SECONDERS SPEECH TO THE REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLICY MATTERS BEFORE THE 59TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Honourable President,
Honourable Speakers and Heads of Delegation,
Honourable Members of the Plenary Assembly,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to second the Report of the Executive Committee to this 59th Plenary Assembly, at a particularly important moment in the evolution of our Forum. It comes at a time when our region is navigating economic uncertainty, geopolitical pressures, growing expectations of democratic accountability and an increasingly complex regional integration agenda.

Against this background, the question before us is not merely whether the Forum has been active, but whether we are purposefully positioning this institution to remain relevant, credible and fit for purpose as we prepare for the transition towards a SADC Parliament.

Honourable Members, the Report reflects meaningful progress, for which the Executive Committee and the Secretariat deserve our sincere appreciation.

Through the GIZ–ADA–EU programme, the Forum has advanced institutional transformation, legal harmonisation and parliamentary cooperation, delivering eight activities for 226 stakeholders. Expanding the internship programme from one to four positions is also a practical investment in implementation capacity and young professionals.

The SRHR programme has strengthened parliamentary action on health, gender equality and the protection of vulnerable populations. Thirteen capacity-building activities reached 510 participants, and engagement across ten countries drew 3,019 participation turnouts. Our shared task now is to turn this engagement into stronger oversight, national legislative action and real improvements in citizens' lives.

We also wish to acknowledge the value of partnerships. The Oxfam commitment of USD 190,000 over an initial two-year period demonstrates the potential of non-traditional partnerships to strengthen programme capacity, and we thank Oxfam for this support. We should build on this progress, while remaining mindful that externally funded positions and programmes require clear accountability arrangements and responsible exit or sustainability plans.

Honourable Members, progress must now be matched by deliberate institutional preparation.

The proposed transformation into a SADC Parliament is perhaps the most consequential undertaking before us. It should not be understood as a change of name or institutional status alone. It calls for a corresponding change in how we engage citizens, support Member Parliaments, influence regional policy and give effect to parliamentary oversight.

The Protocol is approaching the final stages of its approval process. We should therefore encourage our respective Parliaments to prepare for the signature and ratification processes, with full respect for national constitutional procedures and the separation of powers. The threshold of eleven ratifications out of sixteen Member States makes timely preparation essential.

Equally important, we should ensure that the legal transformation does not precede the institution's operational readiness. Our Rules of Procedure, organisational structure, parliamentary support systems, human resources and financial arrangements should be developed in a coordinated and realistic manner.

The workforce proposals before us should therefore be considered with both ambition and prudence. We need the right competencies to support a regional Parliament, while taking care to avoid duplication, unfunded expansion and commitments that the institution may not be able to sustain. Secondments, in particular, should be based on clear written agreements, verified needs and confirmed funding.

The Report also draws our attention to an important institutional risk: our continued reliance on donor funding for significant areas of parliamentary work. Development partners remain valued allies, and

we are grateful for their support; yet the continuity of our core statutory functions should not rest entirely on the changing priorities of external funding.

The proposed cost-sharing framework for Standing Committee meetings offers an opportunity to strengthen ownership and predictability. Its implementation should, however, be phased, consultative and sensitive to the differing financial capacities and budgetary cycles of Member Parliaments. We must move towards sustainability while safeguarding equitable participation.

The enterprise risk findings, the need to strengthen internal controls, the implications of changing donor eligibility requirements and the importance of diversifying our resource base all point to a shared conclusion: institutional independence requires financial and operational resilience.

Honourable President, the Report also places before us governance matters that speak to the character of the institution we are building: gender balance in our Committees, appropriate standards of parliamentary conduct, equitable and merit-based institutional arrangements, and stronger cooperation between the SADC Secretariat and our national Parliaments.

These are not peripheral matters. They contribute to the credibility, inclusiveness and effectiveness of the Parliament we aspire to establish.

Our task today is therefore to move from acknowledgement to implementation.

I respectfully encourage this Assembly to support the Report, not as a declaration that all our challenges have been resolved, but as an honest assessment of progress, risks and the decisions required to move the institution forward.

In supporting it, we should commit ourselves to three practical priorities:

First, to accelerate the preparations for the SADC Parliament, including ratification readiness and the development of the necessary institutional and procedural frameworks.

Second, to strengthen the Forum's financial sustainability, risk management and human resource capacity, ensuring that our ambitions are matched by resources, accountability and sound governance.

Third, to ensure that our programmes and parliamentary cooperation produce measurable outcomes for the people of Southern Africa, with stronger participation, oversight, inclusion and policy impact.

Honourable President and Honourable Members, the future SADC Parliament will be judged not only by the Protocol that establishes it, but by the quality of the institution we build, the confidence it inspires and the difference it makes to the citizens of our region.

Let us therefore support this Report with a shared sense of responsibility, constructive resolve and a clear commitment to implementation.

The SADC Parliament we seek to become must be built through the decisions and discipline we demonstrate today.

I submit, and second this report unreservedly, Honourable President.