



**57<sup>TH</sup> PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION  
31<sup>ST</sup> MAY TO 7<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025,  
VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE**

**MOTION ON SLOW IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SADC MODEL LAW ON  
ERADICATING CHILD MARRIAGE AND PROTECTING CHILDREN  
ALREADY IN MARRIAGE**

**Mover:** Hon. Ntombovuyo Veronica MENTE, SOUTH AFRICA  
**Second:** Hon. Jerónima AGOSTINHO, MOZAMBIQUE

**Date for which Notice is given: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

**Question Proposed:** That the 57<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC PF:

**RECALLING** that the SADC Model Law was adopted in 2016 to serve as a comprehensive and harmonised framework to guide Member States in developing or strengthening national laws to eliminate child marriage and ensure the protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children already in marriage;

**RECOGNISING** that child marriage remains prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa including many SADC countries with at least 37% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa married before the age of 18, according to UNICEF (2023), and that this practice continues to deny millions of girls their rights to health, education, and wellbeing of girls, and perpetuating cycles of poverty and gender inequality;

**NOTING** that child pregnancy, often a direct consequence of early marriage, dramatically increases the risk of maternal mortality and morbidity, interrupts or ends girls' schooling, and limits their economic and social prospects, further entrenching inequality;

**CONCERNED** that although Member States have expressed support for the Model Law and other commitments under the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage and the Maputo Protocol, as well as broader global commitments under Agenda 2030 (SDG 5: Gender Equality) and international instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the implementation of the Model Law remains slow and inconsistent across the region;

**FURTHER CONCERNED** by the persistent gaps in legislation, enforcement, inter-sectoral coordination, and resource allocation, which continue to expose children, particularly girls, to early and forced marriage, violating their fundamental human rights;

**AWARE** that sustained progress in implementing the Model Law requires the political will of governments, proactive legislative action, robust institutional coordination, adequate funding, and meaningful engagement with affected communities;

**NOW THEREFORE, calls on SADC Member Parliaments to:**

- (i) *Urge* their governments to take immediate steps to accelerate the full domestication and implementation of the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage, and to integrate its provisions into national legal and policy frameworks;
- (ii) *Mandate* the relevant parliamentary committee(s) to conduct a comprehensive audit of existing child protection and marriage laws and policies, identify legal inconsistencies, and recommend alignment with the Model Law and international standards;
- (iii) *Encourage* increased budgetary allocations to programmes aimed at preventing child marriage, supporting survivors, enabling access to education and healthcare, and raising public awareness about the minimum legal age of marriage and children's rights;
- (iv) *Urge* their national parliaments to amend relevant legislation, including Marriage Acts and Children's Acts, to reflect the standards set out in the Model Law and the broader obligations under regional and global commitments;
- (v) *Call upon* the Ministries of Gender, Women and Youth, Justice, Education, and Health to develop and operationalise multisectoral implementation frameworks, including timelines, measurable indicators, and accountability mechanisms; and
- (vi) *Ensure* that this motion is transmitted to relevant national, regional, and international bodies, including the SADC Secretariat, AU

Commission, and UN agencies, as a demonstration of the SADC PF's unwavering commitment to ending child marriage and protecting the rights and dignity of all children in the region.

**SIGNATURE OF THE MOVER:** .....

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