REPORT OF THE PAN AFRICAN PARLIAMENT (PAP) 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PARLIAMENTS; MIDRAND, SOUTH AFRICA: 31ST JULY AND 1ST AUGUST 2026 – IMPLICATIONS ON THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Pan African Parliament (PAP) convened its 2026 Annual Conference of Speakers of African National and Regional Parliaments at the seat of the PAP in Midrand, South Africa, on 31st July and 1st August 2026. The Conference was convened under the overarching leitmotif**,**

"The Role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in Strengthening Relations with National and Regional Parliaments and Contributing to the Achievements of the Objectives of Agenda 2063."

1.2 The Conference drew participation from Speakers of Parliament from across the Continent, representatives from Regional and inter-Parliamentary Organisations and former Presidents of the August Assembly to deliberate on matters relating to the role of parliamentary diplomacy in advancing continental integration and strengthening cooperation among Africa's legislative institutions.

1.3 As the Pan-African Parliament's principal consultative forum with national and regional Parliaments, the Annual Conference of Speakers of National and Regional Parliaments provided an opportunity to reinforce collaboration in support of the objectives of the African Union and Agenda 2063 – **"The Africa We Want."**

1.4 It was an honour and privilege for me to be elected President of the Bureau of the Conference of Speakers. Accordingly, I assumed the seat as President of the Conference and presided over the 2-day Conference.

1.5 This report provides moves beyond the banality of a mere narrative of events to provide an analytical review of the PAP 2026 Annual Conference of Speakers of National and Regional Parliaments by focussing on structural intersections, strategic lessons, and actionable recommendations critical to the SADC Parliamentary Forum and its 59th Plenary Assembly.

2.0 CRITICAL ISSUES FOR THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

2.1 The deliberations and outcomes of the 2026 PAP Speakers' Conference directly impact on regional governance and legislative harmonization within the SADC region. The most pressing issues include:

2.1.1 The "Implementation Deficit" and Legislative Action: The conference identified a chronic continental lacuna between visionary policy frameworks, including but not limited to, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and actual implementation of the stated objectives. For SADC PF, this underscores the urgency of shifting from aspirational resolutions to action - oriented outcomes if the Forum is to remain relevant to the SADC citizenry whom we are called to serve.

2.1.2 Institutionalization of the Speakers' Conference: The formal institutionalization of the Annual Conference of Speakers as the highest consultative platform between the PAP and regional parliaments entails that SADC PF member Parliaments must systematically align regional resolutions with continental mandates.

2.1.3 Adoption of PAP Model Laws: PAP unveiled three new model laws on Gender Equality, Labour Migration, and Sustainable Soil Management, adding to existing normative frameworks. SADC PF faces the strategic challenge of domesticating and harmonizing these instruments across Southern Africa without duplicating or conflicting with existing SADC model laws. Doubtless, there is scope for synergistic collaboration with the PAP in developing normative frameworks that will elicit regional and continental support in benchmarking our municipal laws and improving the legislative and policy environment.

2.1.4 The Malabo Protocol Bottleneck: A major structural hurdle highlighted at the conference is the sluggish ratification rate of the Malabo Protocol with only 15 out of the required 28 ratifications achieved over a decade. Because full PAP legislative powers depend on this Protocol, SADC national parliaments carry a direct responsibility to contribute to unlocking this political logjam, especially in view of the fact that none of the SADC Parliaments have ratified the Protocol. We should also draw instructive lessons from the challenges that the PAP has faced in our own quest for transformation into a SADC Regional Parliament. The progress that we have made to date attests to the latent power of perseverance, the astuteness to compromise and change course where necessary while remaining resolutely committed to the goal of transformation. In the words of the former U.S. Army General and 65th United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, **"Leaders honor their core values, but they are flexible in how they execute them."**[1]

2.1.5 Continental Parliamentary Networks: The conference resolved to establish specialized continental networks spanning peace and security, trade, climate change, public finance, and digital transformation. SADC PF must strategically position its existing Standing Committees within these networks to maximize influence.

3.0 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE PAP SPEAKERS' CONFERENCE

3.1 Reviewing the Midrand proceedings offers vital insights for the SADC Parliamentary Forum:

i. **Parliamentary Diplomacy as an Equal Pillar:** Executive diplomacy has historically dominated African foreign policy. The conference established that parliamentary diplomacy is an indispensable, parallel pillar of governance that can actively mitigate regional conflicts and bridge diplomatic impasses.

ii. **Sovereignty versus Integration Realism:** Resistance to the Malabo Protocol is rooted in genuine national sovereignty concerns and cost implications regarding the direct election of PAP members by universal suffrage. Lessons show that continental bodies cannot bypass national executive-legislative consensus. Therefore, proactive engagement with Ministries of Foreign Affairs is vital and unavoidable.

[1] The Thompson Executive Leadership Lessons from Collin Powell. https://schoolleadership.net/project/colin-powells-lessons/. Accessed 17 No. 2026.

iii. **Structured Accountability Frameworks:** Declarations fail when lacking follow-through mechanisms. PAP's introduction of a voluntary monitoring framework requiring national parliaments to submit Annual Implementation Reports and making model law domestication a standing agenda item, provides a benchmark for how SADC PF can encourage accountability among member Parliaments.

iv. **The Nexus of Peace, Trade, and Climate:** Global shocks such as food insecurity, climate vulnerability and debt distress cannot be solved in isolation. The conference proved that economic integration (AfCFTA) and industrialization are inextricably linked to regional peace, security, and digital transformation.

4.0 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SADC PF

4.1 To optimize its relationship with the Pan African Parliament and advance regional interests, it is proposed that the SADC PF considers implementing the following recommendations:

4.2 Harmonizing Legislative Agendas and Model Laws

i. Establish a Joint Review Mechanism: the SADC PF Secretariat should collaborate with the PAP Secretariat to establish a joint technical desk tasked with reviewing PAP Model Laws and facilitating regional rollout, ensuring seamless domestication within the SADC legal framework.

ii. Prioritize Domestication: National Parliaments within the SADC region should prioritize the domestication of the newly unveiled Model Laws on *Gender Equality, Labour Migration, and Sustainable Soil Management*, utilizing SADC PF's regional oversight tools to track progress.

4.3 Unlocking the Malabo Protocol and the SADC Protocol

iii. Intensify Advocacy through National Speakers: Under the leadership of SADC Speakers, SADC PF should champion co-ordinated lobbying within national parliaments and Ministries of Foreign Affairs to accelerate the remaining ratifications needed for the Malabo Protocol and the SADC Protocol to enter into force.

4.4 Institutionalizing Synergy and Eliminating Duplication

iv. Align Regional and Continental Networks: Rather than operating in silos, SADC PF Standing Committees should consider integrating directly into the mooted continental parliamentary networks, among them, climate change, public finance and trade, to ensure Southern African priorities shape continental legislative positions. SADC PF Standing Committees may also actively pursue closer collaboration with equivalent Committees in the Pan African Parliament to strategically influence the continental agenda.

v. Institutionalized Reporting: The SADC PF must be commended for adopting an institutionalised accountability model by making the implementation of the Forum's resolutions by national Parliaments a mandatory, standing agenda item at every SADC PF Plenary Assembly.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The PAP 2026 Annual Conference of Speakers of National and Regional Parliaments marked a decisive moment for African legislative governance by shifting the institutional focus firmly from grand declarations to operational accountability. The Conference underscored that parliamentary diplomacy is an indispensable, parallel pillar of continental integration capable of addressing complex geopolitical, economic, and security shocks. National Parliaments and the SADC Parliamentary Forum must be neither apologetic nor hesitant in leveraging parliamentary diplomacy to strategically position themselves as vanguards of regional and continental transformation.