



**STATEMENT BY THE REGIONAL WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY  
CAUCUS (RWPC) AT THE 57TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY  
SESSION OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM HOSTED  
BY THE PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE IN VICTORIA FALLS,  
ZIMBABWE, FROM 31ST MAY TO 7TH JUNE 2025**

**PRESENTED BY  
HON. HELEN PUSHIE MANYENENG, DEPUTY SPEAKER OF  
BOTSWANA AND MEMBER OF THE RWPC**

**SALUTATIONS**

LET ME RIDE ON ALREADY ESTABLISHED PROTOCOL.

- Your Excellency, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe,  
Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa;
- Your Excellency President of the SADC Parliamentary  
Forum and Speaker of the National Assembly of  
Madagascar, Hon. Justin Tokely;
- Her Excellency Secretary General of the SADC  
Parliamentary Forum Ms Boemo Ndu Sekgoma;

- Honourable Speakers of SADC National Parliaments and Heads of Delegations, Ladies and Gentlemen,
- Kindly permit me to adhere to the already established protocol.

It is with great honour and humility that I address this 57th Plenary Assembly Session on behalf of the women parliamentarians of the SADC Region. I thank the Government and Parliament of Zimbabwe for their warm hospitality extended to us since our arrival in Victoria Falls.

As the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus, we speak for millions of women and girls across Southern Africa, especially those who are too often unheard, unseen, and underserved. We have a clear mandate to advocate for equal and equitable representation of women in politics and decision-making across SADC Member States, in alignment with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and other regional and global commitments.

### **Guest of Honour and Distinguished Delegates,**

As we gather here in Zimbabwe, we honour the powerful legacy of its women, led by the iconic Mbuya Nehanda, the spiritual medium and martyr of the First Chimurenga between 1896 and 1897, whose cry for justice still echoes across generations.

We remember the *chimbwidos*, the courageous young women who, during the Second Chimurenga from 1966 to 1979, sustained the

liberation struggle by providing food, shelter, and intelligence, thus serving as the bridge between the fighters and the rural masses.

### **Guest of Honour and Distinguished Delegates,**

Across Southern Africa, women have always been the heartbeat of our communities, leading struggles for liberation, sustaining social movements, and quietly building the foundations of our nations. Yet in 2025, far too many women still find themselves on the margins, excluded from opportunity, underrepresented in leadership, and burdened by inequality.

This is not just a gap in progress; it is a breach of our promises. We have ratified the Beijing Declaration, the Maputo Protocol, and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. We have pledged action. But pledges alone will not change the lives of many marginalised women and girls. We must act now, with clarity and conviction to close the gap between commitment and change. It begins with passing and enforcing bold legislation, but laws alone are not enough; we must also integrate gender equality into every facet of life.

### **Guest of Honour and Distinguished Delegates,**

Allow me to appreciate the Government of Zimbabwe for hosting the 69<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 69) at which we participated in March this year, in New York, as one the side event.

We note with appreciation, Zimbabwe's advancement in institutionalising gender equality, through the establishment of the Zimbabwe Gender Commission and three dedicated Parliamentary Standing Committees on gender equality, of which was rightly celebrated as a regional best practice. This has of course opened economic pathways for women through various initiatives such as the Zimbabwe Women's Micro-Finance Bank.

The Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus, has hence; been inspired by the success of Zimbabwe's strides in this respect. This is enough evidence that indeed transformational change is a reality as it is already unfolding in our midst. Let us be inspired.

Let us be challenged. And above all, let us remain united in building a region where gender equality is not merely a goal, but a lived and lasting reality.

**Guest of Honour and Distinguished Delegates,**

As I conclude, I urge us all to take bold and decisive steps forward and firstly, we must make gender-responsive budgeting a non-negotiable element of all national planning and resource allocation, because where we invest reflects what we value. Second, we must build stronger regional data systems to effectively track, measure, and accelerate progress on gender indicators, for without data, there can be no accountability. And lastly, we must cultivate structured and sustained male allyship, recognising that true equality will only be achieved when every voice, especially those in positions of influence, actively contributes to dismantling the structures of inequality.

I thank you.