Officer, Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, Department of Climate Change

The presenter highlighted the role of parliamentarians in promoting coordination for enhanced disaster risk reduction and recovery planning in the SADC region. Some of the roles that the presentation highlighted were the need to advocate for adherence and compliance to international and regional agreements and promote domestication of the various international commitments. The presenter also shared some strategic documents and policy instruments.

There was need, therefore, for parliamentarians to enact new legislation, and amend the pre-existing pieces on climate change. The presenter indicated that parliamentarians should ensure that funds were invested into climate change and ensure that the implementation was tracked to ensure adherence.

(c) Mr Aneerood Sookhareea, Officer of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre (NDRRMC)

The presenter highlighted that Mauritius was prone to more than forty-one disasters such as flooding, storm surges, strong winds, cyclones, landslides, tsunamis, debris flow, coastal erosion, sugarcane fire, among others.

Further, the presenter highlighted the main activities that Mauritius was implementing to manage and reduce disasters, including community trainings, which were aimed at inculcating a culture of risk reduction within the population and building the capacity to

respond to disasters; simulation exercises that were focused on enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response; awareness and sensitisation, especially in disaster prone areas; Emergency Planning; Maritime accidents preparedness; and National multi-hazard emergency alert systems.

Further, Plenary Assembly was informed that the institution had a disaster-related database that helped to track the risk of the country toward disasters.

7.0 COUNTRY REPORT ON PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISIONS BY THE 53RD PLENARY ASSEMBLY HELD IN ARUSHA, UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, FROM 2ND TO 8TH JULY, 2023

Plenary Assembly received country reports detailing progress made on the implementation of the Resolutions of the 53rd Plenary Assembly. It was gratifying to note the efforts being made by the various Parliaments towards ensuring that the resolutions were addressed at national level. Zambia reported as follows:

On the Resolution for Member States to enhance gender-sensitive investments in adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building initiatives, Zambia reported that she had been providing gender-sensitive social protection to reduce vulnerabilities and poverty in communities, including capacity building in communities with regard to adaptation, mitigation and use of modern technology to improve lives. Further, various social protection programmes had been designed and implemented to address the needs of vulnerable girls and boys, women and men thus, contributing to the eradication of child marriage and gender-based violence.

On the resolution calling for SADC Member States to develop and implement strategies for awareness and dissemination of messages in the prevention of gender-based violence and child marriage by developing advocacy materials which were adapted to local languages for better assimilations, Zambia reported that with the support from UN Agencies and other co-operating partners, she had been implementing the Global Programme to End Child Marriage (GPECM), using Community Level Case Management Approach, to ensure that children were protected from such harmful practices. The Community Case Management Approach was used to identify vulnerable children and adolescents in communities and link them to appropriate support and services such as healthcare services.

Further, the reintroduction of the free education and re-entry policy frameworks from primary to secondary level had ensured that more children accessed education and stayed in school for them to have a better future as opposed to being married off. The Keeping Girls in School Programme also ensured that poor and vulnerable girls were educated as opposed to being married off at a tender age. Zambia was also implementing a programme to coach and groom 'Boys into Men' in selected rural parts of the country where levels of harmful practices such as gender-based violence and child marriage were high. The programme was a model where boys were engaged through sports to develop healthy relationships with others, including women and girls.

Furthermore, sensitisation campaigns had been conducted in communities on the dangers of gender-based violence and community dialogue had been promoted targeting key community

gatekeepers such as traditional and religious leaders, men, women, girls, and boys focusing on rights of children, alternatives to child marriage and positive gender norms.

The 53rd Plenary Assembly had also resolved that Member States should ensure that SADC citizens, especially those in rural areas, had access to clean energy such as gas and solar to eliminate the use of unsustainable sources of energy such as Charcoal and firewood, which indiscriminately destroyed forests. Zambia reported that the Government, through the Ministry responsible for energy, had prioritised sustainable and clean energy to constitute the majority share of the energy mix.

It was reported that to improve the use and availability of clean renewable energy technologies, the Government had been reviewing and developing various supportive policies, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks, including the Renewable Energy Feed in Tariff, the Global Energy Transfer Feed in Tariff Strategy, the Grid Code, the Distribution Grid Code, development of mini-grid regulations and the bio-fuels blending mandates.

Other interventions included *inter alia* the ones below.

- a) **ElectriFi (2019—2025)** – The EU-supported financing mechanism was aimed at supporting market development and private sector initiatives for affordable, sustainable and reliable energy solutions.
- b) **Alternatives to Charcoal (2021—2026)** – The USAID-supported programme aimed to reduce deforestation related to the production of charcoal. This intervention used a market-driven approach to catalyse a shift in household cooking away from charcoal towards private sector-led low emissions technologies and fuels.
- c) **Electricity Services Access Project (2018—2023)** – The World Bank-supported initiative addressed existing regulatory impediments for private sector participation in off-grid electrification, capacity building for key institutions and the design and potential piloting of financial mechanisms to support private sector-led electrification through renewable energy mini-grids and standalone solar systems.

Member States were also urged to ensure the provision of reliable electrical energy and internet connectivity infrastructure. Zambia reported that through the Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA), it had implemented various projects that were aimed at providing internet connectivity infrastructure in un-served and under-served areas, most of which were rural areas. Specifically, ZICTA had taken measures to improve the internet connectivity infrastructure by embarking on a project to construct mobile communication towers in un-served and under-served parts of the country. A gap analysis for communication infrastructure undertaken by the Authority established that 900 telecommunication towers are needed countrywide to attain 100 per cent universal population coverage. To this effect, a master plan had been devised to gradually roll-out the towers in phases. Using the Universal Access and Service Fund, 122 Towers were planned to be constructed between 2023 and 2024 with an additional 49 towers upgraded.

8.0 CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORTS OF THE REGIONAL WOMEN’S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS, STANDING COMMITTEES, AND MEMBERS’ MOTIONS

The 54th Plenary Assembly adopted the Reports of the Executive Committee; namely the Report on Policy and Administrative Matters and the Report on Financial Matters (Treasurer’s Report), which dealt with a multiplicity of policy, administrative and financial matters of the Forum, including the transformation of the Forum into a SADC regional Parliament.

With regard to the transformation of the Forum into a Regional Parliament, Plenary Assembly acknowledged the progress made towards signing of the Agreement Amending the SADC Treaty to establish the SADC Parliament. Plenary Assembly further approved that further lobbies with Heads of States and Government and other stakeholders be undertaken, with the facilitation of Hon. Speakers and Presiding Officers of Member Parliaments, to ensure that the required quorum of twelve Member States sign the Agreement to Amend the SADC Treaty establishing the SADC Parliament.

Plenary Assembly also reminded Member Parliaments of the standing resolution on the deployment of Election Observation Missions (EOMs), whereby Member Parliaments were to contribute for the cost of participation of their representatives, as they were critical in ensuring that democracy did not recede due to irregularities and unfairness.

Further, Plenary approved the Blueprint of the SADC–PF’s revamped Strategic Plan (2024-2028), which contained the essential features to be approved as matter of policy.

On the subject matter of resource mobilisation initiatives, Plenary appreciated and took note of the contributions from Sweden over the last years (2019-2023) as well as the Funding Agreement with Sweden, effective 1st November, 2023.

Plenary Assembly also considered the Treasurer’s Report, which highlighted the status of Member country contributions. As at 31st March, 2024, eight Member Parliaments, namely Botswana, Eswatini, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe had paid their contributions for the current financial year in full and had no outstanding balances. Plenary was requested to appreciate the commitment of Member Parliaments in ensuring that contributions were paid and to encourage those Parliaments with outstanding balances to settle as a matter of priority.

9.0 CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON POLICY AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS AND THE REPORT ON FINANCIAL MATTERS (TREASURER’S REPORT)

Plenary Assembly considered and approved Reports of the Regional Women’s Parliamentary Caucus and the Standing Committees, which held virtual public hearings from 11th to 18th October, 2023, on the theme “*Amplifying Citizens’ Voices in Regional Integration in Southern Africa: Bridging the Engagement Gap by bringing Parliament to the People*” as set out below.

9.1 Report of the Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth Development

Plenary Assembly adopted the recommendation that Member States should increase availability, accessibility, and utilisation of gender-based violence essential services such as referral structures and influence Governments to domesticate the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence. Plenary also adopted the submission that Member Parliaments should play a rightful oversight role in ensuring that SADC countries fully domesticated the SADC Model Laws Gender-Based Violence and Eradicating Child Marriage and protecting those already in Marriage.

Plenary Assembly also approved the recommendation that Member States should increase youth political participation and gender equality by reforming legislation so that it eliminated barriers to youth political participation within SADC countries and promoted gender balance in parliamentary representation by implementing quota systems or affirmative measures. Member Parliaments should, in this regard, provide platforms that were focused on youth policy discussions and consultations.

Plenary further approved the submission that Member States to establish mechanisms for cooperation, coordination and data management with neighboring countries in order to prevent trafficking in persons (TIP). Member States should ensure that child victims of trafficking were compensated and provided with adequate resources for social and rehabilitation services. Member States should, therefore, advocate for cross-border collaboration and harmonisation of laws to address TIP.

Plenary Assembly also approved the call on Member Parliaments to work with non-state actors to identify common places where child trafficking destinations existed at both national and international level as well as facilitate for capacity building and training of community structures and civil society organisations (CSOs) to enhance the prevention of TIP.

9.2 Report of the Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources

Plenary Assembly adopted the call by the Committee on Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources on SADC Member States to promote inclusivity and gender responsiveness towards climate change while at the same time implementing the Paris Agreement. Plenary also supported the recommendation for SADC Member States to secure resources for climate financing to repair damaged infrastructure and mitigate other climate change effects as well as come up with strategies to enhance the region's preparedness and responses to address the growing threat of droughts and flooding induced by climate change.

Plenary Assembly supported the call on SADC Member Parliaments to strengthen their parliamentary committees on natural resources to adequately exercise their mandate, particularly on climate change and to ensure that legal frameworks that compelled mining investors to consider environmental rehabilitation and regeneration were formulated.

9.3 Report of the Standing Committee on Democratisation, Governance and Human Rights

Plenary embraced the call on SADC Member States develop policies that effectively promoted women's active and meaningful participation in peace and security in line with United Nations resolutions advocating for the development, effective implementation, and continuous monitoring of national action plans aimed at advancing women's involvement in peace and security decisions.

Plenary supported the call for decisive measures to protect women in conflict situations, given their vulnerability, especially in Cabo Delgado, by combating terrorism in a gender-responsive manner and ensuring the incorporation of gender-sensitive approaches to address the unique challenges faced by women in conflict zones. Plenary further embraced the call for urgent and deliberate measures to encourage and facilitate youth participation in electoral processes by creating policies and frameworks that reflected the needs and concerns of young people and amplified their voices through organised platforms for engagement, and making electoral fees affordable for young people to enable their participation.

Further, the call for the region to immediately counter the recruitment of youth by rebel groups, and their susceptibility to violent extremism by offering enhanced educational and economic opportunities to engage them constructively was supported by Plenary Assembly.

Lastly, Plenary approved the recommendation for SADC Member States to prioritise discussions on the rapid development and deployment of autonomous weapon systems powered by Artificial Intelligence, recognising their potential risks to regional peace, security, and international humanitarian law.

9.4 Report of the Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes

Plenary Assembly embraced the call on Member States to invest more in climate change awareness campaigns, early warning systems and to come up with expeditious contingency plans whenever such calamities arose. This could be achieved if Member States collaborated with non-governmental organisations.

Further, Plenary approved the recommendation for national Parliaments in the region to devise strategies of attracting and retaining skilled education professionals; to invest in technical and vocational training programmes (TVET); as well as to review the education curricula since most curricula had become relics of the colonial legacy and out of sync with the demands of the modern world.

Lastly, Plenary supported the need to draw the attention of SADC Member States to the reality of the growing inter-linkages between sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), climate change and disaster risk reduction which had disproportionately affected women and girls.

9.5 Report of the Regional Women’s Parliamentary Caucus

Plenary Assembly welcomed the Regional Women’s Parliamentary Caucus Report which urged SADC Member States to devise mechanisms of bridging the digital gender gaps and empowering rural women by, among others: advocating for improved internet connectivity and infrastructure in rural areas; providing subsidies or loans to rural women to enable them to acquire affordable digital devices such as smart phones, tablets, or computers, to enable them to access online resources and services. Further, Member States should organise digital skills training programmes specifically for rural women to enable them to effectively use digital technologies.

Further, Plenary Assembly appreciated the prompting of SADC Member Parliaments to address the challenges encountered by epileptic women by, among others:

- (a) enacting anti-discrimination laws that protected epileptic women from all forms of gender-based violence so that they were not denied opportunities due to their condition in areas such as education, employment and vocational training; and
- (b) ensuring that women with epilepsy had access to affordable and comprehensive healthcare services, including affordable medication, especially in the Government-funded healthcare facilities;

Furthermore, Plenary hailed the Committee’s urge to SADC Member States to issue directives to all employment institutions in their respective countries to develop workplace policies on sexual harassment of women, and ultimately make laws with stiff penalties against perpetrators of sexual harassment in workplaces.

9.6 Report of the Regional Parliamentary Model Laws Oversight Committee

Plenary heard that SADC Member States needed to ratify and domesticate the SADC Protocols to ensure the harmonisation of laws in addressing issues of mutual interest in the SADC region. Hence, SADC Parliaments should push for the domestication of the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage and for the enforcement of the laws that are put in place at national level.

Plenary embraced the agreement to fast track the process of transforming the Forum to a SADC Parliament to ensure the full implementation of its programmes and initiatives; and requested the Secretariat to continue to request Member Parliaments to encourage Member countries to sign the Agreement Amending the SADC Treaty to give effect to the transformation of the Forum to a SADC Parliament and to continue in familiarising SADC Member Parliaments with SADC Protocols which were developed under the Treaty with a view of promoting regional integration by domestication and achieving a harmonisation of legal norms at national level.

9.7 Motion to Adopt the Report on BRICS and BRICS Parliamentary Forum

Namibia moved a Motion, which was seconded by Eswatini, that the 54th Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC-PF adopts the Report on BRICS and BRICS Parliamentary Forum.

Plenary Assembly was invited to note that during its chairmanship of the BRICS Co-operation and Mechanism in 2023, the South African Government successfully hosted the 15th BRICS Summit from 22nd to 24th August, 2023, under the theme “*BRICS and Africa Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism*” and the 9th BRICS Parliamentary Forum from 27th to 28th September, 2023, under the theme “*Harnessing Inclusive Multilateralism and Parliamentary Diplomacy to deepen BRICS and Africa Partnership for the Accelerated Implementation of African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)*.”

Plenary was invited to appreciate the resolution at the 15th BRICS Summit which encompassed the thematic area of the BRICS and Africa Partnership, namely;

- (a) developing a partnership that looks at equitable just transition;
- (b) transforming education and skills development for the future;
- (c) unlocking opportunities through the *AfCFTA*;
- (d) strengthening post pandemic socio-economic recovery and advancing progress towards the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development; and
- (e) strengthening multilateralism including the efforts towards substantial reforms of global governance institutions and enhancing meaningful participation of women in peace processes.

Plenary Assembly approved the call to encourage SADC Member States to actively explore collaboration opportunities within BRICS Member States and institutions, including BRICS new Development Bank towards the realisation of the development aspirations of SADC Vision 2050 and facilitate the acceleration of the implementation of the *AfCFTA*.

The Motion was resolved in the affirmative.

10.0 STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE SPEAKERS/ PRESIDING OFFICERS

10.1 Statement by the Vice President of the SADC-PF, Hon. Marie Joanne Sabrina Tour, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Marking of the Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

Plenary Assembly noted that the Forum had consistently advocated for the progressive empowerment of women at all levels, in view of eliminating patriarchal gender stereotypes and demystifying deep-seated taboos for women to be considered at par with men, especially in decision-making positions where they could make a difference.

Plenary was also invited to note that the Forum was in the process of adopting domestication strategies for the implementation of the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence, which was a landmark tool that demonstrated the legal, budgeting and administrative avenues available to reinforce the protection of women. The Forum recognised that violence against women, in any form, was brutish, unacceptable and incongruent with the contemporary social fabric and the aspirations of a modern society.

In this vein, the SADC-PF associated itself fully with the UNiTE Campaign which was focused on the need for Member States to invest to prevent violence against women and young girls. Consistent investments were necessary for gender-based violence to be eliminated by 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Agenda. Parliamentarians were, therefore, called upon to profusely act to legislate in favour of women protection and to hold Governments to account on the need for sustainability in anti-GBV measures that were responsive to the domestic context.

10.2 Statement by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia, Rt. Hon. Nelly B K Mutti, MP, FAPRA, on the Launch of the Book titled “*The Birth, Rise and Role of the SADC Parliamentary Forum in addressing Regional Issues*” by Dr Kasuka Simwinji Mutukwa (PhD)

The Rt. Hon. Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia rendered the statement on the launch of the Book authored by Dr Kasuka Simwinji Mutukwa (PhD) titled ‘*The Birth, Rise and Role of the SADC Parliamentary Forum in addressing Regional Issues.*’

The Hon Speaker placed on record sincere thanks to the Executive Committee of the SADC–PF for approving the request by the Zambian Parliament to have the Book launched during the 54th Plenary Assembly Session. She noted that Dr Mutukwa had contributed immensely to the setting up of the Forum as its first Secretary General, adding that Dr Musukwa’s Book was not only useful to Member Parliaments, but also to other users such as the academia, public service and the diplomatic service.

She observed that the launch of the Book could not have come at a better time than now when the Forum was at the verge of transforming into a Regional Parliament, a dream that had been desired since the Forum was established.

10.3 Statement by the Speaker of the Parliament of South Africa, Hon. Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, on Ending the War and Human Rights Abuses in the Gaza Strip, Pursuant to Rule 45 of the SADC-PF Rules of Procedure

Plenary Assembly was invited to express profound concern over the conflict that had engulfed Gaza, leading to unimaginable human trafficking. The loss of thousands of civilian lives, including women, children and the elderly, along with the displacement of millions of people and the destruction of vital public infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, churches and water facilities was a cause for immense distress.

The Hon. Speaker extended heartfelt condolences to the victims of the military attacks in the Gaza Strip and conveyed solidarity and sympathy to the Palestinian people who had endured blatant war crimes. She submitted that the SADC region was deeply concerned about the systematic mass killing, ethnic cleansing and forcible displacement of the Palestinian people, which contravened the fundamental human rights.

She urged the SADC region to unite with the broader international community in applying pressure to Israel to cease its military aggression.

11 RESOLUTIONS OF THE 54TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Set out hereunder are some of the resolutions of the 54th Plenary Assembly Session:

The 54th Plenary Assembly of the SADC Parliamentary Forum:-

EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN that global warming, which is *inter alia* induced by human activity, has led to devastating weather effects in Southern Africa and in other regions of the world, including slower effects such as the melting of ice caps, the erosion of beaches and the sinking of land;

RECOGNISED that extreme weather events damage physical infrastructure and impact socio-economic life; For instance the SADC region has been affected by several destructive cyclones including Cyclones Idai, Batsirai and Freddy, which recently caused extensive damage and hundreds of human casualties, and internally displaced persons;

ACKNOWLEDGED the strategies the international community is activating to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 Degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and that the goals in the Paris Agreement (2015) as well as progress reported at the Conference of Parties (COP) meetings remain highly relevant to enhance climate resilience;

However, **REALISED** that if no action is taken to drastically reduce carbon emissions, temperatures can rise as high as 3 Degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the end of the 21st Century, with every increment translating into more severe and extreme weather events;

AFFIRMING that to mitigate damage caused by extreme weather events in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, there is a need for a multi-sectoral approach whereby public and private stakeholders collaborate to save infrastructure and lives, and ensure that citizens are widely sensitised on disaster preparedness through regular awareness campaigns;

RECALLING that disaster preparedness is pivotal to achieving the Sustainable Agenda 2030 which has been subscribed to by most SADC nations since any progress made in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be lost due to natural calamities such as torrential rains, flash floods and landslides;

MINDFUL that during and in the aftermath of climate disasters, the weak and vulnerable segments of society are often disproportionately affected and lose shelter, clothing, food or even basic amenities, thus requiring the spontaneous response and assistance of authorities concerned; and

RECOGNISED the astounding progress made by the Republic of Mauritius, whereby governance on the matter has shifted from ‘managing disasters’ to ‘managing disaster risks’ which include proactive measures such as the setting up of Early Warning Systems, training of personnel in fire safety, first aid, water rescue activities and other emergency skills, as well as simulation exercises for oil spills and tsunamis.

Now, therefore, resolves to:

- (i) **COMMEND** the Republic of Mauritius, which is host of the 54th Plenary Assembly, for developing a National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Framework (2020-2030) as well as the Action Plan for the same period to consolidate climate resilience, in addition to enacting targeted legislation such as the Land Drainage Authority Act and the Climate Change Act;
- (ii) **URGE** countries to meet total financial needs for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), estimated at USD 6.5 billion, including USD 4.5 billion for adaptation and USD 2 billion for mitigation, since such early investments will save the world from damage in multi-fold figures in the future;
- (iii) **CALL UPON** Member Parliaments to develop new and enhance existing synergies with policymakers, academia, civil society organisations, traditional and faith leaders, community based organisations, youth representatives and other stakeholders to promote climate justice by reducing the carbon footprint through measures in line with the Paris Agreement regularly reported to the COP;
- (iv) **FURTHER CALL UPON** Member Parliaments to enact laws, adopt budgets, exercise consistent oversight and represent communities to enhance climate resilience in a way which mainstreams gender and ensures that the voices of women are heard in decision-making processes on disaster preparedness;
- (v) **UNDERSCORE** the importance of regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction and preparedness, especially since countries of the same geographical region witness similar weather patterns and are affected by similar climate events;
- (vi) **ENCOURAGE** Member States to share best practices, technology, contemporaneous weather data and lessons to promote disaster preparedness and risk reduction; and
- (vii) **INSTRUCT** the Secretariat of the SADC Parliamentary Forum to advocate for climate governance and disaster preparedness through its relevant Standing Committee.

The SADC–PF will make available the full dossier of the Plenary Assembly Resolutions in due course.

12.0 CONCLUSION

The President of the SADC–PF and Speaker of the National Assembly of Seychelles, Hon. Roger Mancienne, put on record his sincere thanks to the National Assembly of the Republic of Mauritius, led by Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, G.C.S.K., G.O.S.K, for graciously accepting to host the 54th Plenary Assembly Session. The President further conveyed the Plenary Assembly's gratitude, through Hon. Sooroojdev Phokeer, to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, and Leader of the House in the National Assembly of Mauritius, Hon. Dr. Pravind Kumar

JUGNAUTH for gracing the 54th Plenary Assembly Session and the people of Mauritius for the warm hospitality enjoyed by all delegates.

The 55th Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC–PF will be hosted by the Republic of Angola in July, 2024.

Hon. Princess Kasune, MP
MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION

December 2023
LUSAKA