



REPORT OF THE SADC PF STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOOD, AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE ACTION (FANRCA) TO THE 57TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY HOSTED BY THE PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE IN VICTORIA FALLS FROM 31ST MAY TO 7TH JUNE 2025

THEME: “ADVANCING FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE PRISON MANAGEMENT.”

Mr. President, I beg to move that the 57th Plenary Assembly do adopt the Report of the Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Climate Action (FANRCA) laid on the Table on 3rd June 2025.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE	3
2.0 COMMITTEE’S TERMS OF REFERENCE	3
3.0 NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD AND MEETING DATES	3
4.0 BACKGROUND.....	3
5.0 SESSION DELIBERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY	4
6.0 APPENDICES	9
APPENDIX I – COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE	9
APPENDIX II - LIST OF OFFICIALS	9
APPENDIX III - RESOURCE PERSONS	9

1.0 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee was composed of the Members as contained in Appendix I. The list of Officials and Resource Persons who attended the meeting are mentioned in Appendices II and III respectively.

2.0 COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

The SADC PF Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture Natural Resources and Climate Action (FANRCA) draws its mandate from Rule 42(c) of the Rules of Procedure of the SADC PF quoted as follows: *"To deal with matters related to agriculture, fisheries, forestry and wildlife, water and environment, energy, transport, tourism, ICTs, meteorology, food security and natural resources."*

3.0 NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD AND MEETING DATES

- i. The FANRCA Standing Committee convened its statutory meeting on the 23rd of April 2025. This culminated in a Joint Standing Committee Meetings of the SADC PF on the 24th and 25th of April, 2025, where they deposited the deliberations outcomes of the Committee which focused on: *"Advancing Food Security and Climate Resilience to Ensure Sustainable Prison Management."*
- ii. This Committee's meeting was one of five Standing Committee sessions being held concurrently as part of a broader consultative process to lay the groundwork for the envisaged Model Law on Prison Oversight. This collaborative approach underscored the multi-faceted nature of prison oversight, bringing together perspectives on human rights, gender, health, economic and environmental issues from the various Committees.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- i. In 2024, the SADC Parliamentary Forum, as part of its Strategic Plan (2024-2028), resolved to develop a SADC Model Law on Prison Oversight to serve as a benchmark and guiding framework for national parliaments in the region. The rationale for this initiative is rooted in the growing need for parliaments to play a more active and informed role in monitoring the treatment and conditions of persons deprived of liberty.
- ii. At first glance, prison oversight might appear to fall primarily under governance or human rights domains. However, the FANRCA Standing Committee recognised that the issues of food security, natural resource management, and climate change are directly relevant to prison management and inmates' welfare. People in custody are entirely dependent on the state for their basic needs, sufficient food, clean water, energy, and a safe environment, all areas that intersect with this Committee's mandate. The climate crisis and environmental degradation exacerbate existing challenges in prisons, just as they do in the

broader community. Recurring droughts and extreme weather events in Southern Africa have led to crop failures and water shortages; these impacts are felt acutely in prisons, which often operate on limited resources and are not resilient to such shocks. The Committee noted that climate change related disasters do not spare correctional institutions, and therefore prisons must not remain on the margins of climate and development agendas. It was against this backdrop that the Committee approached the theme: determined to ensure that parliamentary oversight helps transform prisons into spaces where human dignity, health, and environmental sustainability are respected.

- iii. The Committee also took cognisance of the Forum's successful track record in developing Model Laws as instruments of regional integration and rights promotion. Building on this legacy, the Model Law on Prison Oversight is intended to bolster parliamentary mechanisms to hold governments accountable for conditions in prisons, thus bridging a long-standing gap in oversight of the correctional system. The overarching objective of the Model Law is to empower Parliaments through legal provisions to demand accountability for the treatment of inmates and to ensure that correctional facilities contribute to rehabilitation and safe reintegration into society.

5.0 SESSION DELIBERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Following extensive deliberations and expert presentations, the Committee made the following recommendations to the 57th Plenary Assembly:

WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Climate Action (FANRCA) convened its statutory session under the overarching theme "*Towards Developing a SADC Model Law on Prison Oversight*" and under the subtheme: "*Advancing Food Security and Climate Resilience to Ensure Sustainable Prison Management.*" The FANRCA committee undertook to explore the intersection between food security, climate change resilience, and prison oversight;

REAFFIRMING that prison oversight is a multi-sectoral governance issue, intersecting with agriculture, climate action, natural resource management, public health, human rights, and social development, and that addressing food security and climate resilience in prisons is essential to upholding human dignity and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

ACKNOWLEDGING that these issues fall squarely within the Committee's broad mandate on sustainable development, agriculture, and natural resources management;

NOTING that the Committee received a technical presentation from Mr. Victor Mhango, Executive Director of the Centre for Human Rights Education, Advice and Assistance in Malawi, who provided a sobering overview of the state of prison food security across the SADC region, highlighting that hunger and malnutrition are pervasive in correctional facilities, with prisoners often surviving on a single daily meal consisting of nutritionally inadequate maize porridge, insufficient to sustain health and dignity during long-term incarceration;

ACKNOWLEDGING that food insecurity in prisons is not merely a logistical or budgetary oversight but a systemic failure, compounded by the worsening impacts of climate change, particularly recurrent droughts and extreme weather events that have disrupted agricultural productivity and strained national food reserves across Southern Africa, with prisoners suffering disproportionately as the most dependent and voiceless population;

RECOGNISING that in times of national food shortages, inmates in correctional facilities are entirely reliant on State provision, and that without targeted climate-resilient agricultural practices within prison systems, such as irrigation, crop diversification, and sustainable land management, prison food insecurity will persist as a structural humanitarian crisis;

FURTHER NOTING the examples from across the region, including prison-led farming initiatives in Mozambique, irrigation schemes in Botswana's prison farms, the deployment of energy-efficient stoves in Tanzanian prisons to reduce deforestation, and the fish processing project in Mauritius, all of which demonstrate that prison systems can adopt climate-responsive and self-sustaining food production models when properly supported by policy and resources;

WHEREAS these innovations remain isolated and unsustainable without robust parliamentary oversight, and Parliamentarians must strengthen their role in scrutinising prison budgets, monitoring service delivery, and ensuring that funds allocated for food, health, and infrastructure are translated into real improvements in prison conditions;

STRESSING that the Committee must champion the integration of prison food security and climate resilience into national agricultural and climate policies, and to ensure that the forthcoming SADC Model Law on Prison Oversight articulates these linkages explicitly as part of regional best practice;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that the Committee also received an expert presentation from Justice Zione Ntaba, Judge of the High Court of Malawi, who expanded on the concept of prison oversight as a multi-dimensional mechanism encompassing legal, humanitarian, and governance responsibilities, and underscored that prison oversight must extend beyond physical infrastructure to include food security, climate resilience, and the welfare of vulnerable populations;

NOTING that, drawing on judicial practice in Malawi and referencing a recent UNODC regional assessment, there exists a pervasive oversight gap in addressing how climate change and environmental risks exacerbate food insecurity and health crises in prisons, particularly in under-resourced facilities where inmates face chronic shortages of food, clean water, and basic healthcare;

RECALLING the urgent need for Parliamentarians to integrate prison considerations into national food security and climate adaptation strategies, ensuring that inmates are not excluded from emergency response plans during periods of drought, flood, or other environmental shocks;

RECOGNISING the documented misrepresentation of prison conditions in some countries where official reports falsely claimed prisoners received three daily meals, when in fact they received only one, thereby underscoring the critical role of independent and parliamentary verification of prison conditions;

FURTHER NOTING the plight of women, children, and inmates with chronic health conditions and observing that these groups face compounded vulnerabilities due to the lack of gender-responsive services, such as access to sanitary materials, prenatal care, and nutritionally appropriate diets, and calling for the Model Law to mandate specific protections for these vulnerable groups;

STRESSING that the SADC Model Law must formalise parliamentary oversight powers, including the right of Members of Parliament to conduct unannounced visits, access information, and compel improvements, thereby institutionalising parliamentary accountability for prison conditions across Member States.

AFFIRMING that overcrowding, inadequate nutrition, and environmental vulnerabilities are common features of prison systems across the region, and reflecting on their national experiences where water shortages, lack of bedding, and underfunded prison services are prevalent;

EXPRESSING deep concern about the gendered impacts of prison conditions, particularly for women and children who are often held in facilities not designed to meet their specific health, hygiene, and developmental needs, and who face systemic neglect in terms of access to maternal healthcare, sanitary products, and safe spaces for child development;

HIGHLIGHTING the intersection of food security and health, noting that prisoners with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS require specialised diets and medical care, which are often unavailable or inadequately provided for in overcrowded and under-resourced prisons;

CONCERNED about the extensive use of firewood for cooking, contributing to local deforestation, and the vulnerability of prison infrastructure to climate hazards such as floods and extreme heat, with many prisons lacking adequate water harvesting systems, ventilation, or emergency preparedness plans;

NOTING the need to develop a standardised oversight tool designed to assist Parliamentarians in conducting systematic and evidence-based prison inspections, covering infrastructure, food security, healthcare, and rehabilitation services like the Online Prison Visit Questionnaire;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Committee resolved to make the following key recommendations to the 57th Plenary:

- i. **URGE** SADC Member Parliaments to institutionalise regular parliamentary oversight of prisons, including periodic visits and inspections by Members of Parliament or relevant portfolio committees. Parliaments should establish formal mechanisms including through a dedicated Standing committee to routinely monitor and report on prison conditions covering food quality, water and sanitation, healthcare, and general treatment of inmates in order to promptly identify and address issues.
- ii. **CALL UPON** SADC Member Parliaments to ensure adequate budgetary allocation and financial oversight for correctional services. Legislatures should scrutinise national budgets to verify that sufficient resources are earmarked for the basic needs of prisoners i.e. food, clean water, energy, healthcare, and decent shelter and that these funds are used effectively for their intended purpose. Parliaments are encouraged to develop or adopt budget tracking tools such as budget tags or expenditure reports specifically for prison services, to enhance transparency and accountability in how prisons are financed. In addition, Members of Parliament should advocate for emergency contingency funds or plans to support prisons during crises such as droughts, epidemics, or other disasters, thereby preventing sudden shortfalls in food or essential supplies.
- iii. **ENCOURAGE** SADC Member States to implement climate smart and sustainable practices within their prison systems to improve food security and resilience. This includes promoting prison agriculture programs such as prison farms or gardens where feasible, enabling prisons to produce some of their own food and impart agricultural skills to inmates. Member States should also invest in environmentally friendly infrastructure in prisons for example, installing rainwater harvesting systems to augment water supply, deploying energy efficient cooking stoves or transitioning to cleaner energy sources for kitchen and lighting needs, and improving ventilation and insulation of prison buildings to cope with extreme temperatures.

- iv. **CALL UPON** SADC Member Parliaments and Governments to integrate the needs of prisons into national policies on food security, health, and climate change. National development strategies, agricultural programs, and climate adaptation plans should explicitly include provisions for supporting prisons. There is a need to ensure that prisons are not “left behind” especially as most detainees serve for a period before re-integrating society.

Mr. President I beg to move.

Hon. Sicelo Jele
INTERIM CHAIRPERSON

Ms. Rachel Mundilo
COMMITTEE SECRETARY

6.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX I – COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

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

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| 1. | Vacant has not constituted committees | Namibia (Chairperson) |
| 2. | Hon Mutinta Mazoka, | Zambia (Vice Chairperson) |
| 3. | Hon. Domingos Mussokola, | Angola |
| 4. | Hon. Karabo Gare, | Botswana |
| 5. | Hon. Faustin Kenda Kaziteriko, | DRC |
| 6. | Hon. Sicelo Jele, | Eswatini |
| 7. | Hon. Makatleho Motsoasele, | Lesotho |
| 8. | Hon. RAJAABELINA Lova Herizo | Madagascar |
| 9. | Hon. Hon. Ishmael Ndaila Onani, | Malawi |
| 10. | Hon Rocky Uranie, | Seychelles |
| 11. | Hon Ntombovuyo Veronica Mente-Nkuna | South Africa |
| 12. | Hon. Chinhenza Chigwadzara, | Zimbabwe |
| 13. | Hon. Hawa Subira Mwaifunga | Tanzania |
| 14. | Mauritius Parliament had not yet constituted Committees | |
| 15. | Mozambique Parliament had not yet constituted Committees | |

APPENDIX II - LIST OF OFFICIALS

- (i) Rachel Mundilo, Programme Manager, Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Climate Action, SADC PF Secretariat
- (ii) Mr Unaro Mungendje, Finance Officer SADC PF Secretariat

APPENDIX III - RESOURCE PERSONS

- (i) Justice Zion Ntaba, Judge of the High Court of Malawi
- (ii) Mr. Victor Mhango, Executive Director, Center for Human Rights Education, Advice and Assistance (Malawi)