



SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM



PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE

**SPEECH BY
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PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE &
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**ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE
EAST AFRICAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY
RELATIONS SEMINAR (NANYUKI VI)**

**“THE ROLE OF THE LEGISLATURE IN ACHIEVING
POLITICAL FEDERATION”**

27 to 29 November
Bujumbura, Burundi

SALUTATIONS

May I begin by extending my sincere gratitude to the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) for extending an invitation to me, in my capacity as the Chairperson of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, to come and make a statement at this historic event. Indeed, it is an honour and privilege for me to join the East African Community in celebrating 10 years of existence of the East African Legislative Assembly. The establishment of an East African Regional Parliament 10 years ago was certainly a landmark.

Hon. Members,

Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the SADC Parliamentary Forum and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to place on record our deepest appreciation for the warm welcome extended to us by the Government and people of Burundi since our arrival and for all the arrangements put in place by the Parliament of Burundi towards the hosting of this Inter-Parliamentary Relations Seminar.

I understand that the commemorations of EALA's 10th anniversary were launched in March this year, with EALA

members engaging in the construction of housing in Rwanda as a means of both outreach and corporate social responsibility. The launch was followed by tree-planting initiatives in Arusha in May, as well as a 10th Anniversary symposium in July. Today's seminar is but one of these outstanding activities celebrating the 10th anniversary of EALA, and is an important platform for dialogue and exchange of ideas.

Hon. Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regional Parliaments are now a worldwide phenomenon found on most continents and their establishment is a welcome development in Africa. They create a platform for regional dialogue that brings together experiences of various Parliaments and Parliamentarians in an attempt to promote integration, parliamentary democracy, transparency and accountability. Regional Parliaments also help to keep track of the domestication of the international and regional treaties, protocols and conventions that our Heads of State and Government would have signed.

Let me add that the establishment of Regional Parliaments has brought about interaction and exchange on best practices

that aim at improving the quality of the administration of National Parliaments. Also, they have brought Parliaments closer to each other thus creating a common objective by speaking with one voice. They also give Parliamentarians an opportunity to debate, engage, and agree on a shared agenda that seeks to improve the lives of the people in their region. It is clear that the coming together of parliamentarians can certainly go a long way in achieving a political federation in the Region. These regional groupings have tremendously improved the free movement of people within that regional economic community.

Hon. Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to pay tribute to the Heads of State of the East African Community who established the East African Legislative Assembly on 30 November 2001. They saw the need and wisdom of having a Regional Parliament with legislative authority as complementing the work of the Regional Economic Block of the East African Community. From a distance, we see EALA having done an exceptional job in harmonising regionally agreed protocols, conventions and treaties with national legislation.

May I also acknowledge the existence of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Regional Parliament, which was established in 2002. I encourage its Parliamentarians to continue speaking for and on behalf of citizens of their region.

Hon. Members,

Distinguished Delegates,

While we applaud the existence of the EALA and the ECOWAS Parliament with legislative powers, we are extremely concerned at the slow pace that the creation of the remaining Regional Parliaments on the continent is happening. I am hopeful that the relevant authorities will speed up the process of setting up Regional Parliaments in their regions.

The Southern Development Community (SADC) Summit of Heads of State and Government met in Malawi on 8 September 1997 and approved the establishment of the SADC Parliamentary Forum as an institution of SADC, in accordance with Article 9(2) of the SADC Treaty. In approving the establishment of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the Summit further noted that the main objective of the Forum was *“to constitute a Parliamentary Consultative*

Assembly, the ultimate goal being the establishment of a Regional Parliamentary Framework for dialogue on issues of regional interest and concern”.

It is now 14 years since this resolution was made, yet SADC is still to establish a Regional Parliamentary Framework in line with this decision. I do not wish to hide my disappointment over the slow pace in transforming the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a SADC Regional Parliament. Under the leadership of Speakers from SADC National Parliaments together with SADC Parliamentarians, we have over the years embarked on numerous concerted efforts to expedite the realisation of this objective. Our efforts have been comprehensive and sensitive to the apprehensions of various stakeholders in the Region. We remain open to advice from our national Governments and other stakeholders and we shall continue to engage our Governments on this matter.

Hon. Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The case of a SADC Regional Parliament should be viewed in the context of the regional integration agenda for SADC which is meant to create sustained growth and development

both on the political and the socio-economic front. Accordingly, it is our considered view that the SADC Parliament would add value to the integration process by promoting a culture of democratic practices, transparency, accountability, human rights, gender equality and good governance among Member States. By providing a regional forum for dialogue and consultation, the SADC Regional Parliament will promote public participation in regional governance and encourage greater political, cultural and social contact between SADC citizens and their institutions.

As the SADC Parliamentary Forum we continue to make efforts in achieving this noble objective of transforming the Forum into a Regional parliament. On the 2nd of March 2011, a delegation from the SADC Parliamentary Forum undertook a study visit to EALA. I was unable to lead the delegation due to unforeseen circumstances, but the Secretary General was part of the delegation. Indeed our visit to EALA was rewarding and it widened our scope of knowledge on how Regional Parliaments operate.

In addition, we have debated the transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a Regional Parliament in many of our Plenary Assembly Sessions, the latest being the 29th

Plenary Assembly in Angola in June 2011, where we invited the Speaker of EALA, Hon. Abdirahin Abdi as a guest speaker. We remain indebted to Hon. Abdi for the wisdom he imparted to the SADC Parliamentary Forum as we drew lessons from the experiences of the EALA on matters such as the framework for its establishment, relationship between the Assembly and other Organs of the Community and the relationship with National Parliaments.

Hon. Members,

Distinguished Delegates,

Since then, we now have a consolidated and comprehensive Working Document on the Transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a Regional Parliament. This Working Document will be used in lobbying missions to the Heads of State and Government and other stakeholders in the SADC Region, seeking their approval of the proposed framework of the SADC Regional Parliament. Our lobbying missions have in the past, received support from several Heads of State and Government. Also, our National Parliaments have in the past introduced and adopted motions on this matter. What remains is to transform these positive indicators into reality.

Hon. Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I believe that the establishment of Regional Parliaments in Africa will go a long way in strengthening the Pan-African Parliament and further improve continental integration. Let us ensure that there is unity of purpose among Regional Parliaments to enable the Pan-African Parliament to transform into a body with full legislative authority. I would like to pay tribute to EALA for showing leadership on how bringing together national parliaments in a region can achieve unity, economic growth and political prosperity.

With these remarks, I wish EALA many more prosperous years to come.

Asante sana

Merci

Thank you