



ADDRESS BY

HON. ROGER MANCIENNE

**SADC PF PRESIDENT AND SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT
OF SEYCHELLES**

**AT THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 55TH
SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM PLENARY ASSEMBLY
SESSION**

ON 2ND JULY 2024

LUANDA, ANGOLA

SALUTATIONS

1. HER EXCELLENCY THE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA AND HOST OF THE 55TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY, HON. **CAROLINA CERQUEIRA**
2. HER EXCELLENCY THE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND HOST OF THE 56TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM, HON. **NELLY B. K. KASHUMBA MUTTI**
3. EXCELLENCIES THE SPEAKERS OF SADC PARLIAMENTS AND HEADS OF DELEGATIONS
4. HER EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY UNION AND SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, DR. **TULIA ACKSON.**
5. CHAIRPERSON OF THE REGIONAL WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS, HON. **SHALLY JOSEFA RAYMOND**
6. HIS EXCELLENCY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE FORUM OF PARLIAMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION, MR. **ONYANGO KAKOBA**
7. HER EXCELLENCY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM, MS. **BOEMO SEGKOMA**
8. DISTINGUISHED AUTHORITIES OF THE ANGOLAN STATE

9. DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES FROM MEMBER
PARLIAMENTS

10. DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

11. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to address you as we officially open the 55th Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

We are fortunate to be meeting here in the beautiful city of Luanda, the capital of the Republic of Angola. For many of us it is not the first time and it is a pleasure to be back.

I am sure I speak for all who have come from other countries when I express our gratitude to the Parliament of Angola through our esteemed colleague, Hon. Speaker Carolina Cerquiera, for hosting this event and the warm hospitality we have all received since our arrival.

This plenary assembly affords us once again the opportunity to pursue the business of our network, to assess what we have been doing as parliamentarians, to renew our exchanges on issues close to our hearts and for the people we represent, to promote inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation, and to seek responses and solutions for the challenges we face. We look forward to the targeted Resolutions that will be adopted under the aegis of this august Assembly which will undoubtedly shape the SADC region for the better.

Hosting this assembly attests to the commitment of the parliament of Angola to our organisation and therefore the mission that we have. It is indeed a promising call for each one of us to renew our commitment to our mission for the SADC-PF to

act as the representative body and bridge between the government and the people at the regional level.

Distinguished Delegates and Guests

This 55th plenary assembly has indeed some milestones that are significant and that we can take as signs that we are boldly taking ~~creating~~ our future in hand.

First, I am delighted that we have launched our Strategic Plan for 2024 to 2028, providing a clear roadmap for achieving our long-term goals, aligning resources and ensuring coherence and focus across all levels.

The strategic plan has set out our goals and objectives key areas. These include parliamentary effectiveness and democratic governance, capacity building as well as initiatives for climate action which are germane themes for Parliaments.

We launched the plan in a ceremony yesterday, shared it with the media and we are committed to achieving its goals in the planned timeframe.

At a time when various studies show that citizens across the SADC region consistently express a desire for greater political stability and economic opportunity, the Strategic Plan represents our ~~collective~~ proactive response to these aspirations as a region.

Distinguished guests and delegates

Another aspect of particular significance for the 55th Plenary Assembly Session is that we are convening at a time when we have made commendable progress on one of our cherished goals, that of transforming the SADC PF into a SADC Parliament.

We are now at the point of having 11 Member States to have signed the Agreement Amending the SADC Treaty to establish the SADC Parliament and deposited the instruments with the SADC Secretariat. The distinction of being the latest to join is Zambia, which will do so in a ceremony later this morning and that comes just after Namibia also finalised the process. Let's honour all those who have signed along with the latest countries to do so with a round of applause.

This has brought us ever closer to the required number of 12 Member States needed to bring the Amendment into force. Indeed, this milestone is worth celebrating and represents a significant step forward in our collective pursuit of strengthened parliamentary cooperation and regional integration through the establishment of the SADC Parliament.

While we celebrate this milestone, we must be certain to guard against complacency. The aim is to have all the 16 SADC Member States sign the Agreement. In this regard, National Parliaments need to maintain the resolve we have shown over the years and continue engaging the Member States that have not yet ratified

the Agreement. It is crucial to urge them to ratify the Agreement so that the SADC Parliament, upon being established, will be accessible to all citizens of the SADC region.

Guests and Distinguished Delegates,

The year 2024 has been dubbed the “Super Election Year,” with nearly half the world's population heading to the polls, as 64 countries globally have scheduled elections. For Africa, 17 countries are undergoing elections of which over 180 million people will be eligible to vote. In the SADC region, seven countries have elections. The Union of Comoros already had its elections in January, and recently, South Africa and Madagascar held general and parliamentary elections, respectively. Botswana, Mozambique, Mauritius, and Namibia are next in line. These elections provide opportunities for democratic renewal, electoral innovation and enhanced representation.

While elections on their own, do not constitute democracy, it is indisputable that the regular holding of credible elections remains a critical cornerstone in building a strong and sustainable democracy. Indeed, building democracy is a complex process with many challenges and the holding of credible elections is just a starting point. Where the integrity of elections is compromised, it goes without saying that legitimacy of democracy is also compromised. It is our role as rule-makers to ensure that the SADC region is shielded from election malpractices which can jeopardise democracy.

Our region, like other parts of the world, grapples with both traditional and emerging electoral risks. These include voter apathy, disinformation, cyber violence targeting especially women candidates, electoral outcomes that do not give a clear mandate for rule, non-acceptance of results and electoral and political conflicts and violence. We are also witnessing the proliferation of fake news targeting the electoral processes and role players, where synthetic video and audio media that appear realistic and therefore difficult to distinguish from authentic ones, are generated using artificial intelligence (AI). This last is of course a threat that will continue to become more significant and that the democratic process has to contend with.

Parliamentarians, as products of elections and rule-makers, have a positive duty to ensure that electoral processes are conducted with integrity and accountability and that the will of the people is accurately reflected. The SADC Model Law on Elections, which we adopted in 2018 in Maputo, Mozambique, is a critical framework that provides guidelines to enhance electoral integrity. We must, therefore, focus our efforts on its domestication by Member States so that we contribute to the creation of the stability essential for the realisation of the SADC Vision 2050, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the SDGs.

Guest of Honour and Distinguished Delegates,

The theme of our 55th Plenary Assembly: *"The Role of Parliaments in Promoting Renewable Energy Policies in the SADC Region and Creating a Single Regional Energy Market,"* is both timely and critical. To me, our symposium on this theme in this plenary is a testimony of how we strive to remain relevant to the challenges of our times. As we face the pressing realities of climate change and the global energy transition, the need for sustainable energy solutions has never been more urgent. Renewable energy policies are essential for reducing our carbon footprint by significantly decreasing our reliance on fossil fuels, enhancing energy security and driving economic growth in the SADC region. By creating a single regional energy market, we can harness the collective potential of our Member States, promoting greater cooperation and efficiency in energy production and distribution. I am pleased that SADC PF is taking up this matter and therefore calling on our member parliamentarians to take it up in their respective institutions.

In this regard, Parliaments have a critical role to play in advocating for progressive renewable energy policies, ensuring robust supportive legislative frameworks, holding governments accountable and providing the necessary budgetary support. This is one example of where we can lead and make the difference.

Distinguished guests and Delegates,

As I conclude my address, I wish to once more, extend my sincere appreciation to Hon. Carolina Cerqueira, Speaker of the National

Assembly of Angola, for her exemplary leadership and the generosity for putting in place the wonderful hosting arrangements for this 55th Plenary Assembly.

I invite all delegates to work collaboratively, leveraging our collective strengths to achieve the vision of a united, prosperous and resilient SADC region.

I look forward to fruitful deliberations and to the impactful resolutions to be made during this session.

I thank you very much for your kind attention. It is now my great ~~great~~ pleasure and honour to declare this 55th plenary assembly of the SADC Parliamentary forum officially open.