

# Swaziland hosts 39<sup>th</sup> SADC PF Plenary

## Staff Writer

EZULWINI, SWAZILAND - All the 14 member Parliaments of the SADC Parliamentary Forum are represented at the 39<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly Session of the regional body which officially got underway on Wednesday here.

This is the second time that the Plenary Assembly Session is being held in the Kingdom of Swaziland, the first being in 2004.

Mr Sheuneni Kurasha, the Programme Manager: Democracy & Governance as well as Parliamentary Business Focal Person at SADC PF said the fact that all member states are being represented demonstrates the value they place not just in SADC PF but also in SADC regional integration agenda.

He said the Plenary had begun flawlessly.

“The sub-committees of the Executive Committee met on Monday, including the Parliamentary Business Sub-Committee which considered the parliamentary business for the 39<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly. This was followed by a meeting of the Executive Committee which met on Tuesday and among other things, approved the business for the Plenary Assembly Session,” Kurasha said.

In welcome remarks to the delegates who include Speakers of National Parliaments and Members of Parliament, the Speaker in the House of Assembly of Swaziland, Hon Themba Msibi said his country had benefitted immensely from being part of the deliberative body.

“Swaziland has always been a full member of the Forum and has benefitted in many ways including from many workshops for Members of Parliament and we cannot be more grateful,” the Speaker said.

The chairperson of the Regional Women’s Parliamentary Forum Hon Francisca Domingos Tomas from Mozambique hailed Swaziland for fighting discrimination of women. She said Swaziland afforded equal opportunities to all her citizens including women, some of who now occupy very senior positions in different spheres. Hon Domingos held out the example of the long serving President of the Senate of Swaziland, who is a woman.

The Secretary General of the SADC PF, Dr Esau Chiviya said the theme for the Plenary Assembly Session provided and opportunity for National Parliaments of the SADC Region to “take stock of the human rights situation in the SADC Region in general in general and the rights of women in particular.”

He added: “Parliaments will examine their own centrality the centrality of human rights in law making and at the same time explore strategies for meaningful collaboration.”

His Majesty King Mswati III, who was represented by the Acting Prime Minister, Senator Paul Dlamini, officially opened the Plenary Assembly Session whose theme is strengthening the Role of Parliament in Protecting and Realisation of Human Rights in Southern Africa, on Wednesday.

The King took the opportunity to explain the country's democratic system – Monarchical Democracy - which he said had been misunderstood in some quarters.

“Monarchical Democracy is defined as the marriage between the monarchy and the ballot box. The ballot box is the will of the people who vote for an individual, who will provide advice and counsel to the King and country in a manner that ensures transparency and accountability. It is a combination of power with empowerment. It means that the Monarch of Eswatini guarantees the shared power of the people,” the King said.

He added: “To those who proclaim that democracy is the answer to all nations and their development, we present ourselves as a testimony to a new democratic ideology that works... the Kingdom of Eswatini's position is that it believes in democracy as an idea but not as an ideal because things that are ideal to you may not be ideal to other people.”

Kurasha said among the main highlights of this Plenary Assembly Session is the expected adoption of the Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Those Already in Marriage in Southern Africa.

The law, which was developed in response to the decision by the 35<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly Session held in Mauritius in June 2014, will be a historic milestone by Parliamentarians from the Region in the quest to end the scourge of child marriages bedeviling many countries in the Region.

Other issues to be considered include committee reports by various SADC PF standing committees as well as motions by various Members of Parliament. They include: a motion on the Need for SADC PF to Develop a Model Law on Elections to Facilitate the Domestication of SADC Principles and Guidelines for Democratic Elections by Member States (mover: Hon. Maneesh Gobin, MP, Mauritius); motion on the Prevalence of the Dual Epidemic of Tuberculosis (TB) and Diabetes around the World (mover: Hon. Ahmed Munzoor Shaik Emam, MP, South Africa); motion on Combating Hunger and Poverty in Southern Africa (mover: Hon Paulo Angola); motion on the Need for Integrated Energy Infrastructure and Security as a Means for Regional Development with Specific Attention to the Inga Dam Project (mover: Hon. Stevens Mokgalapa, MP, South Africa); and motion on the Importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) In the Development of the SADC Region (mover: Hon. Siphosezwe Masango, MP, South Africa).

Other motions include : motion on the Negative Impact of Poor Service Delivery on Women as People Responsible for Care Work at the Household (mover: Hon. Masefele Morutoa, MP, South Africa); motion on The Need For SADC Member States Expedite The Signing And Implementation Of The Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement Aimed At Creating An Enlarged Market Extending From Cape To Cairo (mover: Dr Samson Mukanduri, MP, Zimbabwe).

Approximately 190 delegates including observers from other regional and international organisations that SADC PF collaborates with are attending the Plenary Assembly Session which ends on Sunday.

Ends/.

CAPTIONS

**HELLO:** Acting Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, Senator Paul Dlamini, who represented His Majesty King Mswati III at the official opening of the 39<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, greets SADC PF Secretary General, Dr Esau Chivia and Hon Joseph Njovuyalema, Vice President of SADC PF. –Photo: Moses Magadza