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Minister calls for regional benchmarking in education



Hon. Dr. Itah Kandjii-Murangi addresses delegates

Staff Reporters

The Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation Hon. Dr. Itah Kandji-Murangi has praised the SADC Parliamentary Forum for holding regular meetings, saying such meetings demonstrate strong commitment towards peace, stability and harmonious co-existence of the people of the SADC Region.

The Minister said this while speaking at the official opening of the 38th Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC PF.

While reiterating that quality education is key for sustainable development and regional integration, Hon. Dr. Kandjii-Murangi said Namibia subscribes to the importance of sharing and consultations on issues of mutual

interest.

“Parliaments in our part of the world represent, amongst other things, countries’ statehood, rule of law, freedom of speech, human rights and democratic processes of law making. The recent world developments, the latest being those in Paris and Mali, compel every region of the world, to vow to cling with great tenacity to peace building, peace keeping and peace maintenance strategies which is the greatest resource of every country and its people,” the Minister said. She said the SADC PF is an important body that should boldly and proudly intensify its message of regional integration.

“However, regional integration advocacy alone has not yielded requisite results despite the

existence of some strategic SADC Protocols. For instance, on Gender Parity, Education and others. “This Forum has to facilitate and accelerate, through National Parliaments and local institutions, the implementation of ratified SADC Protocols by Member States. Ratified Protocols must be translated into visible programmes with clear targets and timelines with monitoring and evaluation intervals,” she stressed. She emphasized that through well-focused programmes at regional level, Member States stand to benefit more.

“That will enhance trade, improve tourism, and strengthen cultural and educational exchanges. For instance, under the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, many Member States have ratified this and students in many universities in the SADC Region have reached or exceeded the required quota of five percent foreign students from the region.”

Despite this achievement, the Minister said there was still more to be done, such as harmonization of curricula both at Tertiary Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Academic levels; harmonization of teachers and instructors training; harmonization of industry attachment particularly for the TVET stream, and harmonization of qualifications in the regions.

“For instance, a certificate, diploma or degree in Human Resource in Namibia must be recognized as such in Swaziland, South Africa or elsewhere within the region.”

She added that collaboration in research and staff exchange were

very important and must be encouraged to focus more and more on the region's socio-economic challenges and in trying to find solutions to value addition of the region's natural resources. Some of the region's universities had done commendable ground breaking work through research work that has led to the development of patents.

"It is critical that universities are adequately funded to do more than just impart knowledge," she noted.

The Minister highlighted that despite many expectations on the education sector in the SADC Region, the sector in many of the member states was grappling with the infiltration of drugs into schools and campuses; high dropout rates some due to early marriages for girls, staff – student relationships; dilapidation of facilities; low morale amongst teachers and many more.

"These are serious challenges that counter whatever quality education and sustainable development stand for. The training of the young generation in the respect of human rights should commence within our homes. The drive to claim back our children's prosperity in schools, campuses and our neighborhoods, charity should start at home," she concluded.



Parliamentarians exchange views at the Plenary Assembly Session.

Plenary considers Draft Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage



Mps at the Plenary Assembly Session.

Staff Reporters

The 38th Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC PF has considered a draft Model Law on the Eradicating of Child Marriage and Protecting those Already in Marriage.

Hon Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus of Mauritius moved that the draft Model Law be considered. The motion was seconded by Hon Innocent Gonesse of Zimbabwe.

The motion was for the Adoption of the Report of the Joint Session of SADC PF Standing Committee and the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) and Consideration of the Draft Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Those Already in Marriage.

Speaking on behalf of the SADC PF Committee on Trade and Industry, Hon Gonesse said in an interview that the Report was a brain child of the Joint Session of the Forum and the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus, convened at Birchwood Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa during 2015.

The Draft Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Those Already in Marriage will give guidance on what should be provided for in the Law when dealing with the eradicating of Child Marriage. The Forum's working definition of a child is anyone below the age of 18 years.

"In the SADC Region in particular and in Africa in general, there are cases of children, especially girls being forced into marriage or entering into marriage which is not desirable because such children should be at school," Hon Gonesse said.

The problems affecting such children include: failure to complete education; being subjected to abuse such as violence; being exposed to health risks such as HIV/AIDS; for girls bearing children before their bodies are ready for child bearing; having multiple children; being exploited by abusive spouses; and psychological destabilization.

The Draft model law was considered by the Plenary and will be referred to legal experts for further input.



Parliamentarians follow proceedings during the Plenary Assembly Session.

Plenary adopts Motion against the Criminalization of HIV Transmission, Exposure and Non-Disclosure

Staff Reporters

The 38th Plenary Assembly Session currently underway in the resort Namibian town of Swakopmund adopted a Motion on the Criminalization of HIV Transmission, exposure and non-disclosure.

The motion seeks to propose that the Plenary Assembly Session, while acknowledging that southern Africa bears the heaviest burden of the HIV/AIDS pandemic globally, opposes the enactment of HIV-specific laws as countries respond to the pandemic.

It noted that some SADC Member States have enacted specific laws criminalizing the intentional and negligent transmission of HIV, exposure to HIV and non-disclosure of HIV status. The motion noted that existing criminal sanctions against assault and murder are usually sufficient to prosecute instances of malicious, willful and intentional HIV transmission.

The Hon Duma Boko of Botswana moved the motion. Through this motion, he expressed concern that specific criminal laws on HIV transmission, exposure and non-disclosure may be harmful to successful HIV prevention and

treatment efforts. He further argued that specific criminal laws on HIV transmission, exposure and non-disclosure have the potential to infringe on human rights in pursuing successful prosecutions.

In 2008, the SADC Parliamentary Forum adopted the SADC Model Law on HIV and AIDS which does not provide for the enactment of HIV-specific laws.

Accordingly, the 38th Plenary Assembly Session reaffirmed the obligations on SADC Member States to respect, protect, fulfil and promote human rights in all endeavors undertaken for the prevention and treatment of HIV. It called on Members States to continue the pursuit of evidence-based HIV policies, laws and interventions.

The motion reiterates the critical role of Parliamentarians in enacting laws that support evidence-based HIV prevention and treatment interventions that

conform to regional and international human rights frameworks. It then calls on Members States to consider rescinding and reviewing punitive laws specific to the prosecution of HIV transmission, exposure and non-disclosure. It enjoins Member States also to focus on efforts to fight HIV-related discrimination and stigma and to protect women and other vulnerable groups from HIV transmission, infection and exposure.

The motion proposes for SADC Member states to move away from criminalization of HIV.



Hon. Duma Boko of Botswana

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