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PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

MONDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2024

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Speaker:

**REPORT OF THE 53rd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
(AFRICA REGION) CONFERENCE 29 SEPTEMBER TO 7 OCTOBER 2024
ARUSHA, TANZANIA**

ATTENDEES:

Daylin Mitchell, Speaker

Nomafrench Mbombo, Member of the Provincial Parliament

Romeo Adams, Secretary

Achmat Patience, International Relations and Protocol Officer

1. Introduction

The Western Cape Provincial Parliament: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Branch was invited to participate in the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Africa Region) Conference in Arusha, Tanzania, from 29 September to 7 October 2024. This conference consisted of the main conference and the meetings of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SoCATT). The convening of this conference was in accordance with article 16(3) of the CPA Africa Region constitution, which provides a platform for the executive committee and the secretariat to account for the activities of the association.

2. Report and resolutions

The South African Parliament, together with the provincial legislatures, participated in the proceedings of the 53rd conference with the theme *African parliaments at the forefront of addressing existential global challenges: Food insecurity, climate change and youth employment.*

The 53rd CPA (Africa Region) Conference afforded parliamentarians across the Africa Region the opportunity to deliberate on and process the governance work of the Executive. The conference also provided a platform for Members to share experiences on the following topics:

- As assessment of preparedness to cope with the effects of climate change in African countries;
- Harnessing abundant renewable energy sources in Africa to speed up industrialisation: Opportunities and challenges;
- Reforming electoral systems in Africa to address a mounting crisis of mistrust in political institutions;
- Beyond numbers: Re-examining the contribution of women in parliaments; and
- Reforming the education system in Africa to address youth unemployment on the continent.

Furthermore, the annual general meeting processed reports emanating from the Executive Committee and sub-committee meetings and presided over the filling of vacancies for the positions of Vice Chairperson, Treasurer, CWP Chairperson, CWP Vice Chairperson and subregional representatives.

3. Messages of solidarity

During the opening ceremony of the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Africa Region) Conference, delegates received messages of solidarity from the Secretary General of the CPA International, the Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania and the Chairperson of the CPA Africa Region Executive Committee. The keynote address was delivered by the Deputy President of the Republic of Tanzania.

In his remarks, the CPA International Secretary General appreciated the commitment of the government of Tanzania to assist the Parliament of Tanzania to bring together this conference in such a short period of time. The Secretary General further reflected on the update of the transformation of the CPA from its status as a charity organisation to an international organisation that can have influence in the decisions of the world. The Secretary General indicated that the process was quite advanced and the next step in the process would be realised in 2025.

These sentiments about transformation were also shared during the CPA International Executive Committee Meeting held in Durban, South Africa, in April 2024. The Secretary General also reflected on the activities of the organisation, such as the disability network, the further development of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and the vacancy for the Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee that will be voted on at the upcoming conference in Sydney, Australia.

The Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania further underscored the role played by parliaments not only as beacons of peace and hope but also as embodiments of the majestic and visible summit of the people. In line with the theme, the Parliament of Tanzania has been instrumental in promoting the agenda of social transformation in the country. The Speaker is currently serving as the President of the International Parliamentary Union.

His Excellency the Deputy President of the Republic of Tanzania reiterated the importance of parliaments in strengthening the implementation of the sustainable development goals and the need to achieve the resolutions arising from the topics to be discussed at the conference.

4. Discussions and analysis from CWP business meeting.

The CWP business meeting was convened to deliberate on the programmes and activities of the subregions in the fulfilment of the Strategic Plan as coordinated by the Steering Committee. The CWP Steering Committee's report was delivered in which past and future activities of CWP Africa region were highlighted.

Information about CWP meetings and activities for 2023/24 of the various regions were provided. Some regions indicated activities together with recommendations for their countries going forward.

The Chairperson highlighted a few key CWP activities that covered all the regions:

- The Committee conducted sensitisation campaigns in Ghana.
- The Committee also urged Ghana to nominate a representative for the vacant CWP subregional representative for West Africa.
- Reports from the CWP chapters in Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and the Gauteng Provincial Legislature were received.
- Two of the planned activities in 2024 have been postponed to 2025.

5. Plenary workshops

The plenary provided a platform for discussion and deliberations by attendees on the following topics:

- 5.1 An assessment of preparedness to cope with the effects of climate change in African countries.
- 5.2 Harnessing abundant renewable energy sources in Africa to speed up industrialisation: Opportunities and challenges.
- 5.3 Reforming the electoral system in Africa to address a mounting crisis of mistrust in political institutions.
- 5.4 Beyond number: Re-examining the contribution of women in parliaments.
- 5.5 Reforming the education system in Africa to address youth unemployment on the continent.

From these deliberations, the following resolutions were agreed upon:

Noted the commitment made by African countries in the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and enhance resilience to climate impact;

Further noted that the African Union Agenda 2063 calls for united efforts, self-reliance, Africa financing its own climate smart, all-inclusive, people-driven development and Africa speaking with one voice in global fora;

Recognised the urgent need for African countries to enhance their preparedness to cope with the effects of climate change, and acknowledging the diverse impact climate change has on various sectors, including agriculture, water resources, public health, infrastructure and food security;

Affirmed the importance of collaborative efforts among African nations to share knowledge, resources and best practices in addressing climate change challenges;

Acknowledged the increasing frequency and severity of climate-related events such as droughts, floods and cyclones across the African continent, which have a significant socio-economic impact;

Affirmed that addressing climate change requires a multi-faceted approach involving government agencies, private sector stakeholders, civil society organizations and local communities;

Reaffirmed the commitment of African nations to work collaboratively towards achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) while addressing climate challenges through resilient infrastructure, sustainable agriculture practices and renewable energy solutions;

Concerned that fossil fuels, including oil, natural gas and coal, account for the substantial portion of energy sources in Africa, these sources are not environmentally friendly, cost ineffective and unsustainable;

Recognised the vast potential of renewable energy sources in Africa including solar, wind, hydro and geothermal energy, and the critical role that renewable energy can play in driving sustainable industrialisation and economic growth across the continent;

Considered the environmental benefits of transitioning to renewable energy sources, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality;

Noted that increased investment in renewable energy infrastructure can drive economic development, create jobs and improve energy security;

Aware of the challenges posed by inadequate financing, technical expertise and regulatory frameworks in scaling-up renewable energy projects;

Recalled the commitments made under the Nairobi Declaration to increase Africa's renewable capacity from 56 GW to at least 300 GW by 2030;

Recognised the importance of free, fair and transparent elections as the cornerstone of democratic governance and political stability in Africa;

Acknowledged the mounting crisis of mistrust in political institutions across various African nations due to perceived electoral malpractices and the lack of transparency;

Recalled the principles enshrined in both regional and international conventions that emphasise the need for credible and inclusive electoral processes;

Noted with concern that electoral disputes and irregularities have often led to political instability, violence and undermined public confidence in democratic institutions;

Emphasised the role of independent electoral commissions in ensuring impartiality and integrity during elections;

Affirmed the necessity for robust legal frameworks that support transparent and accountable electoral processes;

Recognised further that technological advancements can enhance the transparency and efficiency of electoral processes if implemented with adequate safeguards against misuse;

Noted the significant progress that has been made in increasing the representation of women in parliaments in Africa, yet acknowledging that much work remains to be done to achieve gender parity;

Acknowledged the critical role that women play in legislative processes and decision-making, which contributes to more inclusive and representative governance;

Recalled international commitments, such as the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, which call for increased participation of women in decision-making positions;

Concerned about the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in parliamentary structures despite their growing numbers;

Recalled previous commitments made by African nations under various international frameworks, including the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth);

Recognised the critical role of education in fostering economic growth and reducing youth unemployment across the African continent;

Noted with concern that current educational systems in many African countries are not adequately aligned with the skills demanded by modern labour markets;

Concerned with the statistics on the number of jobs that will be disrupted by the advancement of technology, globalisation and digitalisation due to the lack of specialised training and skills in those aspects;

Emphasised the importance of integrating vocational training and technical education into mainstream curricula to equip young people with practical skills;

Concerned that the youth needs to be both employees and employers but lack accessible sources of capital to start businesses that will create employment;

And accordingly resolved to,

- (a) on an assessment of preparedness to cope with the effects of climate change in African countries,
 - Urge African governments to undertake policy reforms that will integrate climate change policies into all levels of government planning and decision-making processes;
 - Advise African governments to consider community involvement by conducting public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the risks associated with climate change and the actions they can take;
 - Encourage African parliaments to engage fully by influencing legislation and fund allocations to alleviate poverty as a way to mitigate the effects of climate change and all other mitigating measures;
 - Further encourage African governments to consider international cooperation as a crucial solution for obtaining funding, acquiring technology and capacity building for implementing mitigating strategies as well as coping with the consequential disasters;
 - Advise African governments to engage in joint initiatives that address cross-border climate challenges, such as desertification, droughts and floods.
- (b) on harnessing abundant renewable energy sources in Africa to speed up industrialisation: opportunities and challenges,

- Advise African governments to establish a financial mechanism that involves the private sector and international organisations specifically aimed at supporting renewable energy projects for developing renewable energy infrastructure in Africa;
 - Also advise African governments to launch public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the benefits of renewable energy and to encourage community participation in local projects;
 - Urge African governments to reform policies and legislation into a direction that discourages the use of fossil oil as a source of electricity and to focus on less costly and sustainable sources of electricity that support industrialisation;
 - Encourage African governments to develop clear regulatory frameworks that support the integration of renewable energy into national grids and create regional frameworks for joint ventures and collaborative projects aimed at harnessing cross-border renewable energy resources.
- (c) on reforming electoral system in Africa to address a mounting crisis of mistrust in political institutions,
- Advise African governments to establish or strengthen independent electoral commissions that are free from political influence and capable of conducting transparent, fair and credible elections;
 - Also advise the governments to review and update their legal frameworks governing elections to align them with international standards and best practices aimed at ensuring inclusive participation in elections by marginalised groups, including women, the youth, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities;
 - Encourage African governments to establish mechanisms for the timely resolution of electoral disputes through independent judicial bodies;
 - Further encourage the formation of inter-parties dialogue councils and dialogue between electoral commissions and political parties to build trust and consensus on key aspects of the electoral process.
- (d) on beyond numbers: re-examining the contribution of women in parliaments,
- Encourage African parliaments to adopt legislative measures, including gender quotas, to ensure a minimum percentage of women candidates in elections;
 - Urge African parliaments to establish mentorship programmes where experienced female politicians can guide new entrants;
 - Advise African parliaments to undertake reforms in parliamentary structures to create a more inclusive environment for women, including family-friendly policies such as parental leave and flexible working hours;
 - Also advise African parliaments to oversee the participation of women in leadership positions that influence socioeconomic policy-making and politics;
 - Encourage African governments and parliaments to conduct public awareness campaigns aimed at changing societal attitudes and behaviour towards women in leadership roles.
- (e) reforming the education system in Africa to address youth unemployment on the continent,

- Urge African governments to review and reform their national education policies to align them better with labour market needs, focusing not just on academic excellence but also on practical and digital skill acquisition;
- Further urge African governments to integrate vocational training programmes in secondary and tertiary education systems to provide students with hands-on experience in various trades;
- Encourage African governments to invest in digital infrastructure to ensure all students have access to modern learning tools and resources;
- Further encourage initiatives aimed at enhancing teacher training programmes to improve teaching quality, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subjects;
- Advise African governments to increase funding for educational programmes that focus on entrepreneurship and innovation as pathways to self-employment and avail the youth with the necessary capital to run businesses;
- Also advise African governments to collaborate with international organisations, including UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank, to provide technical assistance and funding support for educational reforms targeting youth unemployment reduction.

6. Key issues from the Society of Clerks at The Table (SoCATT)

6.1 Workshops

The SoCATT Africa Region held its annual general meeting as well as workshop for all attendees. The following outcomes were shared during the workshop:

Session 1: The niche of parliamentary administration in heightening the role of the legislature in resilience and climate change adaptation

Recommendations:

1. What do we as individual legislatures understand from *climate mainstreaming* with specific reference to legislatures?
2. Is there a need to establish a dedicated forum/committee for climate change?
3. Principles and programmes
 - a) These should be impactful and value-adding (what can a parliament do to assist people to deal with effects of climate change – value-adding programmes)
4. Resourcing
 - a) Role of other partners in resourcing of climate change programmes/initiatives (eg private sector and civil society)
 - b) Internal resourcing of administrations to support and enable Members

Session 2: (1)The role of artificial intelligence (AI) in transforming parliamentary operations, and (2)Exploring key considerations and enablers for integrating artificial intelligence (AI) in legislative processes and procedures.

Recommendations:

Noting that AI is not an end, but rather a collection of tools for problem-solving in legislatures, it should be considered part of modernisation strategy – with the use of AI being a subset. While AI may not make legislatures faster, it could provide better insights and analysis without disrupting traditions in legislatures.

There are opportunities for AI to be deployed in areas of transcriptions (Hansard), translations and legislative drafting, but with controls to be put in place for validation, verification and quality control.

The effectiveness of the use of AI is enhanced by contributions or collaboration with humans as AI should not be considered as replacement for human beings.

First steps for legislatures towards artificial intelligence:

- 1) Conduct a thorough evaluation of the possible or intended uses of AI in the legislature with the purpose to improve efficiencies, transparency and public engagement – this could result in the formulation of institutional policy on the use of AI in the work of the legislature.
- 2) Understand the risks (including integrity of product, unintended consequences, etc) associated with use of AI (if any) and how can this be mitigated.
- 3) Consider implementing a modular approach with opportunities for integration. What are the opportunities or environment for machine learning in legislatures?
- 4) Consider the ethical use of AI, including over-reliance, bias, privacy, misrepresentation, etc.

Legislative staff should explore opportunities for partnerships to advance the AI journeys in legislatures and share best practices across legislatures.

6.2 SoCATT Annual general meeting

During the annual general meeting (AGM) of the SoCATT Africa Region, the Steering Committee that has served since 2021 relinquished their positions and an election was held for a new Steering Committee to take the reins for the next three years.

The outgoing Chairperson provided a legacy report for the term served and a financial report on the expenditure from the subregions as well as the Steering Committee. According to the rotational roster, the appropriate representatives from their jurisdictions accepted their nominations.

7. Key issues emanating from the CPA Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting was convened to process reports emanating from the Executive Committee meeting as the highest decision- and policy-making body. Following the presentation of the various reports and the approval of the minutes from the last annual general meeting, deliberations on the question of the change in the legal status of the CPA ensued.

Other issues included the following:

- Positions to be contested at the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference: The annual general meeting supported the view that Africa should take up the position of Chairperson in the CPA International; however, Africa has two candidates.
- Vacancies to be filled at 53rd CPA (Africa Region) Conference: In line with the roster adopted during the 52nd CPA Africa Region annual general meeting, the vacant positions whose rotational term had expired were presented for the endorsement of the annual general meeting. Representatives who held the positions for the past years were acknowledged with rewards.

8. Issues emanating from the Executive Committee and Sub-Committee meetings

The Executive Committee meeting was convened to deliberate on matters and reports emerging from subcommittee meetings. Highlighted below are the key issues emanating from each of the subcommittee meetings:

8.1 Regional Representatives Subcommittee

- Update on CPA International Conference issues: The 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) shall be hosted by the CPA New South Wales branch in Sydney, Australia, from 2 to 9 November 2024. Delegations from CPA branches are expected to attend and the programme will consist of plenary sessions, workshops and the CPA General Assembly. It is imperative that all branches are up to date with subscription fee payments as failure to do so would render them ineligible to attend the conference. The Subcommittee was informed that the 67th CPC host has graciously extended the deadline for subscription payment to the end of September to allow branches with arrears to meet their obligations.
- Vacancies to be filled at the 67th CPC: The Secretary General of CPA (International), Mr Stephen Twigg, has circulated a letter to branches highlighting vacancies that will be filled at the 67th CPC in Halifax, Canada. These vacancies include:
 - (a) Executive Committee Chairperson.
 - (b) Small Branches Chairperson.

So far, the Secretariat has been officially notified by Barbados, Nigeria and Zambia of the desire for the position of Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee. It was discussed during the caucuses of the subregions as well as within the South African context, that South Africa will support Zambia for the position of the Chairperson.

- Lobbying for the change of the legal status of the CPA: In the run-up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) to be held in Samoa in October 2024, the Secretary General of CPA wrote to all the branches exhorting them to lobby their ministers of Foreign Affairs to bring up the issue of the change of the CPA's legal status to the fore. This is because the meeting will be attended by the top political executives from across the Commonwealth, including the British Prime Minister. This initiative may assist in fast-tracking the passage of the relevant bills in the two Houses of the UK Parliament.

8.2 Programming Finance Planning Subcommittee

- **Subscription fees:** The total expected amount of subscription fees for CPA Africa Region from 64 branches for the year 2024 was US\$694 671,10. There is a small number of branches that have yet to settle their arrears.