



**COUNTRY REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS OF THE 56TH
PLENARY ASSEMBLY:**

SOUTH AFRICA

03 JUNE 2025

Hon. President, Hon. Members of the Forum, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a profound honour for me to submit the Country Report on South Africa's implementation of the resolutions adopted at the 56th Plenary Assembly Meeting of the SADC Parliamentary Forum (PF) held from the 6th to 15th December 2024 at the Radisson Blu Mosi-Oa-Tunya Resort, Livingstone, Zambia.

The Plenary Assembly met under the theme "Leveraging Technology and Innovation for Smart, Inclusive and Responsive Parliaments in the SADC Region". In accordance with this theme and the resolutions adopted by the 56th Plenary Assembly, our Parliament actively monitored implementation of related policy frameworks, programmes and action plans by the Executive. Moreover, I'm pleased to also report to this Session of the 57th Plenary Assembly that, in discharging their constitutional mandate of oversight and accountability, our Members of Parliament raised several parliamentary questions relating to technology and innovation in South Africa during the 2024-2025 reporting period. This demonstrates our resolve to leverage on our parliamentary work to harness the potential and longitudinal impact of technology and innovation for realization of our country's societal and developmental economic outcomes.

Honourable President, to mention but a few instances:

- On 02 May 2025, a parliamentary question was asked to the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition following the Intellectual Property (IP) and Technology Commercialisation Session on (a) how his department plans to expand IP education to ensure that local entrepreneurs understand how to protect and monetise their

innovations and on whether there are any proposals to integrate IP education into the school and university curricula to foster a culture of innovation from an early stage?

- On 17 April 2025, parliamentary questions were also asked to the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation that, firstly, given the growing importance of innovation in driving economic growth and addressing societal challenges- what initiatives is his department implementing to support research and development in emerging technologies. Secondly, how will he ensure that the specified innovations are accessible and beneficial to all sectors of society. Thirdly, noting that digital transformation becomes increasingly essential for economic growth and service delivery, what specific initiatives is his department spearheading to foster innovation in digital technologies and how will his department ensure that the specified advancements are inclusive and accessible to communities across all sectors of society?
- On 27 March, further parliamentary questions were asked to the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation on; (a) what comprehensive efforts are being undertaken to guarantee equitable access to science, technology and innovation funding for historically disadvantaged institutions and researchers and (b) how are the initiatives addressing systemic barriers to ensure that marginalised groups can fully participate in and benefit from research and innovation opportunities?

Additionally, on 28 March 2025 the Parliamentary Administration briefed the Joint Standing Committee on Financial Management of Parliament on the Fire that engulfed our Parliamentary building and on issues of reconstruction & restoration. Amongst others, the briefing also touched on the imperative of “leveraging technology and innovation for smart, inclusive and responsive parliaments”. The restoration project also seeks to look at issues of ICT modernisation, and part of that includes broadcasting, hybrid systems and data networks. The most important element is the data centre that we need to replace.

This data centre was in the basement of the National Assembly and was completely damaged by water during the fire incident. And the whole idea is to drive the agenda of a smart parliament and a parliament that will enable Members to be effective in law-making and engage effectively. And of course, added to that, there is Section 59 provision that our Parliament must live up to, which is facilitating public access to and involvement in its legislative and other processes, including providing avenues for the public to participate in debates, committees, and the overall legislative process. This is one of the constitutional injunctions that has shaped the form and outlook of the rebuilding and restoration project.

Further to that Honourable Members,

It would be recalled that the 56th Plenary Assembly also adopted various resolutions related to the role of Parliaments in raising, allocating and spending resources necessary for public health and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights [SRHR] financing. In this respect, parliaments were urged to, amongst others; a) prioritize health financing in national budget allocations, ensuring that domestic resources dedicated to health are increased in line with the Abuja Declaration target of at least 15% of national budgets; b) advocate for the establishment of national health insurance schemes to reduce out-of-pocket health spending, protect households from catastrophic health expenditures, and ensure equity in access to healthcare services and; c) support the implementation of innovative health financing mechanisms, including earmarked taxes on harmful products (e.g., tobacco, alcohol) and levies on other sectors, ensuring that these funds are transparently allocated to improving healthcare services, especially in underserved areas.

I can report honourable members that following the revision in 2021 of the South African National Integrated SRHR Policy that provides a roadmap for integrated SRHR services- our parliament embarked on legislative processes on the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill. Subsequently, the Bill was assented to by President on 15 May 2024. Now, the new South African National Health Insurance (NHI) Act 20 of 2023 seeks to, inter alia, provide universal health coverage, which may significantly impact SRHR access and funding. The signing of the Bill into law was a key milestone in the journey towards universal and comprehensive quality health coverage for all. But what is important to highlight in this regard is that the new NHI Act will be phased in gradually, using a progressive and programmatic approach based on financial resource availability from 2024 to 2028.

Furthermore, with regards to the support for the implementation of innovative health financing mechanisms, including earmarked taxes on harmful products (e.g., tobacco, alcohol), I can report that on 14 May 2025, the Portfolio Committee on Health in our National Assembly was briefed by the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) on its input on the Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Control Bill. Amongst others, the Bill seek to regulate smoking; to regulate the sale and advertising of tobacco products and electronic delivery systems and to provide for matters connected therewith.

Honourable President,

The 56th Plenary Assembly also dealt with the very important issue of “leveraging the role of SADC Parliamentary Forum in facilitating citizen participation in SADC regional integration for

enhanced accountability and inclusive socio-economic development". In this respect, parliaments were urged to, firstly, develop strategies to strengthen their oversight and legislative functions in promoting democracy-building and democratic consolidation across member states through reviewing and updating legal frameworks for electoral processes to align with the SADC Model Law on Elections and the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. Secondly, to improve electoral transparency and integrity to prevent post-election violence and build trust in electoral processes by strengthening mechanisms for the independence and accountability of electoral commissions to ensure electoral integrity and foster stakeholder confidence. Lastly, 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.

I can report Honourable Members that, on 07 May 2024, the South African President assented to Electoral Matters Amendment Act No. 14 of 2024. The Act amends the Political Party Funding Act of 2018 and introduces significant reforms to South Africa's electoral and political funding laws. It seeks to provide for, and regulate, public and private funding of political parties, independent candidates and independent representatives, which is indispensable not only in improving transparency and integrity of electoral processes, but also in promoting democracy- building and democratic consolidation.

Hon. President,

The 56th Plenary Assembly also took a resolution on the cumulative impact of fostering citizen participation in SADC regional integration for enhanced accountability and inclusive socio- economic development and cohesion. In this regard, member states were asked to create an environment that facilitates mineral beneficiation of critical minerals to create employment especially for the youths and create value chains. Additionally, member States we urged to; a) organize capacity building program for youths beyond formal education to ensure inclusion of youths in key sectors which drive youth agendas in national and regional platforms; b) boost the agriculture sector to bolster trade and create economic sufficiency and; c) come up with strategies to recover job losses created by the covid 19 pandemic.

In this regard, I can report Honourable Members that, South Africa is actively pursuing mineral beneficiation to add value to its resources and boost economic growth. This involves transforming raw minerals into higher-value products, fostering industrialization and job creation. South Africa's commitment to beneficiation is driven by its global leadership in key

minerals like platinum group metals (PGMs), manganese, and chromium, as well as its strategic role in the expanded BRICS and G20.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2025, the South African President, H.E Cyril Ramaphosa said that countries rich in these minerals – which include lithium, cobalt, copper and nickel – should be the ones to gain most from their exploitation. Thus, President Ramaphosa pointed out that, one of South Africa’s priorities for its G20 presidency is to galvanize support for mineral beneficiation and harnessing of critical minerals for inclusive growth and development. For President Ramaphosa this will be done through calling for a G20 framework on green industrialisation and investment aimed at delivering a grand bargain “that promotes value addition to critical minerals particularly close to the source of extraction”. It is hoped that, cumulatively, this will result in “an additive rather than an extractive relationship” and reverse the historical trend by which resource-rich countries, many of them in Africa, lose out “because the benefit flows out of their own countries to other locals in the world”.

But further to the above Honourable members, on 23 July 2024 the South African President also assented to the National Small Enterprise Amendment Act, 2024 (Act 21 of 2024), which aims to create a more supportive and equitable environment for small businesses in South Africa. The Act does this by enhancing access to resources and reducing regulatory burdens. Moreover, on 29 October 2024, the President assented to the Act Upstream Petroleum Resources Development Act No. 23 of 2024. Amongst others, the Act seeks to provide for orderly development of petroleum resources; to provide for equitable access to, and sustainable development of, the nation’s petroleum resources; to provide for active State and black persons’ participation in the development of the nation’s petroleum resources. Certainly, this will go a long way in creating value chains for youth-led start-ups and in engendering an environment that facilitates mineral beneficiation of critical minerals for job creation, especially for youth people.

Regarding coming up with strategies to recover job losses created by the covid 19 pandemic, the South African President, H. E Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa reported during his 2024 State of the Nation Address that one of the important steps that government has taken to address the youth unemployment challenges is through the presidential Youth Employment intervention. This entailed establishment of SAYouth.mobi platform as a zero-rated platform for unemployed young people to access opportunities for learning and earning. To date over 4.3 million young people are now engaged on the network and 1.6 million have so far secured opportunities.

On 12 March 2025, the National Assembly Portfolio Committee on Employment Labour was briefed by the Deputy Minister of the Department of Employment and Labour on the Labour Activation Programme (LAP). The Committee was informed that the Labour Activation Program is the South African government's direct policy response to unemployment, affording job seekers opportunities to improve their employability and connect them to the world of work. The focus is on combining skills training, work experience, and job placement services to help participants transition into the labour market.

Furthermore, on 23 April 2025, the Department of Employment and Labour briefed the National Assembly Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour on its 2025/26 Annual Performance Plans. In that briefing, the Department indicated that over the medium term, it plans to register 2.8 million work seekers, provide counselling to 780 000 work seekers and place 195 000 work seekers in registered employment opportunities. The Department further reported that it will conduct an annual review of the National Minimum Wage, including the development of monitoring mechanisms to measure its impact on the economy, collective bargaining, the reduction of income differentials, and proposed adjustments. Through the UIF LAP flagship programme, the Department also aims to contribute to employability enhancement of the unemployed, as part of other government initiatives to stimulate the creation of jobs in the Labour Market. The LAP will contribute R4 billion towards the Presidential Employment Stimulus program for the 2024/25 financial year and through other funding received, the Department will also continue with Pathway Management Network which aims at stimulating demand by creating more employment opportunities, supporting increased access to relevant education and training interventions, assisting young people in making choices in terms of access to learning and/or earning, and identifying entry barriers into the labour market.

Hon. President,

The 56th Plenary Assembly further took a resolution on the most pressing issue of advocating for increased budget allocations for climate finance, emphasising funding for adaptation, mitigation, and resilience projects, particularly in vulnerable and high-risk regions by SADC PF Member Parliaments. Members were encouraged to support streamlining access to funds like the Green Climate Fund and the establishment of direct access entities at the national and regional levels. Moreover, SADC PF Member Parliaments were also urged to adopt and implement policies that promote agroecology and climate-smart agricultural practices to strengthen resilience, reduce emissions, and enhance food security. It was also resolved that member parliaments should support and prioritize gender-sensitive approaches and financial incentives for sustainable agricultural practices.

I can report Honourable Members that, the Climate Change Act No. 22 of 2024 was promulgated, which seeks to, inter alia, enable the development of an effective climate change response and a long-term, just transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy and society for South Africa in the context of sustainable development; and to provide for matters connected therewith. What is equally important to point out in our South African context is that the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in 2020 brought climate change adaptation planning to the fore in South Africa. Through concerted efforts and focused oversight by different Parliamentary Committees, South Africa has since integrated sustainability, climate mitigation and climate-resilience into its overall policy and development framework, including various national and sectoral policies, strategies and plans. And this becomes more critical as the country aims to transition to a low carbon economy, in recognition that this makes for a more sustainable, resilient and globally competitive economy, thereby supporting broader development goals.

However, despite these policy commitments and increases in climate finance in recent years, financial flows still fall far short of estimated needs. Finally, adaptation's benefits— environmental, social, and economic—are hard to capture fully. As reported in our Parliament by the South African Presidential Climate Commission, the Adaptation Fund mobilised USD 133 million at COP29, yet such commitments often stall in translation to on-the-ground projects. In South Africa, tracked annual climate finance reached R131 billion per annum on average in 2019 – 2021, an all-time high, but still far from the average annual estimated needs of R334 – R535 billion per annum. Whilst R18 billion in domestic public funding and R113 billion internationally flowed to climate finance in 2023, but private sector contributions remain underreported and unscaled due to tracking difficulties and a focus on insurance over broader resilience.

As reported by the Presidential Climate Commission, the world grapples with escalating climate risks and impact, South Africa stands at a pivotal juncture. The nation's economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities underscore an urgent need for climate adaptation. And relatedly, amid discussions at the G20 and the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29), took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, from November 11 to 22, 2024, undoubtedly, adaptation finance emerges as a critical lever to build resilience, yet significant obstacles hinder its implementation. This is why in the forthcoming 11th G20 Speakers' Summit (P20) debates around advocating increased budget allocations for climate finance, particularly funding for adaptation, mitigation, and resilience projects, will take a centre stage.

Hon. President,

The 56th Plenary Assembly further took a resolution on the important issue of legislative and oversight Measures to strengthen the implementation of regional gender parity frameworks at the national level. With regards to tackling child marriage and gender-based violence among youth through legislation and education programmes, it was resolved that there should be increased advocacy for the domestication of the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage, stricter penalties for offenders, stronger child marriage laws, and the decriminalisation of abortion to ensure women and girls have autonomy over their reproductive health decisions. On improving youth representation in decision-making processes at national and regional levels: Member Parliaments were urged to keep promoting platforms for youth dialogue and integrate their voices into policy discussions through forums, consultative bodies, and cross-sector partnerships. Further to that, on initiatives to reduce the digital divide for women and youth, particularly in rural communities, SADC PF Member States were urged to act swiftly on digital inclusion commitments and provide regular progress reports, focusing on women and youth. Relatedly, there was also a call for urgent measures to address legal gaps and ensure gender and youth-responsive budgeting for expanding digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved rural areas.

I can report Honourable Members that, regarding tackling child marriage and gender-based violence among youth- on 14 May 2025, the Portfolio Committee on Social Development in our National Assembly was briefed by a delegation from the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children. Other equally important developments to report on regarding the issue of gender-based violence include the signing into law of the National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Bill on the 24th of May 2024 by President Ramaphosa. The National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide will coordinate and provide strategic leadership to the fight against GBV and femicide, and be multi- sectoral, drawing on the expertise of all stakeholders, including civil society, labour and business. The establishment of the council was one of the resolutions of the first Presidential Summit on GBVF convened in 2018.

Hon. President, the 56th Plenary Assembly further took a resolution on the important issue of timely domestication of SADC Model Laws and related protocols. In this respect, member parliaments were encouraged to formalize appointment of focal point persons so create linkages with the country reporting mechanisms under SADC, the AU and the UN to ensure that work done in the Member States is duly recorded and acknowledged at SADC Parliament level. I can

report that within our parliamentary value-chain and parliamentary business, the focal point persons for this purpose are located within the Multilateral Section of our International Relations and Protocol Division.

Lastly Hon. President,

Since we were requested by the SADC PF Secretariat to include in our country reports assessment of progress made on live matters and in implementing resolutions of the 56th Plenary Assembly- I wish to conclude by reporting the following:

- A. **Regarding progress at national level for giving comments on the draft Protocol on the Establishment of the SADC Parliament:** on 11 April 2025, the South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation wrote to our National Assembly regarding transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a SADC Parliament. According to the Ministry, Member States were urged to submit inputs on the Draft Protocol on the SADC Parliament by 30 April 2025 and it expressed its willingness and readiness to facilitate the transmission of the South African Parliament's input to the Protocol. However, given the urgent need to pass the Budget and Division of Revenue Bill for the 2025/2026 financial year and unforeseen circumstances and delays in finalizing that legislative process, our National Assembly's Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation and the Select Committee on Security and Justice in the National Council of Provinces are still yet to schedule Committee meetings to consider and deliberate on the Draft Protocol. It is envisaged that this issue will be prioritised in this first term of the 2025/2026 financial year so that the South African parliament's input and/or submission on the Draft Protocol can be expeditiously transmitted to the SADC Secretariat.
- B. **On the question of election observation and whether our Parliament will support the SADC PF Election Observation Missions (EOMs):** given the commitment and high-level of importance our parliament attaches to the work and all programmatic activities of SADC-PF, I can report that, in principle, the South African Parliament supports the deployment of EOMS to Member States holding general elections in the 2026 calendar year. However, regarding contributing USD 6,000 per election and sponsoring two Members of Parliament to participate in each EOM- this is the matter that still needs to be deliberated and decided upon by both Houses as informed by the main appropriation [allocation] to Parliament from the national fiscus and other budgetary considerations.
- C. **Regarding Designation of a Focal Person on Model Law Domestication:** to liaise with the Regional Parliamentary Model Laws Oversight Committee (RPMLOC) and assist in tracking the domestication of SADC PF Model Laws- I would like to report that our International

Relations and Protocol Division are seized with the matter, working together with our Parliamentary Group on International Relations (PGIR)

- D. **Finally, regarding recruitment of the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Researchers:** I would like to report that our Research Unit located within the Knowledge and Information Services Division was seized with the matter. In our Parliament, this has been quite a protracted process due to operational requirements and budgetary considerations, amongst others. However, I can report that shortlisting was done, and interviews were conducted on Tuesday, May 13, 2025. The envisaged date for commencement of duties by the successful candidate was the 1st of June 2025, pending their immediate availability.

Mr President, I so submit.

Thank you.