

**ADDRESS BY SOUTHERN AFRICA YOUTH PARLIAMENT TO THE 57TH
PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF SADC-PF, VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE,
PRESENTED BY HON. ANGELA NOKUBATHA DUBE THE SOUTHERN
AFRICA YOUTH PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATIVE FOR PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES**

Salutations...

It is a profound honour to stand before you today as a representative of the Southern Africa Youth Parliament. As a young person and as a representative and advocate for persons with disabilities within the Youth Parliament, I am deeply humbled by the opportunity to address the SADC PF 57th Plenary Assembly on behalf of the youth across our region.

Guest of Honour, Distinguished Delegates,

As young people of the region, we are sincerely grateful to the SADC PF for opening its doors to allow our voices to be heard, our perspectives to be valued, and our contributions to meaningfully shape the future of our region.

Our partnership with the SADC PF has been pivotal in amplifying youth participation across various platforms. Through this collaboration, the Southern Africa Youth Parliamentarians have not only benefited from the mentorship and leadership of the Secretary General, Her Excellency Boemo Sekgoma, who also serves as Patron of the Youth Parliament, but have also been accorded meaningful opportunities to participate in key SADC PF processes.

These include Public Hearings, where young people have actively contributed to policy dialogue and legislative review processes. Our concerns and aspirations have not only been heard but also taken seriously and incorporated into regional policy

frameworks. Moreover, young people are regularly invited to participate in the Gender Equality, Women's Advancement, and Youth Development Committee, other Standing Committees, and Plenary Assembly sessions. These engagements are a vital part of our parliamentary learning journey and play a key role in strengthening the institutional capacity of the Youth Parliament.

Guest of Honour, Distinguished Delegates,

SADC PF has further supported joint efforts with young people to co-create innovative solutions to the pressing challenges we face. Together, we have hosted impactful campaigns, facilitated intergenerational dialogues, and issued joint statements to commemorate International Youth Day each year. We are also collaborating to establish a Youth Academy, envisioned as a premier capacity-building institution for emerging leaders across the SADC region.

At the 56th Plenary Assembly across the Zambezi river in Livingstone, Zambia in December 2024, the Youth Parliament was honoured to be accorded the opportunity to deliver its maiden address to the Assembly. We were equally humbled when our member, a young sculptor from Domboshava in Zimbabwe, Zenzo Muzamba, was accorded the honour of carving a sculpture that was handed over to the former Speaker of the Namibian Parliament, Hon. Professor Peter Katjavivi.

Guest of Honour, Distinguished Delegates,

Our collaboration has not been one-sided.

In a show of confidence in young people, the SADC PF is engaging young digital experts to train women parliamentarians on leveraging digital tools and social media to increase women's participation in politics. We have also mobilised ourselves as

young people to support SADC PF's visibility, particularly through social media and digital platforms.

Building on this progress, we respectfully add our call for the acceleration of efforts toward the development of the SADC Protocol on Youth. This Protocol would provide a comprehensive framework to systematically address the multifaceted challenges confronting young people in our region and ensure that Southern Africa fully realises its demographic dividend.

Guest of Honour, Distinguished Delegates,

The challenges facing young people remain stark and stubborn. Unemployment continues to cripple their potential and deepen poverty cycles. Access to quality education is uneven. Health concerns, especially HIV/AIDS and mental health, are widespread, with too few services in place. Meanwhile, gender, geographic, and economic disparities further entrench inequality. Despite being the majority, young people remain largely excluded from political processes and decision-making structures.

Guest of Honour, Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me, therefore, to conclude by calling on Parliaments, under the leadership of our Honourable Speakers to take concrete and coordinated steps to address the pressing challenges faced by young people in our region. This includes prioritising youth-centred legislation that tackles unemployment, improves access to quality education, and addresses social inequality. This means implementing youth quotas in decision-making structures to ensure meaningful representation. Parliaments must also invest in capacity building by supporting skills development, innovation, and entrepreneurship among the youth. Furthermore, it is crucial to develop inclusive platforms that amplify the voices of young people in governance and peacebuilding

processes. Lastly, strengthening health systems and implementing targeted programs to support the physical and mental well-being of young people must be a priority.

I thank you.