



PARLIAMENT *Journal*

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Parliament Journal is a peer-reviewed distinctly informative journal published quarterly by the Parliament of Namibia. The journal publishes stories/articles of newsworthy meetings, conferences, and workshops, well researched in-depth feature articles on the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, Chamber proceedings, and oversight visits. Stories/articles about courtesy calls on presiding officers and international meetings/engagements and events such as Pan-African Parliament (PAP), Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), Southern African Development Community Forum (SADC-PF), and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) are also considered for publication.

Stories/articles on other important events normally fixed on the calendar of Parliament such as the Official Opening of Parliament, State of the Nation Address (SONA), and the tabling of the national budget are also published.

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MUHA CALLS ON ZAMBIA TO *share experience on CDF with Namibia*

• *Sakeus likela*

Chairperson of the National Council Hon. Lukas Sinimbo Muha said Namibia is exploring the possibility of entering into a cooperation agreement with the Parliament of Zambia to learn more about how that country is implementing the Constituency Development Fund law.

Muha said lessons from the implementation of the CDF law in Zambia will be valuable to Namibia as the country plans to enact its own Constituency Development Fund law.

An agreement between the National Council and the Parliament of Zambia will therefore help facilitate exchange activities between the two parliaments.

Muha made these remarks during a courtesy meeting with the Committee on Privileges and Absences of the Parliament of Zambia.

The Zambian delegation was in Namibia on a study visit aimed at exchanging experiences, practices, and insights regarding the functioning of both Parliamentary Houses.

Zambia first introduced the CDF in 1995 as an instrument to facilitate the deliverance of public developmental goods and services directly to local communities.

Since then, the law has undergone a set of reforms that have seen the community-representation structure of the CDF develop and the policy enshrined in Zambia's constitution.

The most recent significant changes were made in 2022, which saw an unprecedented increase in the fund's allocation from K1.6 million to K25.7 million per constituency.

The scope of the CDF was also expanded to include additional components such as youth and women empowerment programs and locally administered secondary school bursaries.

Muha told the Zambian delegation that the CDF Bill which was initiated by the National Council has been tabled in the National Assembly and will soon be referred back to the National Council for review.

During the meeting Muha highlighted the significance of the visit, describing it as a milestone in the relationship between Namibia and Zambia.



Chairperson of the National Council Hon. Lukas Muha pictured with the Zambian delegation of MPs

He emphasised the importance of the visit in enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of parliamentary processes.

"These exchanges are invaluable, providing an opportunity to learn from each other's successes and challenges in parliamentary governance," he said.

He acknowledged the critical role of Parliamentary Committees on Privileges and Absences in ensuring that Members of Parliament perform their duties effectively.

"This visit provides a valuable opportunity for us to exchange ideas, experiences, and strategies to enhance the effectiveness of our respective parliamentary systems," Hon. Muha added.

He noted the continuous commitment to strengthening the friendship between the two nations and their legislative bodies.

"The National Council is excited to exchange with you our experiences, practices, and insights regarding the functioning of both houses of Parliament. We value the longstanding excellent relationship between Namibia and Zambia since the era of our liberation struggle," Muha stated.

Muha also expressed gratitude for Zambia's recent assistance during the hero's burial of Namibia's late former President Hage Geingob, highlighting the mutual respect and cooperation between the countries.

Muha reiterated the shared history of friendship and collaboration between Namibia and Zambia.

"Our countries are united by neighbourhood, a common goal of advancing democratic values, promoting good governance, and ensuring the welfare of our citizens. This study visit is a testament to our ongoing commitment to these shared values," he said.

On her part, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia, Hon. Malungo Chisangano, acknowledged the deep-rooted bilateral relations between Zambia and Namibia, and emphasised that the warm bilateral relations have translated into strong parliamentary collaborations.

Hon. Chisangano highlighted the professional interactions between the staff of the two Parliaments, citing recent seminars and benchmarking visits.

"Our coming here is a testament of the good parliamentary relations. Several exchange and benchmarking visits have been undertaken between our Parliaments over the years," she said.

She added: We also appreciate this opportunity to benchmark your Parliament on issues relating to Members' privileges and discipline. Through these platforms, our parliamentarians have been accorded an opportunity to share and exchange experiences and best practices on how to effectively deliver on their parliamentary functions to enhance the lives of our respective people". ■

SADC MPS AND EXPERTS *meet to discuss climate change*

• George Sanzila



Delegates at the SADC climate change workshop pose for a group photo.

Windhoek - SADC Parliamentarians and environmental experts that were gathered at the second Southern Africa Parliamentarian Regional Meeting on strengthening the capacity of national parliaments on oversights in climate action accountability and reporting, all agreed that Parliament plays a critical role in climate change solutions through its functions of representation, oversight, legislative and budget approval.

The African Group of Negotiators Experts Support (AGNES) in collaboration with the Parliament of the Republic of Namibia held the workshop in Namibia from 31st July – 2nd August 2024. It was officially opened by Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Loide Kasingo. The first meeting



Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Loide Kasingo officially opening the workshop.

in southern Africa, was held with the National Assembly of Botswana and other stakeholders in September 2023.

The meeting served as a platform for the exchange of ideas between policymakers, experts and negotiators in the quest for better climate adaptation.

Hon. Kasingo while officially opening the gathering, appealed for a multisectoral approach in tackling the effects of climate change, revealing that Namibia has been severely affected by disasters such as floods and prolonged droughts over the years, which have led to the declaration of a state of emergency. "Parliaments are vital for the translation of international climate change commitments into country level actions. Since climate change is a global issue which transcends borders, strong inter-parliamentary cooperation is crucial for finding international solutions that ensure all countries are able to meet and adhere to the Paris agreement", noted Kasingo.

Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Hon. Pohamba Shifeta encouraged delegates to learn best practices from each other in order to tackle the challenges of climate change. Chairperson of the National Assembly's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Natural Resources, Hon. Tjekero Tweya echoed similar sentiments adding that

he hoped the workshop would result in improved climate change oversight. "It is my sincere hope and conviction that we emerge from this workshop enlightened, informed and ready to join forces to fight the common enemy, which is climate change. Its imperative that we share experiences and realise that climate change has no known boundary, thus a common approach is a must if we are to contribute to reducing emissions", noted Tweya.

AGNES Team leader Dr. George Wamukoya reiterated the importance of domestication of climate change commitments, he believes are crucial in climate adaptation efforts and a climate resilient future. "This meeting is very important. When the Executive go for negotiations led by environment negotiators, they reach some agreements and parliament plays a critical role in domestication. The commitments made need implementation and parliament has a role of oversight of what has been committed", said Wamukoya.

Over 70 participants from across the 16 SADC member states are attending the event, including local stakeholders such as the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and the Environmental Investment Fund (EIF). The first meeting in southern Africa for the not-for-profit think tank that focuses on climate change capacity-building initiatives, was held with the National Assembly of Botswana and other stakeholders in September 2023.

Although Namibia currently has no climate change law, as part of efforts to reduce global warming, it has joined other countries that have ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, all protocols aimed at limiting global warming to acceptable standards. It also adopted the National Climate change policy in 2011.



PAP ADOPTS REPORT *on climate change*

• Immanuel Kooper

The Committee on Rural Economy, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources presented its activity report mainly focused on climate change adaptation and policies. The report was unanimously adopted by the 3rd session of the 6th Parliament of the Pan Africa Parliament in Midrand South Africa.

One of the main projects of the Committee was the co-organisation of the 3rd African Parliamentarians Summit on Climate Change Policy and Equity held from 16 – 17 May 2023 in Midrand South Africa in conjunction with the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA). At the occasion the Chair of the Committee of African Heads of States and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), President William Ruto provided new and robust impetus on the climate change agenda.

The Summit urged parliamentarians to take a leading role in the climate justice agenda by creating awareness on climate change and its consequences in their respective constituencies and lobbying for the enactment of legislation on climate change in their respective countries.

The Committee further proposed a model law on climate change following an extensive consultation with relevant partners more particularly PACJA and the African Climate Legislative Initiative (ACLI), to come up with critical measures to mitigate the negative effects of climate change. The rationale behind the call for the development of a model law on climate change was the absence of a dedicated legislative instrument to deal with climate change in Africa.

Namibia has a policy on climate change (National Policy on climate change for Namibia October 2011) that ultimately promotes the integration and harmonisation of different legislation for effective planning and implementation in climate response measures, taking into account both environmental and human development needs. The policy is meant to guide the Namibian Government on the development and enactment of climate-specific legislation and to establish appropriate legal mechanisms for policy implementation.

According to a study by PACJA on the role of African parliamentarians in

implementing the Paris Agreement, only Kenya has developed and passed a law on climate change hence the call by PAP for the development of a model law. A resolution was presented by the Committee on Agriculture to develop the model law in June 2023, which was adopted in plenary by PAP upon which the Committee embarked on a road map to mobilise required financial and technical resources for the drafting of the model law.

The Committee with the blessing of the Pan African Parliament will prepare for COP29 summit that will take place in Baku, Azerbaijan from 11 to 24 November 2024 in collaboration with PACJA and other relevant partners with a focus on capacity building training and technical aspects related to COP to familiarize and equip African parliamentarians. Hon Gerhard Shiimi from the Namibian Parliament is the Member of the Committee on Rural Economy, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources of the Pan African Parliament.



28 MAY DECLARED *Genocide Remembrance Day*

• George Sanzila

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi has praised former Members of Parliament, the late Hon. Dr. Kuiama Riruako and Hon. Usutuaije Maamberua for their boldness and bipartisan approach in addressing the critical issue of genocide. Hon. Katjavivi addressed the media following the announcement of a decision by cabinet to proclaim 28 May as Genocide Remembrance Day. Hon. Dr. Riruako and Hon. Maamberua tabled Motions in the National Assembly on genocide negotiations and

establishing a dedicated Remembrance Day, respectively.

Extensive consultations were then held by the National Assembly Standing Committee with communities across the country, culminating in a comprehensive report that was submitted to cabinet resulting in the establishment of the Remembrance Day.

The Speaker further thanked President Dr. Nangolo Mbumba and members of cabinet for their positive response adding that the day honours



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon Prof Peter Katjavivi

the memories of those who suffered and perished and is a reminder of the dark chapters in Namibia's history, ensuring that the horrors of genocide are never forgotten.

Genocide Remembrance Day will be a public holiday from 2025.



SIXTH SESSION OF CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT

targets Education transformation in Namibia

• Sakeus Kadhikwa and George Sanzila



Children Parliamentarians in front of the National Assembly during the sixth session of the Children's Parliament.

The sixth session of the Children's Parliament which took place from 12 to 19 July 2024, was focused on finding solutions to educational challenges faced by Namibian children. The Children's Parliament, incepted over 17 years ago, is a platform facilitating the participation of young people in the democratic process, by affording them an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the legislative process and discuss challenges they face and make proposals for changes in legislation that have an impact on their welfare.

The Children's Parliament, premised on the Namibian Constitution that calls for freedom of expression and fundamental human rights, is an initiative of the Namibian Parliament in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Over 60 learners from Namibia's 14 regions gathered at the National Assembly for the one week session under the theme **"Transforming Education in Namibia"**. The session was aimed at addressing critical post-COVID-19 challenges in the education sector such as school drop outs and learner pregnancy. According to the Ministry of education, arts and culture statistics, over 15,000 learners dropped out of school in 2021 alone, of which

over 2000 were as a result of learner pregnancy.

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi during the opening of the 6th session of the Children's Parliament reiterated that the Children's parliament was more than just a forum. "It's a catalyst for change. It empowers our youth to engage in the democratic processes, shaping a future where every child's voice is heard and their rights are upheld", said Katjavivi. He further noted that Namibia attaches great importance to the rights of children as it has enacted and ratified a myriad of both domestic and international conventions aimed at protecting the rights of children.

The session saw a number of youth representatives converging to listen to expert presenters and further discuss pressing issues in education that include equitable access to education, gender/ violence and education, disability and education, governance and education and addressing the digital divide exacerbated by the pandemic, among others. This is in line with the ongoing education reform agenda in the Namibian education system.

National Assembly Spokesperson, Sakeus Kadhikwa noted during the session that parliament was committed to fostering a platform to discuss

inclusive education for the benefit of the Namibian child. "This session will not only focus on identifying challenges but also on proposing actionable recommendations that can contribute to a transformative education system in Namibia", said Kadhikwa.

Prior to the start of the session, learners underwent an intensive induction programme before being sworn for a two-year period as Members of the sixth Children's Parliament with a Speaker and a



Hon. Jane Phiri from the Hardap region(right) and Michael Ajiboso from Kwango east region (left) were elected as Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the 6th session of the Children's Parliament. In the middle is Secretary of the National Assembly, Lydia Kandetu.

Deputy Speaker. Thereafter, Standing Committees were formed to look at specific issues of concern. The sixth Children's Parliament, is made up of sixty four members drawn from schools in all 14 regions of Namibia. Among those members, six learners represent indigenous minorities and children with disabilities. For the first time in its history, the Children's parliament was opened by the President of the Republic of Namibia, H.E. Dr. Nangolo Mbumba.

Significant achievements

Chairpersons of various Standing committees tabled a total of 33 Motions

for consideration. 30 Motions were adopted while three Motions were rejected. Some of the Motions focused on the urgent need to address violence against children, disability friendly school infrastructure, upliftment of the boy child to remain in school, end to hunger, renovation of schools, absent fathers and mothers, provision of ICT tools in schools, gender based violence, child marriages and bullying in schools among many others. The previous sessions of the Children's Parliament have been a resounding success that culminated into progressive legislations such as the Learner Pregnancy Policy by the Ministry of Education, Arts

and Culture that was adopted after successful lobbying by the Children's parliament. The policy gives a second chance to young pregnant girls to go back to school after delivery as well as those who fail Grade 10. Successful discussions have also resulted in input from the fourth session incorporated in the Child Care and Protection Act, including playing a role in the increase of the grants for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). The Children's parliament has also formed part of global discussions at prominent international forums such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). ■

CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT

in pictures



ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY *presented at PAP*

• Immanuel Kooper

The joint sitting by the Committees on Justice and Human Rights and that of Rules, Privileges and Discipline put special emphasis on the aspect of human rights and its abuses globally. The Members concurred that human rights violations are still persisting and needs condemnation from all corners of the world. Several incidences currently at play were put forth as examples. Commissioner Honourable Idrissa Sow, Member of the African Human Rights Commission from Senegal made a presentation on Human Rights violation as well as the abolition of the death penalty. The Commission proposed the abolition of the death penalty for all member states and recognizes the efforts put in place to adhere to this call from the Commission. The Commission noted that 24 states have abolished the death penalty, with 15 states putting a moratorium on the death penalty. In fact, the United Nations on 15 December 2022 has called for a moratorium on the death penalty and a draft protocol was proposed and compiled with the ongoing advocacy by many African leaders to adopt the draft protocol. So far on record about 1156 people were sentenced to death. The Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, Article 4 forbids the death penalty and advocates for the right to life.



Members of the Pan African Parliament during the discussions

It was noted during the sitting that not all legal systems in Africa are working to transition the abolishment of the death penalty and there remains a need for the proper training of judges to fulfil the needs of their citizens in Africa.

However, resistance to the issue is emerging from various regions around the world. It was argued that the reason for the call to abolish the death penalty can be ascribed to the fact that judges can err in their judgments and wrongly sentenced innocent people. The case in point put forth as an example was where the current President of

Zimbabwe was sentenced to death during the apartheid regime, which unfortunately was not meted out due to certain interventions.

The majority of the MPs proposed that other alternatives be considered instead of the death penalty although the Commission also took cognizance of the various cultures and religion of countries hence respected the reasons for keeping the death penalty by some countries on the continent. It was further proposed that the draft protocol on the death penalty be presented and discussed in plenary.



Members of the Pan African Parliament during the discussions

So far on record about 1156 people were sentenced to death. The Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, Article 4 forbids the death penalty and advocates for the right to life.

FARMERS IN NCA BEMOAN NON-FUNCTIONAL ABATTOIRS *as reason for lack of livestock market*

• George Sanzila

Outapi - Farmers in both the Kunene and Omusati regions have lamented non-functional abattoirs and the poor state of livestock infrastructure in the area as the main reason they continue to struggle to gain access to a lucrative livestock market. Non-operational abattoirs and dilapidated livestock quarantine facilities have been identified as some of the impediments hindering livestock producers in the Northern Communal Areas (NCAs). This came to light during oversight visits by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Economics and Public Administration in the NCAs in May 2024.

The oversight visits emanated from a petition received by the National Assembly in 2022, referred to the committee for further investigations, which was lodged by a civic organization known as Lisha Empowerment and Development. The petition calls for the urgent revival of the market for livestock in the Northern Communal Areas (NCAs), further imploring parliament to intervene in what the group describes as “underdevelopment of the livestock market in the NCAs to the point of market extinction”.

Livestock quarantine facilities intended to assist farmers manage and market their livestock in the Kunene region are either non-functional or have been totally vandalized. About three

livestock quarantine camps have fallen victim to vandals, further jeopardizing opportunities for farmers to sell their animals in formal markets. The only facility still in good condition is the Ehomba Community quarantine camp, located over 100 kilometres north of Opuwo. Despite the latter's good condition, that has a carrying capacity of over 100 cattle, it is not being used for its primary purpose, since MEATCO stopped operations in the area some years ago. It is instead leased to a local businessman who runs an abattoir. The Quarantine facilities in Kunene, built by government with assistance from the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) were inaugurated in the year 2000 to help farmers in the NCAs to market their livestock and increase agricultural productivity. The facilities which were initially operated by Meatco, stopped activities in 2014 following the loss of the South African market due to outbreak of animal diseases.

In the Omusati region, the Omutambo maowe quarantine camp, has equally not been operational following Meatco's closure of its operations in 2015. The facility is over 30 000 hectares in size, divided into 31 camps and has not carried any cattle in the NCAs for slaughter in 10 years, except for the 75 state owned cattle held for the purpose of testing quarantined animals for FMD

and other animal diseases. According to officials at the facility, three camps at the quarantine farm, were in good working condition and ready to accommodate cattle for the market should Meatco decide to resume operations.

The dormancy of the facility has irked many farmers in the area who feel that they are being deliberately sidelined in the marketing of their livestock. The lack of a grazing area, exacerbated by a large tract of fenced quarantine land, has further resulted in conflict as farmers' animals scramble for limited grazing. There have been repeated appeals from farmers to allow them to graze their animals in the quarantine camps, particularly during droughts.

The committee was further told that the privately run Outapi abattoir under a joint venture between a local businessman and the Namibia liberation struggle association, has also experienced disruptions in its operations since the signing of the agreement with government in 2014. Disruptions have been as a result of the poor state of equipment, leaving farmers in the area with no lucrative market for their livestock that exceed 2000. The construction of the Ongwediva meat processing plant meant to process and add value to meat products in the area has also stalled. Many meat suppliers now resort to sourcing meat products, south of the redline.

Veterinary cordon fence

At both meetings, farmers criticized the Veterinary Cordon Fence (VCF) policy they said needed to be reviewed as it was designed to favour a minority group at the expense of majority of Namibians. The VCF is an age-old policy dating back to the German colonial period that separates northern Namibia from central and southern parts of the country with the intention to control

see NCA on page 12...



The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Economics and Public Administration pose with community members at Opuwo during one of its oversight visits.

...NCA from page 11

infectious disease among livestock. The rationale behind the policy has been that it has sustained the Namibian meat industry, particularly the export of such products to the EU and other international markets. However, critics have criticized the arrangement as limiting communal farmers access to lucrative domestic, regional and international markets.

Namibia has over 2.5 million cattle, with 1.2 million found in the NCAs while the southern part of the veterinary cordon fence accounts for 1.3 million cattle. The export of NCA cattle to international markets is however restricted by the VCF, colloquially referred to as the red line.

Silver lining

Following consultations with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, it became apparent that

government has started implementing an infrastructure development programme by constructing and upgrading abattoirs and meat processing plants in regions places such as Katima Mulilo, Rundu, Oshakati, Eenhana and Outapi. According to the Ministry, in the Kunene region, a contractor will soon be appointed to upgrade the Opuwo slaughterhouse and Omutambo Maowe quarantine farm that serves livestock farmers in the Kunene, Omusati and Oshana regions.

A representative from Meatco, Thimotheus Kativa who also formed part of the meetings, noted that the company was also in the process of resuming with its operations through what is referred to as commodity-based trade, that entails buying livestock from farmers in the Omusati region and surrounding areas for quarantine in local camps before transporting them to Meatco operated export abattoirs of

Rundu and Katima Mulilo. The nearest abattoir in Oshakati, is currently leased to a private operator.

During a consultative meeting with MEATCO that preceded the oversight, the company appealed for policy interventions to solve challenges it is faced with such as lack of working capital to carry out its operations due to a massive fall in its market share in recent years as a result of underutilization of its abattoirs. Meatco further revealed that farmers in the NCAs can now breathe a sigh of relief following the discovery of a lucrative market for their animals in countries such as Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo and Gulf cooperation countries among others.

The committee was led by Hon. Natangwe Ithete with fellow MPs, Hons. Maria Elago, Gotthard Kasuto, Yvette Araes, Johanna Kandjimi, and Jennifer van den Heever. ■

PRESIDENT OF 78TH UNGA ADDRESSES JOINT SITTING OF PARLIAMENT

• George Sanzila



President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Dennis Francis

President of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Dennis Francis addressed a joint sitting of parliament on the 20th of June 2024. The President of the UNGA visited Namibia as part of his outreach activities to various UN member countries, focusing on the need to accelerate the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

His visit also came ahead of the recent appointment of Namibia and Germany as co-hosts of the Summit of the Future (SOTF) at the UN in September this year.

Francis stressed the importance of multilateralism and the need to urgently implement the SDGs by 2030. "The summit of the future is part of a continuum of efforts to deliver faster and smarter on the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and Paris



Members of Parliament during the Joint Sitting.

agreement on climate change", noted the President.

During a meeting that preceded the joint session, Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi appealed UN support in setting up a unit dedicated to the monitoring, evaluation and implementation of SDGs. ■

PARLIAMENT WANTS *FIMA pension preservation regulations tabled*

• George Sanzila

Windhoek - Parliament has recommended that the Minister of Finance and Public Enterprises, Hon. Iipumbu Shiimi put on hold the controversial clause relating to the preservation of retirement benefits in the new Financial Institutions and Markets Act, Act. No2 of 2021, and that the regulations concerned be tabled in parliament for approval before implementation and enforcement by Namibia Financial Institutions Supervisory Authority (NAMFISA).

Parliament further suggested that the Attorney General must be roped in to clarify the constitutionality of introducing mandatory pension preservation in the new legislation, among a host of other demands. These recommendations are contained in a comprehensive report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Economics and Public Administration that was recently tabled and adopted in the National Assembly.

FIMA, which was gazetted in 2021 to replace the Pension Fund Act of 1956, has attracted a lot of criticism from all quarters of society, leading to the postponement of the of the implementation of the Act that was supposed to come into force as from 01 October 2022. What seems to have ruffled feathers is the pension preservation clause in the Act, that compels those that leave their employment before retirement to have access to only 25% of their fund credit while the rest is preserved until they reach the prescribed retirement

age of 55 years. Following concerns raised by the public over the Act, the committee led by its chairperson, Hon. Natangwe Ithete held extensive consultations including an oversight workshop held at Swakopmund in May this year involving stakeholders such as the Namibia Financial Institutions Supervisory Authority (NAMFISA), Government Institutions Pension Fund (GIPF), Retirement Fund for Local Authorities and Utility Services in Namibia and Retirement Fund Solutions among others.

At that workshop, NAMFISA Chief Executive Officer, Kenneth Matomola reiterated the rationale behind the Act that it was meant to replace the outdated Pension Fund Act of 1956 that does not live up to the standards of the International Organization of Securities Commission (IOSCO) and that the legislation lacks innovation. He also told lawmakers that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) raised similar concerns about the ineffectiveness of regulation and supervision in the Namibian financial sector, particularly the non-banking financial institutions. He added that the clause that has been the bone of contention is solely aimed at consumer protection to ensure that pensioners are financially sustained when they reach the prescribed retirement age of 55 years or their dependents in the event of death.

"This stipulation is opposed to the common practice of withdrawing retirements savings early to meet short term financial needs, which ultimately, results in many people not having sufficient savings after retirement. Pensioners mostly end up depending on social grants from the state", said Matomola. Matomola

further stated FIMA has the added advantage of shielding member's retirement savings from bankruptcy or creditors.

However, representatives of the Retirement Fund for Local Authorities and Utility Services in Namibia (RFLAUN), strongly disagreed with the clause noting that further investigations should have been done on those leaving their employment but have no other means of income, particularly if such people have financial obligations to meet such as the settlement of housing loans. They noted that the clause was an infringement on the rights to take up a lump sum under the current laws calling on the Namibian parliament to live up to its role of oversight and representation by recalling the Act for further consultations and review. RFLAUN met a joint parliamentary committee over the same issue again early last year. Although acknowledging the good intentions of the Act, the local authority pension fund questioned the relevance of the Act in the Namibian socio-economic context, singling out compulsory preservation and forced annuitization as major concerns.

"FIMA is a product of the Canadian consultant working in collaboration with NAMFISA and consequently, FIMA has introduced provisions such as compulsory preservation and forced annuitization which have not taken into consideration the unique nature of the namibian financial sector, its market and social economic practices", noted the representatives of RFLAUN.

FIMA's objectives are to consolidate and harmonise the laws regulating financial institutions, financial intermediaries and financial markets in Namibia and to provide for incidental matters.



The Parliamentary standing Committee on Economics and Public Administration during one of its consultative meetings.

FOOD SECURITY VERSUS *Human Rights in Africa*

• Immanuel Kooper

During a joint presentation between the Committees on Justice and that of Rural Economy, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources of the Pan-African Parliament put specific emphasis on human rights issues, directed to human rights defenders, and bring forth numerous examples to address these concerns. Food insecurity just like migration is a human rights issue thus this call was specifically directed to bodies such as the African National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), the Pan African Parliament, the African Union Commission departments, the UN departments and Civil Society Organisations across the continent. It is regrettably noted that human rights bodies are not doing enough to address the issues of human rights and food security. They need strengthening in the respective countries and should be able to work independently leading to prevailing peace across the globe. This, according to the two committees call for human rights issues to be addressed in conjunction with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG's). They highlighted an example of African migrants crossing the Mediterranean and dying on sea and that African leaders that are mum on this issue.

Conflict and insecurity or simply organized violence remains the primary driver of acute hunger and extreme poverty in many parts of the continent. People living in countries affected by protracted crises are more than twice as likely to go hungry than people elsewhere. The Palestine issue where South Africa is lauded for its stance and support on the Palestine discourse was again given as the perfect example of unending violence and conflict.

It was indeed noted that the human rights issues come a long way on the African continent and can be seen and experienced in various ways. According to the Geneva Academy, Africa currently experiences more than 35 non-international armed conflicts in countries where armed groups are

fighting against government forces and /or against each other.

Although there is about 80% sponsorship to feeding schemes from Member states on the continent, the prevailing conflicts hampers food production as access to conflict prone areas are challenging. More than eight out of ten acutely food insecure people in Africa live in fragile or conflict-affected situations. Another challenge is the Visa requirements among African countries whereby about 51% of food insecurity is experienced only in Africa. What could be seen as a solution is the estimated 289 research facilities in Africa and easier free trade agreements that may address these challenges.

The economic outlook across the globe is another concern as many countries worldwide are struggling with high debt levels that is preventing many governments from protecting their most vulnerable populations, whilst there are no clear signs of relief from the high costs of debt. Many fragile states have emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic with weaker economies and greater instability, leaving them more exposed to traditional drivers of hunger such as conflict and climate shocks. Despite the decreasing global food prices, food remains very expensive in many African countries.

The World Food Programme (WFP) focus areas and response is eminent as it is among many efforts, supporting governments in their effort to eradicating all forms of malnutrition. WFP supports anticipatory actions and climate risk management therefore calls for more partnership for joint actions and is advocating for school feeding as a bridge for humanitarian work and development and building human capital.

The presentation concluded with some recommendations on strategies for strengthening humanitarian assistance and food security as follows;

- Ensure timely and sufficient support to all vulnerable groups.

- Removal of export bans, extraordinary taxes and duties on humanitarian aid.
- Diversification of import sources for food, fuel and fertilisers to enhance resilience.
- Establishment of import facilities for food, fuel and fertilisers aimed at supporting the poorest and most affected countries.
- Maintaining of stable policies by avoiding export restrictions and import subsidies that could disrupt markets

Further recommendations were made for climate resilience and sustainable livelihoods as follows;

- Strengthening climate risk monitoring and early warning systems for accurate and timely decision making.
- Making sure that investments are aimed at enhancing community resilience to climate shocks.
- Rethinking of food production with the focus on access and uptake of food. Looking at various food systems.
- Leveraging country-specific advantages such as land, water and labour.
- Promote diversification into other food sources and encourage the production of food for which the country has a comparative advantage i.e. the indigenous food staffs.
- Foster regional trade and collaboration by exploring initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) for broader cooperation and food security.



GRANDPARENTS SHOULDER BURDEN

as Malnutrition Crisis Deepens in Zambezi Region

• Sakeus Kadhikwa

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Social Development and Family affairs has uncovered rising cases of malnutrition in the Zambezi region. The committee was conducting regional consultative and familiarisation visits to state hospitals in the Zambezi, Kavango east and west and Ohangwena regions to ascertain cases of malnutrition in Namibia. During a visit to the Katima Mulilo Hospital, a poignant reality unfolded as it became apparent that grandparents, often senior citizens, are increasingly becoming the primary caretakers for malnourished children. Zambezi Region has reported that the hospital receives between two to six malnutrition cases per intake, with grandparents shouldering the responsibility left by mothers who have relinquished care.

This troubling revelation underscores the profound human impact of Namibia's malnutrition crisis, a concern that has prompted the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Social Development, and Family Affairs through its oversight mandate, to take decisive action. The Committee is led by Hon. Dr. Becky R. K. Ndjoze-Ojo.

During engagements with stakeholders that included Ministry of Health and Social Services, Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and other invited key role players, Dr. Helena Bainga, Senior Medical Doctor at the

Katima Mulilo State Hospital, shed light on critical factors contributing to malnutrition, citing financial constraints that hinder mothers from providing adequate nutrition and the detrimental effects of alcohol consumption among caregivers on child health. "most the parents don't live in town and some are from the disadvantage background. We encourage mothers to have supplementary feeds. We also find out that most of these mothers are not only nutritional wise that is depriving the mothers, but social circumstances, and that most of them lack awareness in family planning. Echoed Dr, Bainga.

In response, parliamentarians proposed legislative measures to protect child nutrition, advocating for inclusive policy-making processes that encompass diverse citizen perspectives.

The committee also emphasized stringent oversight of government nutrition programs to ensure accountability and efficiency. They recommended dedicated budget allocations to sustain impactful interventions nationwide and underscored the importance of community engagement and public education campaigns to raise awareness about malnutrition.

Community outreach teams were recognized for their vital role in identifying and addressing malnutrition cases, despite challenges such as staffing shortages in health services. Traditional medical practitioner, Dr. Booysen Songa Chibotu of Out of Nature Herbal Clinic provided insights

into cultural solutions using traditional foods and herbs to supplement dietary needs, highlighting community-based approaches to nutrition.

Urban areas, particularly towns, reported a rise in malnutrition cases exacerbated by limited agricultural land, prompting calls for innovative strategies in food production and distribution. The Ministry of Education's efforts to strengthen nutritional support programs received accolades, showcasing effective collaboration across ministries in tackling malnutrition.

Looking ahead, stakeholders emphasized the integration of nutrition guidelines into broader health and education frameworks and stressed sustained efforts to address food deficiency and accessibility issues comprehensively. The committee is preparing a comprehensive report based on these consultations, slated for presentation to the National Assembly for deliberation and implementation.

This initiative underscores parliament's commitment to prioritizing the health and well-being of all Namibians, especially vulnerable populations, through proactive governance and collaborative strategies aimed at eradicating malnutrition nationwide. As the committee progresses through consultations in all the 14 Regions, their efforts aim to ensure a holistic approach to tackling Namibia's malnutrition crisis. ■

MPS IN RWANDA FOR BENCHMARKING

• Rafael Hangula

A delegation of Members of Parliament (MPs) from the National Council Standing Committee on Education, Science, ICT, and Youth Development undertook a week-long study visit to the Senate of Rwanda from 10 to 14 June 2024.

Led by its Chairperson Olivia Hanghuwo, the committee aimed to learn best practices in Education, Science, ICT, culture, and youth development.

Other Members were Bethuel Tjaveondja, Kosmas Katura, Jeremias Goeieman, Deriou Benson and Sakeus Nangula.

During a Courtesy call on the President of the Senate of Rwanda Dr François Xavier Kalinda, the Chairperson voiced their interest in benchmarking

Rwanda's integration of Science and ICT in the education system, promotion of culture, arts, language, and youth empowerment programs.

The visit also focused on identifying potential areas for collaboration between Namibia and Rwanda. President Kalinda highlighted the shared history and resilience between the two countries, emphasising the importance of enhancing parliamentary cooperation.

"Indeed, our two countries share a similar history, marked by a tragic past as well as a spiritual resilience. This shared history provides us with a unique opportunity to forge special relations and cooperation initiatives," said Kalinda.

"As we host your benchmark visit to Rwanda, it is an opportunity to enhance our relations in the field of parliamentary cooperation, in addition to adapting strategic areas of existing bilateral cooperation," he emphasised.

This visit followed the important visit to Rwanda of the Chairperson of the National Council of Namibia, Lucas Sinimbo Muha in March 2023, which was aimed to strengthen bilateral relations and particularly to enhance cooperation between the two parliaments.

The committee engaged with various relevant stakeholders, including Rwanda's Minister of Education and Minister of Youth, as well as their counterpart, Rwanda's committee on

see Rwanda on page 17...



Namibian delegation with the President of the Senate of Rwanda Dr François Xavier Kalinda (second from L).

Social Affairs and Human Rights and is set to visit projects at the Integrated Polytechnic Regional college which aims at providing technology education as a major vehicle for achieving and sustaining industrial development in Rwanda.

MPs also visited the Kigali Genocide Memorial and laid wreaths at mass graves adjacent to the Memorial, where some 250,000 victims of the 1994 genocide lie buried.

In a meeting with the Minister of Education in Rwanda, Gaspard Twagirayezu, the committee learned about Rwanda's initiatives in consolidating public universities, expanding primary and secondary education, and attracting international universities to establish campuses in Rwanda.

Rwanda's integration of ICT in the education system has been a significant focus of the Ministry of Education, said Twagirayezu.

The minister said that the country has made substantial efforts to ensure connectivity in schools, with initiatives like the Smart Education project that aims to connect schools across the country. By leveraging technologies such as fiber, 4G, and satellite connectivity, Rwanda has successfully connected 1,500 schools and plans to connect even more by the end of the year.

The minister highlighted initiatives like the Rwanda Coding Academy and technical education policies aimed at enhancing employment opportunities for graduates.

"In addition to connectivity, Rwanda has also prioritised providing access to devices in education. The implementation of smart classrooms equipped with computers and ensuring that teachers have access to ICT devices are key components of this initiative. The Ministry of Education has launched programs like Connect Rwanda to make ICT devices more affordable and accessible to teachers, further enhancing the learning environment," said the minister.

Capacity building is another crucial aspect of Rwanda's ICT in education strategy.

"The establishment of the Rwanda Coding Academy and the focus on technical education policy demonstrate the country's commitment to equipping students and teachers with the necessary skills to leverage technology effectively," he emphasised.

The minister said by investing in technical education, Rwanda aims to ensure that 60% of post-secondary students pursue technical education, leading to high employment rates among graduates.

In addition, the minister said that, Rwanda's school building policy has had a significant impact on various aspects of society, including health, education, and nutrition.

"The government's efforts to expand school infrastructure and provide essential resources have resulted in improved learning outcomes and increased access to education for children across the country," he said.

The minister also said the country has seen an interesting number in the growth of international students. "This is also to leverage on some of the investment that the country has been doing with IT, in peace and security, because we are a safe country and people want to come and live here.

Rwanda has more than 35 private high-learning institutions according to the minister of education, and the country is working hard to attract even more.

The discussion also touched on the impact of school feeding programs, which the minister said is increasing school attendance and engagement.

"Parents are now more inclined to send their children to school, as it provides a safe environment for learning and social interaction. This shift in mindset has positively influenced enrolment rates and contributed to the effectiveness of Early Childhood Development (ECD) policies," he said.

Efforts to improve teachers' welfare have resulted in an 88% increase in salaries for school teachers in Rwanda. This initiative the minister said has not

only retained over 90% of teachers in the profession but also enhanced their financial stability through access to low-interest loans.

"These measures have played a significant role in promoting student retention, enhancing learning outcomes, and fostering a conducive learning environment," Twagirayezu said.

The committee also engaged with Rwanda's Minister of Youth, Dr. Abdallah Utumatwishima, discussing youth development initiatives to address challenges such as unemployment, teenage pregnancies, and access to education and training.

Dr Utumatwishima, said programs like Youth Connect provide platforms for young people to access opportunities, mentorship, and funding for entrepreneurial ventures.

"The ministry's focus on skills development, employment, health, civic engagement, and creative economy underscores its commitment to empowering the youth and fostering sustainable development," he said.

He said that 80% of Rwandan people have some financial accessibility, and their employment is 50.6% for those who are ready to work.

With all the success stories the country is also confronted with challenges such as that of unemployment and teenage pregnancies.

"So, we have 16.6% unemployment rate. The biggest number that is causing headache to us is what is called NEET, which is young people not in Education, not in Employment, and not in Training. Those are the standard young people, and they are 28.4%," he said.

"Another number that is very critical is the teenage pregnancies. We have 5% of our adolescents, young girls, who've been pregnant below the age of 19. And this is a very big number for us," he added.



NAMIBIA, CHINA SOLIDIFY *Parliamentary Cooperation*

• Rafael Hangula

The Speaker of Namibia's National Assembly Peter Katjavivi and the Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress (NPC) Cai Dafeng expressed mutual appreciation and commitment to furthering cooperation between their respective parliaments.

In a bilateral meeting that took place in May this year at the Parliament building, Speaker Katjavivi highlighted the significant support extended by China to Namibia, particularly during the challenging period of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said the assistance provided by China both at the national and parliamentary levels, has been instrumental in bolstering Namibia's capacity to navigate through the crisis and prepare for future challenges.

"The relationship between Namibia and China has been strengthened through various parliamentary exchanges and significant gestures of goodwill, not long ago during the Covid-19 pandemic China assisted us with the much needed Covid-19 vaccine and medical equipment," said Katjavivi.

"Before Covid-19 H.E Li Zhanshu Chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC donated the parliamentary bus as well as the refurbishment of our C1 conference hall, both of which have greatly enhanced our parliamentary facilities and operations and helped us to execute our mandate during the pandemic," he added.

Katjavivi added that the assistance has facilitated the smooth functioning of Namibia's National Assembly, enabling it to fulfill its constitutional obligations effectively.

"This support has been crucial in mitigating the adverse impacts of the pandemic on Namibia's socio-economic landscape," he said.

As part of ongoing parliamentary exchanges, Vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC announced material assistance worth 500,000 Yuan to support the operational needs of Namibia's parliament,

highlighting the enduring commitment to strengthening legislative ties between the two nations.

"This gesture underscores the depth of cooperation between the legislative bodies of both countries and reflects China's enduring commitment to strengthening ties with Namibia," said Dafeng.

"We need to join hands in defending each other's interests and the common interests of developing countries to make positive achievements to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind," he added.

"Undoubtedly, exchanges between our two legislatures are an important part of China-Namibia relationship. Under your personal care and support, Mr. Speaker, the exchanges between our two legislative institutions have seen many highlights and remarkable achievements," he said.

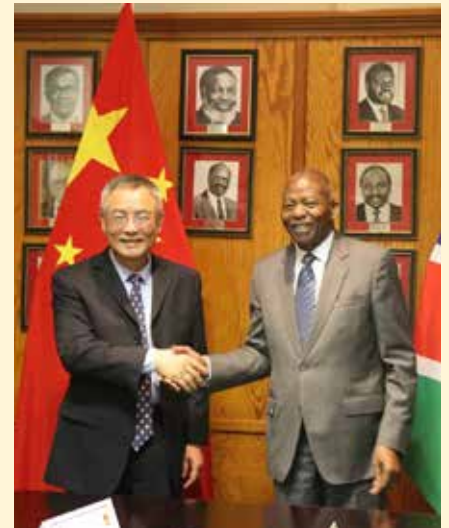
He further lauded Namibia's unwavering support on issues of mutual concern, including Taiwan, human rights, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong, affirming the strength of bilateral ties over the past 34 years.

Dafeng also acknowledged the Speaker's dedication to promoting global peace and development, whilst affirming his support for Namibia to assume a greater role in both regional and international affairs.

"The commitment to bolster international coordination with Namibia underscores China's commitment to fostering collaboration between nations for mutual benefit," he stated.

Looking ahead, both parties reiterated their commitment to deepening bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

Dafeng pledged to further enhance high-level exchanges, share governance experiences, and promote mutually beneficial partnerships for common development in key areas such as infrastructure, agriculture, education, and green energy, with a focus on maximising Namibia's resource potential.



Speaker of the National Assembly Prof. Peter Katjavivi with the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress (NPC).

The meeting also underscored the importance of multilateral collaboration in advancing common interests and defending international fairness and justice.

"The relationship between Namibia and China has been strengthened through various parliamentary exchanges and significant gestures of goodwill, not long ago during the Covid-19 pandemic China assisted us with the much needed Covid-19 vaccine and medical equipment."

NAMIBIA-RUSSIA PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP *Group Holds First meeting*

• Sakeus likela

In a historic engagement, the Namibia-Russia Parliamentary Friendship Group held its first meeting in Windhoek to fortify the existing cooperation agreement and chart a future course for inter parliamentary interactions.

The meeting was attended by members of the National Council and a delegation of members of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation who are in Namibia on a weeklong working visit.

During the meeting, Chairperson of the Namibia-Russia Parliamentary Friendship Group, John Likando, expressed his appreciation to the presiding officers of both houses – Hon. Lukas Sinimbo Muha, Chairperson of the National Council, and Her Excellency Mrs. Valentina Matvienko, Chairperson of the Federation Council, for their pivotal roles in realising the cooperation agreement between the two chambers of parliament.

“The exchange visits undertaken so far have laid a strong foundation for the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement,” Likando stated, highlighting the importance of continued engagement and collaboration between Namibia and Russia.

Likando emphasised the need for a joint technical working group. This group, composed of staff from both chambers, would maintain the working

relationship and momentum of the cooperation agreement.

Likando outlined the National Council's commitment to learning and exchanging best practices, enhancing the capacity of both Members of Parliament and staff through seminars, workshops, and study visits.

Priority areas for cooperation include the digitalisation of parliamentary activities, boosting tourism and trade, and gaining expertise in health and social welfare.

The meeting also focused on upcoming benchmarking study visits in the energy sector, social welfare, and effective oversight, which are slated to be undertaken by relevant standing committees by mid 2025.

These visits will deepen and expand the perspectives of Namibian parliamentarians on the identified areas covered in the cooperation agreement.

The agreement signed between the two parliaments underscores the commitment to fostering political, economic, scientific, and cultural cooperation between Namibia and Russia.

The National Council intends to prioritise cooperation in areas such as the digitalisation of parliamentary activities, boosting tourism and trade, and expertise in health and social welfare.

Likando also expressed gratitude to the government and people of Russia for its continuous support, particularly in education, where young Namibians are afforded opportunities to study critical fields such as medicine and engineering at Russian institutions.

He also expressed sympathy for the recent terror attack in the Dagestan Region of Russia, which resulted in the tragic loss of 19 lives and injuries to 25 others.

“We share our sympathy with you and the entire Russian people and Government of the Russian Federation

on the recent terror attack,” Likando said, conveying condolences on behalf of Namibia.

On her part, hon. Yelena Perminova, the Chairperson of the Committee on Social Policy and Head of the Friendship Group for Cooperation from the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, shared her vision for the future of the bilateral relationship between Russia and Namibia.

Hon. Perminova emphasised Russia's commitment to implementing the provisions of the agreement recently signed between the two parliaments.

She highlighted the importance of enhancing cooperation in key areas such as education, health, and social welfare.

One of the notable points she mentioned was Russia's intention to increase the number of Namibian students studying in Russian universities.

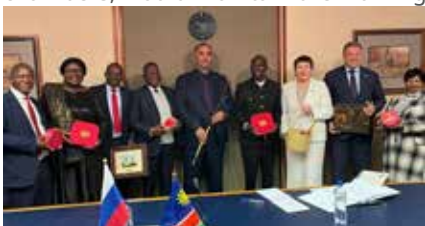
To support this, Russia plans to expand the scholarship quota for Namibian students, particularly in the field of medicine.

She also touched upon Russia's potential involvement in the upcoming Presidential and National Assembly elections, expressing a willingness to participate as observers if invited.

This, she believed, would help maintain a high level of cooperation between the two nations. She further stressed the importance of the shared history between Namibia and Russia, which predates Namibia's independence.

Furthermore, she discussed plans to gather historical material from the period when Russia supported Namibia, with the intention of bringing this valuable history back to Namibia.

This initiative aims to preserve and celebrate the historical ties between the two countries. ■



Namibia and Russia MPs belonging to the Friendship Group pictured after their first meeting.

NAMIBIA, RUSSIA STRENGTHEN TIES

• Rafael Hangula

The Chairperson of the National Council, Lukas Sinimbo Muha, in June welcomed a delegation from the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, led by Elena Perminova, Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs and Head of the Friendship Group for Cooperation between the Federation Council of the Russian Federation and the National Council of Namibia.

The visit, described by Muha, as a “significant milestone,” underscores the deepening relationship between the two nations and their legislative bodies.

During the courtesy call on Muha, discussions centred on the implementation of agreements signed in March 2023 between the Federation Council and the National Council of Namibia, aimed at fostering closer legislative ties and sharing best practices.

The two legislators expressed optimism about future collaborations, particularly in technological innovation for parliamentary operations under Namibia's E-Parliament Strategy.

In addition, Muha expressed deep gratitude for Russia's historical assistance during Namibia's struggle for independence and emphasised the continued strength of bilateral ties since the formal establishment of diplomatic relations in March 1990.

He acknowledged Russia's ongoing support across various sectors including education, defense, and security, citing recent collaborations and agreements that have further cemented these bonds.

The visit reciprocates the diplomatic gestures made by both nations, including Namibia's participation in Russia's presidential election observation missions, reinforcing mutual respect and cooperation in



Chairperson of the National Council (R) Lukas Muha with the head of Russia delegation Elena Perminova.

international affairs. The Chairperson extended congratulations to Russia for its recent successful presidential election and independence celebrations.

“Russia has been a steadfast partner, providing technical assistance crucial for our development,” Muha remarked, reflecting on the recent discoveries of green hydrogen, oil, and gas in Namibia and the potential for Russian expertise to guide responsible exploitation of these resources.

The Chairperson also highlighted Namibia's commitment to democratic principles and economic progress, despite challenges such as persistent droughts exacerbated by climate change.

He underscored the importance of a peaceful global environment, echoing sentiments for stability and growth through international cooperation.

On her part, Perminova highlighted the strategic importance of the parliamentary exchange, emphasising the stable and trust-based political dialogue between Russia and Namibia.

She underscored the role of ongoing delegation exchanges and collaborative efforts in healthcare, education, and social policy as critical to furthering bilateral ties.

“We look forward to enhancing our cooperation across all levels for the mutual benefit of our peoples.”

She further commended Namibia's democratic journey since independence and reaffirmed Russia's commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation across various governmental sectors.

“Our political dialogue remains strong and immune to geopolitical tensions, focusing instead on mutual benefit and solidarity,” Perminova stated, highlighting recent joint efforts including parliamentary

exchanges and international observer missions.

The courtesy call on Muha culminated in discussions about future cooperation initiatives, including potential Russian involvement in observing Namibia's upcoming elections later this year.

“We know that an active preparation is underway in Namibia for the next presidential and parliamentary elections in November this year. If our Namibian friends are interested in the participation of the senators of the Federation Council in the observation of these elections, we would be very grateful to receive an invitation from your side,” she said.

The delegation also visited the Heroes Acre where they laid wreaths to the departed heroes including the late Dr Hage Geingob.

The delegation also met the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health, Social Welfare and Labour Affairs, and have a series of meetings with the Deputy Minister of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, Alexia Manombe-Ncube, Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB), Minister of Health and Social Services Dr. Kalumbi Shangula, amongst others.



ADV. NAMISEB REAPPOINTED *as NC Secretary*

• Rafael Hangula

National Council Chairperson Lukas Sinimbo Muha, has on Tuesday this week reappointed Adv. Tousy Namiseb as the Secretary to the National Council, effective from 1 May 2024. Adv. Namiseb's term will extend until 30 April 2029.

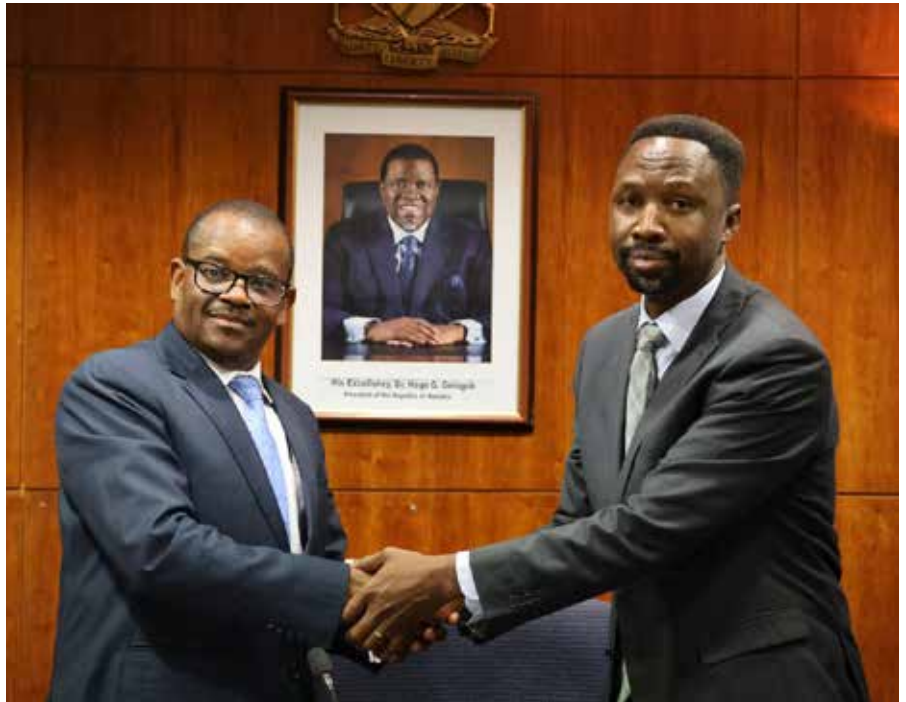
The Chairperson announced Adv. Namiseb's reappointment during a staff meeting that took place on Tuesday.

He said this decision aligns with article 73A (1) of the Constitution, which states that *"Subject to the laws of Namibia regulating the appointment of Parliamentary staff, and the directives of the National Council, the Chairperson shall appoint or if such laws prescribe a different procedure for the appointment of the Secretary of the National Council, designate the person holding the appropriate post as the Secretary of the National Council who shall perform the functions and duties assigned to such Secretary by this Constitution or by the Chairperson"*.

Adv. Namiseb has been a part of the National Council since 2 May 2019, a position he held until his reappointment on 30 April 2024. His initial appointment was necessitated by the deployment of the former Secretary, Emilia Mkusa, as Namibia's Ambassador to Ethiopia.

The Chairperson said his contributions at the National Council have been significant as he has played a crucial role in supporting Members of Parliament (MPs) in fulfilling the constitutional mandate of the National Council, adding that, he has provided guidance to staff members, contributed to the development and implementation of the National Council Strategic Plan 2023/24 - 2027/28, and played a key role in the Namibian E-Parliament Strategy.

"Furthermore, he has been involved in the realignment of National Council Standing Committees, the revision of Standing Rules and Orders, the facilitation of cooperation agreements with sister Parliaments, and the overall



Chairperson of the National Council, Lukas Muha (R) and Adv. Tousy Namiseb.

business process reengineering," said Muha.

"Adv. Namiseb possesses extensive knowledge in legal and parliamentary work. He has consistently demonstrated exceptional administrative and professional skills, supported by his academic and professional qualifications," he added.

The Chairperson has expressed full confidence in Adv. Namiseb, highlighting his strong team player character and his ability to provide valuable advice on work-related matters.

"I believe that these qualities will contribute to the future development and service delivery of the National Council," he stated.

Staff members at the meeting warmly welcomed Adv. Adv. Namiseb's reappointment and wished him continued success in elevating the institution to greater heights.

Adv. Namiseb previously held the position of Deputy Executive Director (Judicial Services) in the Office of the Judiciary before joining the National Council. He is a legal practitioner with an LLB from the University of Cape Town and an LLM from the University of Pretoria. His expertise lies in human rights, particularly in protecting children from harmful cultural practices.

Throughout his career, he has held leadership roles in the Ministry of Justice, the Judiciary, and now in the Namibian Parliament. He has also contributed to academia and civic society, showcasing his diverse skill set in corporate governance, leadership, research, mediation, and budget formulation. Adv. Namiseb has served on various committees and bodies, demonstrating his commitment to legal reform and justice.



NANDI-NDAITWAH URGES *JNC members to champion education*

• Sakeus likela



Chairperson of the National Council Hon. Lukas Muha with the Vice President Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah and the Chinese Ambassador to Namibia H.E. Zhao Weiping pose for a group photo with members of the Junior National Council.

Vice President H.E. Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah has called on members of the Junior National Council to lead by example and encourage their peers to stay away from harmful behaviours such as alcohol and drugs, which can negatively impact education.

She made these remarks when she officially opened the third session of the Junior National Council (JNC) in September this year.

The JNC provides a platform for young people across the country to engage in the legislative process and understand how the government functions.

It also helps them develop public speaking skills and gain insight into policy-making as well as the roles of policy makers.

The JNC also allows young people to voice their concerns and propose solutions on issues affecting them.

Members of the JNC are nominated from schools representing all 14 regions, with each region sending three representatives who serve for a period of three years.

The theme for this year's session was: "Educating a Namibian child fit for Agenda 2063 and beyond".

During her statement, Nandi-Ndaitwah stressed the importance of commitment to education from pupils,

teachers, and parents alike to build a knowledge-based society.

She emphasised the government's commitment to education and urged all stakeholders to eliminate barriers to learning for children and to ensure that the education system is not only responsive to the current needs of our society, but also anticipates the demands of the future.

This is critical, she said, because with the emergence of industries such as Green Hydrogen and oil and gas, Namibia is more than ever compelled to equip its citizens with "the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing world".

"This means embracing a holistic approach to education that goes beyond the mere acquisition of literacy and academic knowledge. To educate a Namibian child fit for Agenda 2063, ... we are obliged to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, must have access to education and training opportunities that are both equitable and of high quality," she said.

The Vice President also emphasised the importance of integrating digital literacy into the education system, advocating for the creation of smart classrooms to prepare students for a technology-driven future.

"Only then, we will prepare our learners and students to navigate and succeed in a world where technology plays an integral role in every aspect of life," she said.

She therefore urged JNC members and young people at large to make use of opportunities made available and hone their critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

By doing so, Nandi-Ndaitwah said, Namibia will "definitely create a generation of thinkers and doers who can drive Namibia's development into Vision 2030 and beyond".

"As you take on the role of Junior Legislators, I encourage you to promote ethical values and responsible behaviour among your peers. Our goal is to build a knowledge-based society where education is valued by students, teachers, and parents alike," she said.

Also speaking at the official opening of the JNC, Chinese ambassador to Namibia, H.E. Zhao Weiping, expressed his country's commitment to contribute to Namibia's efforts of advancing youth related programs.

He pledged that his embassy will continue to support the JNC with various sponsorships to ensure that young people in Namibia continue to learn and voice their opinions on matters of national and international concern.

"The Chinese Embassy is very glad to have sponsored the JNC since last year and we will continue to provide our support every year in future," he said. ■



JNC member during one of their parliamentary sessions.

CHINA'S NPC VICE CHAIRMAN EXPRESSES COMMITMENT *to enhanced cooperation with National Council*

• Rafael Hangula

Windhoek-The Chairperson of the National Council Lukas Muha, engaged in a pivotal bilateral meeting with the Vice-Chairman of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee of China, Cai Dafeng. The meeting held at Parliament building in May, was marked by fervent discussions aimed at fortifying the ties between the legislative bodies of Namibia and China.

With the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect, both parties delved into various facets of collaboration, emphasising the importance of bolstering the existing relations between the two nations. The dialogue, characterised by openness and constructive engagement, underscored the shared commitment to advancing bilateral cooperation in legislative affairs.

During the meeting, issues of common interest were meticulously

explored, encompassing areas such as legislative frameworks, parliamentary practices, and avenues for enhanced legislative exchanges. Both sides expressed their determination to deepen understanding and cooperation, fostering a conducive environment for the exchange of experiences and best practices in legislative governance.

The Chairperson reiterated Namibia's steadfast dedication to nurturing robust partnerships with China, emphasising the significance of parliamentary diplomacy in consolidating bilateral relations.

Furthermore, the meeting delved into the significance of technology and innovation in driving development, with Muha highlighting Namibia's E-Parliament Strategy 2022-2027. He expressed hopes for a digitalised National Council chamber by 2030 and thanked China for its support in sponsoring activities like the Junior National Council.

On his part the, the Vice Chairman Defeng emphasised the significance of the longstanding relationship between the two parliaments.

"Our two legislatures have maintained close exchanges, playing an important role to enhance mutual understanding, deepen cooperation, and carry forward friendship," he remarked.

Highlighting the readiness for further collaboration, Vice Chairman Defeng stated that, "China's NPC is ready to continue to have more cooperation and exchanges with the Namibian National Council at multiple levels, in multiple channels, and also in multiple ways to strengthen our exchange of experience in terms of governance and legislation."

The commitment to broadening cooperation extends to various dimensions, as Vice Chairman Defeng noted, "Both deputies of China's

NPC and members of the Namibian National Council come from different backgrounds." This acknowledgment he said underscores the diverse perspectives that can enrich the exchange of governance practices and legislative experiences between the two nations.

The bilateral meeting reflects the ongoing efforts of both China and Namibia to deepen their diplomatic and legislative ties. The shared commitment to mutual understanding and collaboration serves as a foundation for strengthening bilateral relations and fostering greater cooperation in governance and legislation.

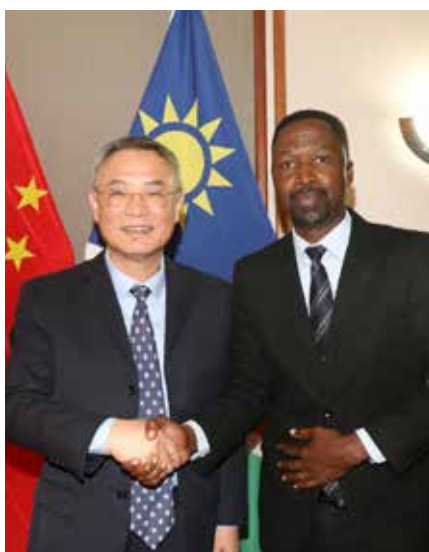
Other collaborations

During their bilateral meeting, the Chairperson highlighted the historical strong ties between Namibia and China and emphasised mutual respect, shared values, and a common vision for development and prosperity.

He expressed gratitude for China's investments and donations, particularly in education, which have enabled Namibian students to study in China and facilitated the establishment of educational institutes within Namibia itself.

Muha also acknowledged China's assistance in infrastructure development, citing the recent completion of a fully-fledged school with a hostel in Satotwa village in Kavango West, which accommodates 150 learners.

However, amidst the cooperative dialogue, the pressing issue of drought in Namibia loomed large. President Dr. Nangolo Mbumba recently declared a State of Emergency due to the severe drought, adversely impacting crop



Chairperson of the National Council Lukas Muha with the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) Cai Dafeng. Photo: National Council.

production, vegetation, and water availability, especially in rural areas.

Muha stressed the importance of cooperation in agricultural technology with China to mitigate the effects of drought and improve food security.

"Our country has been experiencing persistent drought for years. The current drought spell will be recorded as one of the worst ever experienced after independence. It has negatively affected crop productions, vegetation and water availability even in the North-

eastern regions that are sometimes spared," said Muha.

Vice Chairman Defeng reciprocated the sentiments, expressing China's commitment to fostering new areas of cooperation, including infrastructure construction, agriculture, education, and green energy. He said that there are about 500 Namibian students studying in China.

He praised Namibia's stance on international affairs, particularly its support for fairness and justice, echoing China's dedication to strengthening

coordination and supporting each other's sovereignty and development interests.

Defeng emphasised China's readiness to deepen cooperation with Namibia across various sectors, especially in education and technology. He highlighted the success of China-aided schools in Namibia and expressed China's willingness to further collaborate to strengthen human resource foundations for both countries' socio-economic development.

PAN-AFRICAN PARLIAMENT MEMBER STATES *urged to unite*

• Noreen Sitali

The official closing of the 3rd Ordinary Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Pan-African Parliament was marked as a unified occasion at the Parliament's headquarters in Midrand, South Africa on the 5th July as members reflected on Africa's pressing issues and proposed solutions.

Pan-African Parliament President H.E. Chief Fortune Charumbira called on Member States to unite and the importance of upholding the Pan-African Parliament vision, urging legislators to "Think Africa Above All," while emphasizing the need for cooperation and mutual support to achieve sustainable development and prosperity across African nations.

"We carry an onerous mandate to represent not just the people of our respective Member States but the whole of Africa. Once elected, we cease to be mere functionaries of our home countries and become representatives of the entire continent. While focusing on our countries' interests, we must always consider the broader interests of Africa," stressed Charumbira.

The issue of peace and security in Africa took center stage, the session discussed solutions to ensure that peace and security prevails in Africa. In its report, PAP's Permanent Committee on Cooperation, International Relations and Conflict Resolution states that schematically, all the five (05) geographical zones of the continent are experiencing insecurity situations which are severely threatening peace.

Addressing the Parliament virtually, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye stressed the need to prioritize peace, security, good governance, and stability, aligning with the continent's common agenda.

"You are aware of the real, unprecedented security threats our continent faces, particularly concerning African governance. As the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is under severe stress, we must not lose sight of our goals. Multilateralism provides us with norms and principles

to protect civilians and ensure human security," he noted.

Ambassador Adeoye emphasized addressing the root causes of instability and thanked the Pan-African Parliament MPs for standing against terrorism and violent extremism. He called for global solutions tailored to African needs.

Above all, Legislators were urged to prioritize unity at all cost, H.E. Charumbira stressed that only through unity that Africa can overcome many challenges that have led to the suffering of many Africans on the continent, calling for the need to address challenges collectively. "Together, we can actualize African solutions to African problems," he stated.

As members return to their respective countries, they were reminded of the AU's Theme of the year, "The year of Education: Educate an African fit for the 21st: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa.

"Building a resilient education system for increased access, which promotes lifelong vitality and validity in Africa, is timely and crucial for Africa. This aligns with Agenda 2063," Mr. Ndimeni, Chief Director of the African Union Desk at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) stated, quoting the late President Nelson Mandela: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."



African MPs who were gathered at 3rd ordinary session of the 6th Parliament of the Pan-African Parliament

NUCLEAR ENERGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA;

Opportunities, Challenges and Strategic Pathways

• Immanuel Kooper

During a sitting of the Committee on Transport, Communication, Science and Technology on 27 June 2024 and the subsequent presentation at the Pan-African Parliament by the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONe), looked at Nuclear Energy for Sustainable Development in Africa. The presentation highlighted the importance of nuclear energy, opportunities presented as well as challenges and strategic pathways, and how to make this resource meaningful to address the many challenges faced in Africa in this day and age.

Nuclear Energy is believed to be a sustainable or clean source of energy while Nuclear Power is more resilient to the effects of Climate Change than the other sustainable energy sources such as solar, wind or hydro power. Nuclear energy is needed for baseload that solar & wind cannot provide. Power density, reliability & availability of Nuclear Power supports planning for the future e.g. sea water desalination.

Nuclear energy became the focus around the world and Africa too are

able to harness nuclear energy for sustainable development. It was noted that Africa is experiencing severe poverty on energy, with about 640 million people in Sub-Saharan without electricity. Many opportunities as well as challenges are eminent in harnessing nuclear energy, since Africa is also new to the nuclear power spectrum. Harnessing nuclear energy could be capital intensive and Africa at the same time should attempt to close the nuclear fuel cycle by establishing nuclear fuel banks on its shores.

Namibia is one of the countries that could possibly establish nuclear fuel banks as it is one of the largest producers of uranium in the world. South Africa is already using nuclear medicine in treating various cancers, radio therapy and or nuclear therapy.

Africa can take the lead now through a multilateral approach in developing and or producing nuclear energy. Nuclear Power is the long term future for Africa therefore the call on international community and entities to allow Africa to build nuclear reactors (power plants)

although certain risks factors are associated with nuclear plants. Nuclear Power Plants can operate continuously, and are dispatchable, enabling the successful integration of renewables.

Sustainable development requires working together on various fronts therefore the urgent call from the Secretary General of the United Nations to work together in the spirit of Ubuntu". Africa should become independent from the supply and value chains and should be able to handle these processes on its own. Localization of capacity building is thus important for Africa whilst at the same time the universalization of relevant multilateral arrangements is a must. The multilateral approach would surely advance non-proliferation, immunity from national politics of individual States and reduce corruption. Regulatory frameworks will be harmonized and it would enhance the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Namibia is one of the countries that could possibly establish nuclear fuel banks as it is one of the largest producers of uranium in the world. South Africa is already using nuclear medicine in treating various cancers, radio therapy and or nuclear therapy.

PARLIAMENT ON WHEELS: *Bringing Democracy to Schools*

• Sakeus Kadhikwa

The Parliament on Wheels program aims to provide students with an immersive and educational experience about the workings of parliament, the democratic process, and the importance of civic engagement.

The program involves a specially designed tour bus equipped with interactive exhibits, multimedia presentations, and knowledgeable guides. The tour bus travels to schools across the country, bringing the parliament experience directly to students.

Key Features:

1. The tour bus is equipped with interactive exhibits that simulate the legislative process, allowing students to participate in mock debates, vote on bills, and learn about the roles and responsibilities of parliamentarians.
2. Multimedia presentations on large screens inside the bus

provide engaging content about the history of parliament, the structure of government, and the significance of democratic principles.

3. Parliament officials accompany the tour bus to provide informative commentary, answer questions, and facilitate discussions with students about the parliamentary system and its importance in society.
4. Hands-on activities such as role-playing exercises, quizzes, and group discussions enhance the learning experience and encourage active participation from students.
5. Each student receives resource materials such as brochures and booklets to reinforce their understanding of the topics covered during the tour.
6. The Parliament on Wheels program is designed to be accessible to students of all ages and backgrounds, including

those with disabilities. The tour bus is equipped with ramps, audiovisual aids, and other accommodations to ensure inclusivity.

Benefits:

- 1. Educational Enrichment:** The Parliament on Wheels program provides students with a unique opportunity to learn about democracy, governance, and citizenship in a fun and interactive way.
- 2. Community Engagement:** By bringing the parliament experience directly to schools, the program promotes community engagement and fosters a sense of civic pride and responsibility among students.
- 3. Inspiration for Future Leaders:** The program inspires students to become active participants in the democratic process and

see Bus on page 27...



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi, while unveiling the state-of-the-art Parliament bus stated that the initiative symbolises the legislature's commitment to inclusivity, transparency, and foster the public's participation in the legislative process. .



The Parliament of Namibia launched its "Parliament on Wheels" initiative at Dr. Lemmer High School in Rehoboth, Hardap Region on the 8th of May 2024.

encourages them to consider careers in politics, public service, or other fields related to governance.

4. Promotion of Democratic Values:

By promoting an understanding of democratic values such as freedom, equality, and justice, the program contributes to the development

of informed and responsible citizens.

Conclusion: The Parliament on Wheels program is an innovative initiative aimed at educating and inspiring the next generation of leaders and citizens. By bringing the parliament experience directly to schools, the program helps foster a

deeper appreciation for democracy and encourages active participation in the democratic process. ■



The Parliament bus is incorporated with the latest technological innovations, including laptops and interactive digital displays.

APRM COUNTRY REPORT ON NAMIBIA *debated on the 6th PAP ordinary session*

• Immanuel Kooper

A synopsis of a presentation from the main governance report of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was made by Germain Tshiny in the Pan African Parliament chamber in Midrand South Africa on 03 July 2024.

The presentation was aligned to the African Union theme of the year "Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building Resilient Education Systems for Increased Access to Inclusive, Lifelong, Quality, and Relevant Learning in Africa", and the key decisions included a call for member states to increase investment in education to develop human and social capital which aligns with the AU's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025.

The primary purpose of the APRM is to boost the adoption of policies, standards and practices that can lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated regional and continental economic integration.

It was presented that Namibia has demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing its governance architecture, which includes the education sector. For instance, Article 20 (1 and 2) of the Namibian Constitution provides that: "all persons shall have the right to education.

Thus, Primary education shall be compulsory, and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render

effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge.

By virtue of this constitutional provision, access to education is a bridge for socioeconomic liberation of historically disadvantaged communities, as well as a driver for inclusive socioeconomic development through capacity building and empowerment.

As Namibia has signed the Basic Education Act (No.3 of 2020), the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (Republic of Namibia 2013) and the Disability Mainstreaming Plan of 2020 to protect the rights of children, young persons, disabled and vulnerable people's access to education.

The Country Review Mission for Namibia took place from 25 October to 10 November 2021. The Lead Panel Member for Namibia, who is also the Chairperson of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons, Ambassador Ombeni Sefue, led an eighteen-member review team consisting of governance experts from 11 African countries who provided an independent viewpoint on governance challenges and good practices in Namibia.

This Namibia Country Review Report is accompanied by a costed National Plan of Action (NPOA) that addresses the governance challenges identified and assigns responsibility for implementation to public and private institutions, including government, private sector and civil society. The NPOA will also be harmonised with Namibia's Sixth National Development Plan.

Despite the regulations in place, the education system is particularly disadvantageous to disabled children, vulnerable pupils and girls. It was stressed that apart from inadequate

number of schools in the rural areas, the existing schools are largely under-resourced with teachers.

Information gathered from interactive meetings showed that classrooms are generally overcrowded, with a ratio of 50 to 70 students per teacher. The transition between secondary schools and tertiary education is considerably low, essentially because of the costs associated with university education and inadequate number of vocational schools to accommodate graduates from secondary schools that may not be able to access university education.

Although, notable strides have been achieved by the Government to ensure provision of quality, free and accessible basic education across the country, the number of schools remain inadequate, it was noted. In addition, a rather substantial proportion of rural dwellers have to travel many kilometres, sometimes through game reserves that harbour dangerous animals, to access education.

The presentation highlighted several important commendable practices in the area of education in terms of the review:

- a) Enabling adolescent girls to continue their education in the case of pregnancy and motherhood;
- b) To encourage learners to complete their education and be good parents, the country has introduced measures to allow pregnant learners to remain in school until four weeks before their due date, and allow the mother to return to school as soon as the school is satisfied that both she and the baby are in good health and have a plan for the baby's care, while allowing for absence

see PAN on page 29...



Members of Parliament at the Pan-African Parliament session.

from school for a maximum of one year; and

- c) Initiatives by the Rossing Foundation that plays a key role in education, other skills development and training for the community as a sustainable source of labour and skills for the organisation and the country at large.

The Pan African Parliament during the plenary also urged other parliaments to consider;

- a) Supporting capacity-building initiatives within member states to enhance their understanding of the APRM processes. This may include organising workshops, seminars, and training sessions for parliamentarians and government officials on

the importance of the APRM in fostering good governance;

- b) Use their legislative oversight role to ensure that the APRM findings are popularised in the political debates, recommendations emanating from the APRM processes are considered and implemented by national governments;
- c) Actively participate in the APRM National Governing Council, and take their membership in the Council seriously, including in the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report and preliminary National Programme of Action (NPOA);
- d) Ensure sustainability of the APRM process by passing legislations and mobilising grass root support for the APRM

process as well as pass budgets for the APRM process;

- e) Seek for equitable representation in the NGC/ National Commissions and play an active role in this body;
- f) Organise and participate in sensitisation events on the mechanism and engage in APRM advocacy through its findings in their respective constituencies, especially in rural communities.

Other recommendations were to reduce knowledge gaps in the economy through the establishment of specialised bodies, such as training institute for civil servants, Management Development Institutes etc. and to improve educational infrastructure to accommodate children with disability including Early Development Centres (ECDs) for the disabled. ■

ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR *pays courtesy call on Speaker*

• George Sanzila

The Ambassador of the People's Republic of Algeria, H.E. Abdelkrim Diaf, recently paid a courtesy call on the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi. The two, who recounted historical ties between the two countries established during Namibia's struggle for independence, discussed several issues of mutual interest including the creation of a parliamentary friendship group.

During the meeting, H.E. Diaf implored the Namibian parliament to fast track the creation of a friendship group in order to strengthen cooperation between the two legislatures. Speaker Katjavivi early this year, met the President of the People's National Assembly of Algeria, H.E. Brahim Boughali, who was among several world leaders that attended the funeral of late President, H.E. Dr. Hage Geingob, who revealed during that time, that the Algerian parliament had already created a Namibian Parliamentary friendship group and was looking forward to the Namibian parliament reciprocating the gesture.



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (right) with Algerian Ambassador to Namibia, H.E. Abdelkrim Diaf.

Hon. Katjavivi thanked the Algerian government for the moral support offered in light of the recently declared State of Emergency in Namibia due to severe drought, adding that it showed the growing bond and solidarity existing between the two countries.

The two further reaffirmed their countries' commitment to advance the cause of the Western Sahara and seeing an end to the killings of Palestinians in Gaza by Israel. ■

RENEWABLE ENERGY TAKES CENTRE STAGE

at 55 SADC-PF Plenary Assembly

• George Sanzila

Members of Parliament from the SADC region were gathered in Luanda, Angola from 1st to 5th July 2024 for the 55th Southern African Development Community-Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) Plenary Assembly, to look at a myriad of issues such as renewable energy and regional integration among other issues of mutual concern. The Assembly was officially opened by the President of the SADC-PF and Speaker of the National Assembly of Seychelles, Hon. Roger Mancienne.

Renewable energy

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi who led the Namibian Delegation told delegates that Namibia has embarked on an ambitious green hydrogen project meant not only to alleviate the energy crisis in the region and beyond but also to fulfil its aspirations of adopting clean energy and to help de-carbonise and alleviate the energy crisis in the region and beyond. He further urged SADC governments to support the creation of a unified regional energy market and the harmonisation of policies. Members of Parliament were also taken on a tour of a solar farm in the Benguela Province, west of Angola after attending the Plenary Assembly. The solar photovoltaic power plant occupies over 400 hectares of land to produce 144 MW which is injected into the national grid to supply over 8 provinces and 500 000 homes in Angola. The project is part of the government of the Republic of Angola's ongoing efforts to diversify its energy mix and embrace clean and renewable sources of energy.

In her address to the plenary, President of Inter-Parliamentary Union and Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Tanzania, Hon. Dr. Tulia Ackson implored member parliaments to ensure that SADC governments deliver on their key clean energy commitments in line with the Paris

agreement and IPU goals of addressing the energy crisis.

She reminded delegates that SADC was rich in renewable energy sources that could be exploited for the benefit of the region and the world in general. The SADC-PF Plenary Assembly was held under the theme "The role of Parliaments in promoting renewable energy policies in the SADC Region and creating a single regional energy market."

Country presentation

In his presentation on progress on implementation of the Resolutions of the preceding Plenary assembly held in 2023 in Port Louis, Mauritius, Hon. Phillipus Katamelo who is also part of the Executive Committee, reported that Namibia has made progress in areas such as women and youth representation in parliament. Other notable achievements highlighted are the passing of the Disaster Risk Management Act meant to reduce the effects of floods and drought that perennially plague the country and the Access to Information Bill aimed at easing access to information in order to empower communities with timely, adequate and accurate information and bridging the digital divide. The new Education Act and Child Protection Act were also hailed as part of efforts meant to improve the overall education sector and enhance teaching and learning outcomes and the protection of children from challenges such as child marriage, respectively.



Delegates for the 55th SADC PF Plenary Assembly pose for a group photo during the plenary.

SADC-PF transformation

At the same event the SADC-PF launched its strategic plan for 2024-2028 as the forum envisages transformation. Zambia, represented by its Justice Minister, Hon. Princess Kasune also signed the Agreement Amending the SADC Treaty, becoming the 11th SADC country to do so. The Treaty is aimed at transforming the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a SADC Parliament. The signing followed appeals by SADC PF President and Speaker of the National Assembly of Seychelles, Hon. Roger Mancienne for countries to sign the agreement when he officially opened the Plenary Assembly. The Agreement requires signatures by 12 SADC Member States for it to enter into force.

The Plenary Assembly is the policy-making body and deliberative body of the SADC Parliamentary Forum which is constituted of Speakers and up to five other representatives elected by each national parliament. Its main aim is to provide a platform for parliaments and parliamentarians to promote and improve regional integration in the SADC region, through parliamentary involvement and parliamentary diplomacy.

Other Members of Parliament included Utaara Mootu, Agnes Kafula and Paula Kooper from the National Assembly and John Likando and Olivia Hanghuwo from the National Council.

RUSSIA OPEN TO INCREASING SCHOLARSHIP Quota for Namibian Students.

• Sakeus likela

The Russian government has expressed openness to increasing the scholarship quota for Namibian students, particularly in the field of medicine, to further strengthen the relationship between the two countries.

This announcement was made by Senator Yelena Perminova, the Chairperson of the Committee on Social Policy and Head of the Friendship Group for Cooperation from the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, during her meeting with Namibian counterparts in June this year.

During the meeting, Perminova shared her vision for the future of bilateral relations between Russia and Namibia, emphasising the importance of enhancing cooperation in key areas such as education, health, and social welfare. A key highlight was Russia's intention to increase the number of Namibian students studying in Russian universities by expanding the scholarship quota.

Perminova and her delegation also met with Ben Nangombe, the Executive Director of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, who underscored the robust cooperation between Namibia and Russia in the health sector.

Nangombe highlighted that ongoing high-level government exchanges have facilitated partnerships focusing on critical healthcare areas.

"Our countries continue to exchange visits at the highest level. The agreements we have signed so far entail organising and managing the public healthcare system; training and advanced retraining of healthcare professionals; prevention and combating of communicable diseases; promotion of a healthy lifestyle and prevention of non-communicable diseases; maternal and child health; implementation of digital technologies throughout the public health sector; and state regulation of the circulation of medicines and medical devices," Nangombe said.

He also noted the positive impact of Russian health professionals working in Namibia's public and private health sectors, stating that their efforts "help to enrich public healthcare in Namibia."

Perminova acknowledged Namibia's needs in the cardiology sector and expressed Russia's willingness to assist.

"We understand that you need help in the cardiology sector. We will meet with the Minister of Health and share your story with them to see how they can help Namibia improve its cardiology department," she said.

She added, "We know that the interaction between our ministries of health has intensified and that you have some arrangements to work jointly with our Ministry of Health. This demonstrates a positive attitude towards enhancing our bilateral cooperation and achieving practical results here in Namibia. Such cooperation will benefit both our countries, and I wish you further success."

"Our countries continue to exchange visits at the highest level. The agreements we have signed so far entail organising and managing the public healthcare system; training and advanced retraining of healthcare professionals; prevention and combating of communicable diseases; promotion of a healthy lifestyle and prevention of non-communicable diseases; maternal and child health; implementation of digital technologies throughout the public health sector; and state regulation of the circulation of medicines and medical devices,"

SADC-PF NEW STRATEGIC PLAN LAUNCHED

as region gravitates toward regional parliament.

• George Sanzila

Luanda, Angola - The SADC Parliamentary Forum launched its new Strategic Plan for 2024 – 2028 in Luanda, Angola ahead of the start of the forum's 55th Plenary Assembly which took place from 02 – 05 July 2024. The strategic plan that involved input from SADC national parliaments, is a comprehensive roadmap for advancing the organisation's objectives and fostering positive change within the region. It also aims to address pertinent issues such as social development and inclusivity, regional integration and collaboration and enhanced legislative effectiveness.

The Secretary General of the SADC-PF, Boemo Sekgoma when addressing delegates, noted that the strategic plan served as the heartbeat of the forum, urging member parliaments to embrace the strategy for consolidation of democracy and efforts geared towards the integration of the region.

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi, who led the Namibian delegation, anchored similar sentiments adding that the launch of the Strategic plan came at an opportune time when the forum is close to be transformed into a regional parliament. "We are here to take stock of development efforts in our region. The launch is occurring at a time when we are moving towards becoming a regional parliament. This is extremely important. A regional parliament will play a pivotal role in paving the way for regional integration", said Katjavivi.

During the press conference that followed, Hon. Princess Kasune, Zambia Member of Parliament who is also Justice Minister and prominent AIDS activist announced that Zambia will soon join other SADC countries by signing the Agreement Amending the SADC Treaty, transforming the SADC



Secretary General of the SADC-PF, Boemo Sekgoma during her address.

Parliamentary Forum into a SADC Parliament.

Namibia recently signed the Treaty on June 26, 2024 at the SADC Headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana represented by Hon. Dr. Peya Mushelenga, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation. The Agreement requires signatures by 12 SADC Member States for it to enter into force. Namibia was the 10th SADC Member State to sign the Agreement.

The slow progress of transformation has been attributed largely to a lack of commitment by some countries, and other impediments such as financial constraints. SADC remains the only region without a regional parliament. There already exist other organs such as the secretariat (executive) and a tribunal (judiciary), with the legislative arm the only missing link. Other regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have regional parliaments, where matters of regional interest and mutual concern are discussed and resolved by parliamentarians at that level.

The Theme of the 55th Plenary Assembly is: "The role of Parliaments in promoting renewable energy policies in the SADC Region and creating a single regional energy market."

Apart from the launching of the SADC PF Strategic Plan, the Plenary



Speakers of SADC Parliaments hold the new strategic plan during the launch.

Assembly discussed a wide range of issues including presentations on the theme, and country reports on progress on implementation of Resolutions of the 54th Plenary Assembly as well as the consideration of Standing Committee Reports and Members' Motions. Other Members that accompanied the Speaker included Hons. Phillipus Katamelo, Utaara Mootu, Agnes Kafula and Paula Kooper from the National Assembly and Hons. John Likando and Olivia Hanghuwo from the National Council.

The Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) was established in 1997 in accordance with Article 9 (2) of the SADC Treaty as an autonomous institution of SADC. It is a regional inter-parliamentary body composed of Fifteen (15) parliaments representing over 3500 parliamentarians in the SADC region. These member parliaments are Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), eSwatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Seychelles, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Its main aim is to provide a platform for parliaments and parliamentarians to promote and improve regional integration in the SADC region, through parliamentary involvement and parliamentary diplomacy. ■

SADC-PF 55TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY IN PICTURES



SAUYEMWA'S VISUALLY IMPAIRED CENTRE *wants improved services*

• Noreen Sitali

Persons with visual impairment at the Sauyemwa Centre of the Visually impaired have voiced out the challenges they face in their daily lives.

Among the challenges is the difficulty access to transport which they say limits their freedom of movements.

This comes after the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Social Development and Family Affairs recently visited the Sauyemwa Centre of the Visually Impaired in the Kavango region during the Committee's regional consultations on the Motion on Safety and Protection of Children, and familiarization visits to orphans, vulnerable and people living with disabilities.

A representative of the group explained to Members of Parliament (MPs) that even though the centre needs more development, it has been

instrumental to them as it offers training aimed at creating a sustainable environment for visually impaired people through innovative training, career development and job placement programmes that facilitate the creation of self-confidence and economic independence.

"To be empowered citizens, we need more than special skills and assistive devices. We need a positive sense of ourselves as valuable, whole people, who can contribute and participate in our families and communities," stressed the representative.

Here, they learn how to read braille while being introduced to various other subjects – but when you look around, you cannot help but notice the conditions which sometimes interfere with the educational process.

Those who live here say even though they need proper facilities, they improvise.

There are no ablution facilities, so they bathe behind a corrugated shack, using buckets.

The students enjoy a home-cooked meal with the help of a Good Samaritan, who volunteered to cook for them every day.

The learners buy groceries with their disability grant.

The group expressed profound discrimination and deprivation suffered, as some of them do not receive grants due to lack of identity documents.

These students hope that the Sauyemwa Centre for the visually impaired will be turned into a fully-fledged vocational training centre. ■



The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Social Development and Family Affairs with a group of visually impaired people living at the Sauyemwa Centre of the visually impaired.

SHRINE TO HONOUR KAPTEIN HENDRIK WITBOOI

• Noreen Sitali

After a week-long extensive consultation with the Regional and Local Leadership, Traditional Authority and Community members in Hardap and //Kharas Regions on the Motion on the erection of the Shrine for Kaptein Hendrik Witbooi, the Parliamentary standing Committee on Human Resources and Community Development fairly gathered inputs from relevant stakeholders on the Motion.

The Committee consulted with the Witbooi Royal House at Gibeon in the Hardap region and the Vaalgras Traditional Authority in the //Kharas region and with the Nama Traditional Leaders Association as well as members of the public.

The consultations follow a motion tabled by Popular Democratic Movement president McHenry Venaani last year, seeking to erect a shrine in honour of the late Witbooi.

The mover of the motion, Hon. McHenry Venaani stressed that the shrine could bring in investment and tourism revenue to Vaalgras, driving local economic development. "The shrine could serve as an educational hub where social justice principles are not just celebrated but also critically examined and reconstructed," stated Venaani in his motion.

Hendrik Witbooi was the chief of the |Khowesin people who led the Nama people during their revolts against the German colonial empire.

He was killed on 29 October 1905 by a single gunshot wound from the Germans on the northern plains of Vaalgras in the //Kharas region and on that site the a partly completed monument was construction by the German government, a construction the Vaalgras community feels does not completely signifies the legacy of Kaptein Hendrik Witbooi as they would have wanted. "Kaptein Hendrik Witbooi died here in Vaalgras and that is significantly important here, therefore something should be put up



Traditional authority leaders explaining to members of Parliament during the visit

as a remembrance, a proper and well thoughtful, befitting statue of him on a horse back, something that depict the sacrifice he made for his people," said a traditional leader in Vaalgras.

Respectfully, even though majority in Vaalgras are in support with the motion, the notion was that, Hendrik Witbooi hailed from Gibeon and that can never and should not be taken away and therefore it is only respectful and understandable that the erecting of the shrine be in Gibeon, stressing that it being erected in Gibeon does not take away his status as a Namibian hero at

large. Notably, traditional leaders and community members in Gibeon have subsequently expressed that the shrine be by all erected in his homestead by all means,

In the same vein, the Committee also received the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance for further deliberations and the need to recommend for parliament endorsement and ratifications. The Charter seeks to promote and preserve Africa's own identity, values and celebrating its own heritage, culture and traditions.



The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resources and Community together with traditional leadership in the area.

CALLS FOR AI IN PARLIAMENTS

• George Sanzila

Arusha, Tanzania - Following digitalization gains made by many parliaments largely due to the Covid 19 pandemic, there is an emerging call for legislative bodies to embrace Artificial Intelligence (AI). The appeal was made at the 8th Society of Clerk-At-The Table (SoCATT) Professional Development Seminar in Arusha, Tanzania on the 22nd of May 2024. Officials of parliament from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Africa Region attended the two-day seminar under the theme: "Re-positioning Parliamentary Administration in the era of Evidence and Modernisation".

The seminar was aimed at sharing good practices and experiences on evidence use and modernization in the parliamentary setting. Secretary of National Assembly Lydia Kandetu, who is also Deputy Chairperson of SoCATT Africa region, when delivering remarks at the official opening, noted that the seminar serves as a vehicle for capacity building and a lesson sharing approach of the Society in the exchange of practical experiences on evidence-use and modernisation with emphasis on technological advancements, which are key priorities of the Society's strategic plan.

One of the IT experts at the event, Luis Kimaid, Executive Director of Bussola Tech. noted that Artificial Intelligence can be applied on core parliamentary functions such as legislative drafting, parliamentary reporting and editing, analysis of data and addressing other parliamentary functions such as the Hansard, citizens participation and procedural advice and research. Some of the concerns raised during the seminar include data privacy and cyber



Delegates at the SoCATT Africa Professional Development Seminar (PDS) in Tanzania gather for a group picture.

security with the Deputy Director of ICT Operations at the National Assembly of Zambia, David Mulenga imploring parliaments to develop frameworks on how to implement digital innovations to avoid such predicaments.

The Namibian legislature that recently launched its e-parliament strategy, has had to rapidly and stoically transform despite the heavy cost burden that comes with such complex yet necessary and inescapable technologies with assistance from development partners, such as the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and the Chinese and Turkish governments that have come onboard to support the institution as it gravitates towards full ICT compliance.

The National Assembly conference centre was upgraded into a fully-fledged virtual centre with video conferencing facility. The National Assembly chamber too received a fresh lease of life with the installation of a new digital technology system, replete with a touchscreen functionality, that can give lawmakers access to a plethora of digital parliamentary documents such as the agenda (order paper), bills,

the constitution and standing rules and orders among many others. The system further enables the Speaker, as the presiding officer, the chance to properly control debate in the house by deciding who should speak through a control unit. Members can also vote electronically and may request other miscellaneous services. The Namibian parliament further introduced the transmission of its meetings and sessions through livestreaming on social media platforms in its quest to strengthen participatory democracy.

Professionalism and integrity also came under the spotlight at the gathering of administrative Heads of parliaments and their subordinates who all agreed that impartiality was sacrosanct in a parliament set up and that it had the potential to improve trust, credibility and the ethos of democracy. Some of the challenges affecting professionalism in some parliaments include political interference.

Secretary to National Council, Tousy Namiseb, who also formed part of the meeting stressed that efficiency could only be fully realised when parliament administration is strengthened and independent. He noted that the absence of bodies such as the Parliamentary Service Commission, can prevent parliament from fully executing its mandate of law making, oversight and representation. He further revealed that Namibia has made progress and would soon table a Bill aimed at establishing a Parliamentary Service Commission.

The two-day seminar that began on Tuesday, 21 May 2024 ended today.



Secretary to National Council, Adv. Tousy Namiseb stressed the importance of an independent parliamentary administration.



Secretary of the National Assembly, Lydia Kandetu during the official opening of the meeting.

SPEAKER WANTS STRENGTHENED COOPERATION *between China and Africa*

• George Sanzila

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi has called for a continued mutually beneficial partnership between China and African countries. Hon. Katjavivi mentioned this when he addressed delegates on the 21 of August 2024 at the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China (NPC) affiliation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the 2024 Inter-Regional Seminar on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for parliaments of developing countries in Beijing, China.

Speaking at the gathering that included Chinese President, H.E. XI Jinping, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) President and Tanzanian Speaker, Hon. Dr. Tulia Ackson, together with Speakers of other developing countries, Hon. Katjavivi noted that the African region has made strides to boost inter-continental trade through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that was launched over five years ago.

"Over the last 60 years, influenced by the spirit of Pan-Africanism, African countries, post-independence, have continued to seek strength through unity and the desire for regional

integration, as exemplified through the collective voice of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and most recently, the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) amongst other efforts. We are aware that in Africa's desire for self-determination, countries on the continent have continued to singularly and collectively partner with China to promote a just and equitable international order, to safeguard a peaceful and secure global environment and to build an open and inclusive economy", said Hon. Katjavivi.

The AfCFTA, one of the flagship projects of the African Union's Agenda 2063, is a single market trade agreement that removes trade barriers by creating the free flow of goods and services and facilitating investment and the movement of people and capital throughout Africa.

Hon. Katjavivi appealed to international financial institutions to support and enhance Africa's development agenda particularly in the areas agriculture, human development and climate change adaptation and mitigation. The Speaker also wants Africa's untapped natural resources to be sustainably exploited for the benefit for its people, cautioning parliaments



Speaker of the National Assembly, Professor Peter Katjavivi greeted by Chinese President, H.E. XI Jinping.

to exercise their mandate by creating policies aimed at environmental protection and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"The moment is right to support green policies. Parliaments have an obligation to endorse, pass national policies and apportion budgets to help achieve SDGs. Namibia aspires to become a global green hydrogen hub. Our country seeks practical solutions in the development of green hydrogen for export and most importantly for domestic use to offset carbon emissions. A Bill will be presented to parliament for approval before becoming a ratified law", stressed Hon. Katjavivi.

The Speaker further thanked the East Asian country for its support of Africa's quest for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi with other Speakers of developing countries during the meeting with Chinese President, H.E. XI Jinping.



KAVANGO IN DIRE NEED OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS

• Noreen Sitali

A majority of education stakeholders in the Kavango East and West regions have strongly expressed the need for the establishment of special schools in the two regions.

This call was made during a visit by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resources and Community Development's stakeholder consultations on the motion to establish special schools in the Kavango regions.

In his motion, Republican Party lawmaker Mathias Mbundu said: "If any other region had the same crisis as highlighted in my motion, I would still call for support for the motion, I agree with contributions from all corners of the august House, because it speaks to nation-building that goes beyond our party and ethnic affiliation in the greater good of our society.

During the respective committee's consultations with relevant stakeholders, a majority of people expressed the need for special schools as a way of education inclusivity away from the mainstream schools. Some stakeholders stated that the establishments of special schools is way overdue as children with special needs have been left out on the opportunity to be part of the education system, and this has placed them in the disadvantaged group.

A community member from Nkurenkuru stressed that special



The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resources and Community Development listen attentively to the public on the Motion to establish special schools in the Kavango Regions.

schools will provide pupils with special needs the attention necessary.

"There is a need for the establishment of special schools. In fact, it is overdue, but do we have enough resources to meet these needs?" a concerned resident asked.

A senior official from the Ministry of Basic Education, Arts and Culture in Kavango West agreed that there is need for the establishment of these

institutions in the region, but there are some challenges such as the limited budget allocation and identifying specialist to cater to learners with special needs. "Pupils with special needs require special attention and specialists, it will be a challenge to identify specialists in all areas to cater to the needs of our pupils with special needs, but if we all commit and join hands, I believe we can," she stressed.



Members of the public during the consultation with the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resources and Community Development.

NC, REGIONAL COUNCILS COLLABORATE *for better public participation and regional development*

• Rafael Hangula

The National Council (NC) and 14 Regional Councils (RCs) held a joint conference in August this year themed “Harnessing the Roles and Mandates of the National Council and the Regional Councils for Greater Public Participation and Regional Development.”

The conference, which took place from 27 to 31 August, aimed to foster collaboration and strengthen the relationship between these two governance bodies.

The gathering provided a platform for discussing key issues, sharing best practices, and developing actionable strategies for improved public engagement and regional development.

Among the main objectives discussed were the need to clarify the distinct yet complementary roles of the NC and RCs and their contribution towards public participation and regional development..

The conference also discussed the development and status of the Regional Constituency Development Fund (RCDF) and membership or tenure to the NC and to the RC and the implications thereof.

The NC is mandated to recommend legislation on matters of regional concern per Article 74(1)(c)) of the constitution, in addition to its members drawn from RCs.

In addition, Rule 182 of the National Council requires Regional Councils to submit reports regarding the implementation of their activities to the National Council.

Chairperson of the National Council hon Lukas Muha, opened the conference, where he emphasised the significance of collective effort.

“This conference underscores the critical importance of collaboration, inclusivity, and shared responsibility in our collective efforts to serve our people more effectively,” said the Chairperson.

“The National Council ought to champion public participation at the legislative level, while the Regional Councils focus on public participation at the regional development level,” hon Muha explained.



Chairperson of the National Council Hon Lukas Muha (4th from L) with members of the National Council, Regional Councils, Chief Regional Officers, and representatives from various stakeholder organisations.

The conference made several resolutions aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of both parties.

Amongst them is the need for accurate legal interpretations regarding the election processes for the management committees of Regional Councils. The gathering called for a consultative engagement to develop guidelines for these elections.

In addition, the conference also addressed the urgent need for decentralisation and the devolution of powers to Regional Councils, particularly concerning the management of natural resources and meaningful participation in activities relating to the harnessing of natural resources in the respective regions.

The gathering also called for synchronising the session calendars of the two houses of parliament and RCs to minimise disruptions.

The conference also tackled the representation of women in political offices, with a commitment to advocate for improved gender equality within both councils.

“The underrepresentation of women in political offices is a cause for concern and needs to be addressed,” hon Muha emphasised.

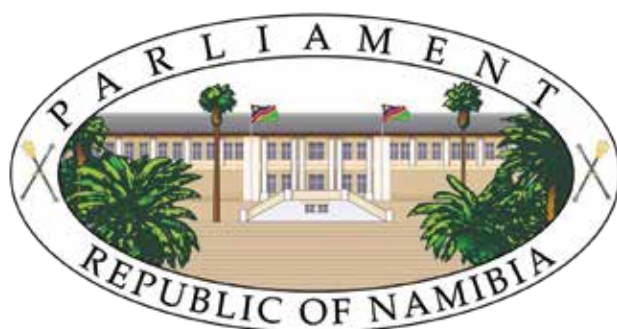


Members of Parliament from the National Council in the joint conference with Regional Councils.



Representatives from various stakeholder organisations in attendance during the conference between the National Council and Regional Councils.

The conference brought together a diverse group of participants, including members of the NC, RCs, Chief Regional Officers, and representatives from various stakeholder organisations. ■



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