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DELEGATION REPORT

(AFRICAN PARLIAMENTS AND AGENDA 2063)

**COMMONWEALTH SPEAKERS AND PRESIDING OFFICERS
CONFERENCE AFRICA REGION CONFERENCE**

13-22 JULY 2023

CAMEROON-YAONDE

WE, THE PEOPLE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides the of the outcomes emanating from the **18th Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers Conference (CSPOC) of the Africa Region** that was held in Cameroon, Yaoundé from 13 to 22 July 2023. The CSPOC is a forum of 63 African national and sub-national legislature heads under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. They are united by the mission of pursuing matters of common interest, which include promoting respect for the rule of law, the development ideals and promotion of strong democratic parliaments.
- 1.2 Through the CSPOC, Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments share best practices, pursue continental interests in the global sphere of nations, and collaborate in advancing the development of the peoples of Africa through building stronger democratic Parliaments. The following countries attended the 18th CSPOC: Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Garbon, Eswatini, Tanzania, Gambia, and Uganda.
- 1.3 The 18th Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers Conference Africa Region was organised by the Cameroon Branch of the CPA Africa Region, under the overriding theme ***“African Parliaments and Agenda 2063”***. The conference sub-themes or topics that anchored and guided conference discussions and resolutions were:
- a) Securing Public Trust; The Role of Parliaments in the strengthening openness, transparency and Accountability***
 - b) The Role of African Parliaments in the Implementation of African Continental Free Trade Agreement***
 - c) Addressing the Challenge of Food Security by Promoting Investments in Agriculture***
 - d) The devastating Impacts of Climate Change: A Call for parliamentary intervention***
- 1.4 The Parliament of South Africa, as well as the Provincial Legislatures of the Northern Cape, Gauteng, Limpopo and Western Cape, participated in the proceedings of the 18th CSPOC. The South African delegation was comprised of the:
- a) Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP): and Leader of the delegation, Hon Amos Masondo;**
 - b) Speaker of the National Assembly: Hon Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula**
 - c) Speaker of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature and Regional Treasurer (CPA Africa Region), Hon Ntombi Mekgwe;**
 - d) Speaker of the Western Cape Provincial Legislature, Daylin Mitchell**
 - e) Limpopo Provincial Legislature, Hon Rosemary Molapo;**
 - f) Northern Cape Provincial Legislature, Hon Newrene Klaatse.**

- g) **North West Provincial Legislature:**
- h) **Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature: Hon Helen August**
- i) **Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature:**

2. Key Highlights of the Briefing Meeting of the South African Delegation

- 2.1 The South African delegation arrived in Yaoundé, Cameroon on 16 July 2023. The Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces and the Speaker of the National Assembly as leaders of the delegation convened a briefing meeting to plan and devise an approach for its effective participation in the conference proceedings. Our leaders of delegation also convened a special meeting with South African High Commissioner who is based in Yaoundé . An overview of key issues flagged during the presentations and briefings are:
- a) The cordial relations South Africa enjoys with Cameroon since South Africa`s democratic dispensation.
 - b) South Africa has enjoyed full diplomatic relations with Cameroon since 29 April 1994. A Cameroon High Commission was opened in South Africa in 1998 and South Africa opened a High Commission in Yaoundé in 2003.
 - c) Cameroon projects itself as a peace-loving country that advocates a better deal for developing countries in the international arena. It lends great importance to the United Nations; the need for greater representation of developing countries in the Security Council; support for the African Union; and commitment to greater regional integration
 - d) There is good cooperation on matters of trade, health and others;
 - e) Cameroon together with High Commissioner had plans to celebrate the events marking the Mandela Day International Day in commemoration of the late President Mandela birthday;
 - f) To this end, the Speaker of the National Assembly was invited to share a platform with other stakeholders in celebration of this day;
 - g) The Briefing of the South African delegation further outlined the process related to the nature objectives the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers seeks through the exchange of experiences and dialogue aimed at upholding and subscribing to values of democracy and rule of law
 - h) It further deliberated on the topical issues to be deliberated and resolved by conference, the state of preparations with respect to content aimed at ensuring the meaningful participation of all the delegates at conference
 - i) The briefing meeting also directed that our delegation must be vigilant with respect to ongoing developments emanating from the debates related to the transformation of the CPA and the related modalities encompassing the issues relocating the Headquarters of

the CPA should there be a deadlock on the implementation of the 66th CPC resolutions by the United Kingdom Branch in particular.

- j) Further suggestions were raised to the effect that there is a need for amendment of the Standing Rules to allow the recognition and formal participation of the Sub-national Branches Speakers in the structures of CSPOC.
- k) This is in view of the fact that Speakers of the fact that all sub-national Branches are exposed to parliamentary settings and multi-party settings where the decorum, fairness and impartiality in the process of presiding is expected to be maintained. To this end, participating and sharing best practices with Speakers and Presiding Officers from different countries is a learning that must be encouraged and benefit the institution of Parliament itself, thus the significance of the implementation of the suggested amendment of the Standing rules.

3. Opening Ceremony

- 3.1 The opening ceremony was addressed by His Excellency the Prime Minister, Head of Government, Chief Dr Joseph Dion Ngute representative of the Head of State – His Excellently Paul Biya, formally opened the conference. In his address the Prime noted Cameroon vision is in line with the theme of the conference premised on “African Parliaments and AGENDA 2063. He outlined the number of priority measures currently implemented by his government with the aim of making Cameroon a modern democratic government by 2035 in spite of the prevailing global challenges. He also emphasized that Cameroon have chosen a path of implementing AGENDA 2063 in a ten-year phases. Of critical importance is the role to be played by African parliament through their oversights and the constituency work parliamentarians are expected to play. This will go a long way to address overall challenge of alleviating poverty and inequality amongst African countries. Like many countries of the Commonwealth, Cameroon is not spurred to challenges of climate, economic growth challenges to which parliamentarians through their deliberations must exchange dialogue and share best practices on various strategies destined to resolve the challenges faced by African constituencies within the Commonwealth and beyond.

4. Discussion and Analysis in Plenary Sessions: Key Issues Emerging from the General Meeting

- 4.1 The General Meeting of Speakers of National Parliaments sat to discuss and decide on governance matters of the CSPOC. These included confirmation of hosts for future CSPOC conferences and the rotation of the Members of the Standing Committee representing different sub-regions within the Africa Region.
- 4.2 The general meeting received a report relating to the Meeting of the Standing Committee which was attended by the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces. Key amongst

the decisions taken was the issue of the nomination of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and the New Members of the Standing Committee.

- 4.3 In this regard, the Parliament of Botswana was nominated to be the Chairperson of the Standing Committee given the fact that the 19th CSPOC will be held in Botswana in 2025.
- 4.4 The Parliament of Uganda has been nominated to the position of Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee whilst South Africa has been replaced by Mozambique as the member of the Standing Committee
- 4.5 The decisions of the Standing Committee meeting were tabled for adoption at the General Meeting of Speakers and Presiding Officers for adoption. This is the meeting that also reflected on the matters arising from the 17th Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers Conference. Both Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces were attendance.

5. Plenary Session on Thematic Topics: The Devastating Impacts of Climate Change: A Call for Parliamentary Intervention

- 5.1 The topic was moved by the Deputy Speaker of the parliament of Cameroon, Hon, Mary Muyali Boya epse Meboka. She acknowledged that Climate change is rapidly emerging as one of the most acute environmental problems of the 21st century. It poses one of the greatest challenges while its economic consequences are especially severe for most least-developed and developing countries including South Africa, especially in terms of the efforts needed to arrest it, by reducing emissions and adapting to its impacts.
- 5.2 These countries are often ill-equipped and lack financial resources to put in place adaptation or mitigation measures. Tackling climate change has far-reaching implications for socio-economic development, for production and consumption patterns, and thus for employment and income levels and poverty reduction.
- 5.3 Climate change poses a serious threat to poverty reduction and threatens to undo decades of development efforts and hinder progress on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Climate change exacerbates existing environmental, social and economic problems while bringing new challenges such as the frequency and intensity of floods and wild fires, heat waves and droughts in various parts of the world including South Africa.
- 5.5 These climate change induced challenges aggravate water management problems, reduce agricultural production and food security, increase health risks, cause damage to critical infrastructure and interrupts the provision of basic services such as water and sanitation, education, energy and transport¹ particularly in developing countries and

¹UN Environment Programme (undated). Why do Sustainable Development Goals matter [Internet] Available from <<https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/sustainable-development-goals/why-do-sustainable-development-goals-matter>> Accessed 30 October 2022.

vulnerable communities. In responding to the arguments advanced by the Mover and Secunder of the topic, participants acknowledged that there is need to ensure that to fully implement the Paris Agreement and adapt the policies and relevant legislation to avert the adverse challenges of climate change.

Delegates further noted that even though Africa contributes about 2% to climate change globally, the continent is the worst affected by the devastating impact of climate change.

In addition, participants further acknowledged the commitments of African governments at the global, continental and national levels in combatting climate change including the allocation of resources towards the implementation of Agenda2063 and other initiatives.

To this end, It was recognised that climate change could seriously compromise the ability of the agricultural sector to feed the world and severely undermine progress towards eradicating hunger, malnutrition and poverty especially in Africa if concrete action is not taken to mitigate its effects. The following recommendation were suggested as mitigating factors to the ongoing challenge;

- Parliaments must ensure that sufficient budgetary resources are allocated to support programmes and initiatives towards combating climate change and for climate action and also strengthen their oversight of the use and management of these resources;
- Collaborate with Executive, Judiciary, State, Provincial, County and Municipal legislatures and authorities, civil society organisations and the media in pursuing programmes and actions to combat climate change;
- Support the private sector to invest in alternative and clean energy sources such as solar, wind and hydro, recycling of waste, among others through the passage of investor friendly legislations and resolutions that provide incentives to the private investors;
- Ratify and domesticate all relevant international agreements, conventions and protocols on climate change;

6. Addressing the Challenge of Food Security

Economic development is at the top of Africa's development agenda and it has been acknowledged that recognize that raising agricultural productivity will contribute greatly to economic growth in Africa. The 2030 Agenda has been integrated and adopted in the African Union Agenda 2063² and was

² AU (2015)

also reiterated in the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods.³ This provides integration of international and continental visions and targets, supporting focused action. Implementing the Malabo Declaration is being carried out through the revision and updating of the earlier Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development (CAADP) National Agriculture and Food Security Investment Plans (NAFSIPs); and progress is monitored through the Biennial Review mechanism. During the debate relating to addressing challenges relating to food security, participants acknowledged that Africa requires a significant increase in investments in agriculture and rural development. Equally, delegates noted that African countries are among the most affected by food and nutrition insecurity, with threats of famine and extreme levels of malnutrition among populations in some countries. They are also cognisant of the fact that climate change, armed conflict, rising populations, poor infrastructure and inadequate investments in research and development, and the agriculture value-chain, is affecting food and nutrition security in Africa. To this end, parliamentarians ought to play their maximum role through ensuring;

- Support increased investments in research and development, agricultural infrastructure, provision of subsidised inputs to farmers, agro-processing, marketing, conservation and storage, including the establishment of an African Investment Bank to support agricultural investment;
- Use relevant legislation to improve investment in agriculture, reform the land tenure system and land-use management to particularly the low-income earners and women, and provide tax and other financial incentives to encourage private investment in the agricultural value-chain;
- Adopt appropriate measures in resolving armed conflicts including conflicts among farmers and herders;
- Encourage and influence educational reforms and skills development that support the agricultural sector, agri-business and agro-processing;

6.1 The Role of Parliamentarians in the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is one of the flagship projects of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063: *The Africa We Want*. It is a high ambition trade agreement, with a comprehensive scope that includes critical areas of Africa's economy, such as digital trade and investment protection, amongst other areas. By eliminating barriers to trade in Africa, the objective

³ AU (2014)

of the AfCFTA is to significantly boost intra-Africa trade, particularly trade in value-added production and trade across all sectors of Africa's economy.

As part of its mandate, the AfCFTA is to eliminate trade barriers and boost intra-Africa trade. In particular, it is to advance trade in value-added production across all service sectors of the African Economy. The AfCFTA will contribute to establishing regional value chains in Africa, enabling investment and job creation. The practical implementation of the AfCFTA has the potential to foster industrialisation, job creation, and investment, thus enhancing the competitiveness of Africa in the medium to long term.

During the plenary sessions, delegates noted that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers an opportunity for enhanced intra-African trade and that regional blocks provide a platform for fostering linkages and harmonising strategies. It was further noted that acknowledging that notwithstanding the successes registered by AfCFTA including the establishment of a permanent headquarters, commitment to eliminate custom duties on 97% of tariff lines in trade facilitation, launch of the common electronic passport, the African passport, to facilitate the free movement of people, a lot needs to be done. In view of the above, parliaments recognised that a need for strong parliament is essential for effective oversight and the foundation of a thriving democracy that builds public trust and confidence; The following recommendations were suggested for consideration by Speakers;

- Ensure the ratification and domestication of AfCFTA Agreement and its harmonization with other sub-regional agreements and treaties and to mainstream gender in the process.
- Appropriate funds for the construction and development of road, air, sea and railway infrastructure and transportation to connect and link
- Adapt policies and relevant legislation
- Ensure participation of women and youth in trade
- Promotion of regional Economic Communities
- Exercise oversight to enhance economic trade and pass relevant legislation
- Develop economic models that would bring about beneficiation to African countries in the process of advancing intra-African trade
- Strengthen infrastructure through developing regional airlines and African air travel must be promoted to reconnect Africa for trade related purposes.

6.2 Securing Trust; the Role of Parliaments in strengthen Openness, Accountability and Transparency

This motion was moved by the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Botswana and seconded by the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, **Hon A Masondo**.

The Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces Acknowledge that South Africa values the need for citizens to be active in their own development, in strengthening democracy and in holding their government accountable. This is one of the objectives of our National Development Plan. We recognise the right of citizens to expect government to deliver certain basic services and to hold leaders accountable for their actions.

Parliaments in general represent the interests of the people by, among other things, passing legislation, scrutinising executive action and promoting public involvement. They play a crucial role in securing public trust by strengthening openness, transparency and accountability.

Of course, Parliaments do not simply will into existence the capacity to strengthen openness, transparency and accountability. They must ensure that the measures are codified in law and embedded in rigorous practice.

Equally the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Botswana underscored that a democratic Parliament ought to subscribe to the principles of transparency, accountability and openness. To this end both presenters articulated the mechanisms in place destined to ensure openness accountability and transparency. These public participation established in terms of South Africa`s constitution and related laws of the country. Institutions supporting democracy and parliamentary democracy offices, which are a connection of Parliament and people in different provinces and constituencies.

Participants noted that that openness, transparency, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability in the use and administration of public resources are key to building a strong and open parliament and a democratic culture that facilitates improvement in public sector performance. To this end, the following issues for consideration in strengthening transparency, Accountability and openness were suggested to be implemented by African Parliaments and beyond.

7. Overall Observations

The conference was a success and has achieved the desired objective of interrogating the role of African Parliaments in responding to the call of the implementation of Agenda 2063. Equally, the South African delegation participated well and contributed in enriching the deliberations of the conference. The conference was well attended and provided an opportunity for African Parliaments to exchange experiences and share dialogue on best practices. It was however

noted that conference missed an opportunity by not tabling a debated related to the developments on the transformation of CPA and find a way for Speaker strengthen this process through engaging and influence Heads of States to help expedite the implementation in question. There seems to be a gap in the implementation of resolutions adopted at CPA conferences.

Recommendations

It is suggested the CPA Secretariat ought to develop a model of tracking the implementation of the resolutions and conference and ensure that accountability and learning out of the conferences Parliaments is participating on. That goes further to emphasize the need to amend the Standing Rules of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers Conference to allow full acceptance of the Provincial Legislatures participation. Secondly to legitimize the fact that all Speakers across the Commonwealth are presiding over a multiparty environment where sharing of experiences and exchange of dialogue in line with the objective expressed in the Standing Rules must benefit all.

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