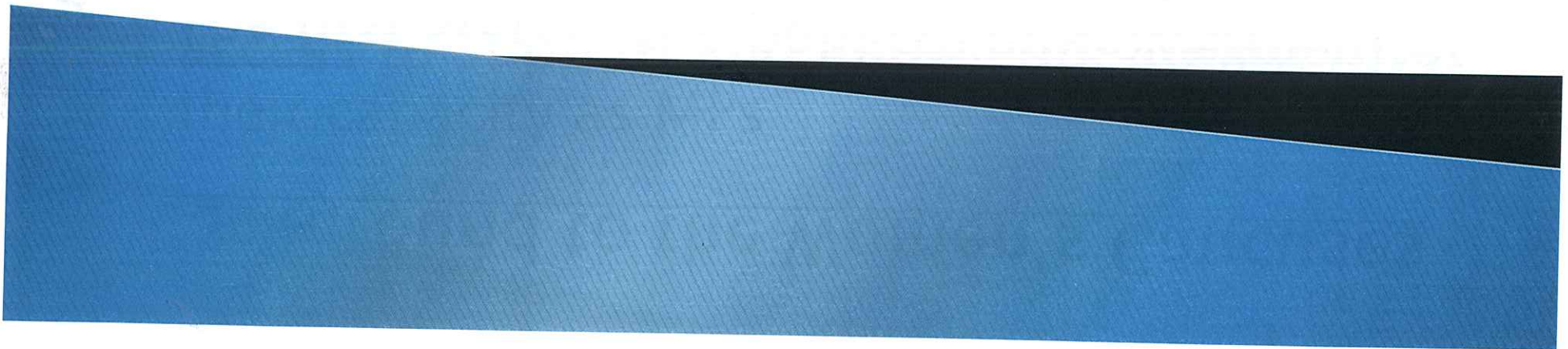


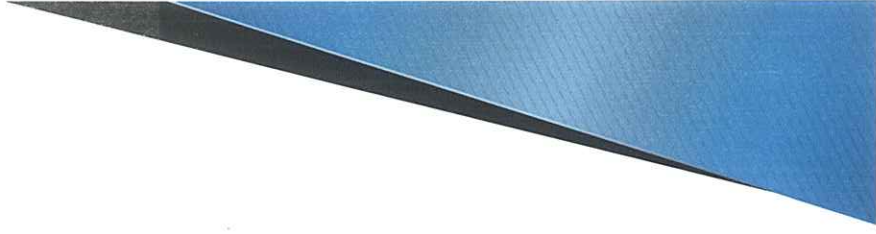
1409 22 Multi-PARTY WOMEN

REGIONAL PARLIAMENTARY WOMEN'S
CAUCUS (Terms of Reference)



Background to the Women's Caucuses

- ▶ The first step in the political empowerment of women is to ensure a critical mass of them are elected to a parliament through an electoral system
- ▶ But once women are elected to parliament, what tools are available to promote women's empowerment from within the institution? One common measure is a multi-party women's caucus (MPWC).



What is a MPWC?

- ▶ It is an “unofficial” group of women MPs (as compared to an official parliamentary committee)
- ▶ varies from parliament to parliament, but generally includes regular meetings in which the MPs discuss issues of:
 - ▶ concern to them about being a woman MP across party line
 - ▶ advocacy for women’s issues in general
 - ▶ access to support and knowledge to improve their capacity as MPs



Benefits to a women's caucus

- ▶ Providing space for women to meet and discuss issues of common concern across party lines, in their own space as women. Where the group is well organized, the issues discussed can then be brought back to the various parliamentary groups / and committees, in turn, to the parliament, through draft legislation, committee investigations or other methods of promoting government action.



Benefits to a women's caucus

- ▶ Allowing for direct support to women MPs to allow them to build their capacity as MPs, recognizing the special challenges faced by women in parliament, across the party lines.
- ▶ It is an important voice for women in a country, as this can be perceived as a group of senior political leaders who are working across party lines to effect change that is positive for women in the general public.
- ▶ It is a source of hope to young/budding feminist politicians, e.g. the unintended outcome of the role played by the RWPC, its members are role models to young women as they can see that women can be actively involved in party politics.



Challenges that might be faced by the group

- ▶ Where there is an established parliamentary committee on women's affairs, such a caucus can cause some confusion with regard to mandates.
- ▶ Recent history has shown that many of these caucuses fail because women MPs are, first and foremost, members of parties and parliamentary groups/committees, therefore having their priorities confused



Strategies to keep the MPWC

- ▶ It must acknowledge the strength of the parliamentary committees within the parliament and work with them to achieve its goals.
- ▶ Efforts to support women MPs must not be solely focused on an unofficial multi-party caucus but on official groups within the parliament (i.e. – committees; parliamentary groups) to ensure the MPs build their capacity and their ability to lead within such groups



About the SADC-PF RWPC

- ▶ The core function of the RWPC is to lobby and advocate for equal and equitable : Article 12.1 'Representation' SADC Gender Protocol signed by all heads of state except, Mauritius and Botswana representation of women in political and administrative decision-making positions.
- ▶ Amongst others, the RWPC plays the following roles:



About the SADC–PF RWPC

- ▶ Lobbies and advocates for the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development
- ▶ It is the voice of women across various parliament committees
- ▶ Conducts election observation missions from gender perspective
- ▶ Supports countries with no MPWC, helps the latter to set such structures
- ▶ It is a source of hope to young/budding feminist politicians
- ▶ Works in an integrated manner with the Regional Gender Machinery, e.g. SADC Gender Unit, SADC–PF Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women's Advancement and Youth Development (GEWA&YD,) etc.



Proposed 2014/2015 programme of action

Objectives:

1. Turning some of the resolutions of the RWPC of the 34th Plenary Assembly Session: 20 October 2013 in Arusha Tanzania, into projects, e.g.
 - ▶ Resolution 1, 5&7: 50% representation of women as members of parliament is realized by 2015 –support countries that are about to achieve this and a strategy for those lagging behind
 - ▶ Resolution 2, 4 & 6: capacity building of women parliamentarians to strengthen their law-making and oversight skills from gender perspective, e.g. gender responsive oversight model
 - ▶ Resolution 3: supporting Member States who are still struggling to establish MPWC
 - ▶ Resolution 10: explore new avenues/areas of abuse of rights of people, specifically women and girls, which have not been tackled before, e.g. the human trafficking especially in the context of the +-300 girls abducted by Bokomo Haram

Proposed 2014/2015 programme of action

2. Developing a vision strategy and an action plan for the body (conduct a strategic plan)
 - ▶ have a programme on the development of a 'Young Feminist' and / development of the new layer of leadership
 - ▶ Agree on 'hotspots' e.g. countries where there has been regression in gender gains, e.g. SA 's decline from 42,3%–+-40% during the last general elections; issue of Malawian former president, the only woman president in this region – reflect and strategise on these losses
 - ▶ Possible partnership between RWPC and UN Women is



Un Women Partnership will focus

on:

Impact 1: Women lead and participate in decision making at all levels: beyond the numbers; what happens after 50:50?

Impact 2: Women, especially the poorest and most excluded, are economically empowered and benefit from development: making laws that are responsive to women's practical gender needs; conduct oversight on various Standing Committees from gender perspective, do we have a framework/s for that

Impact 3: Women and girls live a life free from violence: sharpen law-making and oversight skills from women's practical and strategic gender needs

Impact 5: *Governance and national planning fully reflect accountability for gender equality commitments and priorities: gender sensitive governance, e.g. Where and what are women doing?*

Impact 6: A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, political and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment is in place and is applied through action by Governments and other stakeholders at all levels; commitment to post 2015 poverty and gender agenda



RWPC needs to agree on:

- ▶ Having a 5 year strategic plan developed from gender perspective looking at all the plans and prospects in place
- ▶ Strategy beyond 50:50 gender parity goal – how do we consolidate our gains
- ▶ Beijing +20



