



**SPEECH BY HON. ROGER MANCIENNE, PRESIDENT
OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM AND
SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
SEYCHELLES AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
54TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION OF THE SADC
PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**

**HOSTED BY
THE MAURITIUS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
HELD AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, PORT LOUIS IN THE
REPUBLIC OF MAURIUS
22ND TO 26TH NOVEMBER 2023**

***THEME: “THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN
PROMOTING COORDINATION FOR ENHANCED
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RECOVERY
PLANNING IN THE SADC REGION”***

SALUTATIONS

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Once again, Parliamentarians from across the southern Africa region have assembled for a Plenary Assembly of the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

I am honoured as the President of this Parliamentary Forum, to welcome you all, honourable Members and distinguished guests, to our 54th Plenary Assembly being graciously hosted by the Parliament of the Republic of Mauritius, one of the founding Members of this organisation.

On behalf of all our Members, I extend my appreciation to our distinguished Guest of Honour, Honourable Pravind Kumar JUGNAUTH, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, for his presence on this occasion.

Prime Minister, We are grateful that you have taken the time to be with us, showing the commitment and support that you bring for the vital work of the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

Our heartfelt appreciation to our colleague, the Speaker of the Mauritius National Assembly, Honourable

Sooroojdev Phokeer, for the generous hospitality in hosting this Assembly at the parliament of Mauritius. Mr. Speaker, we all know the work that the Assembly poses on your Parliament, Members and staff, and we thank you for enabling us to pursue the work of our Forum.

This Parliament is one of the founding members of the Forum and has been a consistent participant in its work.

Over the years, both current and former Members from Mauritius have played pivotal roles within various leadership positions of SADC PF organs. These include the former Speaker, Honourable Abdool Razack PEEROO. who as the President of the SADC PF from 2012 to 2014, bringing invaluable leadership and expertise during his tenure.

Among other things he made a vital contribution in the transformative journey toward becoming the SADC Parliament. Here in Mauritius, more than a decade ago, during the 35th Plenary Assembly in June 2014, the SADC PF took a major step towards institutionalising its Rules of Procedure, in a document called called 'Operating like a Parliament.'

It was the then President of SADC PF, Speaker PEEROO, who defined the essence of Operating like a Parliament, In his words:

“Operating like a Parliament means changing our operational modalities from the hitherto conference style to one similar to a parliamentary institution. ...”

I would like to acknowledge the significant progress we have made in our pursuit of this transformation which means a lot for our institution. It offers us the opportunity to deepen our engagement in regional matters and elevate our collective voice to effect change that will positively impact the lives of the people of our region.

Our Guest of Honour and Distinguished Delegates

And now, a brief preview of the work that is before us.

In a world characterised by growing polarisation and conflicts, where multilateralism and diplomacy are often being openly undermined, it is imperative for us to remain committed to and reinforce the pivotal role of Parliaments in conflict prevention and diplomacy, in building strong institutions engaged in democratic governance and marshalling development and progress in our region. It is incumbent upon us to shoulder the responsibility of

positioning our Parliaments as strongholds of inclusivity, diversity, tolerance, stability and democracy.

The theme for this Plenary Assembly, "The Role of Parliaments in Promoting Coordination for Enhanced Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery Planning in the SADC Region," offers a significant platform for Members to engage in comprehensive discussions and exchange insights regarding the pressing issue of climate change. It is incontestable that climate events has been having devastating effects on the lives of our citizens, with vulnerable groups, such as women and children, being the most severely affected.

It is not the first time we devote a plenary Assembly to this subject. We are not overdoing. We cannot let go of this issue because it is of crucial importance to our region and to the whole world. During the symposium, Honourable Members will discuss the theme from a new angle, based on presentations by identified Resource Persons and adopt resolutions for action by various stakeholders including governments.

Our Guest of Honour and Distinguished Delegates

During this Session we will also deliberate on reports of our Standing Committees and the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus, containing regional issues that were submitted by citizens through virtual public hearings that were held from 11th to 18th October virtually. These reports, therefore, represent the voices and concerns of the citizens of our region. By addressing the issues contained in these reports, we will be demonstrating our commitment to responsive governance and the strengthening of democracy in our respective countries.

The current SADC PF Strategic Plan for the period 2019-2023, is set to end in December 2023. As key stakeholders, it is imperative for us to actively participate in the development of the next Strategic Plan for the period 2024 to 2028. Our collective input will be vital in shaping the direction and priorities of our institution, ensuring that it is aligned with the evolving needs and aspirations of citizens.

So here we are at the start of the 54th Plenary Assembly. Let us seize this moment to renew our dedication to the principles of democracy, regional cooperation, and peace. Together, we can make a profound impact on the lives of our people and contribute to a more prosperous and harmonious Southern African.

I thank you!