



**SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED BY THE MOVER OF THE MOTION THAT THIS HOUSE DO ADOPT THE REPORT OF THE REGIONAL WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS (RWPC) TO THE 52<sup>ND</sup> PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION**

Mr. President, I beg to move that this Plenary Assembly do adopt the report of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) to the 52<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, laid on the Table of the Assembly on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

Mr. President, in moving this motion, I wish to inform this august Assembly that the RWPC held a virtual meeting on Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 in accordance with its mandate under Rule 42(d) of the Rules of Procedure. On behalf of the Regional Parliamentary Women's Caucus, I wish to pay tribute to all citizens who took time to interact with us, make submissions and generally enrich our deliberations inspite of other equally pressing commitments. This, Mr. President, is testimony to their commitment to addressing the challenges that prevent women from participating in decision-making processes and structures.

Mr. President, meetings of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus are very important, as it is through them that the goals of the organization are concretized. It is therefore gratifying to note that the meeting, which was held under the theme, "*Consolidating Democracy by Bringing Parliament to the People*", was a timely reminder to all of us that promoting democracy through interaction between ourselves and the citizens we represent is important for two reasons: firstly, it builds the confidence of citizens in the work of the Forum; and secondly, it enriches our understanding of the various challenges that our citizens face because we are brought face to face with the real lived experiences of the citizens.

Mr. President, it is also worth noting that the meeting was held at a time when we are emerging from the Covid – 19 pandemic and as such, it was opportune for us to understand how the pandemic and other times of uncertainty or turmoil, affect the global economy and particularly, the participation of women in various aspects of the social and economic lives of their communities. We are acutely aware, Mr. President, that the pandemic has clawed back quite significantly on some of the hard-won gains recorded in the fight for women's empowerment and participation. The meeting also offered us parliamentarians, as duty bearers, an opportunity to offer viable solutions to the issues that affect women's lives in general. We have emerged from the meeting further strengthened in our resolve to

continue to push the gender agenda forward in the interest of a better future for our region.

Mr. President, from the submissions of citizen representatives and partners who made submissions on the thematic areas of focus, the Caucus was disappointed to learn that women in the region continue to be invisible in decision-making processes as they are not adequately represented. The reasons for this are many – they range from patriarchal norms in our societies, to political factors that make it difficult for women to vie for political office and other decision-making positions at various levels. Mr. President, a lot more needs to be done in terms of promoting the representation and participation of women in decision-making structures in the member States, including the adoption of deliberate measures such as affirmative action and quota systems that guarantee the participation and representation of women in political and other decision-making positions.

In the light of the foregoing, the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus hereby resolves to recommend to the 52<sup>nd</sup> 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.

In concluding Mr. President, allow me to place on record the gratitude of the Regional Women’s Parliamentary Caucus to the SACD PF Secretariat for convening and coordinating the virtual

meeting, and enabling us to interact with our citizens and partners. Tribute also goes to the citizen representatives and partners who, through their contributions to the thematic areas of focus, provided invaluable information, which enriched the deliberations of the meeting.

**Mr. President, I beg to move and I thank you.**