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 Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus to the 59th Plenary Assembly.

I wish to commend the Chairperson and Members of the Caucus for their deliberations and the valuable contributions made towards advancing the role of women parliamentarians in addressing some of the pressing development challenges facing our region.

Mr President,

Climate change has become an increasingly significant development and governance concern for the SADC region. Its effects extend beyond environmental degradation, affecting livelihoods, food security, economic opportunities and the resilience of our communities. Women and girls often bear a disproportionate share of

these consequences, particularly where their livelihoods depend on agriculture, fisheries and other natural resources.

It is therefore important that women are not treated merely as vulnerable groups requiring protection, but are recognised as essential actors in shaping climate responses, influencing policy and driving sustainable development.

The report reinforces the need for women's leadership and meaningful participation in climate governance. As Parliamentarians, we have an important responsibility to ensure that climate-related legislation, national strategies and public investments take account of gender considerations and respond to the realities experienced by our communities.

Honourable Members,

The discussions also draw attention to the opportunities presented by the blue economy and the need to ensure that its development is inclusive. Across our region, women contribute significantly to fisheries, aquaculture, fish processing and trading, yet their representation in the institutions responsible for managing these resources remains limited.

We must therefore ensure that the expansion of the blue economy creates opportunities for women to access financing, markets, skills and leadership positions. The proposed review of maritime legislation, including measures to strengthen women's representation in ocean and maritime governance, is an important step in this direction.

Equally, we cannot make informed policy decisions without reliable evidence. The recommendation for gender-disaggregated data on

participation in the blue economy is therefore essential in identifying existing inequalities and informing appropriate interventions.

Mr President,

I particularly welcome the emphasis placed on strengthening the capacity of women and girls to participate in emerging sectors. Increased investment in girls' education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, including maritime sciences, is necessary if we are to prepare a generation of women capable of contributing to and leading our region's climate and economic transformation.

The recommendations on gender-responsive budgeting, localised early warning systems and the integration of climate resilience into national legislation and development programmes are equally important. These measures must be supported by effective parliamentary oversight to ensure that commitments translate into tangible results.

Honourable Members,

The responsibility before us is to ensure that gender equality is central to how we approach climate action and regional development. Our success should not be measured only by the policies and frameworks we adopt, but by the extent to which women are able to influence decisions, access opportunities and participate meaningfully in shaping the future of our region.

I therefore urge this Assembly to support the recommendations contained in the report and to use our respective parliamentary mandates to advance their implementation at national level.

Mr President, I have the honour to second the motion for the adoption of the Report of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus.

I thank you.