



**REPORT OF THE SADC PF STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENDER
EQUALITY, WOMEN ADVANCEMENT AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
(GEWAYD) 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: “ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN’S AND CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN THE
PRISON MANAGEMENT”***

Mr. President, I beg to move that the 57th Plenary Assembly do adopt the Report of the Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth Development (GEWAYD) laid on the Table of the House on 3rd June 2025.

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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 Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth Development (GEWAYD) draws its mandate from Rule 42(a) of the Rules of Procedure of the SADC PF which states as follows: *"To deal with issues of gender equality, women advancement and empowerment as well as youth development and children, among others"*.

3.0 NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD AND MEETING DATES

The GEWAYD Committee held its statutory meeting on 23rd April 2025 at the Premier Hotel O.R Tambo in Johannesburg, South Africa ahead of the 57th Plenary Assembly to be hosted by the Parliament of Zimbabwe from 31st May to 7th June 2025. The GEWAYD Committee meeting was held under the theme: ***"Advocating for Women's and Children's Rights in the Prison Management"***. The meeting laid a foundation for the Committee to prepare its contribution to the Joint Standing Committee Session held on 24th and 25th April 2025 on the development of the Model Law on Prison Oversight.

4.0 BACKGROUND

Statistics show that the total prison population for SADC countries is now nearly 400,000 with 3% of which being women. It is further noted that most prisons in the SADC countries are operating under degrading conditions such as dilapidated prison infrastructure, overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate access to healthcare, sexual abuse, just to mention few. More worrisome is the treatment of women, youth and children in prisons who are subjected to conditions that increase their risk of incarceration and makes them vulnerable in detention.

The report of the GEWAYD Standing Committee presents a summary of the Committee's deliberations from its meeting held on 23rd April 2025. During the meeting, the GEWAYD Committee focused on issues relating to its mandate, that is, gender equality, women's advancement and empowerment, youth development, and children. In this case, the Committee specifically focused on issues relating to the treatment of the vulnerable groups in prisons such as women, youth and children imprisoned with their mothers in line with Article 30 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

5.0 SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY

5.1 Presentation on the Mid-Term Review of the SADC Strategy and Framework of Action for Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)-2018-2030

The Committee first received a presentation on the Mid-Term Review of the SADC Strategy and Framework for Addressing GBV presented by a consultant

engaged by the SADC Secretariat in the name of Cathy Chames from Southern Hemisphere.

Following the deliberations on the presentation, the GEWAYD Committee resolved to submit to the 57th Plenary Assembly the following observations and recommendations for consideration:

NOTING WITH PLEASURE the progress made from the review report on, among others, capacity building initiatives on GBV data management; prevention and response and coordination mechanisms of GBV service providers and stakeholders; development of SADC Model laws on GBV and child marriage; development of regional GBV training guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures, Guidelines for responding to Sexual Violence among Adolescents and Youth; and development of SADC Handbook on GBV prevention;

FURTHER NOTING WITH APPRECIATION the various strategies put in place by many SADC Member States for addressing GBV in their respective countries, such as, enactment of anti-GBV laws; establishment of one-stop centres/units to support GBV victims in some countries like Zambia and Zimbabwe; designation of chiefs/traditional leaders as ambassadors of GBV; having specific budgetary allocation from the national budget for women economic empowerment.

NOTING WITH DISPLEASURE the slow progress being made by some Member States in the domestication of SADC Protocol on Gender and Development which slows progress in the prevention and response to GBV in the region.

BEING SADDENED with the challenges encountered by Member States in addressing GBV including retrogressive cultural beliefs, such as a man fighting his partner being perceived as a sign of love or corrective behaviour in some cultures.

FURTHER NOTING that many boys and girls are growing up in households without prior knowledge of the concept of gender in terms of their roles in society.

NOW THEREFORE, the GEWAYD Committee resolved to recommend that the 57th Plenary Assembly should:

- i. **APPEAL** to the Member Parliaments to enact laws that facilitate the domestication the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, particularly meant to accelerate progress in the prevention and response to GBV in the SADC region.
- ii. **ENCOURAGE** the Member States to embark on sensitisation of their respective communities to discontinue or discard the cultural beliefs

that perpetuate GBV and instead promote the cultural values that promote love.

- iii. **FURTHER ENCOURAGE** the Member States to involve the traditional and faith leaders in the fight against GBV.
- iv. **ADVISE** the Member States to put in place deliberate mechanisms of empowering women economically in society.
- v. **BEARING IN MIND** that GBV issues are subject to social issues such as instabilities in families, poverty and hunger, **ADVISE** the Member States on the need to be economically strong so that young people can find jobs and support themselves and their families.
- vi. **CALL UPON** the Member States to introduce programs against GBV in the school syllabus so that learners both boys and girls are taught and become knowledgeable of the evils of GBV at a young age.

5.0 PRESENTATIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING A SADC MODEL LAW ON PRISON OVERSIGHT

The Committee received and considered three presentations on this topic as follows:

- i. Overview on the importance of Prison Oversight to protect prisoners from sexual and gender-based violence, presented by Sasha Gear and Doreen Gaura, ust Detention International;
- ii. Detention of children and the importance of and mechanism for oversight over facilities housing children, presented by Karabo Ozah, Centre for Child Law, South Africa; and
- iii. Video presentation showing a prison visit in Malawi and sharing of online questionnaire on conducting a prison visit.

5.1 Committee' Observations and Recommendations to the Plenary Assembly

Following the deliberations on the presentations received, the Committee resolved to submit to the 57th Plenary Assembly the following observations and recommendations for consideration:

ACKNOWLEDGING WITH APPRECIATION the good intention of developing a SADC Model Law on Prison Oversight.

NOTING WITH CONCERN the degrading conditions of many prisons in the SADC region, such as severe overcrowding and inhuman treatment of inmates, particularly the vulnerable groups such as women, juveniles, and infants imprisoned with their mothers, who for example, lack proper diet and sanitation facilities.

TAKING COGNISANCE of the fundamental rights of children of the imprisoned mothers as enshrined in Article 30 of the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child and the critical role of parliamentary oversight in safeguarding these rights.

ALARMED with reports of rape cases in prisons perpetrated by either prison officials or fellow inmates against women while the perpetrators are left scot-free.

RECOGNISING that the development of the SADC Model Law on Prison Oversight would enhance the oversight role of Parliament in demanding accountability for prison conditions and allocating adequate prison budgets for correctional facilities to achieve better standards.

NOW, THEREFORE, the GEWAYD Committee resolved to recommend that the 57th Plenary Assembly should:

- i. **ENCOURAGE** Member States to enact laws domesticating the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, particularly meant to accelerate progress in the prevention and response to GBV in the SADC region.
- ii. **URGE** SADC Parliamentary Forum through its relevant Standing Committee and the Secretariat to speed up the process of developing the SADC Model Law on Prison Oversight to ensure it takes effect within the shortest possible time.
- iii. **URGE** Member Parliaments to enact laws that would facilitate decongestion in the prisons, such as non-custodial sentence, especially for the vulnerable groups such as women, juveniles, and children imprisoned with their mothers.
- iv. **ENCOURAGE** Member Parliaments to strengthen oversight role of their relevant Portfolio Committees over the prisons including regular visits to prisons, demanding accountability for prison conditions and ensure adequate budgetary allocation to improve correctional facilities, especially for the vulnerable groups in prison.
- v. **URGE** Member States to ensure that the perpetrators of rape in prisons are arrested, prosecuted and punished in accordance with the law to curtail the malpractice.

6.0 CONCLUSION

It was very clear from the presentations that the condition of prisons in most SADC Member States is pathetic. Dilapidated prison infrastructure, overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate access to healthcare, sexual abuse, just to mention few, are some of the main challenges faced in the prison management. More concern to the GEWAYD Committee is the situation in which babies and toddlers live with their incarcerated mothers, meaning that the children get imprisoned by circumstances and not by crime. This reality

demands urgent action to protect children's rights found themselves behind bars in such circumstances.

Therefore, the idea of developing a SADC Model Law on Prison Oversight is timely and necessary. It is the hope of the Committee that the development of this Model Law will be a tool of transformation in the prison reform in the SADC region.

In this regard, the Committee would like to appeal that the recommendations being put forward in this report be adopted by the 57th Plenary Assembly.

Mr. President, I beg to move.

Hon. Chushi KASANDA
CHAIRPERSON

Mr. Joseph MANZI
COMMITTEE SECRETARY

7.0 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. | Hon. Chushi Kasanda (Chairperson) | Zambia |
| 2. | Hon. Senator Thato Mako Mohale (Vice Chairperson) | Lesotho |
| 3. | Hon. Teresa José Adelina Neto | Angola |
| 4. | Hon. Helen Pushy Manyeneng | Botswana |
| 5. | Hon. Cathy Moleka Sakombi | DRC |
| 6. | Hon. Nokuthula Dlamini | Eswatini |
| 7. | Hon. Raby Savatsarah Ain’Harimanga Gabrielle | Madagascar |
| 8. | Hon. Sylvia Lukas | South Africa |
| 9. | Hon. Regina Esparon | Seychelles |
| 10. | Hon. Shally Josepha Raymond | Tanzania |
| 11. | Hon. Maybe Mbohwa | Zimbabwe |
| 12. | Malawi (Had not yet nominated a replacement of Hon. Gadama) | |
| 13. | Mauritius (Had not yet constituted Committees) | |
| 14. | Mozambique (Had not yet constituted Committees) | |
| 15. | Namibia (Had not yet constituted Committees) | |

APPENDIX II - LIST OF OFFICIALS

1. Boemo Sekgoma – Secretary General (Virtual)
2. Joseph Manzi – Director of Programmes **(Committee Secretary)**
3. Paulina Kanguatjivi – Procedural Assistant and Coordinator

APPENDIX III - RESOURCE PERSONS

1. Cathy Chames of Southern Hemisphere – SADC Consultant
2. Thabo Buthelezi – Southern Africa Litigation Centre
3. Sasha Gear and Doreen Gaura – Ust Detention International