

**REPORT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENT  
DELEGATION TO THE 19<sup>TH</sup> PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE  
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY-  
PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**

**"REDEFINING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE SADC-PARLIAMENTARY  
FORUM TO MAINSTREAM PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSIONS TO  
REGIONAL INTEGRATION"**

**GABORONE, BOTSWANA**

**8-17 DECEMBER 2005**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the Southern African Development Community-Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) took place in Gaborone, Botswana from 8-17 December 2005. The theme of the Plenary Assembly was, "Redefining Strategic Priorities of the SADC Parliamentary Forum to Mainstream Parliamentary Dimensions to Regional Integration". The following Members of Parliament (MP's) represented the Parliament of South Africa at the Plenary:

- The Hon. F Hajaig, MP (Head of the Delegation)
- The Hon. Mr E Sogoni, MP
- The Hon. Mr W J Seremane, MP
- The Hon. D J Sithole, MP
- Two Support Staff, Ms L D Lenzie and Mr J Mokoena, assisted the delegation<sup>1</sup>

The Presiding Officers and representatives of the following twelve (12) of the thirteen member Parliaments of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum attended the Committee meetings and Plenary Sessions, viz.:

Angola  
Botswana  
Democratic Republic of Congo  
Lesotho  
Malawi  
Mauritius

Mozambique  
Namibia  
South Africa  
Swaziland  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe

The Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania was not represented as it was dissolved pending the outcome of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections that were taking place in the country.

## 2. OPENING SESSION

The opening session was addressed by the following dignitaries:

- The Speaker of the National Assembly of Botswana the Honourable Patrick Balopi (MP).
- The Chairperson of the SADC-PF and Speaker of the Zambian Parliament, the Honourable Amusaa Mwanamwambwa (MP)
- The President of the Republic of Botswana and Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), His Excellency Mr Festus Gontebanye Mogae.
- The Speaker of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Swaziland, the Honourable S'gayoyo Magongo (MP).

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Jazze Mokoena (Researcher) and Ms Duduzile Lenzie (Legal Advisor)

## **2.1. Welcoming Address by the host Speaker, the Hon Patrick Balopi**

The host Speaker the Hon P. Balopi welcomed delegates to Gaborone, Botswana. The speaker highlighted the historical commitment of Botswana to the ideals of SADC as evidenced by the precursor to SADC, the Southern African Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC), which was conceived in Botswana. Botswana first hosted the plenary assembly in March 1998 when the Forum was still very much in its infancy and shortly after the election of its first executive committee in Cape Town in 1997. The active participation of the Parliament of Botswana in the work of SADC-PF is a contribution that the country makes to the region and the African continent. The continued contribution of Botswana Members of Parliament in the Parliamentary Forum is immense with most of them holding positions in the Executive and Standing committees. In September 2005, Botswana hosted a SADC-PF regional seminar on Electoral System Design. The government of Botswana is committed to the historical mission of SADC-PF.

## **2.2. Welcoming Address by the Chairperson of SADC-PF, the Hon. Amusaa Mwanamwambwa**

In his address to the opening session, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Forum stressed the need for closer co-operation and collective decision-making on matters that affect citizens of the region. He emphasised the importance of Parliamentarians to participate in regional politics, development and integration, which could be enhanced by the creation of a SADC Parliament. It was pointed out that the 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly will, among other issues, develop a new Five-Year Strategic Plan. The Chairperson congratulated SADC Heads of State and Government for raising the threshold of women representation in decision-making structures, increasing it from 30% to 50% in line with the African Union's target.

The SADC-PF will contribute towards the realisation of the goals envisioned in the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), as adopted in Tanzania. Through the proposed SADC Parliament, the objectives and plans of SADC can easily transcend national boundaries of countries. The Heads of State and Government, in approving the establishment of the SADC-PF foresaw the Forum as a nucleus of a future regional Parliament, unfortunately the role of parliamentarians in regional co-operation and integration remain undefined. The envisaged role of a SADC Parliament is primarily that of bringing parliamentary dimension to regional co-operation and integration.

The coming into being of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) in 2004 is a welcomed development and regional Parliamentary Forums are necessary for the PAP to fulfil its functions as outlined in its establishing protocol. The Chairperson of SADC must built consensus around the idea of establishing a SADC Parliament as a way of completing the building of a SADC community with all its constituent components, the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary.



The Chairperson thanked the Botswana government for hosting the 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the Forum and for the generous hospitality extended to delegates. He also thanked His Excellency, President Mogae for accepting the invitation to officially open the Plenary Assembly.

### **2.3. Address by the President of Botswana, His Excellency Mr. Festus Gontebanye Mogae**

In his address, the President of Botswana acknowledged the valuable role played by the SADC Parliamentary Forum over the years in building regional consensus and capacity. He appreciated the role played by the Forum in setting benchmarks for the promotion of gender equality, fighting against HIV and AIDS, and observing elections in SADC member countries. It was noted that SADC Election Observation Missions will benefit from the Forum's experience in observing elections and thus, closer cooperation is necessary.

The President noted that at the time when the SADC-PF was established in 1997, it was not considered necessary to establish a fully-fledged regional Parliament. The President assured the Plenary Assembly that the proposal to establish a SADC Parliament would receive careful consideration. The President also noted that Parliamentarians have a role to play in the RISDP and the Strategic Indicative Plan of the Organ on Defence, Politics and Security Co-operation among other SADC declarations and protocols.

### **2.4. Vote of thanks by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Swaziland, the Hon. S'gayoyo Magongo**

The Speaker of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Swaziland, the Hon S'gayoyo Magongo thanked the President of Botswana for his address to the Plenary Assembly and his election to the chairpersonship of SADC. In his address, the Speaker posed key questions for consideration and noted that the Region is at a time where co-operation at regional level must necessarily give way to competition. He called upon the Legislative and Executive arms of government to work cooperatively and not to the exclusion of the other in order to improve the socio-economic, cultural, and political situation of the people.

The Speaker suggested that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) must ask itself the following questions:

- What difference has it (SADC) made to the lives of women?
- Has SADC made any difference to the status of women in the society?
- What concerns do the children have in making it to a university?
- What difference will SADC make to the people of the region?
- What is it that will make people to be proud of being citizens of the region?
- What are the necessary facets of a fully integrated Southern African Development Community?

On behalf of SADC-PF, the speaker suggested that, during the tenure of the President of Botswana, as the Chairperson of SADC, there will be co-operation between the Executive and the Legislative arms of government and this would be enhanced in order to achieve regional co-operation and integration.

### **3. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS – KEY ISSUES**

#### **3.1 Report of the Legal Sub-Committee**

The Legal Sub-Committee met and considered the credentials of delegates to the 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly, as prescribed in Article 6 (3) of the Constitution of SADC Parliamentary Forum. The Committee made the following observations and reported that:

(a) The Parliament of Tanzania was not represented, due to the pending general elections that were taking place in the country.

(b) An apology had been received from the Parliament of South Africa, whose Speaker is currently leading the African Union (AU) Election Observer mission in Tanzania.

(c) Namibia did not have a member from the opposition.

(d) Parliaments of Lesotho, Mauritius and South Africa did not have representatives of their respective National Women's Parliamentary Caucuses, due to the following:

The committee also noted that the Chairperson of the Lesotho National Women's Parliamentary Caucus is currently leading the SADC Parliamentary Forum Election Observation Mission in Tanzania. It further noted that, Mauritius is yet to constitute a National Women's Parliamentary Caucus following the elections in July 2005, while South Africa sent an apology on behalf of the Chairperson of the Country's Women's Parliamentary Caucus.

It was noted that, most Parliaments had at least one-third representation of women and members from ruling and opposition parties in their delegations.

In addition, the Executive Committee adopted a report of the Legal Sub-Committee relating to Guidelines for Elections of Chairpersons of Standing Committees. The elections will be conducted in terms of the 2003 electoral process, which requires that:

(a) Signed nominations for candidates should be submitted to the Secretary general a day before the day of elections.

(b) Names of duly nominated candidates should be publicized to committee members the day before elections.

(c) In electing office bearers, consideration should be made to gender equity and geographic spread of Member Parliaments .

(d) Election shall be by secret ballot.

(e) Outcome of elections would be subject to ratification by the Plenary Assembly.

### **3.2 Report of the Chairperson**

The Chairperson reported on the following issues:

- The Office of the Chairperson made courtesy calls to the Heads of State and Government of Namibia, Botswana, Malawi and Zimbabwe.
- The courtesy call to the Namibian Head of State took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2005.
- The courtesy call on the Head of State of Malawi took place on 22 July 2005 under the leadership of the Hon Duke Lefhoko, Vice Chairperson of SADC-PF.
- The courtesy call delegation to meet the Head of State of Botswana included the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson (Speaker of the National Assembly of Botswana) and members of SADC-PF in Botswana.
- The courtesy visit to President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe was carried out in terms of a decision made at the 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly and 18<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly.
- The main purpose of the courtesy calls was for SADC-PF to be more inclusive by involving parliamentarians in its structures and programmes.
- During the visits, the Parliamentary Forum requested the Heads of State and Government to consider establishing the SADC Parliament under article 9 (1) of the Treaty, which establishes core organs of SADC.
- The establishment of the SADC Parliament would allow Members of Parliaments to be involved in SADC matters through a formalised legislative arm of SADC.
- During the courtesy calls, the Presidents of Namibia and Malawi expressed support for the establishment of SADC Parliament, of which the Presidents of South Africa and Zambia had already expressed support for the establishment of a SADC Parliament.
- The Heads of State and Government of Mauritius, Angola, Tanzania, and DRC were not visited.
- The Vice-Chairperson of SADC-PF also paid a courtesy visit to the Hon Prof Ali Nouhoum Diallo, Speaker of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) Parliament in which it was agreed that the two bodies will work together.

### **3.3 Report of the Secretary-General**

The report highlighted the following key points:



- The institutional development, preparatory work on the development of a new Five-Year Strategic Plan, support to policy organs, relations with SADC, networking and participation at international parliamentary conferences.
- The actual implementation of the activities which are expected to be hosted by the different member parliaments will be subject to consultation with the respective Parliaments to address issues of cost sharing, sitting calendars and local expectations, and other issues.
- The following are some of the issues that should be considered for incorporation in the work plan:
  - (i) Knowledge and information sharing and capacity building initiatives on parliamentary reforms to enhance the independence and financial autonomy of Parliamentary Forum.
  - (ii) Engagement with the PAP processes, including SADC caucus in the PAP.
  - (iii) Conscientisation of National Parliaments on the work of SADC-PF and the establishment of permanent feedback mechanisms between parliamentary forum and national Parliaments.

#### **3.4 Report of the Treasurer**

The following key points were made:

- The Committee noted that the audit for the financial statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005 was conducted in July 2005.
- The Committee congratulated the Office of the Secretary General for this record.
- The Committee also noted the management accounts reported on the results for the six months ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005 with budget figures representing that period and that the budget needed rationalisation.
- The audited donor funded programmes, accountability statements provided in the report were noted and the Office of the Secretary General was congratulated for the good performance and auditors' opinion.
- The Executive Committee considered the application for bank overdraft and Internet banking facilities, which was agreed to and concluded with the Forum bankers, Nedbank Namibia Limited.
- The Forum has an overdraft access of up to N\$500 000.
- The arrangements regarding internet banking facilities will be extended to the second bankers of the Forum, Standard Bank .
- Only nine out of the thirteen member Parliaments paid their annual mandatory contributions.
- The member Parliaments that are outstanding in their contribution should pay soonest.
- The increment of annual mandatory contribution per member Parliament of R850 000 will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006.

- The staff compliment in the Office of the Secretary General has been increased with diverse nationalities and addressed the gender question through new staff recruitment.
- In August 2005, the Executive Committee reviewed the threshold of R2 000 000 for the purchase of the Secretary General's new residence to R2 500 000 to accommodate transfer costs and other costs.
- The new residence of the Secretary General was acquired at R2 340 000, including transfer costs realising a saving of R160 000 on the approved budget of R2 500 000 and the Secretary General has taken occupation of the residence.
- The old residence of the Secretary General was renovated to increase its market value from R1 500 000 to 1 775 000 and estate agents have been commissioned to sell the property.
- The preparations for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SADC-PF in July 2006 are underway and the Treasurer should constitute and head a committee to consider activities for the anniversary celebrations.
- The Committee should include representatives of the host country and the Clerk of the Country hosting the headquarters and the Clerk of the Country that will host the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly.
- All member Parliaments shall participate in the financing of the activities of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

#### **4. STANDING COMMITTEES**

##### **4.1 Committee on Democracy, Gender and Conflict Resolution/Peace-building**

The Committee considered the proposed new name of the Committee and agreed that it will, henceforth be, the Committee on Democratisation, Governance and Gender Equality. The Draft Strategic Plan for the next five years 2006-2010 was also adopted, aimed at the following strategic objectives:

- Effective implementation of regional integration programmes.
- Improving institutions of democratic governance in the SADC region.
- Increased Professional performance.
- Strategic partnerships and alliances established for parliamentary cooperation.

The following Programme Areas for the Committee were adopted:

- Elections and Electoral Systems:** This will include elections observation in order to keep a watching brief on the proper conduct of elections.
- Gender:** The adoption of protocols to accelerate gender equality in SADC
- Strengthening Institutions of Democracy and Good Governance:** working with institutions of civil society, political parties, and anti-corruption bureaus in order to strengthen their capacities.



(iv) Developing Best Practice and Policy Frameworks through Parliaments: such practices should also be aimed at mitigating and combating HIV and AIDS.

#### **4.2 Committee on Inter-parliamentary Co-operation**

The Committee acknowledged the observer status of the Forum in Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) as a desired achievement. It also acknowledged the collaborative mechanisms that have been established with New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Association of West European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA).

The Secretariat was mandated to ensure that reports on Inter-Parliamentary co-operation activities are circulated to all member parliaments quarterly. It was agreed that Members attending SADC-PF meeting must present summary reports of the meeting to be discussed by their Parliaments.

The Committee noted the need to increase advocacy work in individual Parliaments in order to increase awareness of the Forum's activities. The Committee also acknowledge the Forum's newsletter as a tool of information sharing.

With regard to the Parliamentary Leadership Centre (PLC) Contributions, the Committee encouraged Members to appeal to their Parliaments to pay the contribution, as this is a requirement by the donor, the Africa Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). The Committee raised concern on the recommendation that three members of the Committee be part of the Leadership Centre – Advisory Board but the Executive Committee approved only two (2).

The committee recommended that the Chairperson of the Forum be part of the PLC Advisory Board since the committee will be responsible for the PLC. It also acknowledged that the Strategic Plan was well tailored, but raised concern over capacity to realistically implement the programmes suggested. It also received a submission from the Southern African Development Community Organisation of Public Accounts Committee (SADCOPAC) for the structure to be made part of SADC-PF. SADCOPAC is a body of Parliamentarians of the SADC region. The Committee recommended that SADCOPAC's request to be part of the Forum be submitted to the Plenary Assembly.

#### **4.3 Committee on Regional Integration**

The key issues, which were noted and discussed by the committee included:

- Visa restrictions:
  - Bilateral negotiations regarding eliminations of Visa requirements among SADC Member States has resulted in the scrapping of Visa

restrictions between Swaziland and Mozambique, and between Angola and Namibia.

- It was also noted that Visa negotiations between some of the SADC Member States were continuing.
- The treatment of Members of Parliament at South African Airports has not improved and this needs to be addressed.
- New Strategic Plan, 2006 – 2010:
  - The Committee considered the Draft Strategic Plan including its terms of reference and objectives.
  - It resolved that the strategic plan be adopted.
- SADC Protocol:
  - The Committee welcomed the SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Free Movement of Persons.
  - It proposed that a workshop be convened to discuss the protocol as an instrument to facilitate regional integration.
- Relationship between SADC and SADC-PF
  - The Committee recommended that SADC pronounce itself on the relationship between the Forum and SADC and the status of the Forum thereto.
  - The Committee's view was that the pronouncement will help clarify the issue of a regional Parliament and regional integration.
  - The election observation instruments by SADC and SADC-PF should be synchronised.
  - The Committee recommended a mechanism to include issues of SADC, SADC-PF and PAP in the school curriculum across the region.
- Transboundary Natural Resources Management (TNRM) Initiatives:
  - The Committee noted the TNRM meetings that took place in Angola, Namibia and Zambia.
  - The Committee recommended that information on transboundary projects be shared among member Parliaments and that the TNRM initiatives be put on the Regional Cooperation and Integration agenda.
- RISDP, NEPAD and Millennium Development Goals
  - The Committee has noted the submission by the Honourable Gamboa to integrate the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) into its agenda
  - The Committee approved the integration of RISDP, NEPAD and MDGs as proposed since this will guide the committee's development and integration agenda.
- Poverty in the region
  - Majority of the people in the SADC region live below the poverty datum line surviving on US\$1 per day.
  - The Committee proposed that poverty be a standing agenda item on its agenda.
  - Further recommended that SADC should rely on its internal resources instead of foreign assistance when dealing with poverty.

#### **4.5 Committee on HIV and AIDS**

The Committee made the following key points:

- The Committee considered country presentations on the role that parliamentarians and governments play in addressing HIV and AIDS.
- The Committee noted that Namibia has failed in two consecutive years to present a country presentation.
- The country presentations focused on progress made by countries
- The Committee noted the following:
  - The Secretariat did not keep contact with the Chairperson of the Committee on matters pertaining to activities and decisions that need to be taken on behalf of the Committee.
  - Food and nutrition are critical to people living with HIV and AIDS
  - The efficiency of stand-alone HIV and AIDS Portfolio Committees in relation to infectious diseases in the region.
  - The Forum has repackaged material with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Namibia in the form of fact sheet.
  - A handbook on HIV and AIDS, Gender, Human Rights for Members of Parliament has been developed and will be validated by Member Parliaments before going to press.
- The committee agreed to the following:
  - HIV and AIDS should be dealt with together with other infectious diseases.
  - The interplay between HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and malaria should come out clearly in the Strategic Plan.
  - The handbook on HIV and AIDS, Gender and Human Rights be circulated to members of the Committee for validation
  - The Forum and SADC should work closely to synchronise a regional response to the pandemic and regional programmes.
  - The Committee recommended that the Executive be lobbied to strengthen cross border HIV and AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis programmes and activities.
  - The Committee also resolved that the consultant develops an HIV and AIDS Action Plan based on the Strategic Plan objectives and other relevant documents.

#### **4.6 Committee on the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus**

The Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) made the following key points:

- One of the objectives of the SADC-PF Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus mandate is to advocate and influence the participation and representation of women in elective political and decision making positions, including advocacy and lobbying.
- The objective of the RWPC advocacy and lobbying in Zambia is to influence political parties and a broad range of stakeholders to put in place mechanisms that will increase women's representation in the Zambian Parliament to at least have 30% women.



- The lobbying and advocacy mission to Zambia was conducted from the 5-19 August 2005.
- The lobbying and advocacy mission was undertaken in terms of the SADC Declaration on Gender Development and Norms and Standards for Elections in the SADC region.
- The SADC Declaration commits SADC countries to the achievement of at least 30% (this threshold has been increased) representation in positions of power and decision-making by the year 2005.
- In terms of the African Union (AU) Constitutive Act and Declaration and the August 2005 SADC Summit resolution, SADC countries are now expected to achieve 50-50 representations of women and men.
- The Committee resolved to actively promote the 50% representation of women at parliamentary level.
- The RWPC assessment and stakeholders consultations reveal that Norms and Standards for Elections in the SADC region was the reference document that informed the review of electoral laws.
- The RWPC was concerned that most parties claim to have incorporated the SADC Declaration principles but this was not visible.
- The Committee recommended the following:

(a) Awareness campaign about the importance of women's political participation and representation at all levels of power and decision making.

(b) Effective implementation and evaluation systems to track down progress on women's empowerment in all spheres.

(d) Capacity development for women.

(e) Political parties to implement stated commitments on achieving gender equality and institute intra-party democratic processes to review the mainstreaming of gender equality.

## **5. PLENARY SESSIONS – KEY ISSUES**

### **5.1 Thematic Session of the Plenary Assembly**

The following presentations were made in line with the 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session theme "Redefining Strategic Priorities of the SADC Parliamentary Forum to mainstream parliamentary Dimensions to Regional Integration".

#### **5.1.1 Address by the Deputy Executive Secretary of SADC, Engineer Joao Samuel Caholo**

The address of the Deputy Executive Secretary covered progress and challenges in the region. According to the Deputy Executive Secretary, In 2004, real Growth Domestic Product (GDP) of the SADC region grew at the rate of 4.1% as compared to 3.2% in 2003. It was also observed that average economic growth of the region was below the average economic growth of the continent over the same period. This economic growth was due among other factors, peace and political stability obtained in the region, sound macro-economic reforms in the SADC member countries. According to crop

production vulnerability assessment conducted in April/May 2005, 9.7 million SADC citizens will require food assistance.

The challenges facing the region include inter alia, peace and political stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, poverty, food insecurity, HIV and the AIDS pandemic, low rate of investment, and gender inequalities.

#### **5.1.2 Presentation by Professor Max Essex of the Harvard School of Public Health**

The presentation covered progress made in the development of vaccines and other interventions in Southern Africa. It recognised the need to conduct multiple trials with modern designs, international cooperation and regional expertise will be critical in this regard. The presenter advised that modern behavioural change is important to avoid the spread of the pandemic. An emphasis was placed on the provision of anti-retroviral drugs to those infected. It was also emphasised that Parliaments must be committed to fighting the spread of HIV and AIDS through legislative interventions and sharing of best practices.

#### **5.1.3 Draft Strategic Plan for the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum: 2006-2010**

The Plenary Assembly reiterated its commitment to continue lobbying for the establishment of the SADC Parliament to foster regional cooperation and integration. The Plenary also agreed to develop mechanisms to deal with SADC matters, to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the budget and programmes of SADC. A call was made for the acceleration of Intra-African trade to mitigate the unfavourable terms of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

In addition, the Plenary Session approved the Parliamentary Leadership Centre and its work plan including the advisory board.

The Plenary adopted the vision and mission of SADC-PF which were amended to read:

- **Vision:** "A delivery focused, people centred institution that accelerates and promotes parliamentary participation in regional decision making for the benefit of the citizens of SADC".
- **Mission:** " To facilitate strategic partnerships within the SADC region, promote information sharing, initiate and implement projects that enhance regional integration and promote effective and professional parliamentary practice".

The Plenary Assembly also adopted the SADC-PF organisational structure as proposed by the executive committee.

The following four (4) strategic objectives contained in the draft strategic plan were adopted. These objectives are:

- (a) Improved institutions of democratic governance in the SADC region.
- (b) Effective implementation of Regional Integration Programme.
- (c) Increased professional performance of Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff under the Parliamentary Leadership Centre (PLC).
- (d) Strategic Partnership and Alliances Established for Parliamentary cooperation.

## 5.2 Policy Session of the Plenary Assembly

The Plenary Assembly also dealt with the following key issues:

- The Plenary endorsed the PLC Advisory Board to be chaired by the Secretary General and will include members of the Forum.
- Country Reports

Countries presented written reports highlighting progress in dealing with issues that the Forum has decided upon, covering the following issues:

- The SADC principles and guidelines for democratic elections and women representation.
- Support for Women's Parliamentary Caucus.
- The implementation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum Norms and Standards for elections.
- Ratification of SADC protocols, treaties and legal instruments for purposes of regional integration and cooperation.
- Steps taken to deal with the HIV and AIDS, including prevention and the fight against the pandemic.
- Cooperation and participation in the Pan African Parliament activities and the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development.
- HIV and AIDS:
  - The Plenary Assembly approved a Plan of Action for national Parliaments to address the continued increase in the rates of HIV infections.
  - The Plan covered prevention, treatment, discrimination, cultural practices and the Care of Orphans and Vulnerable Children.
- Action Plan
  - The Plenary adopted a work plan for January-December 2006, which included *inter alia*, programmes on electoral reforms, norms and standards, the parliamentary leadership centre, advocacy and lobbying, gender issues, and women representation, poverty reduction and HIV and AIDS, peace and stability and site visits.
- Future Plenary Sessions:



- The 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session will be held in Maputo, Mozambique, in June 2006.
- South Africa has been requested to host the 21<sup>st</sup> plenary session late in 2006.

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