

INTERVENTION BY MARIUS KUDUMO

ON THE OCCASION OF THE THIRD COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION'S SOCIETY OF CLERKS - AT - THE -TABLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINA ON THE THEME:

“Capacitating Legislative Institution towards realizing Agenda 2063: The role of Parliaments in the age of knowledge-based economy”

Windhoek, 02 July 2018

Director of proceedings of the Session,

Seminar participants,

Invited guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Firstly, I would like to express sincere gratitude to the organizers for the invitation extended to me to make an intervention at this very important professional development seminar.
2. Secondly, I would like to express thanks and appreciation to the keynote speaker for providing the framework on the theme, and thus guiding the panelists in our interventions.
3. My intervention will be limited to attempting to recall the duties, functions and powers of parliament and advance arguments why it is perhaps a necessity to capacitate legislative institutions.
4. At the same time, we have to ask the question: What will be the implied risks and impact on the quality of public policymaking, if parliaments do not possess the expected capacity?

5. The theme of the seminar presupposes that parliaments need to be capacitated to realize Agenda 2063 in the context of knowledge-based economies. I therefore, take it as given that parliament, thus both parliamentarians and support staff need capacity enhancement.
6. It is perhaps important at the onset to recall the principles and values that underpin the Namibian Constitution in the case of Namibia when discussing the role of parliaments.
7. Article 1 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia states that : “ The Republic of Namibia is hereby established as a sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary State founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all. “
8. Further, section (2) states that: “All power shall vest in the people of Namibia who shall exercise their sovereignty through democratic institutions of the State.”
9. I am beginning my intervention with these constitutional quotations to argue that the work of any parliaments is about the welfare of the people, and thus about ensuring improved quality of life and human dignity.
10. In a nutshell, it is about improving the socio-economic conditions of all the people through policy interventions and equitable distribution of resources.
11. In the case of Namibia, one of the functions of the National Assembly is to approve budgets for effective government and administration of the country. The National Budget is one of the tools for equitable distribution of resources with the view to bring about improved quality of life.
12. When referring to the people, it is critical to be conscious of the fact that international instruments such as; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights amongst others, underscore the inherent dignity and of the equal and alienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

13. I would therefore argue that the main responsibility of parliament through legislative and representative powers is to ensure dignified and improved human conditions and quality of life.
14. To effectively exercise the responsibilities of parliaments of legislative authority, and oversight over the executive, parliamentarians and staff members of parliaments require skills, competencies and value dispositions.
15. In the case of Namibia under Article 60 (b) of the Constitution, it is explicitly stated that : “All members of the National Assembly shall regard themselves as servants of the people of Namibia and desist from any conduct by which they seek improperly to enrich themselves or alienate themselves from the people.”
16. With this background context, allow me to briefly focus on the role of parliament in the age of knowledge-based economy and realization of Agenda 2063.
17. I am of the view that we cannot discuss knowledge-based economies without referring to knowledge societies.
18. Professor Alwyn Louw, Academic President of Monash in South Africa, reflecting on the fourth industrial revolution observes that: “Although the number of days a year is never going to change, the pace at which the world changes every day is guaranteed to keep accelerating. Although it is possible that predictions of driverless cars, wearable cellphones and voice-controlled appliances will have become our lifestyle realities by 2028, the one area in which complete transformation is guaranteed is the world of work. The role of technology is not only growing, but its effect is also demanding a completely new way of thinking about the work we do.”
19. Against this background and whether we believe in the fourth industrial revolution or not, it is essential that parliaments seriously reflect on their methods of work and processes to remain relevant and effective in an ever-changing world.
20. The UNESCO World Report: “Towards Knowledge Societies”, observes that while information is a knowledge-generating tool, it is not knowledge itself.

21. Knowledge societies according to the Report, “is about capabilities to identify, produce, process, transform, disseminate and use information to build and apply knowledge for human development.
22. Knowledge-based economy presupposes application of knowledge to enhance evidence-based policymaking, creativity and innovation, and efficiency and effectiveness in production processes.
23. Parliamentarians and parliament support staff need to be lifelong learners by acknowledging that the nature of work is changing and therefore, devise strategies on how to respond to an unknown future.
24. To conclude, the role of parliaments in realizing Agenda 2063 is firstly, to domesticate the Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans and policies.
25. Secondly, is to acknowledge that an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in international arena is not attainable without investment in knowledge production and application.
26. Thirdly, is to ensure that financial and human resources are allocated to the achievement of these agendas.
27. Fourthly, parliaments must improve their oversight functions over the executive by improving implementation monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
28. Fifthly, African Parliaments must put human security above state security.
29. Sixthly, parliament support staff must, as a matter of necessity, be the best that states offer to facilitate effective legislative functions.

I thank you.