WELCOME STATEMENT

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

HON SPEAKER RANDRIANASOLONIAIKO SITENY THIERRY

59TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION

HOSTED BY

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI

20 TO 27 NOVEMBER 2026

THEME: *"HARNESSING POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, PROGRESSIVE CULTURE AND DATA TO ACCELERATE THE ERADICATION OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE SADC REGION."*

PROTOCOL/SALUTATIONS

- **HONOURABLE RUSSELL MMISO DLAMINI,** HIS EXCELLENCY, THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI, OUR GUEST OF HONOUR,
- **HONOURABLE SYLVIA ISAKS,** VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA,
- **SENATOR PASTOR LINDIWE DLAMINI,** PRESIDENT OF THE ESWATINI SENATE,
- **HONOURABLE JABULANI C. MABUZA, MP,** SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AND HOST SPEAKER,
- DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS, PRESIDING OFFICERS AND HEADS OF DELEGATION FROM SADC MEMBER PARLIAMENTS,
- HONOURABLE MINISTERS,
- **HER EXCELLENCY MS BOEMO SEKGOMA,** SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM,
- **SENATOR DR. LINDA LORRAINE NXUMALO,** CHAIRPERSON OF THE REGIONAL WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS AND THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS OF ESWATINI,
- HONOURABLE DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND HONOURABLE DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI,
- HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FROM SADC NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS,
- HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF BOTH HOUSES OF THE ESWATINI PARLIAMENT,
- DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE BOARD,

- **COUNCILLOR COMFORT HLOPHE,** HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR OF EZULWINI,

- THEIR EXCELLENCIES, MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,

- CLERKS AND SECRETARIES GENERAL OF MEMBER PARLIAMENTS,

- **MS. THEMBELA MSIBI,** REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA YOUTH PARLIAMENT,
- REPRESENTATIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE, CIVIL SOCIETY,

- THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS,
- DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,

- OBSERVERS AND MEMBERS OF THE FOURTH ESTATE,

- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, it is my great pleasure to warmly welcome you to the Kingdom of Eswatini for the 59th Plenary Assembly Session.

We are honoured to be guests of His Majesty King Mswati III, Ingwenyama of the Kingdom of Eswatini, and we meet in his Kingdom with humility and appreciation.

Eswatini is a land of peace, warm hospitality and proud tradition. In the Incwala and the Umhlanga, the Emaswati show that culture is a living inheritance, carried forward with pride. Under His Majesty's guidance, this heritage has remained strong and visible, and our region is richer for it. The song Njiloni reminds me of a nation that holds its own with dignity and hands it on whole to the next generation.

Hon Speaker Jabulani Mabuza, we welcome the care and warmth with which the Parliament of Eswatini and the Local Organising Committee have received us. Thank you.

I extend a warm welcome to all Honourable Members and Presiding Officers. Thank you for travelling to be here. Your presence and commitment give this Forum its meaning.

The SADC Parliamentary Forum is a family of national parliaments. Parliaments are the voice of the people. Through the Forum, we learn from one another, share good practices and find common solutions for our region.

Our theme, "Harnessing Political Leadership, Progressive Culture and Data to Accelerate the Eradication of Child Marriage in the SADC Region", speaks to an urgent issue. Child marriage limits the education, health and future of our girls. As Parliaments, we pass laws, approve budgets and oversee government action. Let us use these powers, guided by good data, to protect the girl child and serve the best interests of every child.

Parliament is also a pillar of democracy, so we must look honestly at our own role. Strong democracy rests on peaceful transfers of power, the rule of law, transparency, accountability and citizen participation. These build stability, attract investment and create jobs for our youth.

On the leadership of Parliaments, I recall the words of Nelson Mandela: *"Real leaders must be ready to sacrifice all for the freedom of their people."* May we lead in that spirit, putting the interests of our citizens first.

In conclusion, let us make this Plenary Assembly a place of honest debate and practical decisions. Let us leave Eswatini with a firm resolve to protect our girls, strengthen democracy and serve the people of our region. We have only just arrived, and already we feel at home. I wish you fruitful deliberations and an enjoyable stay. You are most welcome.