



National Assembly and National Council

**JOINT REPORT OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
(SADC-PF) 57TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION, 31ST MAY-7TH JUNE 2025
VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE**

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AU	African Union
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC-PF	Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
UAE	United Arab Emirates

1. INTRODUCTION/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 57th Plenary Assembly Session of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) took place in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. The theme of the Plenary Assembly was: “ **Harnessing Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Effective and Efficient Parliamentary Processes in the SADC Region: Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities.**”

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming parliamentary processes by enhancing efficiency, transparency and responsiveness. In the SADC Region, AI integration is crucial for modernising parliaments, strengthening democracy and supporting informed decision-making. AI driven automation streamlines legislative tasks, improves public engagement through chatbots and data analysis and aids evidence based policymaking. AI adoption also presents challenges such as ethical concerns, data privacy issues and the digital divide among SADC member parliaments.

The 57th Plenary Assembly therefore served as a platform for addressing these challenges and shaping a regional AI governance framework. By balancing opportunities and risks, SADC parliaments can drive digital transformation while safeguarding democratic values and public trust. The 57th Plenary Assembly also focused on the role of AI in enhancing parliamentary efficiency, parliamentary reports including the proposed Model Law on Prison Oversight, Country Reports tracking the implementation of past resolutions for the 56th Plenary Assembly held in Livingstone, Zambia. The 57th Plenary Assembly also featured a high-level symposium where AI experts from local universities, the private sector and government ministries shared insights on AI's impact on the legislative processes.

Over 300 delegates, including speakers and members of parliament from 15 SADC member states, regional experts and development partners, attended the Plenary Session. The President of Zimbabwe, His Excellency, Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, who is also the current Chairperson of SADC officially, opened the 57th Plenary Session. In his keynote address, the President emphasised Zimbabwe's commitment to digital transformation and regional integration.

Members of Parliament from the Namibian Parliament (National Council and National Assembly) attended and actively participated in the Session. Hon. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Speaker of the National Assembly, led the Namibian delegation to the 57th SADC-PF Plenary Assembly Session. Namibia contributed to key discussions on AI driven legislative innovations, democratic governance and policy making in the SADC Region.

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, along with other Members of Parliament from the SADC Region were officially sworn in as new members of the SADC Parliamentary Forum during the 57th Plenary Assembly Session in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Other Members of the Namibian delegation participated as observers.

2. OBJECTIVES

The following objectives of the 57th Plenary Assembly Session were to:

- I. Explore AI driven innovations that enhance parliamentary efficiency, transparency and inclusivity while addressing challenges such as cybersecurity and digital inequality;
- II. Integrate AI and innovative tools into parliamentary decision making and legislative processes while ensuring ethical compliance;
- III. Strengthen parliamentary oversight through data driven governance models, mitigating risks of AI biases and misinformation;
- IV. Promote greater public participation through digital tools and AI enabled consultation mechanism, whilst addressing the challenges of digital literacy.

3. Composition of the delegation

The 57th plenary Assembly Session was attended by the following Members and staff of the Parliament of Namibia.

MEMBERS

1. Hon. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila (Head of delegation)	MP, Speaker of the National Assembly
2. Hon. Paula Kooper	MP, National Assembly
3. Hon. Longinus Iipumbu	MP, National Assembly
4. Hon. Paulus Mbangu	MP, National Council
5. Hon. Lonia Kaishungu	MP, National Council
6. Hon. Olivia Hanghuwo	MP, National Council

The delegation was accompanied by officials from the Secretariat.

4. METHODOLOGY

The information presented in this report was gathered from engagements, discussions and presentations made at the 57th Plenary Assembly Session.

5. SYMPOSIUM ON THE THEME OF THE 57TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION: *“HARNESSING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) FOR EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT PARLIAMENTARY PROCESSES IN THE SADC REGION: EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES”*

5.1 Government of Zimbabwe’s perspective on Artificial Intelligence: Regulation, Policy, Funding and Infrastructure

5.1.1 Regulation and policy

The Government of Zimbabwe emphasised the need for robust legal frameworks to govern the use of AI. This includes aligning national laws with regional standards such as the SADC Model Laws and the Malabo Convention on cybersecurity. Zimbabwe supported the calls for ethical AI deployment, data privacy protections and inclusive digital governance.

5.1.2 Funding and Investment

Zimbabwe as a host, showcased its investment in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure in order to support hybrid parliamentary sessions. This included upgraded connectivity, technical support teams and digital platforms to enable remote participation. This served to demonstrate commitment to funding the digital transformation.

5.1.3 Infrastructure and Capacity Building

The country highlighted its collaboration with government ministries to ensure seamless logistics and technological readiness. There was also a push for regional cooperation in building AI expertise, especially through education, training and public private partnership.

5.2 Overview on advancing parliamentary processes through academic collaboration on Artificial Intelligence:

5.2.1 AI Reshaping Parliamentary Operations

AI is revolutionising how parliaments function, from automating transcription and translation to streamlining legislative drafting and managing vast legislative archives. Countries such as Estonia, Italy and Brazil were reported to be already using AI to transcribe debates, translate documents and analyze amendments.

5.2.2 AI Enhancing Parliamentary Functions

AI supports legislative research, identifies policy trends and improve public engagement. AI enables evidence-based policymaking by analysing large datasets and legislative texts and these helps MPs to make more decisions that are informed.

5.2.3 AI Global Transformation of Parliaments

From the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Pakistan, parliaments are integrating AI to modernise governance. The UAE's AI Act has set a global benchmark while Pakistan's Senate has launched an AI powered chatbot to improve legislative access.

5.2.4 AI Key Benefits in Parliaments

AI significantly strengthens parliamentary performance by automating repetitive administrative tasks to boost efficiency, expanding public access to data for greater transparency, broadening participation through multilingual and user-friendly digital tools to promote inclusivity. AI equips law makers with real time insights from large legislative data to foster more informed, evidence-based decision making.

5.2.5 AI Adoption Challenges

Despite the prospect for opportunities of AI, parliaments face hurdles such as outdated information technology (IT) systems, poor data quality, lack of AI literacy and ethical concerns. The United Kingdom's (UK) Public Accounts Committee for instance flagged transparency and digital skills gaps as major barriers.

5.2.6 Academic Collaborations on AI

Academic institution such as the University of Zimbabwe, Midlands State University, Bindura University of Science and Technology have demonstrated how universities are driving parliamentary innovation through initiatives like AI powered Hansard translation tools and advanced legislative tracking systems.

The universities launched regional AI literacy programs aimed at equipping both lawmakers and citizens with critical digital skills for more effective inclusive governance.

6. NAMIBIA VIEWS ON HARNESSING AI FOR EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT PARLIAMENTARY PROCESSES IN THE SADC REGION EXPERIENCE, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES.

6.1 Namibia among other SADC countries, presented its perspectives on AI adoption, challenges and opportunities in its respective focuses of Parliament, highlighting its national AI strategies, regulatory frameworks and specific applications, as follows:

6.1.1 Namibia expressed supports for the 57th Plenary Assembly Session theme and emphasised the potential of AI to enhance parliamentary efficiency, transparency and inclusivity across the SADC Region. While Namibia is in the early stages of AI implementation. The Speaker reported that the country is committed to build a digital infrastructure and capacity through the e-Parliament Strategy, which aims to improve service delivery, legislative processes and citizen engagement.

6.1.2 AI powered tools will assist MPs in decision making, legislative drafting, research and public interaction. Namibia acknowledged the role of AI in improving transparency, accountability and oversight by automating data analysis and integrating predictive models. While the adoption of AI presents opportunities, challenges such as funding, infrastructure, human capacity and regulatory frameworks must be addressed, the Speaker emphasised.

6.1.3 The Government of Namibia finalised critical AI related legislation including the Data Protection Bill, Cybercrime Bill and draft AI Bill which will ensure an ethical AI use.

6.1.4 Namibia will also work with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the country's readiness assessment for responsible AI adoption. Key concerns include data security, algorithmic bias and misinformation. Efforts underway to strengthen cybersecurity and ensure AI tools remain fair and inclusive.

6.1.5 Namibia is committed to use AI to support but not to replace democratic processes. Regional collaboration on AI governance and best practices will be essential for responsible and inclusive AI integration.

7. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE 56TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION, HELD IN LIVINGSTONE, ZAMBIA, 6TH -15TH DECEMBER 2024

7.1 Transformation of the SADC PF into a regional Parliament and Review of the draft Protocol on the Establishment of the SADC Parliament

Namibia, as the host country of the SADC PF since 1997, reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the transformation of the Forum into a SADC Regional Parliament. The Ministry of International Relations and Trade is currently reviewing the Draft Protocol on

the establishment of the SADC Parliament. It was reported that the 8th National Assembly will continue and conclude this process.

7.2 Update on the Signing of the Agreement to Amend the SADC Treaty to Establish the SADC Regional Parliament

Namibia signed the agreement to amend the SADC Treaty to establish the SADC Regional Parliament on 26th June 2024. The country became the 10th member state to do so. The agreement entered into force on 11th July 2024, officially establishing the SADC Parliament as one of the institutions of SADC under Article 9(1) of the SADC Treaty.

7.3 Secondment of Senior Parliamentary staff to the SADC PF

Namibia indicated that she is currently unable to second senior parliamentary staff members to the SADC PF. The country expressed commitment to provide short to medium-term human resource support to the SADC-PF as needed.

7.4 SADC PF Election Observation Missions (EOMs)

The Parliament of Namibia informed the 57th Plenary Assembly Session that it has allocated financial resources in the current National Budget (2025/2026 Financial Year) to support and participate in the upcoming election observation missions to Malawi, Seychelles, and Tanzania.

7.5 Designation of a Focal person for the Model Law Domestication

Namibia has designated a focal person to ensure the full participation in the domestication of SADC Model Laws. The Public Finance Management Bill is at an advanced stage and is aligned with the SADC-PF Model Law on Public Financial Management. Additionally, the Ministry of Health and Social Services has adopted policies, which are influenced by regional standards including the SADC-PF Model Law on HIV and AIDS, the National Policy on HIV and AIDS (2007) and the National Strategic Framework for HIV and AIDS (2023-2026). The Namibian Parliament will monitor and report on the domestication and implementation of these Model Laws while ensuring that they are congruent with Namibia's sovereignty.

7.6 Implementation of the SRHR, HIV and AIDS Governance Project 2023-2026, Phase 3

Phase 3 of Namibia's Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), HIV, and AIDS Governance Project commenced on 1st November 2023. The Project will run for three (3) years. It is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). This initiative aligns with both national and regional priorities, enabling legislative, budgetary and oversight parliamentary interventions on SRHR services. Additionally, the

project addresses climate change justice governance, ensuring a multifaceted approach to rights-based policymaking.

On 18th January 2024, the Parliament of Namibia officially signed the agreement to implement the SRHR project Phase 3 for the period of 2023 to 2026. The Project is aimed at advancing the SRHR initiatives while aligning them with the country's national priorities.

The second implementation phase of the SRHR Project which ran from 2019 to 2023 has concluded. Thus, the contract of the Project Officer came to an end. As a result, the National Assembly is now preparing to recruit new dedicated staff to oversee the Project's execution. An official update on this recruitment process will be provided in due course.

7.7 Child Marriage

The National Assembly and by extension the Parliament of Namibia is committed to end child marriage by legally setting the minimum age at 18 years through the Marriage Act. This reinforces child rights through the Child Care and Protection Act, which prioritises education and the overall well-being of children, particularly girls by preventing early and forced marriages that often derail schooling and future prospects, thereby empowering young people to pursue fuller and brighter futures.

7.8 Electoral Act

The Speaker, Hon. Dr. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila highlighted the constitutional and legal frameworks of Namibia. These include stating the provision of the Electoral Act No. 5 of 2014 and Article 94 (A) of the Namibian Constitution that outlines key processes such as voter registration, political participation and dispute resolution while promoting universal and safeguarding electoral integrity to support inclusive and democratic governance.

7.9 Gender Based Violence

Namibia addresses Gender Based Violence through the Combating of Domestic Violence Act of 2000. The Act was amended in 2022 in order to offer broad legal protection against various forms of domestic abuse such as physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economical. While the amendment further expands the definition of domestic relationships, it enables electronic emergency protection orders and introduced offender counselling referrals, specialized GBV Courts and support services like legal aid and counselling to safeguard survivor's rights and strengthening access to justice.

7.10 Law Reform

The Namibian Law Reform and Development Commission (LRDC), founded under the Law Reform and Development Commission Act No. 29 of 1991 is an independent body tasked with modernising and refining Namibia's legal system to reflect societal needs and

align with regional and international standards, including SADC Model Laws thereby promoting justice, relevance and progressive governance.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Taking into account of the communique of the 57th SADC-PF Plenary Assembly Session symposium, Members of the Namibian Parliament who attended the Plenary Assembly Session present the following conclusions and recommendations:

- 8.1.1 The 57th Plenary Assembly Session concluded that AI is no longer optional but an integral and fundamental driver of progress and development in the SADC Region. Delegates stressed the importance of proactive legislations, investment in AI research and capacity building in order to ensure that AI benefits all citizens while mitigating the risks. The Plenary implored the need for a unified digital strategy to harness AI for economic growth, governance and inclusivity.
- 8.1.2 The 57th Plenary Assembly Session also concluded by adopting a Communique, which highlighted the important issues discussed, and the resolutions, which were taken. It is recommended that Members and Staff of Parliament study the Communique for more information about the 57th Plenary Assembly and its theme. *(See attached Communique).*
- 8.1.3 Namibia emphasised the importance of AI governance and digital security. The Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Saara Kuugongelwa Amadhila highlighted Namibia's commitment to responsible AI adoption by finalising AI related legislation including a Draft Artificial Intelligence Bill, Data Protection Bill and Cybercrime Bill.
- 8.1.4 Furthermore, the 57th Plenary Assembly Session highlighted AI's potential to strengthen democracy, streamline parliamentary operations, and promote citizen engagement across the SADC region while embracing innovation. Delegates further stressed the importance of cybersecurity, ethical frameworks and the need to align the AI's adoption with regional development goals.
- 8.1.5 Parliament of Namibia should establish legal and adopt enabling governance frameworks to proactively legislate for AI and invest in digital infrastructure. This will ensure a robust legal and institutional foundation for the implementation of AI.
- 8.1.6 Parliament of Namibia should form a technical working group and collaborate with MICT to form a National Artificial Intelligence Council to oversee and coordinate the rollout across government agencies.

- 8.1.7 Parliament of Namibia should build upon the E-Parliament Strategy, which introduced a mobile app, online bill tracking system by integrating AI driven features such as chatbot for public engagement, virtual assistants for MPs and automated transcription capabilities to enhance research, debate preparation and oversight efficiency.
- 8.1.8 That SADC PF finalises the Draft Model Law on Artificial Intelligence to guide the harmonised national legislations on AI.
- 8.1.9 Ensure a comprehensive approach to AI integration in governance; Namibia's Parliament should seek training partnerships beyond SADC-PF, engage with academic institutions, AI experts that specialise in AI literacy and policymaking. These partnerships would equip MPs and parliamentary staff with the necessary skills to responsibly adopt and utilise AI technologies.
- 8.1.10 The Parliament of Namibia should conduct a pilot study test on AI tools in Parliamentary functions such as legislative drafting, data analysis, public engagement efficiency and transparency.
- 8.1.11 The Parliament of Namibia and in particular the relevant Committees and Staff members should benchmark the Zimbabwe's AI initiatives, particularly on its effort to integrate AI into governance and legislative processes.
- 8.1.12 The SRHR Project should transition from the Office of the Speaker to the Directorate of Committee Services at the National Assembly for its health related components, while the Directorate of Specialised Services at National Council should manage the climate change and environmental aspects. It is imperative to involve both houses of Namibia's Parliament in the implementation of the Project. This approach will reinforce collaboration and ensure that SRHR and climate change initiatives are advanced in a comprehensive and cohesive manner, aligning with Namibia's commitment to sustainable development and human rights.
- 8.1.13 In order to facilitate comprehensive discussions and decision-making, it is proposed that both houses of Parliament convene pre- and post-meetings for SADC PF cluster sessions. This practice will promote a unified parliamentary engagement, enhance coordination, and ensure that Namibia's legislative body speaks with a cohesive voice on regional issues.
- 8.1.14 National Council has recommended that Hon. Lonia Kaishungu and Hon. Paulus Mbangu be formally sworn in as substantive representatives to the SADC-PF, with Hon. Olivia Hanghuwo as an observer.

9. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

Reviewed and adopted by the Speaker of the National Assembly and Members of the National Assembly and National Council who attended the 57th Plenary Assembly Session.

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SIGNATURE



Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, MP
Member: SADC-PF

DATE

