



PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE

**SPEECH BY
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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE &
CHAIRPERSON OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF THE 30th PLENARY ASSEMBLY
OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**

**“PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THE MILLENIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOALS”**

**VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE
7th to 11th NOVEMBER 2011**

**Speakers and Presiding Officers of the various National
Parliaments of SADC,
Honourable Ministers here present,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
The Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Your Worship, the (Deputy) Mayor of Victoria Falls,
Our esteemed and honoured traditional leaders,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

**It gives me great pleasure to warmly welcome you all on behalf
of the SADC Parliamentary Forum and on my own behalf to the
30th Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary
Forum, taking place in this scenic city of Victoria Falls, which is
home to one of the seven wonders of the world.**

**Let me begin by expressing my sincere thanks to the
Government, the Parliament and the people of Zimbabwe for
the warm hospitality that has been extended to our
Distinguished Delegates in the past few days. Indeed, we are
grateful that Zimbabwe has once again accepted to be the venue
of the Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary
Forum. I am sure that all Delegates will find their stay quite
enjoyable and memorable.**

Hon. Members,

Distinguished Guests,

This Plenary Assembly Session was preceded by the successful 29th Plenary Assembly Session held in Lubango, whose theme was the “Transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a Regional Parliament”. It is my fervent hope that at the end of this Plenary Assembly, we would have received an update on the production of a Working Document to be used in the lobbying for the transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a Regional Parliament. We are also looking forward to hearing the results of the elections of the Chairpersons and other office bearers of the Standing Committees. In addition, this 30th Plenary Assembly Session will also see the launch of the “Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures in the SADC Region”.

Hon. Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this juncture, permit me to address the pertinent question of our system of governance which draws from the Doctrine of Separation of Powers, as enshrined in many of our

Constitutions in the SADC Region. This system seeks to ensure that checks and balances between the three Arms of State, namely the Legislature, the Judiciary and the Executive, are observed. In an environment where the Doctrine of the Separation of Powers is not fully respected, conflict and tension burden the relationships amongst the three Arms of State. It is important that each arm does not dominate another as it executes its duties. Therefore, in our legislative responsibility, it is necessary that National Parliaments help in democratising these Arms of Government in order to promote efficiency and accountability. Where the Constitutional roles of National Parliaments in legislating, representation and executive oversight are observed and upheld, Legislatures are able to perform their duties independently, without fear or favour, thus ensuring a democratic system of governance.

The issues of transparency and accountability play a key role in determining the quality of governance at the national level. This calls for more responsive, open and accessible Parliamentary systems. Both representative and participatory democracy place an important role on Parliaments and their Committee systems to guarantee transparency and

accountability in the nature and manner that people are governed.

Hon. Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A practice that has taken root spearheaded by the SADC Parliamentary Forum is the election observation missions in SADC member states involving SADC Parliamentarians who themselves are products of elections. The involvement of Parliamentarians representing divergent political notions has given credibility to assessments submitted by the SADC Parliamentary Forum on various national elections. Given the funding challenges that our Election Observation Missions encounter, it is imperative that the SADC Parliamentary Forum and our National Parliaments find alternative funding mechanisms to ensure that this worthwhile practice continues.

In this regard, I wish to recall that it is only ten years ago, in 2001, that the SADC Parliamentary Forum adopted the “Norms and Standards for Elections in SADC”. The Zambian General Elections in 2001 were the first to be subjected to scrutiny under this new election observation regime. We remain committed to

best practices in credible election management. The experiences gained from national elections within the SADC Region have provided us with valuable and consolidated information that has helped in the review and reform of existing laws and practices in some national jurisdictions.

To date we have observed 26 General Elections within our Member States, the latest since the last Plenary Assembly in Angola being the 2011 Zambia Tripartite General Elections of 20 September, which our SADC Parliamentary Forum Mission adjudged as free and fair. In this regard, I would like to extend the SADC Parliamentary Forum's gratitude to the Government of Zambia for inviting the Forum's Election Observation Mission into their country. In addition, on behalf of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, and indeed on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate the Government and people of Zambia for holding credible, free and fair elections.

It is my submission that, Zambia's experience in the management of democratic elections is commendable and provides a benchmark to the region on how to effect peaceful transfer of power from one political party to the other. In this

context, it is our fervent hope that future elections in the SADC region, and the forthcoming General Elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo scheduled for 28 November 2011 will continue in this spirit of non-violent and peaceful transfer of power. We wish our brothers and sisters in the DRC peaceful and orderly General Elections. In order to create uniformity in the Election Observation Missions in the SADC region, there is need to harmonise the SADC Parliamentary Forum's Norms and Standards with SADC's Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

Hon. Members,

Distinguished Guests,

The theme of this 30th Plenary Assembly Session is "Parliamentarians and the Millennium Development Goals".

The MDGs are a product of a meeting of world leaders who met in New York in September 2000. As the SADC Parliamentary Forum, it is our responsibility to interrogate the efforts and progress made by our Governments in achieving the MDGs. There is need for closer cooperation between the Executive and Legislature in achieving the targets set by the world leaders. In this regard, those of our national Parliaments that do not have a

Parliamentary Committee on MDGs must ensure that such a Committee is established as a matter of urgency, to assist in the monitoring and implementation of the MDGs. Further, Governments in the SADC region need to undertake deliberate programmes that educate the ordinary citizens of SADC on what MDGs are and what they intend to achieve, as they are intended the beneficiaries of the MDGs.

Although numerous efforts have been made to achieve the attainment of the MDGs that particularly affect our region , we are still a long way off in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and empowering women, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Because Parliamentarians work with the communities that face these crises, it is Parliamentarians who must be at the centre stage towards achieving the realization of the MDGs in their respective countries. Therefore, I urge all of us to take interest in the effective implementation of the MDGs in our countries for the benefit of our citizens. As the 2015 deadline approaches, Parliamentarians together with other stakeholders have to redouble their efforts in the attainment of the MDGs.

Hon. Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The question of the transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum to a Regional Parliament is very dear to us all and has been long outstanding. I do not wish to hide my disappointment over the slow pace in transforming the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a SADC Regional Parliament. It will be recalled that the 1997 SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Blantyre decided to establish a SADC Parliamentary Forum with the ultimate objective of transforming it into a SADC Regional Parliament. Unfortunately, this has taken too long to be effected. As 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 but so far, we have failed to make a break-through. May it be known that we remain open to advice from our national Governments and other stakeholders. This current state of affairs is rather disappointing for the SADC Region because our counterparts in EALA and ECOWAS successfully set up Regional Parliaments in 2001 and 2002 respectively. We shall continue to

engage our Governments on this matter. I hope today's Deliberative Session on the SADC Regional Parliament as mandated by the 29th Plenary Assembly will provide answers and chart the way forward to achieve our cherished and noble objective.

With these remarks, I wish this 30th Plenary Assembly fruitful deliberations. Please find spare time to further explore our beautiful tourist resort, Victoria Falls.

I thank you.

Obrigado

Merci

Siyabonga