



**REPORT OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM STANDING COMMITTEE
ON GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN ADVANCEMENT AND YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT TO THE 53RD PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION**

***THEME: “THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN PROMOTING GENDER AND
CLIMATE JUSTICE AGENDA IN THE SADC REGION”***

Mr President, I beg to move that this Plenary Assembly do adopt the Report of the SADC Parliamentary Forum Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth Development laid on the table on 4 July 2023.

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1.0 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee consisted of the following Members:

1. Hon. Shally Josepha Raymond, MP, Tanzania (**Chairperson**)
2. Hon. Paula Kooper, MP, Namibia (**Vice Chairperson**)
3. Hon Marie Joanne Sabrina Tour, MP, Mauritius
4. Hon. Talita Monnakgotla, MP, Botswana
5. Hon. Anne-Marie Mbilambangu, MP, DRC
6. Sen. Busisiwe Dlamini, MP, Eswatini
7. Lesotho (TBA)
8. Hon Marie Jeanne d'Arc Masy Goulamaly, MP, Madagascar
9. Hon. Roseby Gama Gadama, MP, Malawi
10. Hon. Teresa José Adeline Neto, MP, Angola
11. Hon. Maria Marta Fernando, MP, Mozambique
12. Hon. Kelly Samynadin, MP, Seychelles
13. Hon. Nkhensani Kate Bilankulu, MP, South Africa
14. Hon. Jeffrey Mulebwa, MP, Zambia
15. Hon. Goodlucky Kwaramba, MP, Zimbabwe

2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The mandate of the Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth Development is stipulated in Rule 42(a) of the SADC PF Rules of Procedure.

3.0 NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD AND MEETING DATES

The Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth Development held one statutory meeting on Friday, 12th May, 2023 under the theme *“The role of parliamentarians in promoting gender and climate justice agenda in the SADC region.”*

4.0 BACKGROUND

In the SADC region, just like elsewhere on the African continent, women tend to be disproportionately affected by climate change impacts and this aggravates existing gender inequalities as a result of persisting gender norms and discrimination. Evidence shows that climate change affects women more negatively compared to men in five impact areas: (i) agricultural production; (ii) food and nutrition security; (iii) health; (iv) water and energy; and (v) climate-related disaster, migration, and conflict.

Given that climate change is one of the most serious threats facing the SADC region and women and girls being disproportionately affected, parliamentarians should play a crucial role in ensuring a gender-responsive climate and

environmental action. Through their law-making, oversight, representation and budgetary functions Parliaments should ensure that women have equitable access to productive resources, such as finance, land, water and clean energy.

Parliaments have a duty to ensure that legislation and policy put women and girls at the centre of the fight for climate justice and a decisive shift towards a greener economy. Parliamentarians must leverage their legislative roles to champion the development and implementation of concrete actions that include financing women's and girls' climate solutions by supporting the efforts of women, particularly at grassroots and rural levels, to respond to the climate crises, and increasing the number of women in climate and environmental leadership and jobs. Parliaments should also demand more accountability at all levels by insisting on equitable access to climate finance, technologies and knowledge.

Further, Parliaments should promote the voices and solutions of grassroots and indigenous women. Finally, to effectively leverage its role in ensuring gender-responsive climate and environmental action Parliaments should also strengthen their institutional capacity to handle activities linked to climate change, take interest in international climate negotiations and agreements and progress on the implementation of such agreements.

5.0 SUMMARY OF THE KEY ISSUES AND DELIBERATIONS ON THE PRESENTATION

Given the above, in deliberating on the theme, the Committee received a presentation from Mr Titus Gwemende, Africa Division Director at Open Society Foundation. The presentation specifically focused on the following:

- i. latest information and evidence regarding the way women and girls were disproportionately affected by climate change in the SADC region;
- ii. practical ways in which Parliaments could leverage their law-making, oversight, representation, and budgetary powers to ensure gender equality and climate justice;
- iii. identifying ways through which Parliaments could promote legislation and policies that put women and girls, particularly at grassroots and rural levels, at the centre of the fight for climate justice and a decisive shift towards a greener economy;
- iv. how Parliaments could demand accountability at all levels by insisting on equitable access to climate finance, technologies, and knowledge; and
- v. strategic proposals for strengthening the institutional capacity of Parliaments to handle climate change-related issues, including tracking of international climate negotiations and agreements and their implementation and to promote a greater role for constituency voices and civil society representation.

The key issues highlighted from the presentation and the deliberations are set out below.

- 5.1 Climate change affected all people but not in the same way, because in any given climate crisis, women and girls experienced the greatest impacts of climate change, which was amplified by pre-existing gender inequalities.
- 5.2 Gender equality and climate justice were inextricably linked. As demonstrated in any climate crisis, it was women and girls who often faced the greatest impacts from environmental degradation and natural disasters, like in many other spheres of life.
- 5.3 The effects of climate change were not gender neutral; as such climate change posed unique threats to women's livelihoods, health, and safety.
- 5.4 The SADC region continued to battle the challenge of gender inequality, with several member states struggling to eliminate both the evident and unseen barriers to gender equality. Because of this state of affairs, the region was not different from the rest of the African continent where women were disproportionately affected by climate change impacts.
- 5.5 It was a well-established fact that across the world, women depended more on natural resources such as land and nature, which were fundamentally affected by climate change. In this regard, agriculture was the most important employment sector for women in lower-middle income countries. In this vein, it was notable that during periods of drought, erratic rainfall and floods, women, as agricultural workers and primary procurers, worked harder to secure income and resources for their families.
- 5.6 Available data demonstrated that a women endured a disproportionate responsibility for securing food, water, and fuel particularly in developing countries. Therefore, the consequences of climate change increased the burden for women and girls. For example, women were required to travel further to obtain daily supplies, leaving less time for paid work and potentially exposing them to greater risks to their personal safety. In relation to girls, the effects of climate change resulted in added pressure on them as they often had to leave school to help their mothers manage the increased burden.
- 5.7 Women who were struck by natural disasters were less likely to survive and more likely to be injured due to long standing gender inequalities that created disparities in access to information, mobility to flee danger zones, decision-making positions that determined what should be given priority, and resources as well as training in survival skills. Similarly, in the aftermath of natural disasters, women and girls were less able to access relief and assistance, further threatening their livelihoods, well-being and recovery, and creating a vicious cycle of vulnerability to future disasters.

- 5.8 Women's and girls' health was endangered by climate change and disasters through limited access to services and health care, as well as increasing risks related to maternal and child health. Research indicated that extreme heat increased the incidence of stillbirth, and climate change was increasing the spread of vector-borne illnesses such as malaria, dengue fever, and Zika virus, which were linked to worse maternal and neonatal outcomes.
- 5.1 Gender inequalities had created disparities in access to information, mobility, decision-making and access to resources and training, with women being disproportionately disadvantaged.

6.0 COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the foregoing deliberations, the Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth Development:

- i. **Recognised** that climate change affects all people, however, it is not gender neutral as it gives rise to unique threats to women's livelihoods, health, and safety.
- ii. **Realised** that the region continues to battle the challenge of gender inequality, with several member states struggling to eliminate both the evident and unseen barriers to gender equality.
- iii. **Appreciated** that in many regions, women endure a disproportionate responsibility for securing food, water and fuel.
- iv. **Noted** that, with particular regard to developing countries, the consequences of climate change not only expose women to a greater risk of personal injury and insecurity, but also increase their burden by increasing the distances they have to cover in order to access water and other necessities for their families.
- v. **Realised** that due to the increased distances to be travelled in order to obtain daily supplies in the wake of various extreme weather events arising due to climate change, women have much less time for paid work. Similarly, girls encounter added pressure to drop out of school to help their mothers manage the increased burden of providing for their families.
- vi. **Affirmed** that women depend more on natural resources such as land and nature, which are fundamentally affected by climate change, for their livelihoods.
- vii. **Noted** that women are often not included in decision making processes relating to planning and developing solutions to address crisis situations. **Further noted** that, in most cases, climate change adaptation initiatives do not identify and address the gender-specific impacts of climate change, especially as they relate to water, food security, agriculture, energy, health, disaster management, and conflict.
- viii. **Reiterated** that climate change cannot be addressed without a proper analysis of its causes and drivers.

- ix. **Regretted** that although the phenomenon of climate change impacts Africa most acutely, it does not originate in Africa, which is already on net zero emissions.
- x. **Noting** that extreme human suffering is occasioned by the effects of climate change, **posited** that the remedy lies in the “loss and damage facility,” established at the COP 27 meeting, under which arrangement those who caused climate change contribute money to repair the damage by floods, droughts and hurricanes, among others, to the country that suffered from that phenomenon.
- xi. **Noting** that the biggest source of energy in Africa remains coal, firewood and other combustibles, **realised** that there is much scope for renewables and a rise in renewable energy can provide significant opportunities for gainful employment for the women and youth in the region.
- xii. **Expressed confidence** that the clean energy revolution can trigger a shift in economic and political power and gender stereotypes and ultimately help dismantle existing gender inequalities if women can be capacitated to participate across the energy value chain.

Now, therefore, the Committee recommends that the 53rd Plenary Assembly should:

- i. **Urge** SADC Member States to pass legislation that promotes the use of clean energy in order to mitigate climate change.
- ii. **Appeal** to SADC Member states to consider climate change as a business opportunity. In this regard, **implore** SADC parliamentarians to endeavour to persuade their governments to invest in youth innovation in mitigation and adaptive measures such as production of solar panels, water harvesting equipment and energy conservation appliances, among others.
- iii. **Call** on Member states to have climate change solutions that address challenges and threats to women’s livelihoods, health, and safety.
- iv. **Urge** SADC National Parliaments to take pragmatic actions in the form of voting for budgets which enhance funding towards climate change mitigation actions.
- v. **Resolve** to take measures to capacitate SADC parliamentarians to advocate for the full operationalisation and resourcing of the loss and damage facility so that countries within the region that suffer from the effects of climate change do not suffer and increased debt burden in their quest to reconstruct infrastructure damaged by these extreme weather events.
- vi. **Strongly urge** parliamentarians in the SADC Region to advocate for concessional or grant financing for climate change rather than embracing commercial loans.

- vii. **Call** on SADC Member States to integrate climate change solutions into programmes that are aimed at addressing barriers to gender equality.
- viii. **Urge** Member states to enhance gender-sensitive investments in adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building initiatives.
- ix. **Resolve** that the SADC Parliamentary Forum, in collaboration with its Member Parliaments, facilitates parliamentary institutional capacity building programmes so as to enable SADC Parliaments to provide a strong mechanism for ongoing parliamentary scrutiny, especially as it relates to women and climate change programmes.
- x. **Urge** Parliamentarians in the SADC Region to leverage on their representative role and provide a knowledge link with women constituents as a vital facet of their countries' gender sensitive response and resilience to climate change.
- xi. **Reiterate** the need for SADC parliamentarians to take all necessary measures to promote the voice of women in the climate change discourse and for the inclusion of women's priorities and needs such as water, food security, agriculture, energy, health, disaster management, and conflict, ought to be reflected in the development planning and funding processes for climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience.
- xii. **Call** upon SADC parliamentarians to advocate for improvement in early warning systems for various extreme weather events.
- xiii. As a best practice, **encourage** National Parliaments to set up caucuses or clubs that will sustain the climate change discourse in the parliamentary fora.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Climate change is one of the most serious threats facing the world, yet most countries are still poorly equipped to deal with its undeniable and increasingly profound impacts. There is also an inseparable linkage between gender equality and climate justice, drawing from the evidence of women and girls who often face a disproportionate impact from the effects of environmental degradation and natural disasters and many other aspects of life. A gender perspective is, therefore, imperative when considering climate adaptation strategies and funding priorities.

The Committee also expressed its appreciation for the excellent support rendered to it by the Secretary General and staff of the Secretariat during the meeting, noting that without such support, the work of the Committee would not have been successfully executed.

Hon. Shally Josepha RAYMOND

Ifoma Hamabele MULEWA

CHAIRPERSON

COMMITTEE SECRETARY

8.0 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 Democratisation, Governance And Human Rights (DGHR)
Ms Ifoma Hamabele Mulewa, Committee Secretary/Rapporteur – GEWAYD
Ms Paulina Kanguatjivi, Assistant Procedural Officer and Coordinator
Mr Ronald Windwaai, Webmaster
Ms Agnes Lilungwe, Executive Assistant to the Secretary General

Appendix II - Resource Person

Mr Titus Gwemende, Africa Division Director - Open Society Foundation