



**MESSAGE OF THE  
REGIONAL WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS (RWPC)**

**PRESENTED BY  
HON. MONICA MUTSVANGWA**

**CHAIRPERSON OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY WOMEN'S  
CAUCUS**

**PRESENTED TO THE 35<sup>TH</sup> PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION OF THE  
SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**

**HELD AT  
PORT LOUIS, MAURITIUS  
SIR HARIL VGHEE MEMORIAL HALL  
WEDNESDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2014**

Director of Ceremonies

The Guest of Honor: His Excellency Mr Rakkeswur Purryag, GCSK, GOSK,  
President of the Republic of Mauritius,

Hon. Abdool Razack Mahomed PEEROO, SC, GOSK, Speaker of the  
National Assembly of Mauritius and President of the SADC  
Parliamentary Forum and also our Host,

Hon Speakers and Deputy Speakers of SADC National Parliaments,

Hon Leaders of Delegations,

Hon Members of Parliament from various SADC National Parliaments,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour and gives me immense pleasure to address this 35<sup>th</sup>  
Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC-PF on behalf of the Regional  
Women's Parliamentary Forum. I am even more humbled to be  
standing before you, here in Mauritius, the motherland of Anjalay  
Coopen . As a daughter of this region, I have immense respect to  
Anjalay Coopen.

**Your Excellency, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlement**

Ms Anjay Coopen has gone down in the annals of history as one female  
agricultural labourer who was dedicated to the liberation of women in  
this country. Hon Members we learned that, on the 27<sup>th</sup> Septemebr

1943, four sugar cane workers, including Anjalay Coopen, were killed and became the martyrs of the Mauritian working class movement, Anjalay Coopen, is an important historical figure of early contemporary Mauritius and she has become a tangible and iconic symbol of the Mauritian people's struggle for human rights against British colonial tyranny and sugar planters in the 1940s.

Mauritius boasts of a rich history of contributions to women's liberation struggle, where the women of this country used every platform and every opportunity to mobilize and join the struggle against women's subordination. On behalf of the women of the SADC Region, therefore, we salute the gallant women of Mauritius and are proud and happy to be here in this great country.

### **Your Excellency, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen**

I wish to remind you that despite it being 60 years after adoption of the Convention of the Political Rights of Women, almost 35 years after CEDAW and 20 years after the Beijing Platform of Action, parliamentary life remains dominated by men. The SADC Parliamentary Forum Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus will use **EVERY** platform at its disposal to unrelentingly remind the people of this region about the commitments our governments have made, and the hope and expectations generated, through the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. This Protocol aims to ensure that at least 50% decision-

making positions at Local Government, Parliament, Cabinet and senior positions in the public sector, among others, should be held by women by 2015, and that, in this regard, affirmative action measures must be in place to accelerate the attainment of this 50% by 2015. We need our male counterparts' support to realise gender equality. We, therefore, implore you, our male counterparts, to provide this much needed support for the attainment of gender equality.

There are significant achievements that have been made. I am happy to say, as SADC women, we have achieved enormously, for example, we boast of the UN Women Executive Director based at the Office of the UN Secretary General in New York, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax from Tanzania Lawrence, the Executive Secretary of the SADC. The 3 women have broken a new ground as they are the first Women from the SADC Region to hold such powerful positions. As RWPC, we support the 3 women in their efforts of gender equality and women advancement.

**Your Excellency, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen**

**According to the SADC Gender Unit, Gender Barometer 2013**, as compared to other sectors of government, the Legislative Sector is regarded as doing fairly well, e.g. out of the 14 Member States, 4 countries, now that SA has fallen off, have a great potential of reaching

the required 50:50 gender representation targeted for 2015, these are, Seychelles(43,8%), Mozambique(39,2%), Tanzania(36,0%) and Angola(34,1%). It should be noted however, that, out of the 4 countries with great potential to achieve the target, our hopes are with Mozambique as it has its National Elections before 2015. The big challenge is, how we assist the remaining 11 Member Countries who will not be able to reach 50:50 Gender Parity Goal by 2015, and have no national elections. We need also to devise a strategy to assist countries who are to hold national elections before the end of this year, e.g. Botswana and Namibia.

Our successes have not been without challenges, e.g.

- Women must have reasonable access and control of positions of power
- Transparency : lack of openness and in decision-making and undemocratic internal processes for women who have just joined party politics
- Lack willingness of citizens to accept new ideas about gender roles in society
- Ability of women to attain financial autonomy and or lack of access to economic resources. Worldwide women's lower economic status, relative poverty and discriminatory legal

frameworks are substantial hurdles to their participation in the position in the political life of their communities.

**Your Excellency, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen**

As RWPC, we would have failed if we do not reflect to the resolutions of our last RWPC meeting in Tanzania and assess progress made, these include

- i. **Capacity building of women parliamentarians** to strengthen their law-making and oversight skills from gender perspective
- ii. **Strategy to assist and support** Member States who are still struggling to establish Multi-Party Women's Caucuses
- iii. **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 (which is more relevant now than then, specifically after the abduction of Nigerian girls by Boko Haram, as RWPC, we support Nigerians on their #bringbackourgirls# campaign.

**Your Excellency, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Having highlighted the cardinal importance of Women Caucuses, my humble plea is that as we begin to operate like a Parliament with the hope of attaining the transformation of the Forum into a Regional Parliament, we shall not suffer from the same challenges that have

plagued our national legislature and countries in terms of not opening up the democratic space for women to participate fully.

In closing, I have this to pose to all of us, against the backdrop of the Assembly Theme: ***SADC Regional Parliament – The Future Is Now***, can we really become a parliament representing our constituencies and our countries if we do not have a strategy to institutionalize gender equality and women empowerment within this 'new born'? Do we have a strategy to assist, monitor and evaluate countries who have acquired 50:50 Gender Parity Goal by 2015 to avoid set-backs to our achievements?

As we set off to this important journey of establishing SADC Regional Parliament, we should, as delegates of this Assembly, remember that, we have a responsibility to combat gender inequalities and feminized poverty in the SADC Region. We also have a responsibility to secure the freedoms, security and prosperity of future generations of African boys and girls, of men and women.

I thank you