SYMPOSIUM

Sunday, 22 November 2026

09h00–13h00

Ezulwini Palazzo, Kingdom of Eswatini

OPENING ADDRESS BY HON. RANDRIANASOLONIAIKO SITENY THIERRY, RESIDENT OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM, DURING THE SYMPOSIUM ON THE THEME OF THE 59TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY: "HARNESSING POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, PROGRESSIVE CULTURE AND DATA TO ACCELERATE THE ERADICATION OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE SADC REGION" ON 22 NOVEMBER 2026 AT PALAZO, EZULWINI, KINGDOM OF ESWATINI

Salutations
Honourable Minister and Chairperson of this Session;
Honourable Speakers and Members of Parliament;
Distinguished Representatives of Government,
Traditional And Religious Leaders, Civil Society, Youth and the Private Sector;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. It is a pleasure to welcome you to this Symposium. We are pleased to return to the country where, ten years ago, the SADC PF adopted the Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage.

2. Honourable Members, child marriage continues to deny many children, especially girls, their right to education, good health and a better future. While progress has been made, much remains to be done. Our challenge is to ensure that the commitments we made ten years ago bring real change to the lives of our children.

3. Our theme reminds us that ending child marriage requires political leadership, positive cultural values and reliable data. As parliamentarians, we must strengthen our laws, provide resources and hold governments accountable. We must also work with traditional and religious leaders, families and

communities to change harmful practices while promoting the positive values of our cultures.

4. I am particularly pleased that we will also launch the Regional Child Marriage Monitoring Dashboard, an important tool that will help our Parliaments track progress, identify gaps and strengthen accountability. Our success must be measured not only by the laws we pass, but by the children whose lives we protect.

5. Distinguished delegates, I encourage everyone to contribute openly and help us agree on practical recommendations for our Parliaments and governments. The next ten years must bring greater progress in ensuring that every child has the opportunity to grow, learn and fulfil their potential.

6. I wish you fruitful deliberations and hereby declare this Symposium officially open.

I thank you.