



PARLIAMENT
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**REPORT OF THE VIRTUAL STANDING COMMITTEES AND REGIONAL WOMENS'
PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS (RWPC) PUBLIC HEARINGS AHEAD OF THE 54TH
PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**

11 – 18 October 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) held its Standing Committee Session ahead of the 54th Plenary Assembly from 11 to 18 October 2023 under the theme “Amplifying Citizens’ Voices in Regional Integration in Southern Africa: Bridging the Engagement Gap by bringing Parliament to the People”. The Standing Committees each dealt with their respective internal business and held public hearings on various issues under their respective mandates. This is in line with the Forum’s policy decision that one of the two annual Committee Sessions should be a public hearing session in order to give citizens a platform to voice their opinions on regional issues of interest and concern on a regular basis.

Participating in this engagement supported Parliament’s mandates as follows:

- **Law-making and oversight:** Deliberations with the public on various thematic areas alerted MPs to various common challenges in SADC that can be addressed through legislative, and oversight means at the national level. In preparation for the 54th Plenary Assembly, these insights will be captured as resolutions for the Plenary Assembly’s consideration and adoption. Following the Plenary Assembly’s adoption of the Standing Committee and RWPC reports and resolutions, SADC national parliaments will be expected to facilitate their implementation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the meeting: For each Standing Committee and the RWPC to:

- Meet on their internal business (considering and adopting the minutes for their previous meetings); and

- Hold public hearings on various thematic areas that fall under the mandate of each Committee.

Delegation Members:

- Hon. S. Mohai, MP – Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources (FANR)
- Hon. N. Bilankulu, MP – Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Women Advancement and Youth Development (GEWAYD) and Regional Womens Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC)
- Hon. D. Moela, MP – Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and Special Programmes (HSDSP)
- Hon. D. Bergman, MP – Standing Committee on Democratisation, Governance and Human Rights (DGHR)
- Hon. V. Mente, MP – Standing Committee on Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment (TIFI) and RWPC

Delegation Secretariat:

- Dr N. Leibrandt-Loxton: Researcher – International Relations and Protocol Division (IRPD)
- Ms N. Skitasi-Nkayi: SADC PF Desk Officer – IRPD
- Ms A. Dlomo: IRPD Official

2. MEETING OUTCOMES

Each Standing Committee and the RWPC met based on the following agenda:

- Considering and adopting the minutes of their respective previous meetings.
- Holding virtual public hearings and receiving submissions from the public on issues relevant to each committee. The public hearings were further enriched through each committee receiving sectoral updates from the SADC Secretariat, enabling delegates to receive detailed information on the work done by the executive branch.
- Being requested to complete a questionnaire related to the development of the Forum's new strategic plan.

Following these meetings, each Standing Committee and the RWPC will prepare reports and resolutions for consideration and adoption by the 54th SADC PF Plenary Assembly, due to be held in November/December 2023.

Each committee engaged with the public and received presentations from the public on the following matters under their mandates:

2.1 RWPC

The RWPC received submissions from the public on various issues, including:

- Addressing challenges faced by rural women in accessing digital technology and the digital gender gap.
- Tackling discrimination and stigma among women, pregnant adolescent girls, young & single mothers.
- Youth unemployment, gender stereotypes and sexual harassment of women in the workplace
- Addressing the human rights challenges of women in informal cross-border trade.
- What unique challenges do rural women face and how can the digital gender gaps be bridged?
- Measures for the realisation of the rights of young people especially adolescent girls.
- A Safer World for All: Making anti-GBV Promises real in member states.

- Leaving No Woman Behind: Rural women and inequality.
- What strategies can be implemented to increase women's participation and representation in political processes, including electoral systems and quotas; and
- How can Parliament contribute to the promotion of smart education agendas?

After hearing all the submissions, the Members present discussed their thoughts and agreed that more effort is required to achieve equal gender representation in politics. They also discussed ways of revising the electoral systems that contribute to the challenge, as well as strategies to get political parties to nominate and equip more women for candidacy. It was concluded that these measures are essential to ensure the success of gender equality in political decision-making. Hon. Bilankulu suggested that issues affecting rural women need to be further explored, notably in terms of their limited land rights and access to services.

2.2 Standing Committee on GEWAYD

The Standing Committee on GEWAYD received submissions from the public on various issues, including:

- Addressing human rights economic challenges of women in informal cross border trade.
- What challenges exist in ensuring women and youth have equitable access to quality healthcare, including SRH services and what solutions can be explored?
- Child Trafficking & Children Right to Education.
- How can intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality faced by women and youth, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds be better recognised and addressed in policies and programmes?
- How can regional and continental economic policies, including the AfCFTA, be harnessed to promote women and youth's economic inclusion, entrepreneurship, access to financial resources and close the gender pay gap for marginalised women, young girls, and youth?
- A Call for Action Towards Climate Justice and Youth-SRHR: Case of the areas surrounding Lake Chirwa.
- Mechanisms for gender-responsive national budgets to address the needs and rights of women and youth.
- What mechanisms can be put in place to ensure that national budgets are gender-responsive, addressing the specific needs and rights of women and youth in Africa countries?
- Call for youth inclusive approaches in line with the African Charter on Youth.

Following the presentations, members engaged with the presenters to thank them for their insightful presentations. During these discussions, Hon. Bilankulu made various interventions to encourage the adoption of gender-responsive economic policies and legislation within SADC parliaments. She advocated for budgetary allocations that prioritize women and youth economic empowerment programs and for legislative reforms to eliminate barriers to youth political participation. Furthermore, she advocated for the inclusion of gender analysis and impact assessments in budget decision-making processes, as well as the creation of mechanisms for parliamentary scrutiny of budget proposals to ensure gender and youth considerations are prioritized. Additionally, Hon. Bilankulu encouraged the inclusion of marginalized groups in parliamentary structures, committees, and decision-making processes to ensure that policies and programs tailored to meet the needs of diverse and marginalized communities are developed. Finally, she proposed for parliamentary debates and discussions to be held specifically focused on intersectional discrimination and social justice.

2.3 Standing Committee on HSDSP

The Standing Committee on HSDSP received submissions from the public on various issues, including:

- Tackling the impact of climate-induced disasters on school dropouts within the SADC.
- Comprehensive Response to Educational Needs .
- Progress & Barriers to implementing KP Commitments at SADC level.
- Provision of SRHR Services for Vulnerable Groups During Humanitarian Crises especially in Rural Areas.
- Reducing Barriers that hinder learners from accessing quality education which increases class absenteeism rates and low performance.
- Ending Child Marriage.
- The role of Parliament in promoting smart education agendas for Life Skills Learning and Disease Prevention.
- How the domestication of the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence at the national level be expedited and what concrete steps can be taken to proactively prevent gender-based violence in communities and ensure comprehensive support and justice for survivors.
- How can barriers to girls and women's education and skills development be overcome to ensure they have equal access to educational opportunities?
- How can Parliament actively engage with the African Union's 2024 theme of Education and its Roadmap for Education to incentivise Member States to implement measures aimed at eliminating the root causes hindering education at all levels?
- Unlocking a Healthier Future: Prioritizing Tobacco Control in the SADC Region and Urgent need to initiate discussions on establishing a SADC Model Law on Tobacco Control.
- Role of parliament in promoting smart education agendas, including life skills learning and health education, to prevent diseases like malaria, tuberculosis (TB), and HIV/AIDS .
- Harnessing youth-led research in Integrating Non-Communicable Diseases in the fight against HIV/TB.
- Call to Expedite the Domestication of the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence at the national level and Comprehensively Address GBV Challenges in the SADC Region.
- It Shouldn't Take an Annual Theme: Educating for Africa's Place in the 4th Industrial Revolution
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in schools and higher education institutions.

Members expressed their gratitude for all the submissions. Members observed the need to improve curriculum development in SADC to ensure that it is aligned for the development aspirations of the region.

2.4 Standing Committee on DGHR

The Standing Committee on DGHR received submissions from the public on various issues, including:

- The role of Parliament in addressing gaps in Whistleblower Protection in Southern Africa: A Key Tool in Curbing Corruption.
- The implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the military domain, with emphasis on Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS) in the African Context.
- What steps can Parliaments take to support the implementation of the SADC Regional Counter Terrorism Strategy?
- How can regional initiatives and policies better support women's active and meaningful participation in peace and security? What specific measures are needed to ensure their protection and inclusion in conflict resolution?
- Gendered dimensions of conflict In Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique.
- Sow the Dragon's Teeth; Reap the Dragon: Disaffected Youth and Extremism
- Democracy = Diversity: Help Civil Society Help You.
- Peace Security and Governance in the SADC region.

- Parliament's crucial role in combating sextortion: Addressing Gender-Based Corruption in the SADC Region.
- Status of youth participation in electoral processes.
- Democracy Governance and Human Rights in the SADC Region.

Members thanked the presenters for all their submissions. Hon. Bergman appreciated the focus of terrorism and emphasised the need for SADC countries to close all avenues available to terrorist groups that allow for terrorist financing. He stressed the need for SADC countries to work together in this respect. Hon. Bergman also emphasised the need for SADC countries to utilise the SADC PF's model laws to assist in harmonised responses against terrorism in the region.

2.5 Standing Committee on TIFI

The Standing Committee on TIFI received submissions from the public on various issues, including:

- How can cross-border trading within SADC be streamlined to promote economic integration and the growth of small-scale and informal businesses?
- The Nexus between Debt & Human Rights.
- Proposal on how SADC Member States should manage rising debt and ensure fiscal sustainability.
- How should SADC States manage rising debts and ensure fiscal sustainability?
- Activating Industries and accelerating trade in Africa. Challenges and Solutions
- In the face of economic shocks, what strategies can be employed to build economic resilience and ensure the stability of regional economies?
- Domestic resource mobilisation allocation and utilisation as tools for foster regional economic resilience in the SADC Region.
- Nuggets for Regional Economic Growth and Job creation as a vehicle to youth development.
- Creating Inclusive Economic Policies in SADC Countries for Equitable Economic Growth.
- Measures that Parliament can take in attempt to alleviate poverty in regions with high poverty rates.

Members expressed their gratitude to all the presenters.

2.6 Standing Committee on FANR

The Standing Committee on FANR received submissions from the public on various issues, including:

- The role of MPs in ensuring accountability Climate Finance.
- What strategies can be employed to secure sustainable climate financing for adaptation and mitigation efforts and how can these funds be effectively utilized?
- Climate change and human security issues in the SADC Region.
- Countries to enhance their preparedness and response strategies to address the growing threat to climate change-induced droughts and flooding on food security and nutrition.
- Addressing food insecurity in the SADC Region.
- What steps should SADC Member states take to maximise the sustainable exploitation of transitional minerals, ensuring economic benefits and environmental protection?
- Young people and women in Agriculture.
- The Water-Energy-Food Nexus.

- What strategies can be employed to secure sustainable climate financing for adaptation and mitigation efforts, and how can these funds be effectively utilised?

Members thanked the presenters for their submissions.

3. CONCLUSION

Following these meetings, each Standing Committee and the RWPC will prepare reports and resolutions for consideration and adoption by the 54th SADC PF Plenary Assembly, due to be held in November/December 2023.
