

# Capacitating Legislative Institutions towards realising Agenda 2063: The role of Parliaments in age of Knowledge Based Economy

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## Introduction

Let me locate my talk within Aspirations of Africans as highlighted and contained in the African Union Agenda 2063 of the **Africa We Want** and consequently published in 2015. (African Union Commission, 2015) In this Agenda, Africans voices their appreciation to all generations of Pan-Africanists. While affirming their unity in diversity, they also recognised the importance of the continent's history and all other efforts to better its citizens as made by predecessors. The review of past plans and commitments was effected followed by pledges of how older lessons will be utilized in order to achieve objectives of the agenda and implementation of its aspirations. Also contained in the voices was a sense of rededication towards endurance of Pan African Vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa and driven by its citizens while presenting a dynamic force in the international arena.

In this Agenda, Africans expressed 7 key aspirations namely:

- A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development
- An integrated continent, politically united based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance
- An Africa of good governance, democracy respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law
- A peaceful and secure Africa
- An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics
- An Africa, whose development is people driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children
- Africa as strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner

Having listed the aspirations above, I wish to now place the topic for today's discussion into context of the Agenda and its Aspirations. The topic "Capacitating legislative institutions towards realisation of Agenda 2063: the role of parliament in the age of knowledge based economy" squarely fits in Aspiration 3. It is within Aspiration 3, that Africa aspire to be:

- A continent of where democratic values, culture, practices, universal principles of human rights, gender equality, justice and the rule of law is entrenched,
- Respectively, it is an aspiration to have capable institutions and transformative leadership in places at all levels.

Aspiration 2 also has a component that speaks to the topic today, namely, development of infrastructure that will support Africa's accelerated growth and integration, technological transformation, trade and development. A well developed ICT and digital economy are but some of the examples in this regard.

Program Director, my above sentiment begs to ask for the following questions in order to make sense of the assignment at hand. Firstly, what are the issues? Since we are 45 years away from 2063, what is the current situation now? Do the practitioners in legislative

institutions understand what is expected from them during this journey? Are they empowered in order to carry out their assignments? In this particular case, how are legislative institutions empowered to deal with implementation of deliverables that will lead our nations to prosperity? And in terms of knowledge economy, on what should legislative institutions focus on given the scope and size of what could be termed as: knowledge economy.

As Africa transition in to the future, how should the continent position itself given the particular skewed relations with other players on the global field? There are countries and world institutions that set an agenda which is not favourable to all players. Africa as continent has not been spared from such unfavourable conditions. Practitioners in legislative institutions are most of the times actors in global deliberations that affect the continent and its people. Being actors in such spaces, are they ready? Do they understand the concept of knowledge economy in relation to their contexts?

The paper for today suggests and outline main ways on how to deal with the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the knowledge economy. The fourth economy is characterised by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres. It actually paints a very scary image if one considers the pace and nature of work we have on the continent. If existing occupations are to disappear as predicted by the author, what will become of you as clerks at the table? Are legislative institutions one of the areas that will flourish with presence of robots instead of human beings that understand sense and can observe human nature? Should we leave it to geo-political forces to dictate and determine the destiny of legislative institutions?

Parliament of Namibia has over the years attempted to bring its services closer to the people. For instance, it had outreach moments with citizens of the country so that it educates and inform the public about duties and roles of parliament. This exercise in a way is meant to increase public participation in law making process. One notable activity of the local parliament is development of the **Customer Service Charter** as a tool to develop and improve service delivery to the general public. How successful was this endeavor? I am asking this in light of poor inaccessibility of citizens to technology and related tools including information? There were reports by a local research house recently that information was not easily accessible in state agencies. If accessibility to information is an impediment, how are we going to deal with knowledge economy.

Respectively, in light of Fourth Industrial Revolution and knowledge economy, how is this task supposed to be dealt with amidst moderate illiteracy level and limited access to technology? This is the moment we have to consider our own local contexts as a continent and see how the knowledge economy can be adapted or tamed to fit our spaces. This consideration should not happen in absence of other knowledge such as indigenous knowledge and practices.

How will the fourth industrial revolution in the knowledge economy appreciate the informal economy with its dynamics as we experience it on the continent? Is this expected revolution going to be experienced in similar or different ways on the continent? Informality, which is not entirely the continental making has led to serious problems that

may hamper anticipated industrial revolution. Informality to large extent is coupled by labour market flexibilities and de-regularisation of labour in beneficial countries. Big lenders in the world has often attached harsh conditions that are not favourable to socio economic conditions of borrowers. This is witnessed through labour safeguards in multilateral development banks (IMF,International Finance Corporation).

What roles are legislative practitioners and parliaments going to play?

- They need to understand the socio- eco- political contexts they work and operate in.
- Their actions should be informed by empirical research.
- Parliaments as institutions must be well serviced with modern data and proper archives for ease of reference.
- Parliaments must be well informed about topical issues on trade, innovation, technology, peace and security.
- Parliaments need to have intelligence information about affordability of changes and new economies.
- It is important to appreciate the various scapes (ethnoscapes, techno scapes, financescapes, mediascapes, ideoscapes and that has narrowed and shrank the global borders. (Appadurai,1996)

Reference:

African Union Commission, 2015. Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want  
Arjun Appadurai, 1996. Modernity at Large.