



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**REPORT OF THE 147th INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION ASSEMBLY AND
RELATED MEETINGS**

Luanda, Angola

23 – 27 October 2023



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A delegation from the South African Parliament participated in the 147th IPU Assembly under the theme '*Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions*'. Participating in this engagement supported Parliament's constitutional mandates as follows:

- **Law-making and oversight:** The Assembly's adoption of a resolution 'Orphanage trafficking: The role of parliaments in reducing harm' recommending several legislative and oversight strategies to parliamentary committees aimed at addressing any loops in the prevention and combating orphanage trafficking. In this light, The Parliamentary Group on International Relations (PGIR) is advised to refer the resolution as follows:
 - *Resolution on Orphanage trafficking: The role of parliaments in reducing harm* to the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development and the Select Committee on Security and Justice for consideration as well as the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.
- **Deepening international engagement:** Parliaments international engagements were deepened through the following:
 - Submitting substantive proposals for amendments to the above resolution in line with South Africa's interests, of which all were adopted into the final text.
 - Hon. Speaker Mapisa-Nqakula's inputs into the *Luanda Declaration: Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions* afforded Parliament the opportunity to share recommendations with the parliamentary community South Africa's experiences of dealing with violence including as part of building an inclusive society known as rainbow nation.
 - The delegation had bilateral engagements with parliamentarians from Belgium, Canada, Syria, Palestine, UK, Ukraine and Yemen as part of the ongoing campaign for Hon. Tulia Akson, Speaker of the National Assembly on Tanzania for the IPU presidency position.

The Luanda Declaration and a resolution are available online at <https://www.ipu.org/event/147th-assembly-and-related-meetings#event-sub-page-31305/>

OTHER NOTEWORTHY DECISIONS / DEVELOPMENTS

The following are other worthy decisions/developments that Presiding Officers need to note:

- **Note the new IPU President and the Executive Council Members:** In a historic first, Hon. Tulia Akson, Speaker of the National Assembly on Tanzania became the first African woman to hold the IPU presidency position for a non-renewable three-year term. Hon. Ackson is only the third woman President of the IPU after Najma Heptulla from India (1999–2002) and Gabriela Cuevas from Mexico (2017–2020).

The Africa Group nominated Mr. G.O Akpabio, President of the Senate, Nigeria and Ms. N. Mutti, Speaker of the National Assembly, Zambia as the new Executive Council Members

- **Note the proposal to amendment Statutes and Rules to lower the age limit of young parliamentarians to 40 years old:** The Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians reiterated its call to amend the Statutes and Rules to lower the age limit to be considered a young MP to 40 years old. Currently, young MP refers to a person younger than 45 years.
- **Note the capacity-building Opportunities for MPs:** The IPU has several capacity-building opportunities for MPs including on climate change, gender-sensitive parliaments, SDGs, disarmament, reconciliation and conflict prevention as well as counter-terrorism. These

opportunities provide access to tools, research and good practices, and building standards to assist parliamentarians and parliaments in their work.

- **Note the increase in Members' Assessed Contribution:** In 2024, the Governing Council has agreed to increase Members' assessed contribution by 3% to implement the IPU's Strategy 2022 – 2026.
- **Note the future Assembly and related meetings:** The Governing Council approved the 148th Assembly and related meetings to take place from 23 - 27 March 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland.

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the meeting: To deliberate on the theme '*Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions*', draft resolution, as well as debate and consider several items on the agendas of the Standing Committees and other committees . Around 700 parliamentarians from 130 countries attended the 147th Assembly.

Delegation Members:

- National Assembly (NA) Speaker, Hon. N. Mapisa-Nqakula, MP – Leader of the delegation.
- National Council of Provinces Deputy Chairperson and the Convener of the IPU Focus Group, Hon. S. Lucas, MP.
- Hon. S. Mohai.
- Hon. Dr. Lotriet, MP.
- Hon. D. Dlakude, MP.
- Hon. F. Masiko, MP.

Delegation Secretariat:

- Ms. N. Nojozi (Adviser to the Speaker).
- Ms. Z Kula (Support to the Speaker).
- Dr. S. Mvulane (Office Manager: Office of the NCOP Deputy Chairperson).
- Ms M. Brandt (Personal Secretary: NCOP Deputy Chairperson).
- Mr. Z. Mvulane (Head: Office of the NCOP Chief Whip).
- Mr. D. Sithole (IRPD Division Manager).
- Ms. M. Monnagotla (Content support to the delegation).
- Dr. N. Leibrandt-Loxton (Content support to the delegation).
- Mr. Ian Mundell (Protocol Officer to Speaker).
- Ms. K. Noah (Media support).
- Ms. F. Ndenze (Media support).
- Mr. P. Jikelo (Media support).

2. MEETINGS PRECEDING THE 147TH ASSEMBLY

The 147th IPU Assembly was preceded by the following meetings:

2.1. The SADC and Africa Geopolitical Group meetings

The SADC and Africa Geopolitical Groups met on 22 October 2023 to adopt common positions on some of the items on the agenda of the 147th Assembly and other substantive issues, including:

- **Emergency Item:** The Group endorsed the tabling of an emergency item entitled 'Stopping the War and violations of human rights in Gaza' as proposed by Algeria and supported by South Africa on behalf of the African Group.
- **The IPU Presidency position:** After spirited engagement on the matter, the Group endorsed the SADC and AU preferred candidate for the position, Hon. Tulia Akson, Speaker of the National Assembly on Tanzania.

2.2. The 36th Session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians

The 36th Session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians met on 23 October 2023. It brought together 186 participants, including 131 parliamentarians (102 women and 29 men) from 61 countries. Amongst others, it considered the following:

- **Contributions to the work of the 147th Assembly from a gender perspective – on the draft resolution: Orphanage Trafficking: The role of parliaments in reducing harm.** The discussions highlighted the need for strong laws to combat child trafficking in orphanages as well as for training for police, justice and immigration services on this matter. Poverty and the discontinuation of schooling and gender-based discrimination including violence are often at the root of unwanted pregnancy, which in turn increase the risk of orphanage trafficking.

Hon. Lucas noted, amongst others, that parliamentarians must work tirelessly to protect women and girls' rights, ensure their safety, and empower them to resist and recover from the traumas of trafficking. Noted that the draft resolution should recognise that orphanage trafficking perpetuates gender inequalities and violates the rights of children, particularly girls, amplifying the need for urgent action.

- **Panel discussion: Women in Politics: To stay or not to stay?** In this panel discussion, the participants examined the challenges faced by women when taking up a political decision-making position and when pursuing a long political career. Parliaments must ensure that their working environment was respectful and gender-sensitive, by adopting policies against harassment, including sexual harassment. Networks of women parliamentarians in parliaments enable women to get support and to combat these obstacles collectively. Finally, all women leaders must take the time to celebrate their victories and so find the strength to persevere and give a strong positive meaning to their political commitment.

Hon. Masiko, amongst others, noted that to prioritise the safety and well-being of women parliamentarians, parliaments must create a political environment that encourages long and fulfilling careers. Implementing inclusive policies, promoting gender-sensitive legislation, and providing necessary support and resources will contribute to the empowerment and success of women in politics. Additionally, the challenge of work-life balance that predominantly burdens women must be addressed by ensuring family-friendly policies and support for caregiving responsibilities.

2.3. Forum of Young Parliamentarians

The Forum of Young Parliamentarians was held on 24 October 2023. It brought together almost 100 participants, including 86 parliamentarians (35 young women and 51 young men) from 57 countries, as well as representatives from organizations. The Forum, amongst others, considered the following:

- **Youth participation in parliaments:** The IPU Secretary General, Mr. M. Chungong, proceeded by highlighting the latest IPU report Youth participation in national parliaments: 2023, which showed that levels of youth participation in parliament remained low, and that more action was needed to make progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The report included global data on levels of youth representation in parliaments, country rankings, the relationship between age and gender, as well as the solutions promoted by the IPU I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament! campaign to enhance youth participation, such as: quotas, lowering ages of eligibility, youth caucuses, training for young MPs, mentoring aspirants and advocacy. The IPU was keen to support parliaments seeking to empower youth in their countries.
- **Contribution to the work of the 147th Assembly:** Participants examined the theme of the General Debate of the Assembly, Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), from a youth perspective. They discussed the key leadership roles that young MPs should play in fostering parliamentary diplomacy for peace and mutual learning. They also stressed the importance of eliminating harassment of women. A youth overview report on the draft resolution considered at the Assembly on Orphanage trafficking: The role of parliaments in reducing harm was presented. It called on parliaments and young MPs to take stronger measures to combat trafficking and raise awareness.

3. MEETING OUTCOMES OF THE 147th ASSEMBLY AND THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

3.1. The Assembly

The following are some of the items considered during the 147th Assembly:

- **General debate on the theme of the Assembly:** The Assembly adopted the Luanda Declaration on the theme '*Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions*'. The Declaration highlights the critical role that good governance plays as a means to achieving sustainable development. It calls for parliamentarians to "strengthen trust and ensure the more active participation of citizens in institutions at all levels, beginning with our own parliaments, where women and youth, as well as the poor and other disadvantaged groups, deserve to be more equitably represented. Madam Speaker, amongst others, urged the legislators to take concrete action and implement the United Nations resolution for a just, comprehensive, and peaceful two-state solution between Israel and Palestine. South Africa stands ready to contribute its expertise in mediation and conflict resolution, drawing from its experience not just on the African continent but around the world. That the words of the founding father of democracy in South Africa, Former President Nelson Mandela remain true and relevant when he said, 'We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians'.

- **Adoption of the emergency item:** The Assembly failed to adopt an emergency items as all the items submitted by Member States, including South Africa on behalf of the Africa Group ‘Stopping the War and violations of human rights in Gaza’ failed to receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in order to be accepted.

3.2. The Governing Council

The following are some of the reports adopted by the Governing Council:

- **Members’ Assessed Contribution:** In 2024, the Governing Council has agreed to increase Members’ assessed contribution by 3% to implement the IPU’s Strategy 2022 – 2026.
- **Future Assembly and related meetings:** The Governing Council approved the 148th Assembly and related meetings to take place from 23 - 27 March 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland.

4. MEETINGS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

4.1. Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

The Committee, amongst others, discussed the following items:

- **Expert hearing on the next resolution- Addressing the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapon systems and artificial intelligence:** Since the early 2000s, technological leaps have allowed for the deployment of many new technologies on the battlefield – over 20 years later, these include artificial intelligence and Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS), which are progressively removing human decision-making from the frontline and putting life and death decisions in the hands of opaque algorithms. Reducing human action in conflicts is creating an ethical grey zone within which international peace, human rights and established conventions could be challenged by automated decision-making outside of human control.

Hon. Lotriet, amongst others, noted that the potential consequences of lethal autonomous weapons are alarming. Without the necessary human judgement and empathy, these systems may be prone to making tragic errors, leading to civilian casualties and widespread humanitarian harm. International human rights standards, including the right to life, the prohibition of torture, and the principle of distinction, are at stake. It is parliaments’ duty to prevent the erosion of these principles and protect the dignity and well-being of all individuals, even in times of conflict.

- **Panel discussion on the theme Inventory of tools for MPs to engage in dialogue, legislation, oversight and prevention in the pursuit of peace:** The resolution Rethinking and reframing the approach to peace processes with a view to fostering lasting peace, adopted in March 2022, tasked the IPU with developing an inventory of tools for parliaments and parliamentarians to engage in dialogue, legislation, oversight and prevention in the pursuit of peace. The discussion included a presentation of the inventory of tools that will inform guidelines for parliaments.
- **Panel discussion on the theme The role of parliaments in promoting a culture of transparency, anti-corruption and citizen engagement to restore trust in national and international institutions and strengthen peace:** The discussion explored the challenges

and opportunities for promoting transparency, including in public spending, the consequences of misaligned priorities, and ways to reinforce democratic institutions for peace and stability. It also addressed strategies to strengthen parliamentary oversight and accountability mechanisms so that the needs of citizens are effectively met.

4.2. Standing Committee on Sustainable Development

The Committee, amongst others, discussed the following items:

- **Expert hearing on the next resolution: Partnerships for climate action: Promoting access to affordable green energy, and ensuring innovation, responsibility and equity:** Partnerships play a crucial role in the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, both adopted by most of the United Nations Member States in 2015. Hon. Lotriet, amongst others, noted that as parliamentarians emphasise the importance of partnerships in driving the transition to affordable green energy, it is critical for them to exercise effective oversight to ensure that energy transition loans provided to their respective countries do not result in further indebtedness. While transitioning to sustainable energy sources is pivotal, it should not burden countries with overwhelming debts that impede their development efforts. Currently, most of the countries are in debt distress or are at high-risk debt distress. It is really shocking that on average African countries pay four times more when borrowing than wealthier economies. These disparities in interest rates should be vigorously addressed through the relevant multilateral forums such as the World Bank and IMF.
- **Expert hearing on the theme Ensuring global food security:** The expert hearing discussed ways in which parliaments can contribute to the transformation of agrifood systems to make them sustainable and more resilient, and to enable them to deliver lower cost nutritious foods and affordable healthy diets for all.

4.3. Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

- The Committee considered proposed amendments and endorsed the draft resolution titled '*Orphanage trafficking: The role of parliaments in reducing harm*' available at <https://www.ipu.org/event/147th-assembly-and-related-meetings#event-sub-page-31305/>. The consultative process involved the consideration of over 100 amendments received from Member Parliaments, often with complimentary tones. This showed the positive level of MPs' commitment and understanding on the matter.

4.4. Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

The Committee, amongst others, discussed the following items:

- **Bringing gender equality to the UN General Assembly:** Currently, only one in four top ambassadors (Permanent Representatives) in the General Assembly is a woman. This gender imbalance in the UN's top decision-making body gives the impression that the UN does not practice what it preaches when it comes to gender equality. Making the General Assembly and other key UN bodies gender-equal will greatly strengthen the multilateral system and its ability to deliver to the people.

Hon. Dlakude, amongst others, noted that having more women in the General Assembly brings a wealth of perspectives and experiences to the global stage. Women make up half of the world's population and their voices deserve equal representation. Their perspectives can shed light on critical issues such as gender-based violence, women's empowerment, inclusive development, and peacebuilding. By including more women in the General Assembly, foster a more comprehensive and holistic approach to tackling complex global challenges. In this light, recommended that the Assembly agrees to rotate the gender of its president each year. This will send a powerful message to the UN's commitment to practice what it preaches.

- **Reforming the Security Council for a stronger multilateral regime:** Participants noted that the composition of the Security Council no longer represents the geopolitical realities of the world. The inherent imbalance of voices and representation on the Council, as well as the indiscriminate use of the veto power by some Permanent Members, accounts for much of the Council's inability to act effectively and consistently in response to conflicts and other security threats around the world.

5. BILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS

The delegation had bilateral engagements with parliamentarians from Belgium, Canada, Syria, Palestine, UK, Ukraine and Yemen as part of the ongoing campaign for Hon. Tulia Akson, Speaker of the National Assembly on Tanzania for the IPU presidency position

6. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The South African Parliament is invited to note the following key issues:

- **Note the new IPU President and the Executive Council Members:** In a historic first, Hon. Tulia Akson, Speaker of the National Assembly on Tanzania became the first African woman to hold the IPU presidency position for a non-renewable three-year term. Hon. Ackson is only the third woman President of the IPU after Najma Heptulla from India (1999–2002) and Gabriela Cuevas from Mexico (2017–2020).

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