



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**REPORT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION TO THE VIRTUAL EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM AHEAD OF THE
54RD PLENARY ASSEMBLY**

4 NOVEMBER 2023

WE, THE PEOPLE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive Committee (EXCO) meeting of the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) ahead of the 54th Plenary Assembly. According to Article 12 of the SADC Parliamentary Forum's Constitution, the EXCO is responsible for managing the affairs of the Forum, giving direction to the Secretariat, and ensuring the decisions of the Plenary Assembly are implemented, while also being answerable to the Plenary Assembly. The objectives of the meeting are to adopt the minutes of the previous EXCO meeting in Seychelles, receive a report from the President of the Forum on the activities undertaken since the last meeting, review the financial situation of the Forum, discuss the preparations for the 54th Plenary Assembly, and exchange views on key developments that require the attention of EXCO members. This meeting is essential for the SADC PF to ensure adequate preparation for the upcoming Plenary Assembly.

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

- Deepening international engagement: Hon. Bergman's participation at this meeting contributed to important reflections concerning the management of the SADC PF's affairs, particularly the transformation progress, resource mobilisation, Secretary General contract renewal and the state of readiness for the 54th Plenary Assembly scheduled to take place from 22nd to the 26th of November 2023 in Port Louis, Mauritius.

The outcomes of the meeting require the following pertinent issues for noting/action by Parliament:

- **Consideration of the Proposal on SADC PF creating a World Class International Learning Centre and Library by Hon. Darren Bergman, MP, South Africa:** The Secretary General reported that the South African Parliament has not responded to the Forum's written letter to further solidify the matter. Additionally, it was noted that the matter requires an investment in architectural drawing, substantial resources, and a clear vision of the proposed center. Furthermore, an additional proposal, building on Hon. Bergman's idea, has been submitted by the architect responsible for the property.
- **Update on the Transformation of the SADC-PF:** Mozambique became the 9th Member State to sign the Agreement Amending the SADC Treaty to create the SADC Parliament. Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mauritius and Namibia are yet to sign the Amendment Treaty. EXCO approved intense lobbies be pursued with countries which have not signed, through the Office of Speakers/Presiding Officers who may act as liaison with Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of State and Government.
- **Secretary General's Contract Renewal:** EXCO approved the renewal of the contract of the Secretary General of the Forum, Ms Boemo Sekgoma for a further 5-year term. The current contract is set to conclude in July 2024.
- **The ongoing risk to the Forum's operations:** The current level of funding will not be sustainable going forward. In this light, Member States are requested to consider the financial position of the Forum, in a view of the resolution not to increase Member Contributions and the absence of donor funding. There were views for Member Parliaments to reflect on the possibility and affordability of increasing SADC PF membership fees and seconding full-time staff to the SADC PF.
- **The hosting of the 54th Plenary Assembly:** EXCO Members are requested to note that the Parliament of Mauritius will host the 54th Plenary Assembly from November 22nd to 26th,

2023, in Port Louis, Mauritius. The theme for the assembly will be “The role of Parliaments in promoting coordination for enhanced Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery Planning in the SADC Region.” The aim is to develop concrete Resolutions to encourage Parliaments to oversee disaster preparedness in their respective countries with a focus on mitigating the effects of extreme weather events.

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the meeting: For EXCO Members to receive and adopt reports from the President of the Forum and the sub-committees (Legal, Finance and HR) on the activities undertaken since the last meeting, review the financial situation of the Forum, discuss the preparations for the 54rd Plenary Assembly, and exchange views on key political developments that require the attention of EXCO members.

Delegation Members:

- Hon. D. Bergman, MP: Transitional member of the EXCO.

Delegation Secretariat:

- Ms. M. Monnakgotla (IRPD Researcher).

2. MEETING OUTCOMES

2.1 Welcome address by the President of the SADC PF and Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Hon. Speaker Roger Mancienne.

In his opening remarks, Hon. Speaker expressed his delight at the Members' attendance at the meeting while lamenting the unfortunate inability to convene in-person. Additionally, he conveyed gratitude to the Secretariat for ensuring the timely submission of all sub-committee reports to EXCO, for recommendation ahead of the 54th Assembly. The Hon. Speaker further acknowledged the one-year anniversary of EXCO's inauguration and expressed appreciation to the transitional members for their successful completion of the mandate, ensuring a seamless transition from the previous EXCO to the current one.

2.2 Consideration and approval of Minutes, and Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on the 27th to the 28th of May 2023 at the Eden Island, Seychelles: The EXCO considered and adopted the minutes of its previous meeting and engaged on the following substantive matters that arose:

- **Disposal of 66 Erosweg property:** The Secretary Generally reported that in pursuit of obtaining the compliance certificate from the Windhoek Municipality, a contractor was employed on site on the 1st of September 2023 and work is expected to be concluded by the 1st November 2023.
- **Membership of the Comoros to the Forum:** The Secretary Generally reported that the Forum remains open to Comoro's membership, although Comoros is lagging behind on its SADC subscriptions. Therefore, it is unlikely that Comoro's Parliament would make a move to subscribe to the Forum.

- **Written commitments to national Parliaments regarding elections in Angola:** The Secretary Generally reported that only Lesotho, Namibia and Tanzania responded to the enforcement of standing Resolution to support Election Observation Missions. Lesotho and Namibia declined to participate due to lack of funds, while Tanzania responded positively and submitted its contribution for all the elections. It is worth noting that Mozambique participated in the Angola elections under SADC and not the SADC PF Letters were written to all Parliaments requesting them to nominate Members and contribute towards election observation missions (2023 – 2024).
- **The case of Mr. Lovemore Mabuku:** The Secretary Generally reported that the matter remains ongoing and the Forum has sent all the relevant documents requested by the Investigation Committee. Hon. Speaker Mudenda noted that this matter has dragged for far too long and its negatively impacting the administrative efficiency of the Forum. The Secretary General reported that if this matter extends beyond 12 months, it will be considered prejudicial, hampering the Forum's ability to proceed with the disciplinary process.
- **Update on the Transformation of the SADC-PF:** Mozambique became the 9th Member State to sign the Agreement Amending the SADC Treaty to create the SADC Parliament. Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mauritius and Namibia are yet to sign the Amendment Treaty. EXCO approved the intense lobbies be pursued with countries which have not signed, through the Office of Speakers/Presiding Officers who may act as liaison with Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of State and Government.
- **Consideration of the Proposal on SADC PF creating a World Class International Learning Centre and Library by Hon. Darren Bergman, MP, South Africa:** The Secretary Generally reported that SA Parliament is yet to respond to the written letter from the Forum to further concretize the matter. Also, noted that this matter requires investment in architectural drawing, massive resources and the vision of what this Centre will look like. Secondly, another proposal augmenting Hon. Bergman's idea has been submitted by the Architect engaged to undertake works at the property.
- **Consideration of the Report from the 146th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings held in Manama, Bahrain by Hon. Speaker Adv. Jacob Mudenda:** The 53rd Plenary Assembly adopted a resolution to support the candidacy of Hon. Dr Tulia Ackson Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania as President of the IPU. The Campaign Team was formed and had a meeting at which a campaign strategy was mapped out.
- **Consideration of a Proposal on a Comprehensive Resource Mobilization Strategy for the Forum:** The Secretary Generally reported a comprehensive paper summing up the history of the financial challenges facing the Forum will be submitted to EXCO in June 2024. The SADC PF President proposed a Comprehensive Resource Mobilisation Strategy for the Forum

Speaker Mudenda moved for the adoption of the minutes and proposed that the Secretary General send the minutes before the Executive meeting, allowing Members to make necessary corrections and return them before the final copy is presented to the Committee. Speaker Kasune (Zambia) seconded the adoption.

2.3 Consideration of the President's Report to the Executive Committee: The President reported to the EXCO on the following matters:

- **The African Union becoming a permanent member of the G20:** EXCO was requested to note the positive development of the AU becoming a permanent of the G20 and this positive step ensures the voice of the Region in this important platform.
- **Opportunities for the region through the BRICS Summit:** EXCO Members may wish to congratulate South Africa for successfully hosting the BRICS and note the development which are likely to bring new business opportunities in the SADC region.
- **Cyclonic previsions in SADC for summer 2023/24 and the hosting of the 54th Plenary Assembly:** EXCO Members are requested to note that due to the propensity of the region to suffer from several climate disasters in summer period, the Parliament of Mauritius will host the 54th Plenary assembly from the 22nd to the 26th of November 2023 in Port Louis, Mauritius under the theme “The role of Parliaments in promoting coordination for enhanced Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery Planning in the SADC Region”. It is expected that the 54th Plenary will lead to concrete Resolutions that would motivate Parliaments to oversee the disaster preparedness regimes in their respective countries with a view to mitigate the effects of extreme weather events.
- **Greening the Forum to improve eco-friendliness:** EXCO Members are requested to approve the following measures for the Forum’s minimum carbon footprint decision:
 - The Forum goes completely paperless and that all documents be shared electronically, except formal letters to offices which still require paper correspondence:
 - The activities conducted by the Forum, including Project activities, be held with a paperless organizational framework.
 - When activities are held, 90% of waster products such as empty plates and cups should be biodegradable and/or recyclable.
 - That meetings be held online where possible to reduce the carbon footprint associated with transport. As far as possible, meetings be organized at venues which partly or fully use renewable energy sources for lighting and other purposes, such as solar or wind power.
- **Transformation of the Forum to a SADC Regional Parliament:** EXCO Members are requested to approve the following:
 - That intense lobbies be pursued with countries which have not signed, through the Office of Speakers/Presiding Officers who may act as liaison with Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of State and Government.
 - That the SADC Protocol be finalised at the internal level with the SADC Secretariat whilst ensuring that there are transitional provisions in the Protocol, that the Trust remains as an organ of the Forum, that the President remains the Chairperson of both EXCO and the Plenary Assembly, and that organs such the Committee of Clerks/Secretaries General and the Regional Parliamentary Model Laws Oversight Committee are retained in the Protocol.
 - That countries are allowed to have 6 months (instead of 3) to propose comments to the SADC Secretariat or approve the Protocol once the finalized version is approved by Summit for circulation. This will be a matter which will then be taken up with the Secretariat at the appropriate time.

- **Demonstrating the real money worth value of Member Parliaments Contributions:** EXCO Members approved that when annual mandatory contributions are set out, the money-worth value of other contributions will also be specified such as a secondment or infrastructure to show the real money worth of Parliaments contributions.
- **Leveraging on administrative guidance from the Committee of Clerks/Secretaries General:** to note the positive interactions between the Committee of Clerks/Secretaries General which support the Forum's administrative support. The Clerks/Secretaries General have agreed that the next meeting will take place in Zambia.
- **Pursuing the ideal of an Open and Accountable Parliament that is gender balanced:** To approve the following measures to pursue regional inter-parliamentary democracy:
 - Ensure that public hearings are held for every meeting of standing Committees of the Forum or Joint Sessions which occur on a 6-months frequency around a common theme.
 - Include online tools such as polls and an online barometer for citizens to state which themes they want to discuss.
 - Introduce a menti-meter on how citizens feel about the public hearings and their interactions with MPs in view of garnering appropriate feedback.
 - That the Forum continues to promote gender parity for Parliaments through its own initiatives or those led by partners, since an equal gender representation of both men and women is a germane feature of a modern open and accountable Parliament.

The report was adopted.

2.4 Consideration of the Risk Management Report: The Secretary General presented the Forum's Risk Management Report, mandatory at each EXCO, which highlighted the following:

- **Lack of Financial Sustainability for some programmes:** Risk remains high due to limited staff at the Secretariat to undertake sustained resource mobilisation. In this light, Secretary General requested EXCO to note the following to mitigate the risk:
 - ✓ Engagement of new donors in addition to the traditional ones.
 - ✓ Recruitment of Programme Managers to facilitate resource mobilisation at programme level.
 - ✓ Considering an increase in Member subscriptions, and operationalisation of the SADC PF and Its Successors Trust. Apparent reluctance by Member Parliaments to increase Annual Contributions.
- **Inadequate resources/provision for appropriate human resources both in number, remuneration and qualifications to enable efficient delivery of operational and Strategic goals:** The Forum currently has several vacant positions, especially in the Programmes Department. With the confirmation of the SRHR Project (2023-2026) by Sweden, and the Forum there is availability funding to fill 2 positions in the Programmes Directorate, notably the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Manager, and possibly the Human and Social Development and Special Programmes (HSDSP) Manager.

- **Poor financial Managements:** Whilst the SRHR Project (2023-2026) will be providing a 3-year funding for the Internal Audit position, the Forum needs to consider a longer sustainability plan.

The report was adopted.

2.5 Report of the virtual Joint Meeting of the Human Resources & Parliamentary Capacity Development Sub-Committee and the Legal Sub-Committee to consider the Staff Grievance Matter submitted by Mr. Sheunie Kurasha on the 15th of June 2023: Having considered the matter, the Joint Meeting resolved to recommend that the grievance be set aside due to the following:

- ✓ An employee at the Forum cannot be recruited to a vacant regional position without an open advertisement as per Rule 7.1.3 (iv) of the SADC PF Administrative Rules & Regulations; and
- ✓ The Secretariat does not have the mandate to advertise a regional position when the Executive Committee has resolved that the position should be filled by secondment of a national Parliament due to financial constraints.

2.6 Consideration of the Report of the Finance Sub-Committee Meeting (Treasurer's Report) held on 2nd November 2023: EXCO Members were requested to note and approve the following:

- **Annual Mandatory Member contributions as at 30th September 2023 (with update as at 31st October 2023):** The current annual mandatory contributions from 14 Member Parliaments, stand at N\$1,501,500 per annum, per Parliament. Seychelles contribution is N\$127,050 per annum. The total revenue to be collected from Mandatory Contributions for the financial year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 is therefore N\$21,148,050.
 - ✓ As at 30th September 2023, eight Parliaments had paid their contributions for the current financial year in full and have no outstanding balances. These are Botswana, Eswatini, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Seven countries have outstanding balances for the current financial year, namely Angola, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Seychelles. DRC and Madagascar are still owing for the financial year ended 31st March 2023.
 - ✓ EXCO is requested to encourage those Parliaments with outstanding balances to settle.
- **Mode of Operations/Implementation of Activities:**
 - The budget for the 2023/24 Financial Year ensures that the business of the Forum is conducted within the funds raised from Annual Mandatory Contributions and Retained Earnings, with minimum in-kind contribution from Member Parliaments.
 - In view of the limited financial resources, the 52nd Plenary Assembly approved that, in this financial year, some of the statutory meetings of the institution be held physically while others be held virtually as follows:
 - ✓ Both the 53rd and 54th Plenary Assemblies to be held physically.

- ✓ Two Executive Committee meetings to be held physically with any additional EXCO meetings to be held virtually. The budget provides for 2 physical and two virtual meetings.
 - ✓ All the EXCO Sub-Committee meetings will take place virtually (FSC, HR & PCD, Legal, & Parliamentary Business). The budget provides for 2 virtual meetings for each Sub-Committee.
 - ✓ For all physical meetings, a provision would be made to facilitate participation through a virtual platform (hybrid system).
 - ✓ Member Parliaments' in-kind Contribution: As per SADC PF established policy, the costs of participation of the membership in the physical meetings shall be borne by their Member Parliaments unless external funding is made available.
- **Update on impact of policy to optimise technology for the implementation of activities:**
 - ✓ **Virtual Meetings:** The institution continues to implement a mix of physical and virtual meetings, which has greatly reduced operational costs. This includes facilitating the engagement of resource persons and interpreters to provide services virtually even where meetings are physical.
 - ✓ **Paperless environment:** The Forum is now operating a paperless environment with all reports and documents for its meetings being electronically.
 - **Budget Performance Trend Analysis**
 - ✓ Programme Support (68%): The budget is almost depleted as it was used towards the transformation agenda and the attendance of the SADC Summit and the IPU Conference.
 - ✓ Language Translation Cost (88%): Translation costs continue to be high in view of the number of documents produced and the volume of communication to various stakeholders.

The report was adopted.

2.7 Consideration of the Secretary General's Renewal of Contract: EXCO approved the renewal of the contract of the Secretary General of the Forum, Ms Boemo Sekgoma for a further 5-year term. The current contract is set to conclude in July 2024. As per the stipulations outlined in Rule 7.6.3(ii) of the Administrative Rules and Regulations of the Forum, it is required that the Secretary General informs the Chairperson of the SADC-PF of their intention to seek contract renewal at least 9 months prior to the expiration of the current contract.

3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- **An update on the SADC PF Strategic Plan 2024 to 2028:** The Secretariat sent out an online questionnaire to Member Parliaments to gather information and feedback for developing a new Strategic Plan 2024 to 2028 that will be operational from January 1, 2024. A budget was allocated and consultants from Headhunters International were engaged to do the groundwork. However, the consultants are failing to get feedback from the key stakeholders, the Member Parliaments. In this regard, Hon. Speaker Mancienne encouraged Member Parliaments to adequately respond to the questionnaire sent by the Secretariat. It was

proposed that the Parliaments fill out the questionnaire during the upcoming 54th Plenary meeting. It will be important for the Member Parliaments to respond to the questionnaire as encouraged by the Hon. Speaker. Filling it out during the upcoming Plenary meeting could help improve the response rate.

- **Consideration of Dr Kasuka Mutukwa's (Former Secretary General of SADC Parliamentary Forum) book launch request (side-event):** Hon. Speaker Mancienne noted that although the book was not commissioned by the Forum, the book is useful as it adds to the literature on the history of the Forum. Dr. Mutukwa's wish is for the book to be distributed for sale to parliamentarians during the 54th Plenary. EXCO approved for the book to be launched as a way of recognizing its contribution to literature in the region.

4. Concluding remarks

Hon. Speaker Mancienne expressed appreciation for everyone's participation in the meeting and acknowledged that the gathering was the result of a significant amount of effort, especially from the sub-committees. He emphasized the importance of the work that transpires behind the scenes in any organization and the need to express gratitude for such efforts. Additionally, he mentioned that he is looking forward to the upcoming plenary in Mauritius.

5. RECOMMENDED ISSUES FOR NOTING AND/OR ACTION BY PARLIAMENT

- **Consideration of the Proposal on SADC PF creating a World Class International Learning Centre and Library by Hon. Darren Bergman, MP, South Africa:** The Secretary General reported that the South African Parliament has not responded to the Forum's written letter to further solidify the matter. Additionally, it was noted that the matter requires an investment in architectural drawing, substantial resources, and a clear vision of the proposed center. Furthermore, an additional proposal, building on Hon. Bergman's idea, has been submitted by the architect responsible for the property.
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ENDS