**SECONDER' SPEECH FOR THE REPORT OF THE GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN ADVANCEMENT AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (GEWAYD) TO THE 59th PLENARY ASSEMBLY**

**Mr President, Honourable Members of Parliament, Distinguished Delegates,**

I rise to second the motion for the adoption of the Report of the Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth Development.

At the outset, I wish to commend the Chairperson and all Members of the Committee for their valuable contributions and constructive engagement during our deliberations. The report reflects our collective commitment to advancing gender equality, strengthening women's participation and ensuring that young people are meaningfully included in our democratic and governance processes.

**Mr President,**

A key message emerging from our deliberations is that the existence of regional commitments must be matched by deliberate and sustained implementation at national level. While the SADC region has made important strides through instruments such as the Revised

SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and the SADC Gender Parity Framework 2025–2035, significant barriers to women's equal participation remain.

Political-party gatekeeping, unequal access to campaign financing, discriminatory social norms and gender-based violence continue to limit women's opportunities to participate and lead. We must therefore ensure that our commitment to gender equality goes beyond representation and translates into meaningful participation, influence and decision-making power.

The Committee also underscored the importance of gender-responsive budgeting. Our commitment to equality must be reflected not only in the laws and policies we adopt, but also in the resources we allocate. As Parliaments, we have a responsibility to ensure that public budgets respond to the different needs of our populations and that allocations intended to advance gender equality translate into measurable results.

**Honourable Members,**

We must equally recognise that the advancement of women and the development of young people are interconnected priorities. The proposed operationalisation of the Regional SADC PF Youth Caucus and the development of a regional baseline on youth representation and participation are important steps towards strengthening the voice and influence of young people in parliamentary processes.

I also wish to highlight the growing concern around technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Women, particularly those in

political and public life, must be able to participate in democratic processes without fear of intimidation, harassment or abuse, whether offline or online. The proposed strengthening of protections within the SADC Model Law on Elections is therefore a welcome development.

**Mr President,**

Ultimately, the responsibility for translating these commitments into tangible outcomes rests with all of us. As Parliamentarians, we must use our legislative, oversight and budgetary powers to hold governments accountable and ensure that regional commitments are domesticated, implemented and adequately resourced.

The success of our work should be measured not simply by the number of policies adopted or commitments made, but by whether women, girls and young people across our region experience real improvements in their opportunities, protection, representation and quality of life.

I therefore encourage this Assembly to support the recommendations contained in the report and to ensure that they receive the necessary attention and follow-up within our respective Member Parliaments.

**Mr President, I have the honour to second the motion for the adoption of the report.**

I thank you.