

REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

To the 57th Plenary Assembly of the SADC PF on Leveraging Technology and Innovation for Smart, Inclusive and Responsive Parliaments in the SADC Region



**PRESENTED BY
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SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

1. Introduction

Hon. President, the Parliament of the Kingdom of Lesotho reaffirms its commitment to continue supporting the SADC Parliamentary Forum towards the realization of Forum objectives. Hence we take seriously the resolutions of the Plenary Assembly as the highest policy-making body of the Forum.

Pursuant to the guidance provided by the office of the Secretary General through a letter dated 23rd April, 2025, Ref: SG/57th PLENARY/SK/2025/07 on submission of Country reports and the standing practice of the Forum, I am presenting this report which will detail the efforts made by the Parliament of Lesotho to implement key resolutions of the Forum. The Report will also highlight measures that have been taken to implement the resolutions of the 56th Plenary Assembly Session that was held in Livingstone, Zambia in December, 2024.

2. Progress on the Transformation of the Forum into a SADC Regional Parliament

Hon. President, as reported in the last Plenary, the Government of Lesotho has signed the AGHJgreement to amend the SADC Treaty to establish the SADC Parliament.

In addition, the Parliament of Lesotho has received correspondence from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, urging Parliament to comment on the Draft Protocol on the Establishment of the SADC Parliament. Both the Draft Protocol and the strategic documents that were used by the Forum to advocate for the transformation, have been shared with relevant Departments of the two Houses of Parliament for legal opinion. Upon receipt of the opinion, Presiding Officers of both Houses will meet to agree on the position of Parliament and submit the same to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not later than the end of June.

3. Secondment of Senior Parliamentary Staff to the Forum

As stated in our last Report Hon. President, officers of Parliament are employed by the Public Service Commission and seconded to Parliament by the Public Service. The Public Service Act and the Public Service Regulations, do not provide for secondment of staff with full pay, and therefore, remuneration of all seconded officers is borne by the institutions to which they have been seconded. Therefore, as long as parliament officers are still under the Public Service, the Parliament of Lesotho will not be in a position to second staff to the Forum on full pay.

Unfortunately, Hon. President, the Constitutional Amendment proposing to establish the Parliamentary Service and Parliamentary Service Commission is still before the Senate (the upper House of Parliament) for enactment.

4. Support for the SADC PF Election Observation Missions

Hon. President, allow me to indicate that for the 2025/2026 Financial Year, the Parliament of Lesotho does not have a budgetary provision for Election Observation Missions. The estimated sum required from the Parliament of Lesotho to sponsor the elections in Malawi, Seychelles and Tanzania in 2026 is approximately M 749, 535. 04 (a total of the proposed contribution of USD 6,000 per election and sponsoring two MPs per mission) which is 8.5% of our current international travel budget. It is sad to mention that the sum allocated for international travel is not sufficient to cover all statutory international trips of the National Assembly; and therefore, we are unable to factor in the cost of electoral Missions.

Notwithstanding the above, Hon. President, the Parliament of Lesotho is very clear that Election Observation Missions are instrumental in facilitating and ensuring election integrity, voter confidence and the legitimacy of the electoral process and its outcome. Therefore, the Parliament of Lesotho stands firm in advocating for continuation of SADC PF Election Observation Missions in pursuance of the SADC PF objective of promoting the principles of human rights, democracy, peace and security within the SADC region. We also appeal to all member states to find ways of financially supporting the

Missions for the sake of the sustenance of what we stand for as the Forum. In this regard, the Parliament of Lesotho is in the process of pursuing its financial independence which will enable it to participate in these Missions in the not so distant future.

5. Designation of a Focal Person on Model Law Domestication

Hon. President, we are in the process of recruiting three additional legal officers during the course of this Financial Year; and one of these officers will accordingly be assigned to liaise with the Regional Parliamentary Model Laws Oversight Committee (RPMLOC) in tracking the domestication of SADC PF Model Laws.

The following are amongst the pieces of legislation that have been directly influenced by SADC Model Laws:

- The National Assembly Electoral Act of 2011 and its subsequent Amendments;
- Counter Domestic Violence Act, 2022;
- Harmonization of the Rights of Customary Widows with the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act of 2022; and
- Children's Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Bill, 2022, that is currently before the Senate.

The Parliament of Lesotho has also shared the relevant SADC Model Laws with the Ministries of Finance and of Tourism and culture that are in the process of drafting the Public Financial Management and Accountability Bill and the Protection and Administration of Custom at Initiation Schools Bill respectively.

6. Implementation of the 2023–2026 SRHR and Governance Project

The Parliament of Lesotho re-appointed the SRHR Researcher in October, 2023, following the approval of the current phase of the Project. On 14th February, 2024, the Parliament of Lesotho signed the SRHR and Governance Project Implementation Agreement with SADC PF.

To date, M70, 100.00 (approximately \$ 3, 643.00) has been expended for

project activities. In addition to the activities that I mentioned in my last report, the following activities were carried out:

- Multi-stakeholder meeting to promote democratic accountability and advance human rights; and
- Meeting of the National Working Group aimed at analyzing the implications of the changing global health financing architecture on health service provision for HIV, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), as well as its impact on health systems strengthening.

So far, 30 Members of Parliament (MPs), 12 parliamentary officials and 12 members from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have been trained under this Project.

From 26th to 28th May, 2025, there will be a public awareness campaign on the impact of climate change on SRHR and how SRHR can be integrated into climate action in the Mafeteng District, where 15 Members of Parliament, 10 parliamentary staff, three members from Civil Society Organisations and representatives from two line Ministries will participate.

Hon. President, I wish to indicate that the Parliament of Lesotho appreciates the crucial role that the Project plays in strengthening regional and national responses to SRHR challenges through the legislative arm of governance. It institutionalizes SRHR within the structures and work-plans of parliaments, including through dedicated committees, motions, debates, and budget oversight, ensuring that SRHR is not treated as a stand-alone issue, but that it is integrated across all sectors.

7. Resolutions of the 56th Plenary Assembly

7.1 Resolution of the Symposium on Building the Capacity of MPs on Legislative Functions vis-à-vis Technological Advancements:

With the support of the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology, the Parliament of Lesotho will hold three workshops in the current Financial Year as follows:

- A workshop on Cybersecurity;

- A workshop on Digital Public Infrastructure; and
- A workshop on ICT Governance.

7.2 On the Two Symposium Resolutions calling on SADC Member States to Develop Policies and to take Practical Steps enact ICT Laws:

Lesotho is making the following developments:

- The Data Protection Act of 2011 is being reviewed;
- The Computer Crimes and Cybersecurity Bill, 2024 is being enacted (being considered by one of the Portfolio Committees of the House);
- The Electronic Transactions Communications Bill is being drafted;
- The Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy is due for consideration by the Cabinet;
- Data Management/Data Governance Policy is being finalized.

7.3 On the Resolutions on the Report of the Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth Development calling for Domestication of the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage and to establish Safe Spaces and Ensure Provision of Counselling and Legal Support for Survivors of Child Marriage and GBV:

Early this year the National Assembly passed the Children's Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Bill, 2022, which addresses many of the issues contained in this Model Law and as mentioned earlier, the Bill is currently before the Senate.

7.4 On the Resolution on the Report of the RPMLOC that implores Member Parliaments to seriously consider setting up Parliamentary

Budget Offices to assist Parliaments to achieve excellence in budget oversight:

The Parliament of Lesotho is in the process of establishing the Parliamentary Budget Office. The position of Director Parliamentary Budget Office was advertised; and shortlisted candidates will soon be interviewed by the Public Service Commission; and we hope to have a fully-fledged Department soon.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, Hon. President, I would like to indicate that our Representatives have met and resolved that, in addition to presenting the Plenary reports in the House, they will sit and agree on the modalities of implementing the resolutions of the Plenary. This is a positive step, Hon. President, which will enhance our reporting in subsequent Plenaries.

I thank you, Mr. President.

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