



Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum

Oxfam Solidarity Statement.

Delivered by Ms Nkateko Chauke – Interim Executive Director Oxfam South Africa on the occasion of the 57th Plenary held in Victoria Falls Town, Zimbabwe.

Protocols

1. The President of the SADC Parliamentary Forum and Speaker of the National Assembly of Madagascar, Ho. Justine Tokely.
2. The Speaker of Parliament and Host Honourable Advocate Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda.
3. Honourable Speakers of SADC National Parliaments and Heads of Delegations.
4. Honourable Members and Distinguished Delegates.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the SADC Parliamentary Forum on the occasion of the 57th Plenary Assembly. It is a great honour to be here.

This plenary session is held at a time when our region is at the frontline of intersecting crises namely, the climate-induced disasters, inequalities, gender injustice, and chronic food insecurity. Recently, the global geopolitical shifts, including global trade wars, US and Europe foreign policy shifts, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Palestine war in Gaza, have significantly impacted trade flows and economic growth prospects, not only for our region, but globally. Nonetheless, the surge in demand for critical minerals such as lithium, graphite is attracting investments, but concerns remain on environmental, human rights and equity issues.

The region is severely affected by Climate Change, with the recent El Niño and La Niña -induced droughts and floods that have exacerbated food insecurity, displacement, and disease outbreaks. These are reversing development gains,



dampening growth, widening inequalities and increasing vulnerability for our people, especially among women and children. There is a pressing need to integrate climate resilience and disaster risk reduction into programming, and national response actions.

Despite progressive legal frameworks, women and girls in the SADC region continue to face systemic marginalization due to entrenched patriarchal norms, limiting their participation in political, economic, and social spheres. Gender-Based Violence and Early Child Marriage remain widespread, exacerbated by cultural practices, weak legal enforcement and limited access to justice, especially for rural communities. Barriers such as restricted access to land, education, healthcare, and leadership opportunities further entrench gender inequality and hinder the full realization of women's rights and potential.

Distinguished guests and honourable members, the theme of this 57th Plenary **“HARNESSING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) FOR EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT PARLIAMENTARY PROCESSES IN THE SADC REGION: EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES”** is very timely.

We are now living in a digital age, and it is important that the SADC Parliamentary Forum considers the implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the work of the Parliamentary Forum and broadly development in the region. While we recognise the opportunities that AI presents, both for the Parliamentary Forum and the Member States, we also need to ensure that risks are well managed. These considerations should be made in line with the guiding principles of the SADC PF which are the respect for the institution of Parliament, Democracy, Rule of Law, Human Rights, Financial Accountability and Transparency.

We welcome the considerations by this house to incorporate the use of AI in improving governance and legislative activities because recognize that, indeed AI does offer opportunities to enhance efficiency, transparency and



responsiveness within parliamentary processes. However, we are also cognizant of the risks around ethical considerations, data security, privacy concerns and the digital divide. We believe your deliberations in this session have greatly been insightful in developing the appropriate solutions for the SADC PF and for the member parliaments.

Over the years, the SADC Parliamentary Forum has made significant strides in various areas that resonate with Oxfam's mission and principles. We take this opportunity to commend the SADC PF on the following achievements.

1. **The implementation of the Model Law on Gender Based Violence (GBV)** - The SADC PF has successfully promoted the alignment of member states with the SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence, demonstrating a commitment to combating GBV within the region. This initiative has paved the way for stronger legal protections for victims of violence.
2. **Launching the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage** – This model law will ensure the harmonization of the age of a child across member states. This progress will protect children's rights and ensuring uniformity in legal standards. This Model law has been a great milestone particularly in the fight against Early Child Marriage.
3. **Women's Caucus engagements:** - Convening a parliamentary forum on the women's caucus at the SADC level has been instrumental in fostering networking opportunities for Parliamentarians and enhancing the capacity of women leaders. This is a crucial step towards achieving gender parity in political representation and decision-making.
4. **Parliamentary Advocacy:** The SADC PF has demonstrated effective engagement with Parliamentarians to strengthen the implementation of SADC protocols, treaties, and other decisions at the national level. This strategic involvement enhances the capacity of parliamentarians to advocate for and implement policies that benefit their constituents.



5. **Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy:** - The SADC PF's commitment to promoting human rights, democracy, and regional integration through collective responsibility is commendable. Their actions reflect a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of social development, economic governance, and gender equality.

Oxfam has been an active player in development at regional, continental and global levels, championing the fight against poverty and inequality. Our work spans across SADC countries where we collaborate with communities, youth- and women-led movements, and local partners to address urgent humanitarian crises, promote climate justice, and champion gender equality. Oxfam is committed to transformative change that centres the voices and rights of vulnerable populations, particularly women and youth.

Oxfam supports regional influencing by: Convening civic actors and coalitions for policy dialogue. Promoting feminist and youth-led governance and economic systems and advocating for climate loss and damage compensation from global polluters. We are also strategically located in South Africa where our work centres on influencing the BRICS and the G20. At continental level, we align with key African Union policies including the **Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** and the **AU Youth Charter**. By contributing evidence, case studies, and policy insights, it strengthens continental advocacy for gender-transformative agriculture, inclusive economies, and equitable governance. At Global level, Oxfam's **global campaigns** on climate justice, humanitarian response, and economic inequality bring Southern Africa's lived realities into global policy spaces. Through joint fundraising, coordinated humanitarian action, and policy advocacy, Oxfam ensures that African voices influence international commitments.



Oxfam has collaborated with the SADC PF on a notable number of areas in the past. Honourable Speaker, allow me to highlight a few notable areas of joint cooperation.

Under Fiscal justice and resource governance we have worked together to revise the SADC mining protocol to ensure Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). In the area of humanitarian response and climate justice, Oxfam has collaborated with SADC member states to build the capacity of communities and local partners in Disaster Risk Reduction and contingency planning in emergencies guided by its Local Humanitarian Leadership Strategy. Recently, during the 2023–2024 El Niño-induced drought and climate crises in affected member states, Oxfam partnered with local governments to strengthen cyclone and flood early warning systems.

Under Gender Justice, Oxfam has been working to ensure diverse women, girls, and marginalised groups fully realise their rights, exercise their leadership, and live a life free from violence, discrimination, and poverty. This has been done through thematic work on Ending Violence Against Women and Girl's (EVAWG), Transformative Women Leadership, Women Economic Empowerment, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and Girls Access to Education. Furthermore, Oxfam has spearheaded key interventions focusing on addressing key barriers that infringe the rights of women and girls. With SADC, Oxfam has partnered with the SADC Parliamentary Forum to influence policy, using the GBV and Ending Child Marriage Model Laws, and has convened regional and national forums to support their dissemination and domestication. Additionally, Oxfam has contributed thought leadership on women's political participation.

Oxfam will continue to actively collaborate with the SADC Parliamentary Forum on the following.

- 1. Advocacy for Domestication of Model Laws:** Oxfam will continue to champion the domestication of the SADC Model Law on GBV, working closely with member states to ensure that these laws are not only



adopted but effectively implemented. This advocacy contributes to creating legal frameworks that protect the rights of vulnerable populations and promote equality.

- 2. Addressing Child Marriage:** Oxfam will continue to work to tackling child marriage through advocacy efforts and empowering local stakeholders to implement the corresponding Model Laws. We believe that addressing these critical issues is essential in fostering environments where girl children can thrive and are free from harm.
- 3. Support for Human Rights Frameworks:** Oxfam will continue to promote the alignment of national legislation with the SADC Model Laws and human rights treaties. Oxfam will support the harmonization of laws across member states, facilitating a stronger collective regional stance on human rights.
- 4. Capacity Building and Networking:** Oxfam will support the parliamentary forums women's caucus at the SADC level, which reinforces networking and capacity building for women leaders. This aligns with our values of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in decision-making processes.

As I conclude, Honourable members, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, Oxfam, pledges to continue supporting the SADC Parliamentary Forum to enhance the role this house plays in development. The role of Parliaments in our member states, as the supreme law-making body, is all the more critical as we progressively achieve our development goals.

As a region we are indeed faced with complex development challenges and partnerships have become critical to achieving our shared goals. Oxfam's value-add includes evidence-based advocacy, convening power, national to regional to global linkages, and capacity strengthening.

Oxfam is excited to be one of the five organisations that will be formally signing an MOU with the SADC Parliamentary Forum this Saturday 7th of June 2025.



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Through this MOU, we will work together on mutually agreed priorities in Economic Justice, Gender Justice and Humanitarian response. I stand here on behalf of Oxfam to pledge our solidarity and continued support to advance prosperity for our people and a future that is equal for all.

I thank you.