



**REPORT OF THE SADC PF STANDING COMMITTEE ON
DEMOCRATISATION, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS (DGHR) TO
THE 56TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY HOSTED BY THE PARLIAMENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA FROM 8TH TO 15TH DECEMBER 2024**

Mr. President, I beg to move that the 56th Plenary Assembly do adopt the Report of the Standing Committee on Democratisation, Governance And Human Rights (DGHR) laid on the Table on 11th December 2024.

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1.0 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

As at the date of the meeting, the Committee consisted of the following Members:

1. Hon. Leonard Mwalwanda (Malawi) (*Chairperson*)
2. Hon. Ruth Mendes (*proxy for Hon. Pedro Sebastiao*) Angola
3. Hon. Francoise Ndokwa Bemba DRC
4. Hon. Napo Moshoeshoe Lesotho
5. Sen. Isaac Magagula Eswatini
6. Hon. Ratsiraka Sophie Soamiadana Madagascar
7. Hon. Utaara Mootu Namibia
8. Hon. Richard Labrosse Seychelles
9. Hon. Selemani Jumanne Zedi Tanzania
10. Hon. Victor Lumayi Zambia
11. Hon. Tendai Nyabani Zimbabwe
12. Botswana (Parliament was dissolved ahead of 30th October elections)
13. Mauritius (Parliament was dissolved ahead of 10th November elections)
14. Mozambique (Parliament was dissolved ahead of 9th October elections)
15. South Africa (Member not yet assigned after 29th May general elections)

2.0 COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

Broadly, the Standing Committee on Democratisation, Governance and Human Rights (DGHR) deals with democratisation and governance issues, including open, transparent and accountable governance, democracy, political participation including elections, security, peace and stability on the basis of collective responsibility, rule of law, human rights, and conflict resolution, among others. The specific Terms of Reference for the Committee are spelt out in Rule 42 (d) of the Rules of Procedure of the SADC PF.

3.0 NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD AND MEETING DATES

The DGHR Committee held its virtual public hearing session on 25th October 2024 under the theme: *“Leveraging the Role of SADC Parliamentary Forum in Facilitating Citizen Participation in SADC Regional Integration for Enhanced Accountability and Inclusive Socio-Economic Development.”*

4.0 BACKGROUND

The 2024 Public Hearing Session highlighted the importance of citizen participation and the SADC PF's role in promoting accountability, inclusive development, and social cohesion within SADC integration efforts. Submissions focused on key thematic areas aimed at enhancing democratic governance and citizen participation, including strengthening the role of SADC Parliaments, improving electoral processes, protecting electoral rights, and addressing regional security challenges.

A key focus was strengthening the oversight and legislative functions of SADC Parliaments, with proposals to enhance their roles in promoting democracy and democratic consolidation, stressing the need for greater engagement and stronger legislative frameworks. Improving electoral transparency and integrity was also emphasised, with measures recommended to prevent post-

election violence, foster trust, and ensure credible elections. This was linked to protecting electoral rights, particularly for marginalised and vulnerable groups, ensuring the right to vote, stand for office, and access information.

Discussions also centred on domesticating the SADC Model Law on Elections, addressing challenges and opportunities, and emphasising the role of civil society in promoting its adoption and implementation to standardise electoral practices and enhance democratic governance. The issue of disinformation on social media during elections was raised, with strategies proposed to combat misinformation while safeguarding freedom of expression to maintain electoral integrity in the digital age.

Youth participation and representation in governance were also discussed, highlighting the need for electoral reforms to ensure greater youth involvement and create spaces for them to contribute actively to decision-making. Disarmament and humanitarian issues were raised, particularly measures to curb the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and the rise of autonomous weapons systems.

The impact of these issues on regional security was highlighted, with calls for stronger measures to reduce their spread and mitigate their negative effects on peace and stability.

5.0 SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC HEARING SUBMISSIONS

5.1 Strategies For SADC Parliaments To Strengthen Their Oversight And Legislative Functions In Promoting Democracy-Building And Democratic Consolidation Across Member States

Two expert submissions were made under the thematic area. Olufunto Akinduro, Senior Programme Officer in the Africa and West Asia Regional Programme at International IDEA presented findings from the Global State of Democracy 2024 Report, which assessed democratic performance across 173 countries using 165 indicators. The report revealed a pressing global decline in democracy, with one in three people now voting in countries where election quality has deteriorated over the past five years. This includes rising disputes over election outcomes, reduced voter participation, and democratic backsliding, especially in representation and rights. Even high-performing democracies, notably in Europe and the Americas, have seen more regressions than progress.

In Southern Africa, democratic challenges are concentrated on representation and rights, with declining voter turnout, increased protests, and uneven gender equality progress. Although electoral administration has improved, vote counting and voting irregularities remain significant concerns. Akinduro's submission underscored the pivotal role of SADC Parliamentarians in strengthening democratic institutions, upholding electoral integrity, and promoting inclusive governance. Their actions are

crucial to ensure credible elections and protect voter rights, particularly for marginalised groups.

Dr Augustine Magolowondo of the Democracy Works Foundation stressed the vital role of political parties in democratic consolidation in Southern Africa. Despite their importance, political parties in the region faced internal challenges that limited their effectiveness, including a lack of intra-party democracy, personality-driven leadership, and weak membership structures. Magolowondo categorised Southern African political parties into three generations, each facing unique issues, such as clientelism, low internal accountability, and challenges posed by digital technology, which offers alternative political engagement channels. His submission called for reforms to enhance the role of political parties in governance in an evolving digital landscape.

5.2 Strategies for Curbing the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, and the Rise of Autonomous Weapons Systems

Three submissions were received, addressing critical disarmament and humanitarian issues in Southern Africa, focusing on small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and the rise of autonomous weapons systems.

Ms. Pauline Demper, National Coordinator of NANGO Trust, Namibia, discussed the adverse impacts of SALW proliferation on security, citing links to crimes such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and gender-based violence. Despite the frameworks provided by the SADC Protocol on Firearms and the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA), challenges remain in curbing SALW due to stalled implementation efforts, such as the disbanding of Namibia's National Action Plan Secretariat. Demper called for greater focus on gender-responsive policies to address how SALW affect women disproportionately, evidenced by firearm-related violence statistics.

Joseph Dube, Director of Disarmament and Arms Control for South Africa, underscored the humanitarian toll of explosive weapons in populated areas. Drawing from conflict zones like Gaza, Ukraine, and Sudan, Dube highlighted severe civilian casualties and long-term damage to critical infrastructure. The 2022 Political Declaration on Strengthening Civilian Protection calls on states to limit the use of explosive weapons in such areas and enhance aid for affected civilians. Dube urged SADC countries to endorse this declaration and adopt protective measures.

Edwick Madzimore, Director of WILPF Zimbabwe, advocated for urgent action against autonomous weapons systems, urging parliamentarians to support a global pledge to prevent their development. He argued that autonomous weapons risk deepening social inequalities and reinforcing systems of militarism and patriarchy, promoting violence and social control. Madzimore

stressed the need to ban autonomous weapons and address the oppressive systems enabling their creation.

5.3 Measures to Improve Electoral Transparency and Integrity to Prevent Post-Election Violence and Build Trust in Electoral Processes

Two submissions were received under the thematic area by Tendai Shepard Mbanje, a PhD student in International Human Rights Law from the African Centre for Governance, and Hon. Francois Musampwa, a Member of the Southern Africa Youth Parliament from DRC. Both submissions emphasised the urgent need for improving electoral integrity within the African Union and its Regional Economic Communities. Mbanje's submission highlighted the decline in democracy across various regions, citing challenges such as inconclusive electoral cycles, unresolved political and electoral disputes, manipulation of electoral processes, constitutional tampering, and suppression of political competition, all of which compromise electoral credibility. He raised concerns over campaign finance, disinformation, and the inadequate management of election technologies, which collectively erode public trust in democratic processes.

Hon. Musampwa's submission focused on fostering transparent and fair elections, which are essential for Africa's political stability and economic growth. He highlighted two key obstacles: biased electoral laws favouring ruling parties and undermining the opposition and the lack of independence in electoral commissions, eroding public trust and triggering post-election unrest. Musampwa called for the implementation of the SADC Model Law on Elections to establish robust, impartial electoral laws and strengthen the independence of electoral bodies.

5.4 Strategies for SADC Member States to Protect Electoral Rights

Hon. Nsama Patrick Mpundu, Speaker of the 3rd Southern Africa Youth Parliament from Zambia, made a compelling submission on the importance of protecting the electoral rights of marginalised and vulnerable populations within SADC Member States. He emphasised the importance of justice and the right of all citizens to participate in governance and highlighted key challenges: limited access to electoral information for rural and illiterate populations, political intimidation, and corruption. He also pointed to the need for technology to ensure electoral integrity and for competent leaders driven by integrity. Finally, he called for legal frameworks to be strengthened to protect electoral rights and advocated for transparent electoral bodies and independent judiciaries.

5.5 Strategies for Combating the Spread of Disinformation and Propaganda on Social Media During Elections while Balancing Freedom of Expression

Dr Victor Shale, General Manager at the Office of the CEO, Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC), made the submission on behalf of the IEC and the Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC Countries (ECF-SADC). The submission focused on the provisions of the Principles and Guidelines for the Use of Digital and Social Media in Elections in Africa adopted by the Association of African Electoral Authorities (AAEA) in February 2024 and outlined the principles and guidelines for managing digital and social media to protect electoral integrity in Africa. The submission acknowledged that social media could both support and undermine election processes and hence, the guidelines are meant to establish a balance through a rights-based framework. Dr Shale explained that the document covers regulation, monitoring, digital literacy, and partnerships to mitigate misinformation while promoting transparency and fairness. The document also highlights the importance of legal structures that safeguard electoral rights and calls for collaborative efforts with social media platforms to monitor and counter election-related disinformation.

5.6 How Can Electoral Systems and Political Processes be Reformed for Greater Youth Participation and Representation in Elections and Governance?

Misheck Gondo, Regional Coordinator for the Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF), made a submission on the importance of electoral and political process reforms to increase youth participation and representation in governance across the SADC region. He highlighted that youth, comprising over 60% of the population in the region, bring fresh perspectives and innovative approaches, which can strengthen democratic processes, increase accountability, and promote inclusive growth. He observed that greater youth involvement is essential for inclusive democracy and sustainable development. Gondo called for policy reforms, capacity building, enhanced access to political processes, responsible technology use, and the establishment of youth-friendly frameworks, quotas, and safe spaces to advance youth from mere participants to leaders.

Maureen Shonge from UN Women—East and Southern Africa complimented the earlier submission and emphasised reforms targeting young women. She noted that empowering youth, particularly women, in governance fosters inclusive democracy and strengthens governance structures. Shonge underscored the need to create safe, inclusive environments and youth-friendly policies and address systemic barriers like limited resources, lack of civic education, and gender-based discrimination.

6.0 DELIBERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the presentations by the experts and citizens, the Committee deliberated on the issues raised and resolved to recommend to the 56th Plenary Assembly as follows:

6.1 Strategies For SADC Parliaments To Strengthen Their Oversight And Legislative Functions In Promoting Democracy-Building and Democratic Consolidation Across Member States

- (i) **Urges** SADC countries should review and update legal frameworks for electoral processes to align with the SADC Model Law on Elections and the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.
- (ii) **Calls** on the SADC PF to use its expanded mandate and the SADC Model Law on Elections to advocate for electoral integrity and credible democratic processes across the region.
- (iii) **Urges** SADC PF to collaborate with the ECF-SADC and civil society networks to promote electoral reform initiatives in line with the Model Law.
- (iv) **Urges** political parties to:
 - (a) implement internal mechanisms that foster democracy within their structures, allow members to participate in decision-making, and hold leaders accountable to enhance democratic credibility;
 - (b) introduce regulations to reduce dependency on dominant figures, encourage leadership accountability, and curb the “big man” syndrome within party structures; and
 - (c) develop reliable membership identification systems and databases to accurately track party affiliations, improve organisational structure, and prevent cross-party membership.
 - (d) prioritise capacity building to effectively use digital platforms for engagement and transparency, ensuring they remain relevant and competitive in the digital age.

6.2 Strategies for Curbing the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, and the Rise of Autonomous Weapons Systems

SALW

- (i) **Encourages** the urgent need to re-establish and adequately fund National Focal Points across SADC to coordinate SALW reduction efforts effectively.
- (ii) **Calls** for strengthening of the implementation of UNPoA strategies for tackling illicit arms flows, including better cross-border collaboration and enforcement by SADC governments.

- (iii) **Urges** for the promotion of gender-responsive SALW control policies that address women's specific vulnerabilities and ensure gender equity in all SALW initiatives.
- (iv) **Calls** for strengthening of international collaboration, particularly with the AU's "Silencing the Guns" initiative, to ensure cohesive, region-wide arms control efforts.

Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

Urges SADC PF to:

- (i) Encourage SADC countries to endorse and implement the Declaration to minimise civilian harm; currently, only three of 16 SADC states have endorsed it.
- (ii) Promote awareness and action to prevent civilian harm from explosive weapons in populated areas while ensuring rapid and safe humanitarian access to affected regions for timely assistance and support.
- (iii) Use diplomatic channels to discourage the use of such weapons in populated zones, considering both direct and indirect civilian impacts.
- (iv) Support assistance and protection efforts for victims, in cooperation with organisations like the UN, ICRC, and civil society groups.
- (v) Advocate for states to attend the follow-up conference in Costa Rica in July 2025, aiming for broader endorsement and practical guidance on implementing the Declaration.

Autonomous Weapons Systems

- (i) **Urges** parliamentarians to support an international ban on autonomous weapons systems to prevent their development and deployment.
- (ii) **Calls** on policymakers to adopt an intersectional perspective by considering how autonomous weapons may disproportionately affect groups based on race, class, gender, and other social identities.
- (iii) **Calls** for urgent action to address and counter the underlying systems of militarism and patriarchy that promote and sustain the development of autonomous weapons.
- (iv) **Encourages** a paradigm shift in funding from militarisation to peacebuilding by reallocating resources from defence budgets to initiatives promoting peace, justice, and equality.

6.3 Measures to Improve Electoral Transparency and Integrity to Prevent Post-Election Violence and Build Trust in Electoral Processes

- (i) **Encourages** Member States to promote conclusive electoral cycles by strengthening state institutions to address issues of deep state influence.

- (ii) **Urged** Member States to strengthen mechanisms for the independence and accountability of electoral commissions to ensure electoral integrity and foster stakeholder confidence.
- (iii) **Urged** SADC PF to advocate for the domestication of the SADC Model Law on Elections to align Member States' laws with regional and international standards, ensuring equal treatment of all political parties.
- (iv) **Urged** Member States to consider implementing truth and reconciliation initiatives to break cycles of violence and misinformation and foster trust in the electoral process and democracy.
- (v) **Encourages** Member States to invest in youth development to cultivate a generation of skilled, Pan-African, and competent leaders as Africa's most valuable asset.
- (vi) **Urges** Member States to actively identify and address the needs of marginalised and vulnerable populations with targeted approaches, including context-specific protections of their electoral rights as part of broader nation-building efforts.

6.4 How SADC Member States Can Protection Electoral Rights

Urged Member States to:

- (i) Use data analytics and community-based surveys to identify under-informed groups and collaborate with faith-based and traditional leaders to effectively disseminate electoral information.
- (ii) Enforce strict safeguards against intimidation and electoral malpractices to ensure a safe environment for all voters.
- (iii) Provide comprehensive training and monitoring for polling officials, with clear penalties for any misconduct to maintain integrity in the voting process.
- (iv) Implement user-friendly electronic voting systems that enable all citizens, including those with limited literacy, to participate confidently and independently.
- (v) Strengthen independent electoral bodies to oversee elections and ensure that election petitions are addressed by an impartial judiciary to uphold electoral rights.

6.5 Strategies for Combating the Spread of Disinformation and Propaganda on Social Media During Elections while Balancing Freedom of Expression

Urged SADC PF to:

- (i) Leverage its leadership in norm-making, socialisation, and advocacy for domestication, along with its partnership with the AAEA and ECF-SADC, to mainstream the Principles and Guidelines as a framework for harnessing digital and social media benefits while combating associated harms in elections.

- (ii) Assist Member Parliaments in domesticating the Principles and Guidelines by identifying actionable areas and “low-hanging fruits” within the document.
- (iii) Collaborate with the AAEA and ECF-SADC to provide Member Parliaments to build partnerships with social media companies to facilitate responsible digital engagement, promote transparency in online election information, and address issues related to misinformation and disinformation in electoral processes.
- (iv) Use its convening power to authoritatively address ways to mitigate both the benefits and harms of digital and social media during elections.

6.6 How Can Electoral Systems and Political Processes be Reformed for Greater Youth Participation and Representation in Elections and Governance?

Urged SADC Member States to:

- (i) Introduce youth quotas, integrate youth advisory roles in governance, and reduce barriers for youth and young women candidates by revising electoral laws.
- (ii) Expand civic education tailored to youth, provide resources for youth-led political activities, and establish mentorship and financial support for young candidates, including utilising digital platforms and social media to build awareness and engagement.
- (iii) Address political and gender-based violence, establish safe workspaces, and protect young leaders from harassment to enable meaningful youth participation and foster leadership development.
- (iv) Invest in digital literacy, responsible social media use, and accessible technologies, such as e-voting and digital registration, to enhance youth engagement and facilitate efficient participation in elections.
- (v) Engage with NGOs, civil society, and youth organisations to build youth leadership capacity, encourage intergenerational dialogue, and promote community-based advocacy for youth representation in policy and governance.

Hon. Leonard MWALWANDA
CHAIRPERSON

Mr. Sheuneni KURASHA
COMMITTEE SECRETARY

8.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX I - LIST OF OFFICIALS

- (i) Boemo Sekgoma, Secretary General, SADC PF Secretariat
- (ii) Joseph Manzi, Director of Parliamentary Business and Programmes, SADC PF Secretariat
- (iii) Sheuneni Kurasha, Programme Manager and Committee Secretary for Democracy, Governance and Human Rights & GEWAYD, SADC PF Secretariat
- (iv) Rachel Mundilo, Programme Manager FANRCJ, SADC PF Secretariat
- (v) Masenate Molapo, Programme Manager TIFI, SADC PF Secretariat
- (vi) Dr Moses Magadza, Media Officer, SADC PF Secretariat
- (vii) Ronald Wandwaai, ICT Officer, SADC PF Secretariat
- (viii) Paulina Kanguatjivi, Procedural Assistant and Coordinator, SADC PF Secretariat

APPENDIX II – LIST OF EXPERTS AND CITIZENS WHO MADE SUBMISSIONS DURING THE PUBLIC HEARING

The Role of SADC Member States in Protection of Electoral Rights and Access to Information for marginalised and vulnerable populations - Hon. Nsama Patrick Mpundu, Speaker of the SADC Youth Parliament, Zambia Email: nsamapatrickmpundu@gmail.com
Presentation of the Global State of Democracy 2024 Report and the Implications for Parliamentarians with a Focus on Southern Africa – Olufunto Akinduro, International IDEA Email: g.matenga@idea.int
HEALTH BREAK
Presentation on Principles and Guidelines for the Use of Digital and Social Media in Elections in Africa & opportunities for collaboration with Parliamentarians in its domestication in the SADC Region – Dr Victor Shale, IEC South Africa Email: shalev@elections.org.za cc. Hilda Modisane, Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC Countries (ECF-SADC) Email: hmodisane@ecfsadc.org
Enhancing the Role of Political Parties in Democratic Consolidation in Southern Africa - Dr Augustine Magolowondo, Democracy Works Foundation, Malawi Email: amagolowondo@democracyworksfoundation.org
Leveraging electoral systems and political processes reforms for greater youth participation and representation in elections and governance in the SADC Region – Misheck Gondo, Southern Africa Youth Forum Email: sayof.sadc@gmail.com
Reforming electoral systems and political processes for greater youth participation and representation in elections and governance? UN Women- East and Southern Africa Email: maureen.shonge@unwomen.org
LUNCH BREAK
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Measures for improving electoral transparency and integrity to prevent post-election violence and build trust in the electoral process?• Protection of electoral rights, particularly for marginalised and vulnerable populations? - Tendai Mbanje (PhD International Human Rights Law, with focus on electoral processes within the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities), The African Centre for Governance, Email: tumelo@africancentregov.org
Mesures visant à améliorer la transparence et l'intégrité afin de prévenir la violence post-électorale et de renforcer la confiance dans le processus électoral - Hon Francois Musampwa Email: fmusampwa@gmail.com
Small Arms Light Weapons national Target Setting on SADC Protocol, UNPoA - Ms Pauline Dempfer, National Coordinator NANGO Trust, Namibia Email: Survivor_july89@yahoo.com
Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons In Populated Area – A Call for Universalisation - Joseph Dube, Director, Disarmament and Arms Control, South Africa Email: joseph@polka.co.za

Stop Killer Robots: Call to Members of Parliament to sign the Pledge - Edwick Madzimore, Director,
WILPF Zimbabwe Email: beemadzimore@gmail.com