



**REPORT OF THE SADC PF REGIONAL WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS
TO THE 52ND PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION**

**THEME: "CONSOLIDATING DEMOCRACY BY BRINGING PARLIAMENT TO
THE PEOPLE".**

Mr. President, I beg to move that this Plenary Assembly do adopt the Report of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus to the 52nd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, laid on the Table on 5th December 2022.

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1.0 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee consisted of the following Members:

1. Hon. Regina Esparon, Seychelles **(Chairperson)**
2. Hon. Emiline Ramarosoa, Madagascar **(Vice Chairperson)**
3. Hon. Iida de Fatima da Silva Almeida Martins, Angola
4. Hon. Ruth Adriano Mendes, Angola
5. Hon. Luisa Pedro Francisco Damiao Santos, Angola
6. Hon. Talita Monnakgotla, Botswana
7. Hon. Anne Marie Mbilambangu, DRC,
8. HRH. Sen. Princess Phumelele Dlamini, Eswatini
9. Sen. Busisiwe Dlamini, Eswatini
10. *To be advised* Lesotho
11. *To be advised* Lesotho
12. Hon. Marie Jeanne d'Arc Masy Goulamaly, Madagascar
13. Hon. Roseby Gama Gadama, Malawi
14. Hon. Rachel Zulu, Malawi
15. Hon. Marie Genevieve Stephanie Anquetil, Mauritius
16. Hon. Marie Joanne Sabrina Tour, Mauritius
17. Hon. Jerónima Agostinho, Mozambique
18. Hon. Maria Marta Fernando, Mozambique
19. Hon. Paula Kooper, Namibia
20. Hon. Utaara Mootu, Namibia
21. Hon. Agnes Kafula, Namibia
22. Hon. Rosie Bistoquet, Seychelles
23. Hon. Audrey Vidot, Seychelles
24. Hon. Kelly Samynadin, Seychelles
25. Hon. Nkhensani Kate Bilankulu, South Africa
26. Hon. Hlengiwe Mkhali, South Africa
27. Hon. Shally Josepha Raymond, Tanzania
28. Hon. Hawa Subira Mwaifunga, Tanzania
29. Hon. Princess Kasune, Zambia
30. Hon. Julien Nyemba, Zambia
31. Hon. Mutinta Mazoka, Zambia
32. Hon. Goodlucky Kwaramba, Zimbabwe
33. Hon. Paurina Mpariwa, Zimbabwe
34. Hon. Tambudzani Mohadi, Zimbabwe

2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus are articulated in Rule 42(d) of the SADC PF Rules of Procedure.

3.0 NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD AND MEETING DATES

The Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) convened virtually on 28th November 2022, under the theme, "Consolidating Democracy by the People to the People."

4.0 BACKGROUND

With the Covid-19 pandemic impacting negatively on the social, economic and cultural lives of communities worldwide, rethinking how to address its impact on men and women has been the focus of dialogue among key stakeholders, including parliamentarians. The SADC PF, realizes the impact that the pandemic has had on its citizens, and acknowledges the need to engage state actors, leaders, champions, social advocates and citizens in general, in discussions around how the pandemic and other times of uncertainty or turmoil affect the global economy, and particularly the participation of women in various aspects of their social lives. It is against this background that the RWPC convened under the theme, 'Consolidating Democracy by the People to the People' to engage with citizens on a diversity of issues, among them, the following topical issues; women empowerment during inflationary time: the marginalization of women in times of economic crisis; and difficulties for women in the labour market during financial turmoil.

5.0 SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS BY CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES AND PARTNERS

The Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) received presentations from various citizen representatives and partners (the list of citizen representatives and partners is at Appendix II of the Report), on four key thematic areas of focus under the theme of the Committee Session, "Consolidating Democracy by the Parliament to the People". The key issues raised in the presentations and ensuing deliberations are highlighted under the four key thematic areas of focus as presented hereunder:

5.1 How can citizens promote women participation in decision-making processes in the public sector at all levels?

The Caucus learned that despite the fact that women represented a large percentage of the world's population, they were largely underrepresented in decision-making structures at various levels. Furthermore, although most African countries had put in place comprehensive legal frameworks aimed at promoting women's empowerment and their participation in decision-making

processes, there has been limited or no political will to ensure that women were ably represented in these structures.

Members were informed that women could and should play a key role in decision-making structures because it was their human right, it was a requirement for democracy, and it was also an essential element to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this regard, citizens had a critical role to play to promote women participation in decision-making in the public sector at all levels by, among others; supporting regional and national institutions to implement their commitments to end practices such as violence against women that limit women's political participation; supporting efforts to promote increased investments in women's political participation; and, through a holistic approach, transforming harmful negative norms that hinder women's participation in decision-making.

The RWPC noted that civil society organizations (CSOs), which were considered bastions for youth engagement, presented an avenue through which issues that affected or limited the participation of the youth, particularly young women, in decision-making could be addressed. Particular attention should be paid to information on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and on harmful cultural practices that had the potential to limit the participation of young people in decision-making processes and structures.

With regard to conflict resolution and peace building efforts and processes, the RWPC was informed that it was important to involve women, as research had shown that peace processes were better implemented when women were involved. It was also important for SADC Member States to develop National Action Plans to ensure the inclusion of women in peace keeping processes. In general, the presenters emphasized the need for political will from member States, coupled with allocation of adequate resources to support the leadership engagement of women in the public sector.

5.2 Which measures may be put in place to increase women representation in Parliament to attain the 50 – 50 gender parity?

The general view presented was that SADC Member States had signed regional and international instruments on the promotion and participation of women in politics, including Parliament, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women. SADC member States in particular had also adopted the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development to provide for the empowerment of women, as well as to eliminate discrimination and achieve gender equality through the development and implementation of gender-responsive legislation. However, despite these commitments, there were very few women represented in parliament in comparison to their male counterparts.

Member States were encouraged to put in place measures to remove barriers that limited women's participation in elections and in Parliament. These barriers included both formal and informal factors such as education requirements, nomination fees, and campaign finance rules, limited infrastructure for people living with disability, and safety and security for candidates or voters.

The citizen presenters also mentioned that electoral laws and systems worked to disadvantage women from participating in the electoral process, making it a challenge for women to aspire for political office or to take part in the electoral process. Furthermore, several countries in the region had adopted electoral systems with no constitutional, legislated quota or special measures in place to promote women's equal and effective participation in politics. These challenges, among several others, were a hindrance to parliaments to attain the 50 – 50 gender parity. In order to increase women representation in Parliament, it was recommended that monitoring and reporting mechanisms on the implementation of legislation on women's rights and empowerment should be established, and where they already existed, they should be strengthened to ensure that Member States fulfilled their undertakings.

SADC member States were also encouraged to revise electoral laws and systems to ensure a level playing field that would encourage women to participate in politics. Electoral laws should also make provision for independent candidates, including women, who also had a right to political participation. There was also need for member States to regulate political parties to ensure that top leadership positions in these parties complied with the 50-50 gender parity requirement. Member States were also encouraged to put in place other measures such as introducing legislation to sanction political violence, sexual harassment and any other form of violence which could be barriers to women's participation in decision-making.

Further, Member States were encouraged to domesticate the SADC Model Law on Gender Based Violence to make the political space safe for women to participate effectively; and to make deliberate efforts to implement the provisions of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development (1997), and other legal instruments which provided for equal representation of women and men in decision-making.

The meeting was informed that existing social security systems in SADC member States needed to be adequately funded, and that allocation of resources should be done equitably so that the marginalized, which included women, could benefit from them. Parliamentarians were called upon to support bills touching on women's issues and that women parliamentarians in particular, should solicit the support of their male counterparts in championing women's political participation. Furthermore, media practitioners should be sensitized in gender – responsive reporting to ensure that women vying for political office are not

stigmatized but were instead encouraged to join and participate in the political space.

5.3 Should budgets passed in Parliament consider and mainstream women's issues?

The RWPC learned that one of the factors that prevented women from taking a key role in decision-making was the lack of resources, and limited allocation of resources to women's programmes. Therefore, there was need to ensure that the budget process was responsive to the needs of women and girls. The Covid-19 pandemic had also worsened the already existing inequality between men and women. This was as a result of the austerity measures that countries put in place to cushion the impact of the pandemic on its fiscus, which invariably had a negative effect on the economic situation of women and girls, preventing them from participating in decision-making on matters that affect them.

Other salient issues raised in the presentations on the theme included the importance of monitoring fiscal policies to see whether they were being implemented in a way that was supportive of women and their programmes. Furthermore, as women were not a homogeneous group in that they faced different realities and had different needs and requirements, it was important for member States to take on board the varying realities of all women, including women living with disability, and women in minority groups, to ensure that all women were able to participate fully in all areas of decision-making, without discrimination.

Other contributions on this theme included the call on member States to establish specific ministries to be responsible for gender in order to ensure that gender mainstreaming formed an integral part of the budgeting process, and to encourage SADC citizens to play an active role in the budget process. This was in recognition of the need to ensure that gender concerns were integrated in the process, at all levels. In general, there should be clear political will to allocate funds to women's programmes, and strong accountability mechanisms to monitor the allocation of financial resources.

5.4 Which measures should be put in place to increase the representation of women in the boards of private corporations?

With regard to increasing the representation of women in the boards of private corporations, the meeting was informed that in most SADC countries, the composition of key decision-making positions of private corporations was dominated by men. For example, it was noted that representation of women in leadership positions of Election Management Boards (EMBs) was very limited. As a result, women were underrepresented on these boards.

The general view presented was that the boards should be reformed to create spaces for the traditionally marginalized such as women and the disabled, to ensure that these spaces are inclusive. The boards should also be encouraged to

put in place an enabling legal framework or provisions that provided ideal practices for increasing women's participation. In addition, there was need for private corporations to adopt, and effectively enforce, could create an environment that allowed women to thrive.

6.0 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from its interactions with citizen representatives and partners, and pursuant to its deliberations, the SADC PF Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus:

CONCERNED that though women represent a large percentage of the population in the region, they are grossly underrepresented in decision-making structures and processes at various levels.

AWARE that SADC member States are party to both regional and international conventions that aim at promoting the participation of women in politics and other decision – making structures.

COGNISANT of the need for SADC Parliaments to consider and mainstream women issues in their national budgets.

ALSO COGNISANT of the need for the boards of private corporations to put in place an enabling legal framework or provisions for increasing and promoting women's participation in decision-making structures.

APPRECIATING the various efforts by SADC member States to work towards the attainment of the 50 – 50 gender parity,

ENCOURAGE SADC member States to domesticate the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development to ensure its implementation at national level.

NOW, THEREFORE the RWPC recommends to the 52nd Plenary Assembly to:

- (i) **URGE** SADC member Parliaments to ensure that the SADC Gender Protocol on Gender and Development is domesticated in the respective national laws, in order to attain the 50 – 50 gender parity.
- (ii) **IMPLORE** SADC member States to put in place mechanisms to monitor and review national progress on the domestication and implementation of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development so as to ensure that member States comply with its provisions.
- (iii) **ENCOURAGE** SADC member Parliaments to work with Electoral Management Boards (EMBs), and other stakeholders to ensure that the electoral processes are favourable to women's participation at all levels of

the electoral process; and to collect gender disaggregated data to ensure that the SADC region harnesses the demographic dividend of its women and youthful population.

- (iv) **CALL UPON** SADC member Parliamentarians to work with law enforcement agencies in their respective countries in order to combat election-motivated violence, and other electoral malpractices that prevent women from participating in politics, and hence to make the political space safe for women to participate in effectively.
- (v) **EMPASISE** that SADC member Parliaments should strengthen their oversight role in the budget process so as to ensure accountability and transparency in the allocation of resources. In this vein, further **CALL UPON** SADC member Parliaments to also undertake gender impact analysis of budgets in their respective parliaments and develop mechanisms and methods for developing gender sensitive budgets, so that the budget formulation and implementation processes are engendered.
- (vi) **IMPLORE** SADC member States to develop legislation common to all political parties in their respective countries, to encourage compliance with gender parity in the top leadership of their party structures, and in the nomination of candidates.
- (vii) **DIRECT** the SADC – PF Secretariat to organize periodical forums that will allow parliamentarians to continually engage with their citizens on various thematic areas, in order to encourage their participation in issues that affect them, and also, for expert input that will enrich the work of parliaments in the region.
- (viii) **ENCOURAGE** SADC member States to work with civil society organizations and other stakeholders, to engage the youth, particularly young women, including young women living with disability, on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) issues, and harmful cultural practices that have the potential to limit their meaningful participation in governance structures, and in other areas that affect their lives.

7.0 CONCLUSION

As an organisation mandated to ensure regional integration, the SADC Parliamentary Forum is suitably positioned to engage its citizens in a wide range of policy dialogue and development initiatives to ensure that the perspectives of both men and women are addressed and taken into account. The Forum also provides a common avenue where Member State commitments to promote the participation of women in decision-making structures and processes can be monitored to ensure compliance, and that they “walk the talk” with regard to women’s empowerment. Therefore, the decision to convene a forum that

encourages parliamentarians to engage with the citizen representatives is a laudable achievement.

The RWPC therefore, extends its gratitude to the Secretary General and staff of the SADC PF for facilitating the meeting. The RWPC also extends its appreciation to the citizen representatives and partners for their input which enriched its deliberations and form the basis of this report.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I – LIST OF OFFICIALS

Ms. Boemo Sekgoma, Secretary General
Ms. Yapoka Mungandi, Director - Finance and Corporate Services
Ms. Clare Musonda, Director – Corporate Governance
Mr. Sheuneni Kurasha, Programme Manager – DGHR
Mr. Ronald Windwaai, Webmaster
Ms Paulina Kanguatjivi, Assistant Procedural officer and Coordinator
Dr. Carina Talakinu, Committee Secretary – RWPC
Ms. Sharon Nyirongo, Committee Secretary - FANR
Ms. Bibiche Muzeke, Moderator

APPENDIX II – LIST OF CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES AND PARTNERS

Ms. Maureen Shonge - UN Women, East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO)
Ms. Fadzai Traguno - Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA)
SADC Electoral Commission Forum (ECF)
Ms. Loveness Mudzuri, Rosaria Memorial Trust
Ms. Natasha Seketa (Zambia), SAT
Ms. Namatama Mildred Phumulo Sakabila - SADC Secretariat Gender Unit
Southern Africa Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC)
International IDEA
Ms. Teboho Mohloai, SAT, Lesotho
Ms. Tafadzwa Muropa, Gender Expert