



**REPORT OF THE SADC PF STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (HSDSP) TO THE 54<sup>TH</sup> PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION.**

**THEME: “AMPLIFYING CITIZENS’ VOICES IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: BRIDGING THE ENGAGEMENT GAP BY BRINGING PARLIAMENT TO THE PEOPLE.”**

Mr. President, I beg to move that this Plenary Assembly do adopt the Report of the Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes (HSDSP) to the 54<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, laid on the table on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>1.0</b>	<b>COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD, DATE AND THEME</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Tackling the impact of climate-induced disasters on school dropout within the SADC</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Progress &amp; Barriers to implementing KP Commitments at SADC level</b> ....	<b>6</b>
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Provision of SRHR Services for Vulnerable Groups During Humanitarian Crises especially in Rural Areas</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Reducing Barriers that hinder learners from accessing quality education which increases class absenteeism rates and low performance</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Ending Child Marriage</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>The Role of Parliament in Promoting Smart Education Agendas for Life Skills Learning and Disease Prevention</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>5.7</b>	<b>How the domestication of the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence at the national level be expedited and what concrete steps can be taken to proactively prevent gender-based violence in communities and ensure comprehensive support and justice for survivors</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>5.8</b>	<b>How can barriers to girls and women's education and skills development be overcome to ensure they have equal access to educational opportunities</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>5.9</b>	<b>How can Parliament actively engage with the African Union's 2024 theme of Education and its Roadmap for Education to incentivise Member States to implement measures aimed at eliminating the root causes hindering education at all levels</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>5.10</b>	<b>Unlocking a Healthier Future: Prioritizing Tobacco Control in the SADC Region and Urgent need to initiate discussions on establishing a SADC Model Law on Tobacco Control</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>5.11</b>	<b>Harnessing youth-led research in Integrating Non-communicable Diseases in the fight against HIV/TB</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>5.12</b>	<b>Call to Expedite the Domestication of the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence at the national level and Comprehensively Address GBV Challenges in the SADC Region</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>5.13</b>	<b>It Shouldn't Take an Annual Theme: Educating for Africa's Place in the 4th Industrial Revolution.</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>5.14</b>	<b>Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>12</b>

**7.0 CONCLUSION..... 14**  
**8.0 APPENDIX: LIST OF OFFICIALS ..... 15**

## 1.0 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee consisted of the following Members:

1.	Hon. Rosie Bistoquet	Seychelles <b>(Chairperson)</b>
2.	Hon. Kassim Hassan Haji	Tanzania <b>(Vice Chairperson)</b>
3.	Hon. Luisa P. F. Damiao Santos	Angola
4.	Hon. Tshoganetso Leuwe	Botswana
5.	Hon Ngbonda Daully Nestor	DRC
6.	Hon. Mope Khati	Lesotho
7.	Hon. Fiarovana Lovanirina Célestin	Madagascar
8.	Hon. Rachel Zulu	Malawi
9.	Hon. Ashley Ittoo	Mauritius
10.	Hon. Agnes Kafula MP	Namibia
11.	Hon. Desmond Lawrence Moela	South Africa
12.	Hon. Julien Nyemba	Zambia

## 2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference of the Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes (HSDSP) are articulated in Rule 41 (5) of the SADC PF Rules of Procedure as follows:

- 5) To deal with human and social development issues pertaining to health and combating illicit drug trafficking, HIV/AIDS, human resource development, education, professional training, employment and labour, culture and sport, science and technology and humanitarian issues as well as and other issues to be determined accordingly.

## 3.0 NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD, DATE AND THEME

The Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes (HSDSP) convened and conducted a Virtual Public Hearing on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2023 under the theme: *“Amplifying Citizens’ Voices in Regional Integration in Southern Africa: Bridging the Engagement Gap by bringing Parliament to the People.”*

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

The SADC Region continue to face a myriad of challenges owing to the exigencies of climate change-induced catastrophes with their ripple effects on social amenities. This had an adverse impact on access to quality and inclusive education as well breeding other social vices like gender discrimination, forced child marriages and child labour. The aforementioned challenges are further compounded by the fact that the SADC Region is still reeling from the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic. These challenges have an adverse effect on the previous steps which had been taken by the region towards attainment of the aspirations of SADC Vision 2050, Africa Agenda 2063 and United Nations Unsatiabale Development Goals (SDGs).

The string of unpredictable challenges mentioned above had been a major blow on the achievement of Human and Social Development Programmes. The international commitments mentioned in the foregoing paragraph can fully be achieved with a skilled African labour, a skilled labour force which

should be function of quality education as espoused by SDG 4 on, “*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*” Numerous barriers had continued to be impediments towards the attainment of this goal in the SADC region. Furthermore, the SADC region was not spared by the contracting global economy which adversely affected the macroeconomic milieus of member states. Governments ended up negating or underfunding critical areas such as Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and education.

It is against this backdrop that SADC PF identified the need to have public hearings in order to give citizens an opportunity to make presentation on issues affecting communities in the member states. The public hearing was used as a tool to stimulate participatory democracy thereby aiding in the regional integration trajectory.

## **5.0 SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION**

The Committee received submissions from the following individuals and organisations:

- i. Amnesty International Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office ESARO;
- ii. Vivian R Ngaiza from Tanzania;
- iii. AIDS and Rights Alliance for southern Africa (ARASA);
- iv. Queen Kimmy Mwandira representing Youth Advocate for SRHR Working with Adolescent girls and Young Women;
- v. Towera Ngwira, founder and Executive Director for a youth-led organisation, Extra Mile Development Foundation (EMDEF) in Malawi;
- vi. Shora Kauluka, Executive Director of Fountain of Hope (FOHOP);
- vii. Maria Mchome
- viii. Oxfam in Southern Africa represented by Lingalireni Mihowa;
- ix. Vivian R Ngaiza from Tanzania;
- x. Vivian Joseph, Medical Personnel and Head of SAYOF Health Cluster;
- xi. Jacqu Krish;
- xii. Dr. Blessings Kasenge, Medical Practitioner Zambia, SADC Youth Parliament Representative for Zambia;
- xiii. Ziada Kassimu, Young Person from Tanzania;
- xiv. Foster Mafiala, representing the Southern Africa Trust (SAT); and
- xv. Ashwell Forbes, representing Southern Africa Trust (SAT)

The above listed made submissions on the following topics:

### **5.1 Tackling the impact of climate-induced disasters on school dropout within the SADC**

The submissions on this topic underscored the impact which Tropical Cyclone Ana had on Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Madagascar and Malawi in late January 2022. Tropical Cyclone Ana left a trail of disasters along the North-Eastern border of Zimbabwe, parts of Mozambique, Madagascar and Malawi which saw mild to extensive damage of infrastructure which

includes inter alia; roads, schools and bridges. As a result, people were displaced, and food was destroyed. The submissions emphasised on the point that displaced people could not access social services and children were forced to drop out of school.

The submissions also lamented the lack of investment by governments in the SADC region in climate change awareness campaigns and early warning systems and that there was also little collaboration between governments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in dealing with climate change disasters.

## **5.2 Progress & Barriers to implementing KP Commitments at SADC level**

The submissions highlighted efforts which had been made by Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe to fulfil the Key Populations (KP) Specific Commitment pointing out that there was a general consensus on the importance of the KP Specific Commitment, however, there was dearth of knowledge about the commitments.

The submissions reflected on the stigmatisation around the issue of Key Populations especially insofar as access to social services was concerned. The presenter further suggested that programmes to sensitise people about the needs of key populations should be prioritised. It was highlighted that the level of knowledge and attitudes towards KP Specific Commitment revealed that there was very little knowledge of SADC PF Minimum Standards for Protection of SRH of Key Populations.

It was submitted, however, that some positive steps were identified in Zimbabwe when an amendment to the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act decriminalised what was traditionally termed “wilful and deliberate transmission of HIV” was done. The presentation indicated that this was a positive step since criminalising the transmission of HIV resulted in promoting non-disclosure of HIV status between sexual partners.

The submissions also highlighted positives changes which happened in Mozambique. The Fifth National Plan to Combat HIV/AIDS (2021-25) denounced discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. Mozambique also came up with a National HIV response plan called the PEN IV which was human rights-based and addressed stigma, discrimination and harassment against people living with HIV as well as some KPs.

Much progress was noted in South Africa where the recognition of KPs was highly institutionalised. The submissions highlighted that South Africa was the leading country in the recognition of the needs of the KPs. The Department of Basic Education Revised Five-Year Strategic Plan mandated schools to develop guidelines for the protection of LGBTIQ+1 students. It was also noted that the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development Strategic Plan 2017-2020 and 2021-2027 had strategies for KPs. Furthermore, the Human Sciences Research Council Strategic Plan 2016/2017- 2020/2021 also dealt with the needs of the KPs.

The submissions laid down some of the major hindrances in achieving the KP Specific Commitments. The major pervasive challenge was financial constraints. It was revealed that Zimbabwe remained underfunded and structural barriers remained in place for the Key Populations. Although there was a considerable number of services available for sex workers, lack of funding was the major undoing.

Criminalisation of sex workers was also highlighted as another stumbling block which frustrated progress towards achievement of KP Specific Commitments. KPs faced violence from law enforcement officers, clients and even partners thereby increasing the risk of contracting HIV. There was a general shrinking of advocacy space for NGOs to perform their advocacy role in Zimbabwe. The submissions also blamed religious and cultural extremism as impediments towards the achievement of KP Specific Commitments.

It was submitted that most countries lacked capacity and will to address challenges faced by the Key Populations. It was further highlighted that countries were hesitant to domesticate all SADC Regional Instruments which speak to Key Population Health Programming. Scientific data on Key Populations including on what are the barriers to access services was also negligible.

### **5.3 Provision of SRHR Services for Vulnerable Groups During Humanitarian Crises especially in Rural Areas**

The submissions highlighted Malawi's experience in the provision of SRHR Services for Vulnerable Groups During Humanitarian Crises. During Cyclone Freddy in 2023 the government became preoccupied with providing food and shelter to affected people to the detriment of SRHR services and consequently there was an upsurge in teenage pregnancies. The presentation also highlighted that the UNFP reported that pregnant young girls could not receive antenatal and SRH services. This led to increased rate of school dropouts as pregnant girls could not attend classes. There was a conspicuous gap between provision of SRHR services between the rural and urban populations with the latter having better access to services.

### **5.4 Reducing Barriers that hinder learners from accessing quality education which increases class absenteeism rates and low performance**

The submissions highlighted challenges faced by learners in accessing quality education. The major challenges highlighted was uneven distribution of teachers, poor education facilities, and lack of teaching resources. The submissions further indicated that in Malawi the government had instituted austerity measures in a bid to turn around the economy, however, this was deleterious to education funding as funding was drastically reduced. It was also highlighted that there was lack of proper coordination between the government and stakeholders in the education sector.

## **5.5 Ending Child Marriage**

The submissions underscored that tackling child marriages was not only a legal obligation but also smart economics and a strategy to achieve SADC's Agenda for Achieving Sustainable and Inclusive Development. Child marriage remained a problem in Africa. 40% of children were married off before the age of 18 years in the SADC Region. It was also submitted that Malawi and Mozambique exhibited high prevalences of child marriages. This jeopardised aspirations to promote the girl child. It was disconcerting that most girls were forced by parents to enter into early marriages.

The submissions bemoaned the lack of trained people to fight child marriage in the communities. There was also absence of community structures to deal with child marriages. The submissions further indicated that there was, rather, a lukewarm approach by countries in monitoring progress on ending child marriages.

## **5.6 The Role of Parliament in Promoting Smart Education Agendas for Life Skills Learning and Disease Prevention**

One of the submissions defined Smart Education Agendas as using technology such as digital tools to enhance education experiences. Smart Education Agendas could be stimulated by having countries allocate enough budget towards Smart Education Agenda. There was also little public awareness on importance of the smart education agenda. The presentation emphasised the need to create supportive environments to usher in the digitalisation of the learning experience. Governments could synergise with CSOs to help accelerate the uptake of Smart Education Agendas. It was also highlighted that there was a gap in laws that protect children and create safe learning environment in the ever-increasing digital learning space.

## **5.7 How the domestication of the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence at the national level be expedited and what concrete steps can be taken to proactively prevent gender-based violence in communities and ensure comprehensive support and justice for survivors**

The submissions emphasised that the Model Law could be a useful tool for GBV provisions to be incorporated into properly crafted GBV laws. This Model Law could bolster national GBV laws. It could also be a benchmark of national policy analysis and could reinforce commonality across the region. The presentation also highlighted that the Model Law could be a stimulus to debate and aid in raising awareness and GBV.

The submissions flagged out a plethora of challenges which were experienced in SADC Region insofar as dealing with GBV was concerned, some of which mentioned were as follows:

- Inadequacies in laws existed in member states;
- Different and fragmented pieces of legislation which dealt with GBV;
- Lack of adequate access to justice on GBV cases;
- Absence of judicial and rehabilitative facilities to deal with GBV;
- The laws were silent on how they could accommodate asylum seekers, refugees, and stateless persons; and



- There was no single unit which could deal with GBV resulting in numerous institutions dealing with these issues.

The submissions accentuated the need for SADC member states to domesticate the Model Law as it would help to consolidate various pieces of legislations which dealt with GBV. Government could also warm up to CSOs and build synergies which could tackle GBV and its concomitant of vices. The submissions further pointed out that the Model Law could be used as model to craft GBV laws which suit the peculiarity of individual national contexts.

It was, however, bemoaned that there was lack of a mechanism by SADC PF to monitor progress made by member states in adhering to commitments to which they are a signatory.

It was therefore suggested that SADC PF should put in place a peer review platform where member states submit state reports annually highlighting commitments status to end GBV. Given this, it was observed that it was difficult for SADC PF to promptly follow up on commitments made.

Another worrying observation made by the submissions was lack of a conducive Enabling environment created to allow CSOs to research on GBV. It was highlighted that the dearth of information from member countries, for example, bi-annual reports from each member on enforcement, compliance and regulations regarding GBV. Sharing of data could help in comparing experiences and ideas.

### **5.8 How can barriers to girls and women's education and skills development be overcome to ensure they have equal access to educational opportunities**

The submissions highlighted that gender discrimination was rife in the education sector and this was compounded by lack of policies and laws to prohibit child labour and early marriage. There was lack of proper coordination between governments and stakeholders to raise awareness to end child labour and child marriage. In this regard, the submissions made the following proposals as mechanisms ensure equal access to educational opportunities:

- SADC Member State Parliaments could prioritise education in budget allocation. This will lead to improvement in infrastructure;
- Promotion of smart education agendas;
- Attracting and retaining skilled education professionals;
- Improved salaries for teachers;
- Offer professional development programmes to teachers;
- Investment in vocational training programmes;
- Mitigate the impact of climate disasters on school dropouts; and
- Develop contingents plans for alternative learning methods during disasters.

### **5.9 How can Parliament actively engage with the African Union's 2024 theme of Education and its Roadmap for Education to incentivise Member States to implement measures aimed at eliminating the root causes hindering education at all levels**

The submissions highlighted the importance of active engagement between SADC PF and the 2024 African Education Theme suggesting that there was need to have inclusivity lens in accelerating digital education as there could be a risk of sidelining People with Disabilities (PWD). It was also submitted that digitalisation of education could inadvertently impact the rights of students with disabilities in a very big and adverse way. The submission made a plea to governments to invest in inclusive technologies which would translate into empowerment of PWD to be independent in the classroom.

The submission also underscored the need to create and stimulate investment in digitalised education and this could easily be realised through creating synergies with relevant stakeholders. The presentation also highlighted lack of proper training on students and teachers in using digital gadgets effectively.

Another submission called on national parliaments can engage with AU's 2024 Theme through enacting legislations which resonate with the theme. A majority of education institutions in the SADC Region were churning out graduates who lack employability skills. The skills learned by students could not be easily converted it into outputs which transform the communities they live.

It was also highlighted that the curricula in some member states were obsolete and not in sync with the demands of the modern global economy. This was exacerbated by the lack of SADC PF to play oversight to monitor member states and see how the education curricula could be dovetailed to be in step with modern demands.

### **5.10 Unlocking a Healthier Future: Prioritizing Tobacco Control in the SADC Region and Urgent need to initiate discussions on establishing a SADC Model Law on Tobacco Control**

The submissions revealed that tobacco-induced health problems was a major concern in the SADC Region. Zimbabwe and Malawi were the largest producers and exporters of tobacco in the region. Over 20 million people in the SADC Region used tobacco products. It was also highlighted that tobacco use was the leading cause of preventable death causing over 60 000 deaths in the region per year.

It was also submitted that high prevalence of tobacco use in the SADC Region was driven by several factors which included the influence of the tobacco industry, social norms that support tobacco use, and weak tobacco control policies and regulations. The health impacts of tobacco use were significant and smoking was linked to a range of chronic diseases which included lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory illness.

Passive smoking was also significant posing risk to non-smokers including children and pregnant women.

It was further noted that efforts to address the tobacco epidemic in the SADC Region was limited as many countries lacked comprehensive tobacco control policies and programmes. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) could be used as a roadmap to effective tobacco control, including strategies such as tobacco taxation, smoke free environments, and comprehensive tobacco and promotion bans. SADC members states made steps to control tobacco use, nonetheless, challenges still persist. Through the ratification of the FCTC some levels of control were registered.

The presenter acknowledged that while it was not possible to eliminate tobacco *in toto* Africa regulations needed to be if the region was keen on creating a sustainable future. SADC should come up with a SADC Model Law on Tobacco Control which would be important in a number of ways as it would promote uniformity by harmonising laws across SADC countries thereby ensuring consistent and effective control measures. The Model Law could support regional cooperation by facilitating cooperation and coordination among SADC countries, promoting information, sharing joint efforts to tackle the tobacco epidemic. Countries with limited resources could also benefit from this cooperation. Further, the presenter argued that the Model Law could invite global recognition by demonstrating SADC's commitment to international tobacco control efforts. The model law could also see SADC countries complying with international obligations such as the implementation of the WHO FCTC.

One of the submissions bemoaned the impact of tobacco on the youth. Statistics demonstrated a significant rise in tobacco use among SADC Youth, leading to an upsurge in smoking-related diseases, which included respiratory problems, cardiovascular issues and cancers. The data emphasised the urgent need for effective tobacco control measures. There was little awareness of the FCTC. It was imperative for states to promote tobacco-free environments, by raising awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco and also by instituting tobacco control policies.

The submission recognised the importance of adopting a harmonised regional approach to tobacco control to address cross-border challenges effectively. The proposed model law could help standardise regulations and enhance regional cooperation in tobacco control efforts. The need for urgent and immediate comprehensive action to combat tobacco use among the youth was also emphasised.

#### **5.11 Harnessing youth-led research in Integrating Non-communicable Diseases in the fight against HIV/TB**

One of the submissions pointed out that the youth was generally not involved in research work and the major impediment was identified as underfunding. Youth led research could promote participation in problems affecting them.

The submission also highlighted that the World Health Organisation (WHO) had anticipated that by 2030 non-communicable diseases could be the largest cause of death among people. It was highlighted that there was need to improve on youth-led research by developing a legal framework under which the research could flourish.

#### **5.12 Call to Expedite the Domestication of the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence at the national level and Comprehensively Address GBV Challenges in the SADC Region**

The submission emphasised the need for immediate action to adopt and implement SADC model law on GBV. Will help tackle GBV in SADC. The prevalence rate of GBV varied significantly across member states. Stigma was rife in law enforcement services when people report the vice and this was a disservice to efforts aimed at addressing effect of GBV. It was highlighted that this stigma was rooted in patriarchy. GBV was pervasive in SADC with victims being mainly women and girls. Irksome was the fact that perpetrators were not facing reprisals. The submission advocated for expeditious domestication of the Model Law on GBV as it could lead to collaboration and coordination among member states.

#### **5.13 It Shouldn't Take an Annual Theme: Educating for Africa's Place in the 4th Industrial Revolution.**

The submission received warned against falling trap to the cycle of coming up with colourful themes which come and go without translating into any meaningful material benefit to the people. The key impediments to education in Africa lied in the failure to access quality education, coupled with inadequate infrastructure and lack of fees school dropouts were inevitable. Another major problem identified was lack of quality of teacher training. The education curricula in most African states were colonial relics which did not stimulate innovation and industrialisation. The major undoing was inadequate education funding with several countries in Africa allocating less than 4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to education.

#### **5.14 Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)**

The submissions brought to the attention of the Committee that the youth had the highest population in Africa. A third of Southern Africa population were people between the age of 18-24 and it was the highest population facing the risk of HIV/AIDS. It was also submitted that the number of young people could double the year 2050. It was irking that adolescents did not have enough knowledge about sexuality education. CSE aimed to develop learners holistically making them become responsible citizens.

### **6.0 COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

During the subsequent deliberations, the Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes:

**Recognised** that gender discrimination was rife in the SADC Region Education Institutions and the was compounded by rampant early child marriages and child labour with girls as the principal victims.

**Aware** that climate calamities such as cyclones and droughts have become pervasive in the SADC Region resulting in school dropouts.

**Desirous** to establish mechanisms to alleviate poverty as a primary factor drawing children out of school, particularly in regions with high poverty rates.

**Appreciated** that parliaments have a role to address logistical and infrastructural challenges bedevilling delivery of basic education.

**Irked** by the continued loss of skilled professionals in the education sector, including teachers.

**Aware** of the emergence and utility of Smart Education Agendas in the ever-increased digital learning environment.

**Cognisant** that new innovations in the education sector are flourishing in other parts of the world and that SADC Region does not exist in isolation from the digital learning world.

**Recognised** the importance of the African Union's 2024 Education and affirming the role regional organs play at eliminating problems affecting education at all levels.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, the Committee recommends that the 54th Plenary Assembly should:

**Urge** Governments in the SADC Region to invest more in climate change awareness campaigns, early warning systems and to come up with expeditious contingency plans whenever such calamities arise. This could be achieved if member countries collaborate with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs);

**Call** SADC to come up with a mechanism to measure the compliance levels of members states to commitments they make;

**Implore** Parliamentarians in the SADC Member states to progressively review and repeal laws that criminalises key populations and take actions to prevent new criminalisation laws being enacted;

**Encourage** Parliamentarians to urge SADC Member States to spearhead the domestication of all SADC Regional Instruments that speak to key Population health programming;

**Call upon** SADC Member States to increase funding towards education and to further create synergies with stakeholders in the education sector. There should be an exponential increase in budget towards smart education agendas;

**Urge** SADC Members States to enact a peer review platform where they submit annual reports highlighting progress made in the realisation of commitments they make.

**Encourage** Parliamentarians of the SADC Member States to devise strategies of attracting and retaining skilled education professionals;

**Urge** Governments of SADC Member States should invest in technical and vocational training programmes (TVET).

**Encourage** Governments of member states to review the education curricula since most curricula have become relics of the colonial legacy and out of sync with the demands of the modern world; and

**Urge** SADC Parliaments to put in place a legal framework under which the youth-led research can be incubated and flourish.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it should be appreciated that human and social development in the SADC Region continue to face threats from the vagaries of climate change and its resultant catastrophes such as cyclones, droughts and floods. These natural calamities have a domino effect on social services like education and health. Climatic disasters remain pervasive in the sub-Saharan Africa and SADC Region was most hard as it recorded numerous climate disasters which exacerbated vices like child marriage, child labour and school dropouts. The situation was further compounded by lack of properly trained education person as some Member States face skills flight due to volatile macroeconomic milieus. Nonetheless, a concomitant of measures cab be instituted to allay the situation. SADC Member states have an immense task to play in the new education agenda and institute social policies which are human centred to encourage sustainable economic and social growth.

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Hon. Rosie BISTOQUET  
**CHAIRPERSON**

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Mrs Petronella HAZVINA  
**COMMITTEE SECRETARY**

## **8.0 APPENDIX: LIST OF OFFICIALS**

- |    |                                   |                     |
|----|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Ms Boemo Sekgoma                  | Secretary General   |
| 2. | Mr. Joseph Manzi                  | SADC PF Secretariat |
| 3. | Mr. Sheuneni Kurasha              | SADC PF Secretariat |
| 4. | Mr. Ronald Windwaai               | SADC PF Secretariat |
| 5. | Ms. Paulina Kanguatjivi           | SADC PF Secretariat |
| 6. | Mrs Petronella Hazvina (Zimbabwe) | Committee Secretary |
| 7. | Ms Deborah Sanja                  | Moderator           |