

**STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE  
SADC-PF  
MS B.SEKGOMA ON  
“MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN THE SADC RENEWABLE  
ENERGY SECTOR”  
15<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

*Honourable Members, Distinguished Colleagues and participants,*

On behalf of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, it is with immeasurable pleasure that I make this statement in relation to gender mainstreaming in the SADC renewable energy sector. The Forum has always considered that the infusion and integration of gender considerations should take place in every initiative, whether at the executive or parliamentary level, and thus gender mainstreaming in the energy sector is to be a welcome development.

I wish to underscore that the implementation of renewable energy programmes are at the core of parliamentary functions. Over the last decade, at least 10 SADC national Parliaments have espoused laws and policies that promote the use of renewable energy directly or indirectly. Reduction of taxes and tariffs on solar panels and wind farm equipment, business facilitation for renewable energy industries and trade concessions for energy efficient

amenities are measures which have been processed across SADC through the institution of Parliament. Indeed, Parliaments are cognizant that the renewable energy sector is to follow an exponential growth in the years to come, with fossil fuels rapidly being depleted, and the growth of this promising sector needs to be coupled with responsive legislation and policies in view of ensuring its sustainability and providing the necessary incentives for SADC citizens to switch to green energy.

In its Strategic Plan (2019-2023), the Forum has clearly identified 2 strategic objectives which weave into the discussion of today on gender mainstreaming in the renewable energy sector. First, one strategic objective speaks to the need to promote gender equality and women empowerment across SADC. At the same time, another strategic objective points to the objective to promote prudential planning which includes the reduction of systemic risks through the identification and use of renewable sources of energy. Armed with such strategic objectives, the Forum has often addressed the relevance of the green energy sources at its Plenary Assembly, with resolutions that ensure that Member Parliaments are sensitized on the importance of preparing early for a progressive transition to renewable energy. For instance, during

the 46<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly session of the SADC-PF, the issue of climate change was discussed at length and the deliberations on the elimination of carbon emissions hinged on the need for a sustainable framework for green energy that is cost-efficient and which also provides the necessary incentives to serve the interests of SADC citizens.

This approach by the Forum reiterates the topic of today's agenda which is to ensure that women and young girls are not side lined when policies concerning renewable energy are prepared and processed by Parliament. The Forum subscribes to a view that access to the energy sector should indeed be democratized, which means that every SADC citizen, without discrimination, should obtain a fair opportunity of benefiting from the multiple advantages which renewable energy confers. This is in line with the vision of the Forum to be a flag-bearer of democratization and socio-economic development in the SADC region, and the Forum frequently promotes initiatives to mainstream gender in all sectors, including renewable energy.

A recent initiative of the Forum is the Gender Responsive Oversight Model (GROM) which can be adapted to mainstream gender in the energy sector. Although the GROM was not

specifically applied to the energy sector, its application clearly indicated that there are major disparities between men and women in most programmes implemented by the Executive, and that in some cases, positive discrimination in the form of women empowerment was necessary to close the prevailing gaps. It is certain that the renewable energy sector, which is the more so an expanding and novel industry, will furthermore involve significant disparities between men and women who are not equally predisposed to tap into opportunities specific to that sector.

For this reason, it is essential that SADC Governments work together with national Parliaments to devise gender-responsive laws and policies that close the existing gaps and give women and young girls the necessary education, knowledge and skills to understand the prospects which renewable energy offer and to become part of the renewable energy revolution. Although most Parliaments are already acquainted with the notion of renewable energy, and have accordingly adopted certain energy-related laws and policies, there is still an uphill slope to climb before gender equality is fully infused in this sector and for the SADC region to

reach the aspirations of Africa Agenda 2063 or fulfil the target of Sustainable Development Goal 7 on sustainable and clean energy.

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Currently, women and young girls are mostly not able to contribute to the renewable energy sector which is known to be a mostly sophisticated and male dominant industry. In many SADC nations, women and young girls do not have adequate access to education and this undermines their understanding of the pressing need for an energy transition as well as prevent them from formulating their energy concerns for the future.

An energy transition will take place only if the transition lies on the strong foundations of gender parity and equality. A transition to renewable and green energy will require that the SADC region works together to obtain better trade concessions for the importation and fabrication of green energy equipment. It will also require that the full spectrum of the international human rights regime is applied, with the right to education, the right to work and protection from discrimination, being major pillars that will sustain the renewable energy sector on the long term and ensure that both men and women partake equally in its development.

SADC national Parliaments need to continue to be at the forefront of legislative, oversight and budgetary interventions that intensify gender mainstreaming in all sectors, including the green energy sector. Additionally, stakeholders such as Civil Society Organisations should engage in shadow reporting on the implementation of renewable energy programmes and work closely with Parliament to ensure that policies are responsive to the needs of the citizenry. For its part, the Forum will continue to build the capacity of national Parliaments to promote peer learning and a cross-fertilisation of ideas on renewable energy and to ensure that gender considerations remain the pinnacle of the energy debate. While the road to renewable energy is likely to be a challenging one, the SADC region will only reach its destination if all stakeholders work hand in hand together, with our shared interests in green energy being the unifying factor.

With these words, I thank you for your attention.

Ms B.Sekgoma,

Secretary General

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