REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO TO THE 59th SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM PLENARY ASSEMBLY, HELD IN THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI, ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE 58TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY, HELD IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, IN DECEMBER, 2025



PRESENTED BY

THE RIGHT HON. SPEAKER TLOHANG SEKHAMANE

1. INTRODUCTION

Hon. President, allow me to present the progress made by the Parliament of the Kingdom of Lesotho towards implementing the resolutions of the 58th Plenary Assembly Session that was held in December, 2025, in Durban, South Africa, on the theme: The Impact of Climate Change on Women and Youth in the SADC Region and the Role of Parliaments in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation. The Report is in line with the Secretary General's guidance letter of 1st June, 2026, which indicates that reports should focus mainly on the position of member countries in signing, ratification, accession, domestication and parliamentary oversight on 18 listed SADC instruments.

Right from the onset, I must confess, Hon. President, that in this Report, I have taken the liberty to elaborate briefly on some important instruments that do not relate directly to the 18 mentioned above.

2. PLENARY ASSEMBLY SYMPOSIUM

The Communique states as follows:

> *"The Plenary Assembly reaffirmed the critical interlinkages between climate change, health, and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), noting that climate-induced disasters disrupt healthcare systems, restrict access to essential SRHR services, and heighten risks of maternal mortality, gender-based violence, child marriage, and the spread of HIV/AIDS".*

Hon. President, in this regard, a few initiatives were made by the Parliament of the Kingdom of Lesotho on the linkages between climate change, SRHR, and other health services.

In the first place, the Women's Caucus tabled a report on the impact of climate change on sexual and reproductive healthcare and maternal services in two villages in the Mafeteng district. The Report, which was being debated when the House adjourned for winter recess, reveals that the SRHR- climate nexus remains under-addressed. It highlights the need to raise awareness among the Members of Parliament on the crucial link between Climate change and SRHR. The report further appeals to MPs to facilitate the enactment of a Climate Change bill with specific provisions on SRHR issues. It further urges MPs to advocate for policies and programmes that prioritise the needs of children and expectant mothers in climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

In addition, Hon President, in May this year, the National Assembly resolved to establish the Parliamentary Climate Change Caucus through a Motion sponsored by the National Women's Caucus. Following the adoption of the resolution, the SRHR Technical Working Group (TWG) convened to brainstorm on the structure, to determine the mandate and strategic direction of the Caucus; including its objectives, membership, governance arrangements, and areas of focus. The Technical Working Group also explored ways in which the Caucus can complement the objectives of the SRHR project by promoting the engagement of Parliament on issues that relate to climate change.

Furthermore, the office of the Clerk interacted with the focal point person for the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU's) global initiative on Enhancing Parliamentary Action on Climate Change: Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Reducing Methane Emissions. Following this interaction, the IPU Secretary General has formally invited the Parliament of Lesotho to participate in this initiative. Subsequently, the Parliament of Lesotho has designated one MP to participate in activities related to this initiative. So far he has participated in a few activities including the 153rd IPU Assembly side event (Workshop) which was intended to explore practical ways in which Parliaments can advance solutions to reduce methane emissions. He will soon participate in the upcoming IPU Meeting at the 31st UN Climate Change Conference (COP 31) to be held in Türkiye.

3. Resolutions Relating to the Executive Committee Report

3.1 SRHR Participating Parliaments to Report on Gains Made in Year 2 of the Project

Over the past year, the Parliament of Lesotho has made big strides in advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), gender equality, and human rights, through strengthened legislative engagement, parliamentary oversight, policy advocacy, capacity building, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. These efforts enhanced the understanding of the Members of Parliament with regard to SRHR, HIV/AIDS, gender equality, climate resilience, and human rights; while strengthening evidence-based and rights-based policy making.

A key area of progress in 2025 was the continued integration of SRHR into the climate change agenda, building on work initiated in 2024. In that year, Parliament examined the effects of climate change on access to essential health services, including contraception, antenatal and maternal care, and HIV services, particularly among vulnerable communities. Oversight visits to flood-prone areas and engagement with government and civil society partners helped identify policy gaps and advocate for the inclusion of SRHR and gender equality in national climate policies, including the proposed Climate Change Bill and Lesotho's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

The reporting period also recorded important legislative progress in strengthening human rights protection, notably through the passage of the Children's Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Act, which explicitly includes intersex children within the scope of legal protection. This milestone strengthens protection against discrimination; and reinforces the principles of equality, dignity, bodily autonomy, and equitable access to healthcare.

Overall, the SRHR Project has strengthened Parliament's capacity to advance rights-based legislation, evidence-informed oversight, and policy reform. The progress achieved demonstrates growing political commitment to integrating SRHR, gender equality, climate action, and human rights into Lesotho's legislative agenda and provides a strong foundation for continued reform and sustainable development.

3.2 Member Parliaments to Find Measures to Reduce Debt and to Report in the Next Plenary on Measures being Taken Nationally to Reduce Public Debt

In August 2025, Parliament enacted the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution Act. Section 15 compels the Minister of Finance to prepare an annual borrowing plan to be presented with the annual estimates for approval by Parliament, before the Government can contract any debt. In March this year, Parliament made history by adopting the first Annual Debt plan.

In addition, the Public Debt Management Bill is pending adoption in the National Assembly. The Bill intends to designate an authority vested with the power to borrow, repay and guarantee loans; and to establish debt management committees to enhance the management of public debt in the Kingdom. It is my fervent hope that this Bill will garner the support of Members and be passed soonest.

3.3 Member Parliaments to Pay Mandatory Contributions During the First Half of the Financial Year to Stabilise the Forum's Cash Flow Management (Treasurer's Report)

Hon. President, the Parliament of Lesotho strongly supports this resolution to enhance the sound fiscal management of the Forum. As a result, on 10th July our payment was processed and negotiations are ongoing with the Public Debt Department in the Ministry of Finance to effect payment in May of every year.

4. Resolutions on the Report of the Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes

4.1 National Parliaments to Appropriate Adequate Funds for Implementation of the Protocol on Health, and Enhance Oversight of National Health Budgets

Hon. President, the Parliament of Lesotho, through the Portfolio Committee on the Social Cluster and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), continues to execute its oversight mandate over the health budgets. In March this year, the Portfolio Committee on the Social Cluster interrogated the 2025/2026 budget performance report of the Ministry of Health before recommending its budget allocation for the Financial Year 2026/27. The Committee also conducted site visits to health clinics governed by a partner NGO in health, the Christian Health Association of Lesotho (CHAL) in the Southern Districts of Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing; and held several meetings with the Global Fund and other international partners, under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, to oversee domestic funding, strengthen the health system, and revamp the fight against TB and HIV/AIDS.

In addition, the PAC is currently interrogating the employees of our National Referral hospital, the Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital (QMMH), under the Ministry of Health, on alleged abuse of hospital funds.

Our hope is that the two Committees will soon table their reports in the House for consideration and resolutions.

4.2 Member States to Sign and Ratify the Protocol on Employment and Labour

Lesotho has signed the Protocol; but still remains to ratify it. Through informal engagements with the Ministry of Labour and Employment, it was established that legal hurdles that prevented the Ministry from ratifying some instruments on employment and labour related matters have just been resolved. Therefore, the Ministry is now in a position to ratify. Parliament will continue to engage the Ministry to ensure the prompt ratification of this Protocol.

5. Resolutions on the Report of the Standing Committee on Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment

5.1 Parliaments to Advocate for Ratification of SADC Instruments and Strengthen their Oversight through Requiring Timely Progress Reports from Governments on the Status of Ratification

Hon. President, our Parliament is in the process of reforming its reporting framework for accountability purposes before the Portfolio Committees. One of the proposals to be considered is to include the status of signing, ratification and domestication of international, continental and regional commitments.

5.2 Parliaments to Advocate for Harmonisation of Tax Policies

In this regard, the relevant Portfolio Committee has just completed consideration of the following Bills and will soon table its reports in the House:

- Value Added Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2026;
- Tax Administration Bill, 2026;
- Excise Bill, 2026 and the
- Customs Bill, 2026.

The intention is to harmonise and align them with best international practices and standards

6. Report of the Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Climate Action

Parliaments to Prioritise the Ratification of all Outstanding SADC Energy Protocols, and Enact National Laws in line with SADC Model Laws

Hon. President, just less than a year ago Parliament took full advantage of a meeting with the office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) and Legal Officers from the Public and Private sectors on legislative processes and encouraged these germane officers to use SADC Model Laws for reference whenever they draft Bills. As we speak, the Energy Bill is before the Portfolio Committee on Natural Resources for scrutiny. Amongst others, the Bill makes provision for the management, administration and regulation of the energy sector; the introduction of sustainable and affordable energy service and technologies; and promotion of renewable energy. The Committee is currently working jointly with OPC and the Ministry to initiate amendments.

7. Resolutions on the Report of the Regional Parliamentary Model Laws Oversight Committee (RPMLOC)

Parliaments to Capacitate the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and Relevant Officers from Line Ministries on Issues of Procedure and Domestication Processes

Hon. President, I just mentioned in paragraph 6 above, that the Parliament of Lesotho participated in a session convened by the OPC; and that our Parliament continues to work hand in hand with the OPC.

8. Resolutions on the Report of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus

Parliaments Develop Inclusive Platforms and Establish Cross-party Coalitions on Climate Action Caucus

Hon. President, as mentioned under 2 above, in May this year the Parliament of Lesotho resolved to establish a Parliamentary Climate Change Caucus.

9. Resolutions on the Report of the Joint Session of the Standing Committees of the SADC PF

Member Parliaments should Advocate for the Adoption and Legislation of the SADC SRHR Strategy; Harmonise Relevant Laws to Provide for the Age of Marriage and Consent to 18 and Reform Laws to Protect Women and Adolescents from Harmful Practices

Parliament has passed the Children's Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Bill, and the Bill will soon receive Royal Assent. The Bill has provisions that are aligned with the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage. The Bill, which in line with the provisions of the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution Act, defines a child as someone below the age of 18, prohibits child betrothal and child marriage and clearly states that "religion, culture, custom, ethnicity or nationality shall not be a defence for child marriage". It further protects children against all forms of violence.

10. CONCLUSION:

Mr. President, I have two points by way of a conclusion. First, I would like to re-iterate the words of gratitude to our Secretariat for their unrelenting and selfless efforts in pushing forward the agenda of the Parliament of our subcontinent; and in this regard, to commend and thank in a very special manner, the able team led by Hon. Adv. Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo, Speaker of the Parliament of Zimbabwe, for making impressive and laudable strides towards our lofty vision of transforming this Forum into a Regional Parliament.

Second, and closely related, Hon. President, I wish to indicate the unequivocal commitment of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the principles, ideals and tenets of the SADC Parliamentary Forum; and to pledge that where possible,

we will always implement the Resolutions of the Plenary Assemblies, to ensure that the commitments we make are translated into actions that improve the livelihoods of the people of Southern Africa.

I so submit Hon. President.

And I thank you all for your kind attention.

…….