



Southern Africa Development Community-Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF): Sign up event for UN Women's HeForShe Campaign

Venue: Royal Swazi Sun

Date: Thursday 2 June 2016 (15:00-17:00Hrs)

WELCOME REMARKS BY HON. JOSEPH NJOBVUYALEMA, VICE PRESIDENT, SADC-PF

- Hon. Speakers and Deputy Speakers of the SADC Parliaments,
- Hon. Leaders of Delegations,
- Hon. Members of Parliament from the various SADC Parliaments,
- Hon. Ministers here present,
- Ms. Anne Githuku-Shongwe, UN Women Representative for South Africa
Multi-Country Office,
- SADC-PF Secretary General, Dr Esau Chiviya
- Invited Observers and Resource Persons,
- Staff from the SADC National Parliaments,
- SADC PF Secretariat Staff,
- Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me great pleasure to extend to you all a very warm welcome on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community – Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF)

and to say how grateful we are to UN Women and the SADC-PF Secretariat for convening this **SADC-PF Sign up event to UN Women's HeForShe** Solidarity Campaign for gender equality.

Let me begin by pointing out that one of SADC-PF's Gender Program strategic objective is to assist the National Parliaments within the SADC Region to implement and domesticate the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and various other United Nations Conventions and Resolutions that seek to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

At SADC-PF, we recognize that beyond the intrinsic value of gender equality and women's empowerment, investing in women's rights and gender equality is critical to our socio-economic advancement, political stability and development. In this regard, we at SADC-PF work with our National Parliaments and the SADC-PF Gender Programme to sharpen parliamentarians' gender analysis and planning skills with the aim of promoting sustainable development and eradicating feminized poverty in the Region.

Honorable Members, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me briefly to introduce the SADC-PF Gender Program of which the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus and Gender Equality, Women's Advancement and Youth Development are component parts. The Gender Program, established in 1997, is one of SADC-PF's longest standing programs. The original mandate, which remains today, is to work with and support Members of Parliament in order to eradicate gender inequalities in the SADC Region thereby realizing the SADC Gender and Development Declaration of 1997.

Through the RWPC, the Program has successfully lobbied various SADC Member States to sign the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. It has also lobbied for equal and equitable representation of women in political, administrative and decision-making positions: this is known as the 50:50 Gender Parity Goal of the SADC Gender Protocol.



Within the SADC Region, as SADC-PF, we continue to promote accountability to the Maputo protocol of the African Union and we are leveraging on the AU declaration for 2016 as the year of Human Rights, with particular focus on the Rights of women.

Honorable Members,

The recently approved Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 5 on **“Achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls”**, and the other gender-related targets, have opened up new opportunities to re-connect, re-commit, and mobilize political will and public support for women’s economic empowerment. The SDGs give us an opportune space and time to influence the governance processes so that gender equality is integrated meaningfully in our policies and their implementation. We need to leverage on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to change the game for gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s rights. At SADC level with support from UN Women, we are finalizing the review of the SADC-PF protocol in line with the SDGs.

We will also be working with our governments to promote accountability to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60) Resolution on **HIV, Women and Girls**.

Let me congratulate UN Women for this great initiative aimed at bringing boys and men to the center of the global fight for women’s rights and gender equality. The HeForShe movement challenges us to take action at both the institutional and personal level.

In concluding, **Honorable members of parliaments, Ladies and Gentlemen**, I welcome you to these sign up event and look forward to fruitful deliberations on how we can move this initiative in our countries.

Thank You, Merci, Obrigado, Siyabonga, obrigato

