



Parliament

Journal





Representatives from the National Federation of People with Disabilities in Namibia (NFPDN) at the launch of the Disability Handbook for Members of Parliament in Windhoek.



Members of the Omusati Regional Council who paid a courtesy call on National Council Chairman Asser Kapere (centre) on 21 October 2008.

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Editorial Board

Editors: Fanuel Katshenye
Tjiuai Kaambo

Members: Elsie Nghikembua
Vincent Mwangi
Joseph Motinga
David Nahogandja

Staff writers: Ambrosius Amutenja

Photography: Ambrosius Amutenja

Layout: John Meinert Printing

Printing: John Meinert Printing

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Please send your written contributions and enquiries to the Editor, Parliament Journal, Love Street, Private Bag 13371 / 13323, Windhoek, Namibia; Tel. 264 61 202 8000 / 264 61 2889111; Fax 264 61 226121 / 264 61 231687.

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You may also e-mail your contributions to f.katshenye@parliament.gov.na or t.kaambo@parliament.gov.na, accompanied by appropriate photo(s) where possible.



Cover photo:
Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab being congratulated by his Indonesian competitor, Hon. Agung Laksono (right) for winning the race. Outgoing IPU President, Hon. Pier Ferdinando Casini, looks on.

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**Konrad
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A partner of the Parliament of Namibia

Konrad Adenauer Foundation
Tel: 061- 225568
P.O. Box 1145
Windhoek
info@kas-namibia.org
www.kas.de/namibia

From the Editor

In the previous issue of the Parliament Journal (May-August 2008), we focused on the Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab's campaign for the Presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). This time Parliament Journal joins the citizens of Namibia, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region and Africa in general in congratulating Hon. Dr. Gurirab for being elected President of the IPU on 15 October 2008 for a three-year term.

The IPU is an international organisation of Parliaments of sovereign States established in 1889. The Union is the summit for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and co-operation among peoples for the establishment of representative democracy, with the purpose to foster contacts, co-ordination, exchange experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries. The organisation considers questions of international interests and concerns and expresses its views on such issues in order to bring about action by parliaments and parliamentarians. It contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights -- an essential factor of parliamentary democracy and development. In addition, the IPU contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions and to the strengthening and development of their means of action.

Additionally, the IPU supports the efforts of the United Nations whose objectives it shares, and works in close co-operation with it. The world body also co-operates with regional inter-parliamentary organisations, as well as with international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which are motivated by the same ideals.

The Parliament Journal wishes to reiterate its position that Hon. Dr. Gurirab has what it takes to perform his new assignment in the highest office of IPU with distinction. The fact that Dr. Gurirab's candidature was endorsed by SADC Parliamentary Forum, IPU Africa Group, Heads of State and Government of the African Union, and IPU GRULAC speaks volumes of his capabilities.

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Gurirab pledged to be IPU President for all its constituents. He further pledged to be involved fully in every worthy cause which promotes world peace, social development, human security, gender equality and empowerment of the people. It is with no doubt, therefore, that Hon. Dr. Gurirab, during his tenure of office, will make every effort to lead the IPU to greater heights.

IPU ELECTS GURIRAB AS ITS NEW PRESIDENT

The Speaker of the National Assembly Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab has been elected President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for a three-year term. The secret ballot voting, which took place at the 119th session of the Union in Geneva on 15 October 2008, saw Dr. Gurirab garnering 200 against 113 votes scored by his competitor and Speaker of the House of Representatives of Indonesia, Mr. Agung Laksono. This is the first time that the IPU elects its president from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region.

Established in 1889 and with Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, the IPU - the oldest multilateral political organisation in the world - brings together 154 affiliated national parliaments and eight associated regional assemblies. The world organisation of parliaments also has an Office in New York, which acts as its Permanent Observer to the United Nations.

In his victory and acceptance speech, Dr. Gurirab pledged to be President for all of IPU's constituents, be involved fully in every worthy cause which promotes world peace, social development, human security and gender equality in all aspects of human life. Dr. Gurirab replaced Hon. Pier Ferdinando Casini, the former President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, who had been IPU President since 2005. Dr. Gurirab's abridged victory and acceptance speech reads as following:

Democracy has spoken and the verdict is clear. Victory celebration is on. We celebrate not my success as the new



Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab delivering his acceptance speech shortly after his election as IPU President.

President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). It is a renewal of our collective commitment to the ideals of democracy. That is what we are invoking. It is a reaffirmation of the principles of an accountable government and the legitimate rights of the people we represent in our national parliaments.

By orderly transition of authority and peaceful succession of leadership, we have rekindled the vision we cherish of parliamentary democracy as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Democracy, which we celebrate on 15 September annually. I wish sincerely to thank the people of Africa and their parliamentary leaders, public officials and the media for making my candidature a living and joyful pride of our continent and her people.

Through active involvement and hard work of cluster parliamentarians of the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Parliamentary Union (APU), the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), and interaction with various governments and national parliaments, I was sustained by their genuine efforts. Whenever I went to the other regions of the world or met

delegations at conferences, I received encouraging support and goodwill.

My best accolade goes to the IPU African Geopolitical Group which has diligently managed the process by consistently engaging the members of other IPU Geopolitical Groups. I am deeply honoured and owe this victory to each and every one of you. Namibia, my country, knows the meaning of international solidarity. I thank you all very much indeed.

I pledge to be IPU President for all its constituents. I will be involved fully in every worthy cause which promotes world peace, social development, human security, gender equality and empowerment of the people. A great man, Hon. Pier Ferdinando Casini, occupied this seat for three eventful years. We recognise his outstanding work and congratulate him for a job well-done.

I pay a tribute to my persistent competitor, Hon. Agung Laksono, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Indonesia. This time, I got lucky by democracy's fairness, as it keeps the door open for next time. Both of us are products of and believers in the Bundung legacy,

Non-Alignment and South-South cooperation. Our two countries and peoples enjoy longstanding and friendly relations that will endure. I will seek your support in my work.

The world is changing and moving on. Leadership must keep in tandem with its direction and mitigate imponderables of change. As parliamentarians, we have a stake in these challenges. We are therefore expected by the people, the reason for our existence and activities, to influence change towards a better world. The future we want must end wars, nuclear proliferation, regional conflicts, domestic violence, religious intolerance, poverty, HIV/AIDS, youth unemployment and the disconnection between the city and the village. We must be committed defenders of the rule of law, social justice, moral fortitude and human compassion.

As Speakers and Presiding Officers, as parliamentarians and international civil servants, our duty is to understand the wishes and concerns of the people and to take action for their well-being, access to capital and security. It is the people who are changing the world. We need to be there with them always. Our thoughts and deeds must resonate with what the people feel and what they want in life.

We must assist the people with the necessary means to acquire knowledge, and avail themselves of information and improve support services towards realising their dreams. By enlarging their opportunities for self-empowerment, we will increase our own interaction with the various communities which we are responsible for. Because of that, we cannot compromise on policy issues and social pre-occupations as they relate to the larger human society.

The Universal Declaration on Democracy states that: "Peace and economic, social and cultural development are both conditions for and fruits of democracy. There is thus inter-dependence between peace, development, respect for observance of the rule of law and human rights."



Outgoing IPU President Pier Ferdinando Casini (right) and the Union's Secretary-General, Mr. Anders Johnsson (left) congratulating a delighted Theo-Ben Gurirab on his election victory.

Over more than 40 years of my life, I have struggled for and promoted these ideals and virtues as defining commitments of my personal life. My mind is set for the future. In essence, these commitments speak to my mind and conviction, about human brotherhood, social development and harmony between women, men, children and the environment.

My view is, in bringing a parliamentary dimension to the United Nations, the IPU must protect its unique identity and mission that stand on ensuring public interest and accountability. While the growing IPU-UN partnership seeks the same goal of promoting human development, social stability and aiming at creating economic opportunities for the people. The oversight function has its priorities that we, parliamentarians, cannot ignore in the scramble for towering world politics. We should be building towards complement, reciprocity and to avoid fusion.

I commend the vital political role that the IPU Presidency and the Office of the Secretary-General respectively continue to bring to bear on the essential relationship between the IPU and the UN. Furthermore, the IPU and legislatures of certain big powers should come together with the same conviction to promote dialogue on democracy, invest in human development and make peace-building a priority.

I conclude by paraphrasing my dear brother and predecessor, the late Dr. Mosé Penaani Tjitendero, the founding Speaker of our Parliament who missed this honour and recognition that I now happily enjoy, many thanks to you. I earnestly offer you my vision, commitment and service, my internationalism and my dedication to the vision of IPU and the ideals of democracy. I pledge to serve all of you without fear and favour or prejudice; and with loyalty and impartiality.

IPU PRESIDENCY IN BRIEF

According to the IPU Constitution, the organisation's Governing Council elects the president for a three-year term. The IPU President is the political head of the union and shall be ex-officio President of the Governing Council. The election of the President takes place during the second Assembly of the year. If, for exceptional reasons, the Assembly cannot be convened, the Governing Council may nevertheless hold the election.

The retiring IPU President is not eligible for re-election and must be replaced by a person from another Parliament. An endeavour is made to ensure a regular rotation between the different geopolitical Groups. In case of the resignation, loss of parliamentary mandate or death of the president, the functions of president is exercised by the Vice-President of the Executive Committee appointed by the latter, until the Governing Council has elected a new president. The same provision applies in the case of the suspension of the affiliation of the Member of the Union to which the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union belongs.

The president is assisted by a group of six vice-presidents representing each of the geopolitical groups and appointed from among the members of the Executive Committee for a renewable term of one year.

IPU GEOPOLITICAL GROUPS

Geopolitical groups play an important role in the functioning of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Each group decides on its own working methods that best suits its participation in the



Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab being congratulated by his Indonesian competitor, Hon. Agung Laksono (right) for winning the race. Outgoing IPU President, Hon. Pier Ferdinando Casini, looks on.

activities of the Union and informs the Secretariat of its composition, the names of its officers, and its rules of procedure.

As stipulated in the statute of the union, those Members belonging to more than one geopolitical group should inform the Secretary-General which geopolitical group they represent for the purposes of submitting candidatures for positions within the Union.

There are six geopolitical groups of the union that are currently active. They are composed of the African Group with 42 member nations; the Arab Group with 17 member nations; the Asia-Pacific Group with 26 members; the Eurasia Group with seven members; the Latin American and Caribbean Group with 19 members; and the Twelve-Plus Group with 45 member-states. The groups are grouped in countries as listed below:

African Group: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Republic of Congo, Ivory Cost, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe,

Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Arab Group: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Asia Pacific: Afghanistan, Australia, Cambodia, Canada, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam.

Eurasia Group: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Tajikistan.

Group of Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Twelve-Plus Group: Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Kingdom.

Some IPU members (such as Azerbaijan, Maldives, Montenegro and Ukraine) are not affiliated to any of the above geographical groups. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament are observers only.

GURIRAB REFLECTS ON HIS RECENT ELECTION

The election of Namibia's Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, to the Presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) presents him with additional challenges, responsibilities and mandates. These challenges range from revitalizing the economy to poverty eradication, the fight against HIV and AIDS, youth development, job creation, global warming and climate change, social instability, organised crime, and domestic violence. Parliament Journal caught up with Dr. Gurirab and asked him on how he felt being elected to this high international position on 15 October 2008 coming from a small country like Namibia.

Gurirab: Thank you very much for the opportunity to talk to you. It is a great honour for me personally as a Namibian and as a citizen of the SADC region. At the end, I was Africa's candidate for the IPU presidency. It did not come as a surprise to me. I campaigned with the help of my country and with the help of my colleague African Speakers from SADC Parliaments. We enlisted the support of our governments and we made use of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the SADC countries. Our own (Namibian) Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed all our Ambassadors (and High Commissioners) throughout the world to champion this campaign for my election.

In a way, my not being surprised has



Dr. Gurirab admits that the IPU faces the challenges of poverty eradication, HIV and AIDS, job creation, climate change and organised crime among others.

to do with that this is just another opportunity. I had perhaps the rarest opportunities in 1999 for having been elected as the President of the United Nations General Assembly. It is an opportunity that will repeat itself only in the next century when we enter the 22nd Century and the next millennium. My presidency of the General Assembly took place at the dawn of the 21st Century and at the dawn of the third millennium. In comparison to that, this is a smaller run.

PJ: Which countries and individuals were your chief supporters in your bid for the IPU Presidency?

Gurirab: They were all the African countries – it became Africa's stand and all the African countries supported me.

I am sure that all the African countries voted for my candidature. We wanted to make a case, but we did not quite succeed in convincing all the countries because there was another candidate (Mr. Agung Laksono) from Indonesia who also stood. But the results of the election underlined the fact that this is Africa's term and I won big at the end.

PJ: Does your election have a special meaning or benefit for Africa and Namibia in particular?

Gurirab: Just the same as when I became President of the United Nations General Assembly. Once you are elected, you become a servant of the membership of the organisation. You cannot practice apartheid when you become a president of international bodies. The reason why

the IPU Presidency rotates among regions underlines the consideration that all the regions should have a term to serve. That implies that when you become a president representing a given region, the sensitivity, the priorities, and the concerns of the people of that region should enjoy, perhaps not higher consideration, but prominent consideration.

PJ: How are you going to reconcile your duties as IPU President and Speaker of the National Assembly simultaneously?

Gurirab: It is a tough one. Being Speaker of the National Assembly in itself has made the responsibilities and the mandates of the National Assembly to grow. My plate is full and is becoming fuller everyday in my capacity as the Speaker. The roles of national parliaments have gone beyond the national borders. They have become regional, continental and global. It is a very valid point. I will be able to do what I am doing as Speaker and meet the challenges that I know will be written down in terms of the calendar of the National Assembly. With the equally mounting challenges and responsibilities, as President of the IPU, I will have to do that. The criteria for being elected as President of the IPU are dictated that you must be a head of parliament – a Speaker/ Presiding Officer. I will do my level best. Both of them are very demanding positions. But I will have to balance the responsibilities, which means that my deputy will now do more work than she would have normally been doing.

PJ: What are the series of things that you plan to accomplish at the end of your three-year term?

Gurirab: It is a long list. But I can take you through by mentioning some of them. We have been talking that Africa has its special needs – the needs for poverty eradication, the needs for fighting the HIV and AIDS pandemic, the needs for empowerment of women, the needs for youth development and to create opportunities for those leaving secondary schools and universities to find jobs or to start entrepreneurship.

The challenges of global warming and climate change need to be addressed. The real issues at the heart of it all are two things: one is the economy. Africa is a continent of enormous natural resources and, on the other hand, with poor people. This is a major challenge. The other challenge is what I would call the concern about social instability. This is a broad term which lumps together poverty, the breakdown of law and order, organised crime, domestic and commercial violence – all these are challenges. If we could get the economy right and create employment opportunities; if we could get the economy right so that the national budget can provide more in the areas of education, healthcare and infrastructure, we would have done well.

Social instability means the breakdown in family lives, a disparity between the urban life and the rural life. It means violence where children and young people no longer attach importance to their cultural values and customs. Those are the things that I would want to share with the membership of IPU to articulate them from a parliamentary perspective. That is why parliaments are placed on the front banner.

PJ: Should you not be re-elected as Speaker of the National Assembly in 2010, will this affect your IPU Presidency?

Gurirab: It is a good question. You ask me to tell my SWAPO Party to make sure that I am on the party list because I deserve that. As all of you know, as a member of the SWAPO Party and as a Namibian, I am a nice person [laughter]. Well, it is not for me to say. But, of course, I expect, I trust, I hope and I pray that that will not happen. I hope that I will continue to be Speaker in order to serve my three-year term as IPU President.

PJ: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Gurirab: Yes. I just want to say that so much has been said when people

become successful and reach high. They tend to forget how they got up there. I have achieved a great deal in my life and I owe all those achievements to the wonderful people that were around me, who inspired me and who set examples for me. At a very young age, the leadership of the SWAPO Party, our Founding President – the first President of the SWAPO Party (Dr. Sam Nujoma) – saw in me an ability, together with a handful of my colleagues – actually two others – to represent our movement while we were students. I went on to become the first permanent observer of any African liberation movement at the United Nations, officially representing our liberation movement, SWAPO. I became SWAPO's Secretary for Foreign Affairs, a post that I held until we came back home (in 1989). I became Foreign Minister and served the longest and still holding the record. I think I will hold that record for a long time because I don't think any successor of mine as Foreign Minister will be allowed to serve for more than a decade.

I became Prime Minister and now I am the Speaker. I became President of the United Nations General Assembly. I am now the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. That is quite a lot. I am most grateful for the love, support, encouragement and care that I have received from those who felt that I have a contribution to make. That is the spirit that I will always hold dear.



I have achieved a great deal in my life and I owe all those achievements to the wonderful people who inspired and set examples for me.

SPREAD AWARENESS ON HIV/AIDS, URGES KAPERRE

“Namibia, like the rest of the world, committed itself to being a part of the World AIDS Day global commemoration in order to help ensure that public and private partners spread awareness about the status of the pandemic and encourage progress in HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care within our country.” This was said by the Chairperson of the National Council, Hon. Asser Kapere during the commemoration of the World AIDS Day on 1 December 2008 in Windhoek.

Kapere said on this day, individuals and organisations from around the world come together to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and demonstrate solidarity in the face of the pandemic. “Individuals at all levels of leadership must redouble their endeavours in highlighting efforts needed to fulfill commitments that have been made in the response to AIDS – particularly the promise of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010”.

The Chairman of the National Council stressed that “as parliamentarians, civil servants, managers, and supervisors and as leaders in our communities and homes, we must all play a role in lessening the plight of those affected by HIV/AIDS”.

Kapere reminded the public that “we must recognise that the battle against AIDS is a shared responsibility. AIDS has become the leading cause of death in the world. Altogether, we are faced with a major health, security, economic, political and social catastrophe that affects each one of us”, he emphasised.

Chairman Kapere is of the view that since Namibia has a small population of approximately 2 million people, “we cannot ignore the devastation that is overwhelming our cities, towns, villages and the country in general”. He said although it was encouraging to note that the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS positive cases in Namibia have fallen significantly from 22 percent in 2002 to 19.9 percent in 2006 and from 2006 to 17.8 percent, “it is not enough and we must all redouble our efforts in ensuring that we witness a double digit decline during the next few years”, he stressed.

Hon. Kapere, the Councillor for the Arandis Constituency in the Erongo Region, reminded the audience that “in countries where concerned political leadership, openness about public issues, and cross-cutting activities come together, the tide is turning and clear successes are being achieved. We must therefore continue to put HIV/AIDS at the forefront of our national agenda”.

Kapere said the impact of HIV and AIDS in the world was severely undermining development with millions of lives hanging in the balance. “It is no exaggeration to say that AIDS may very well be the greatest threat



Hon. Asser Kapere, Chairman of the National Council

to survival of humanity today, leaving no part of the world untouched. Namibia is no exception. That's why, as Parliamentarians, activists, management and staff, we must form a united front to defeat AIDS".

He suggested that "efforts to contain and turn the situation around will require partnerships and political commitment. The Government, private sector, civil society, particularly the youth, religious communities, and international cooperating partners must join hands to achieve success in our common struggle to save lives". Kapere advocated for a coherent approach in public awareness efforts, prevention and treatment, as a way of reducing HIV transmission. "There is solid evidence that, at local community and national levels, considerable results can be obtained with carefully organised and monitored programmes", he said.

He reminded the public of the HIV and AIDS preventive ways. "They include a combination of life skills and peer group counseling for responsible and safe sexual behaviour, and condom distribution. Applying such workable tools requires delivering full-scale programmes to infected mothers,

embattled youth and AIDS orphans". Kapere encouraged the public to strengthen solidarity and mutual support among themselves to successfully fight this dreadful pandemic. "To do this, we should all join hands to mobilise our strength as a nation and as individuals to ensure that we are able to manage, reduce and, in the long run, defeat the AIDS pandemic. We have it in our power to achieve this objective. What is critical is that we must work together as a united force".

He outlined the responsibilities of Parliamentarians in the fight against HIV and AIDS as:

- Adoption of legislative measures to ensure the protection and removal of all forms of discrimination against, and empowerment of, affected and infected people;
- Review and reform the laws and procedures applicable to access resources, care and services to eliminate gender bias and ensure justice and fairness to women, children and men;
- Reviewing, amending or repealing laws adversely affecting the status of communities affected by and infected with HIV/AIDS;

- Introducing, as a matter of priority, legal and administrative mechanisms for communities affected by and infected with HIV/AIDS, to enjoy effective access to counseling;
- Promoting the eradication of elements in traditional norms and religious beliefs, practices and stereotypes, which legitimise discrimination of affected and infected people;
- Introducing and supporting gender sensitisation and public awareness programmes aimed at eradicating discrimination against women and children;
- Encouraging the media to play a constructive role in the eradication of discrimination against communities affected by and infected with HIV/AIDS. The media must not exploit issues concerning HIV/AIDS for their benefit, but adopt guidelines which ensure sensitive coverage of the issue, and avoid the perpetuation of stereotypes;
- Introducing programmes and strategies for the eradication of poverty and promote economic empowerment of women and children;
- Adopting and promoting policies and positive measures which ensure the equal representation of women and men in positions of leadership and real power in all spheres of public and private life.

Kapere appealed to his fellow lawmakers, parents and community leaders to fight HIV and AIDS together with the knowledge and tools at their disposal. "We need to recognise that we all shoulder a particularly critical responsibility and role. There are some specific roles and tasks that each one of us can play. However, we must strengthen our efforts and fight the pandemic with intensity and single-minded purpose, for only then, can we really make a difference", he concluded. The year 2008 marked the 20th anniversary of World AIDS Day.



Members of the National Council lighting candles in commemoration of the World AIDS Day 2008.

PARLIAMENT CELEBRATES DAY OF DEMOCRACY

Parliament of Namibia celebrated for the first time the International Day of Democracy this year. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the day in 2007 and declared 15 September annually as the International Day of Democracy. This year, Namibia celebrated the day on 18 September as the National Assembly did not resume business until 16 September 2008.

In his welcoming remarks, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab who is also the IPU President, gave a background on the origin of the International Day of Democracy: "The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in September 1997 adopted a Universal Declaration on Democracy and called upon its constituents – the National Parliaments – to popularise its contents widely in their respective countries. The idea originated much earlier from the United Nations. In 2007, the UN General Assembly reaffirmed

the resilience and universality of the principles of democracy by declaring 15 September as the International Day of Democracy. It is the day to celebrate democracy."

According to Dr. Gurirab, it was the duty of the IPU to maintain vigilance and ensure that national parliaments became committed agents who kept the tradition alive in the hearts and minds of the people. Democracy required strong parliaments, buttressed by functioning constitutions, dedicated parliamentarians and informed and demanding citizens, Dr Gurirab emphasised.

Dr Gurirab said that any discussion on democracy began with the people. He said it used to be said that apartheid South Africa was a republic without the public for excluding the overwhelming majority of the people of the country. The struggle to bring freedom and justice was meant, in a large measure, to bring democracy, equality and the rule of law to both Namibia and South Africa. It is understood that one-size-fits-all democracy is unrealistic. For democracy to be worthy of the name, it must have certain essential features which should be measurable. Among such essential features, Dr. Gurirab observed, were written constitutions, representative governments, periodical elections, and respect for human rights, parliaments, freedom of speech and association, religion, judiciary, national budget and a public service that is accountable.



Judge President of the High Court of Namibia, Mr. Petrus Damaseb.

The head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, Bishop Zephania Kameeta, summed up what he saw as the "ideal moral values of a society in a democracy" as following: a democratic State was like a house in which a family lives under one roof. Each individual with her/his own identity, characteristics and different ideas; sharing, caring, tolerance and unity in diversity were the indispensable characteristics and the soul of this house. Without it, this house will be torn apart and fall; not our differences, but our unity is the most important aspect of our relationships and living together in our one democratic house called Namibia; and that we must never ever allow the ugly things of the past to return or being repeated in our democracy, today or in the future.

The Judge President of the High Court of Namibia, Mr. Petrus Damaseb, quoting the Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 161st session in Cairo on 16 September 1997, stressed that "a state of democracy ensured that the processes by which power was acceded to, wielded and alternated, allowed for free political competition and were the product of open, free and non-discriminatory participation by the people, exercised in accordance with the rule of law".

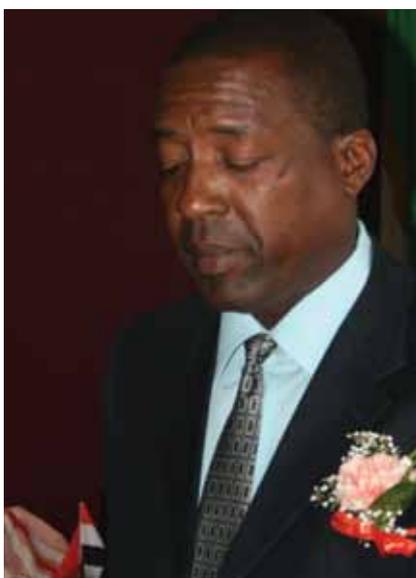
According to Damaseb, the Universal Declaration on Democracy states in part that: "Democracy is founded on the primacy of the law and the exercise of human rights. In a democratic State, no one is above the law and all are equal before the law."



Representatives from Namibia's tertiary institutions and civic organisations joined Parliamentarians this year to celebrate the International Day of Democracy.

The Judge President explained that when declaring the International Day of Democracy, the UN General Assembly “correctly” noted that there was no single model of democracy, observing that all democracies shared common features. “In my view, a state that does not embody the ethos and principles set out in the Universal Declaration on Democracy cannot call itself democratic,” Damaseb cautioned. Added Damaseb: “Democracy is the very antithesis of colonialism and apartheid. Therefore, to speak of democracy in a pre-independent Namibia is a contradiction in terms. In pre-independent Namibia, there was no equality before the law; no respect for human rights; no universal adult suffrage; no equal access to social services; no equal opportunities in employment and pursuit of one’s chosen career; and laws were made by the colonial power – South Africa – and imposed on the people of Namibia.”

“There was a simulacrum [replica] of an independent judiciary which lacked legitimacy and was rendered toothless by the so-called doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty which made those who arrogated to themselves the power to make laws omnipotent. The essence of the doctrine is that parliament could pass any law it wanted and such law would not be subject to judicial scrutiny as long as it complied with the formal requirements for making laws,” Damaseb said, referring to the laws that were applicable in Namibia before March 1990.



Mr. Moses Ndjarakana, Director of the Electoral Commission of Namibia.



Chairman of the Namibia Non-Governmental Organisations Forum, Mr. Ronny Dempers.

All that changed when Namibia attained statehood and adopted a sovereign, autochthonous [national] constitution adopted by the peoples’ chosen political representatives; a constitution that ordains political pluralism and the peoples’ right to freely choose their representatives; a constitution that contains a justiciable Bill of Rights. Today, Namibia boasts of a legislature and an executive chosen freely by the people of this country. That gives legitimacy to the laws they pass and the governance of the country. Unlike Namibia of the old, in present-day Namibia both the executive and the legislature are required to comply with the constitution and the law. If they fail to do so, an independent judiciary exists to review their actions. In view of the separation of powers, the judiciary recognises that the constitution has delineated boundaries of each arm of government, and the courts are not there to make laws or to second-guess government policy unless they are in breach of the law, explained Judge President Damaseb.

Mr. Moses Ndjarakana, the Director of the Electoral Commission of Namibia [ECN], speaking at the same occasion, argued that elections alone did not make democracy. “It is through regular free and fair elections open to all citizens that the people choose a government of their liking. Therefore, under a functional democracy the people’s right to vote is a basic civil and political right that is guaranteed in the constitution. In a democracy elections cannot be a farce, but have to instead be an authentic and competitive process seeking original or renewed mandate from the people.

In a democracy not only do citizens have rights, but they also have the responsibility of the political system that is designed to safeguard their rights,” said the chief of the ECN.

The Chairman of the Namibia Non-Governmental Organisations Forum (Nangof), Mr Ronny Dempers, praised parliament’s outreach programme, describing it as an “innovative initiative which needs to be continued and sustained as it allowed an interface between Members of Parliament and citizens”. Mr. Dempers, contributing on “how we can make the Namibian Parliament more democratic, accessible, representative, transparent and accountable”, pointed out, among others, the following:

- Party list systems through which MPs come into parliament remains an obstacle towards the aspirations of the people’s government concept;
- The perception and some of the practices that appears to see the National Council as subservient is a very unhealthy situation;
- Strengthen the workings of the Parliamentary Standing Committee and conduct of more public hearings (not only in main towns), is one of the ways through which we can make the parliament more democratic;
- Allow more media coverage of works and activities of parliament to enhance transparency. Members of parliament should have a more structured space on how they interact with the citizens; and
- Strong dominance of the executive in parliament compromises the ability of parliament to play its oversight role more effectively.

EVENTS AT PARLIAMENT IN PICTURES



A group photo of an 11-man delegation from the Omusati Regional Council who paid a courtesy call on the Chairman of the National Council, Hon. Asser Kapere on 21 October 2008. The councillors, led by Regional Governor Sackey Kayone, came to learn from the experience of the National Council's Committees system and on decisions monitoring and evaluation in order to improve on their performances.



The Managing Director of Namdeb Diamond Corporation, Mrs. Inge Zaamwani-Kamwi, paid a courtesy call on the Chairman of the National Council, Hon. Asser Kapere on 4 November 2008. The three-person delegation made a presentation on the future of Namdeb, its financial position and the less impact that the current global financial crisis has on the operations of the corporation.



Thousands of former fighters in Namibia's war of liberation and others flocked to the National Council administration building from 16 to 20 September 2008 to apply for registration as War Veterans.



The Algerian Minister for Veterans Affairs (Moudjahidine), Mr. Mohamed Cherif Abbas paid a courtesy call on the Chairman of the National Council, Hon. Asser Kapere on 19 November 2008. Namibia's Ministry for Veterans Affairs and that of Algeria signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 21 November 2008 to enhance the bilateral relations between the two ministries.



Omusati Regional Governor, Hon. Sackey Kayone.



Thousands of visitors flocked to the Parliament Exhibition Stand at the Windhoek Industrial and Agricultural Show 2008.

EVENTS AT PARLIAMENT IN PICTURES



Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Hon. Doreen Sioka (right) exchanges gifts with CPA Secretary-General, Dr. William Shija (left).



Chairman of the National Council, Hon. Asser Kapere (left) exchanges gifts with CPA Secretary-General, Dr. William Shija (right).



The Seychellois Speaker, Hon. Patrick Herminie (far right) paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Nahas Angula.



Commissioners of the Nigerian National Assembly Service Commission who paid a courtesy call on the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Doreen Sioka while on a fact-finding mission to Namibia.

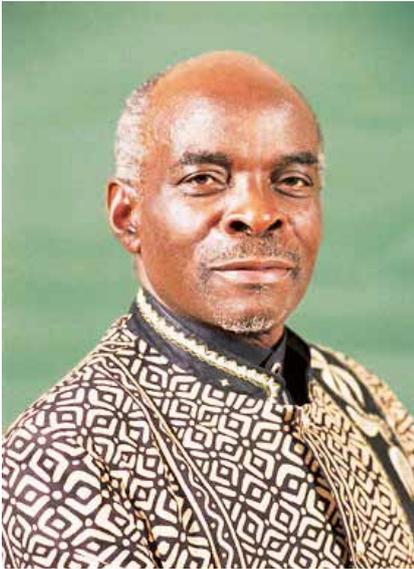


Students from the Augsburg College, USA, on a study tour of Namibia through the Centre for Global Education, visited the Parliament of Namibia on 16 October 2008.

DISABILITY A DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUE, SAYS PRIME MINISTER

Disability has become developmental, human rights and a cross-cutting issue. This observation was made by Prime Minister Nahas Angula at the official launch of the Disability Handbook for Members of Parliament in Windhoek on 22 October 2008.

The Prime Minister categorised disability as a developmental issue because “as we develop, the issues of disability also develops, they are just not stationed at one stage”. As a human rights issue, he added, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was coordinating the United Nations Disability Experts Committee which possessed working documents on human rights of people with disabilities. The abridged speech of the Prime Minister reads as following:



Prime Minister Nahas Angula.

The OHCHR is encouraging all human rights treaty monitoring bodies to monitor the compliance of States with their commitments under the relevant instruments to ensure the full enjoyment of those rights by people with disabilities. It urges Governments to cover fully the human rights of people with disabilities in compliance with reporting obligations under the relevant UN instruments.

Disability in Namibia is regulated by

the National Policy on Disability of 1997, the Affirmative Action Act of 1998, the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities of 2003, the National Disability Council Act of 2004, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities of 2005. These national and international instruments had been ratified and approved. We should honour our commitments. We should not inform the people with disabilities of their needs as we think. Rather, we ought to meet their expectations.

The National Disability Council monitors, among others, the implementation of the National Policy on Disability; represents people with disabilities before any organ of the State; provides legal advice to persons with disabilities in matters related to their rights or their integration into society. The other empowering measures for people with disabilities in the Act are the penalties for any person who gives false statement to the Council – be it an annual report from Ministries or from other institutions as requested by the Council. The penalty for false statement is a fine not exceeding N\$16 000; or imprisonment for a period not exceeding four years or both.

As a result of the Plan of Action for the African Decade for Persons with Disabilities (1999-2009), a disability unit has been established under the Office of the Prime Minister in consultation with the National Federation of People with Disabilities in Namibia (NFPDN). The unit has actively participated in many deliberations on equal opportunities for people with disabilities at national, regional, continental and international levels.

In cooperation with the NFPDN, the disability unit and the Members of Parliament have:

- secured approval from the Namibian Government to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities;

- secured approval and ratified the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities;
- designated Disability Focal Persons in all ministries;
- established the Braille Tactile Ballot folders for use by people with visual impairment during elections;
- developed regional and municipal Disability Action Plans;
- translated the Public Service Charter into Braille;
- incorporated a sub-sector on disability in the NDP3;
- resolved a case where a person with disabilities in a wheelchair was refused boarding an Air Namibia flight from Eros Airport to Ondangwa. As a result, road transport from Windhoek to Ondangwa was arranged at the expense of Air Namibia;
- opened a disability unit at the University of Namibia (UNAM);
- held discussions with UNAM's Faculty of Law to establish a partnership with those people with disabilities involved in human rights activities, in accordance with the UN Convention;
- participated in the workshop on Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Disability in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2008.

Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda is critical. It ensures equal opportunities for people with disabilities and eradicates poverty among them. Specific targets can be set within our plans and reports on MDGs, Poverty Reduction Strategies and the national programmes such as Black Economic Empowerment and Resettlement.

Deliberate actions are required to change systems, programs, and plans to achieve the most required results timely. My predecessor, the Speaker of the National Assembly and President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, in his acceptance statement of his new position said: “It



This book will be a useful tool in the protection of rights and dignities of people with disabilities.

is the people really – and not us – who are changing the world.” This can also be true in respect to the wishes of people with disabilities.

The disability handbook for parliamentarians is a product of United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and many other actors. The handbook is derived from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The convention promotes, protects and ensures full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities as well as promoting respect for their dignity.

The handbook focuses on how parliamentarians work and the role they play in promoting and protecting human rights. It aims to assist parliamentarians and others to realise the convention so that people

with disabilities could achieve the transition from exclusion to equality. It further seeks to raise awareness of the convention and its provisions, to promote the appreciation of disability concerns, and assist parliaments in understanding the mechanisms and frameworks needed to translate the convention into practice.

This handbook is a useful tool for the entire world in the protection and promotion of the rights and dignities of people with disabilities. You can now refer to it in any different situations. I urge you to use this tool when we are developing different political parties’ manifestos so that they are informed by the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities.



Members of the National Federation of People with Disabilities in Namibia who attended the official launch of the Disability Handbook for Members of Parliament.

NAMIBIA POLITICAL YOUTHS HOLD ANNUAL MEETING

Namibian youth leaders representing political parties around the country met recently to attend their second annual meeting at the Heja Lodge outside Windhoek.

The meeting, under the theme “Vision 2030 – Youth Aspire to Adapt, Relate and Own,” was organised by the Namibia Political Youth Forum (NPYF). The aim of the forum is “to bring together (Namibian) youth leaders from different political parties and ideologies around one table to discuss selected issues that are of concern to young people”.



Hon. Doreen Sioka, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

In an opening statement read on her behalf by SWAPO Party Parliamentarian Evelyn !Nawases-Taeyele, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Doreen Sioka described the biggest challenge facing the youth as unemployment, HIV/AIDS and poverty. “These challenges require from us to work together for the common good of our national interest above and irrespective of our political affiliations,” said Sioka.



Membership of the Namibia Political Youth Forum is drawn from different political parties of different ideologies around the country.

Hon. Sioka commended the youth for seeing the need to create a forum in which divergent issues affecting the youth, are tackled. "I want to assure you that as citizens of this country it is your democratic right to raise issues that you think will shape your lives...I believe that for the youth to be successful in all their endeavours, they need the support of all stakeholders. They also require the existence and/or creation of supportive policies, programmes and regulations. This view is also reiterated in the African Union Youth Charter as well as in the African Charter for Participation in Development and Transformation," she said.

Referring to the National Youth Council Bill which was before Parliament, the Deputy Speaker said if enacted the Bill would go a long way in empowering the National Youth Council and its structures, such as the Namibia Political Youth Forum, to function efficiently and effectively to the benefit of the Namibian youth.

The Deputy Speaker assured the youths that parliament was taking the needs of the youth seriously and wanted to see the National Youth Council Bill enacted. Equally, she added, parliament had taken note

of the calls from those who had commented on the Draft Bill that its enactment should be accompanied by an increase in funding to the National Youth Council. "I believe that the Bill will not only strengthened the NYC as an institution, but will also enable the youth, through the NYC, to better influence the policies and programme of the government," she said.

She advised the youths to be in the forefront of propagating the Bill by sensitizing the public about it; write position papers and inform the nation on the pertinent issues contained in the Bill. In this light, she said, it was imperative that the youth constituents should attend parliamentary public hearings and air their views. "The fact that the Bill has been submitted to Parliament should not make you complacent and just wait for parliament to take its course. You must be seen to influence the legislative process all the way," she urged the youth.

Hon. Sioka praised the establishment of the Youth Forum as it "challenges all myths and stereotypes" against the youth who are accused of "political apathy". This youth forum is a clear demonstration that we can put our peoples' wellbeing before any political bigotry. She added that the political

forum provided its youth with an opportunity for dialogue and to make contributions to policy formulation. "I hope the tolerance displayed in the Forum could be extended to our political party campaigns leading to national elections scheduled for next year. Therefore, young people should understand that tolerance plays a crucial role in avoiding any political intolerance," she said.

At the end of their meeting, the NPYF issued a declaration in which they pronounced themselves on education, health, culture, economics, globalisation, technology, politics, democracy, and good governance.

The general objectives for the NPYF is to instill a sense of political tolerance amongst Namibian youth leaders; to promote the culture of research and academic dialogue to enable them to build a foundation of a knowledge-based society envisioned in Vision 2030; and to create a platform for youth representatives of political parties to engage each other on an annual basis on issues relating to economic, social and political challenges facing them.

SEYCHELLOIS SPEAKER HAILS NAMIBIA'S DEMOCRACY



The Seychellois Speaker, Hon. Patrick Herminie.

The Speaker of the National Assembly of the Seychelles Honourable Patrick Herminie has hailed Namibia as a thriving democracy, saying he was impressed with the country's parliamentary system concluding from what he had seen and been told.

Speaker Herminie, on a four-day working visit in the country at the invitation of the Parliament of Namibia, was accompanied by senior officials from that island nation's National Assembly. He held discussions with the Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, and other high ranking parliamentary officials during his official visit from 28 September to 3 October 2008.

Dr. Gurirab expressed delight at the visit, describing it as important for small countries like Namibia and the Seychelles to conduct visits of this nature to exchange and share ideas. He said such visits would help strengthen the cordial relations that already existed between Namibia and the Seychelles.

Gurirab maintains that as member states of intergovernmental bodies such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the United Nations and the Pan-African Parliament, the two countries must utilise all the platforms at their disposal to bring about successful developments to their respective people.

Both Speaker Gurirab and Herminie expressed concern over the current state of international economics, referring to the credit crunch being experienced in the United States and the rest of the world. The two Speakers concurred that although the United States was far away from their respective countries, the United States' financial woes did affect small economies severely – including Namibia and the Seychelles – given the fact that international trade was practiced within the United States-led economy. As a result, Gurirab said, “when the United States of America sneezes, the whole world gets flu” adding that the credit crunch was reminiscent of the Great Depression of the early 1930s.

Speaker Herminie also paid a courtesy call on the Chairman of the National Council, Hon. Asser Kapere. Hon. Kapere briefed the Seychellois delegation on the electoral procedure of National Council members, in addition to the functions of the Upper House. The Chairman then

thanked the Seychellois for visiting the Parliament of Namibia. He stressed that such exchanges were necessary to strengthen democracy. According to Kapere, the Parliaments of Namibia and the Seychelles have similar problems which, if tackled jointly, would be much easier to resolve and enhance collaboration between the two Parliaments. Already the two countries have been supporting each other on decisions pertaining to parliamentary issues during Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) meetings.

Chairman Kapere highlighted the gender representation in the two houses of the Parliament of Namibia where the National Assembly has 30 percent female representation, compared to the National Council's 26 percent. Hon. Kapere attributed the lower percentage of women representation to the fact that women were jointly oppressed by men and other cultural and traditional rules.

On his part, Speaker Herminie said that in Seychelles many women were represented at the local government level as councilors and less visible in the executive. He added that the majority of Seychellois women were represented at the district level. Speaker Herminie appreciated what he learned during his four-day stay in the country and intended to utilise the Namibian experience to strengthen his country's



Seychellois Speaker, Hon. Patrick Herminie (left) exchanging gifts with National Council Chairman, Hon. Asser Kapere.

legislature. Speaker Herminie was particularly impressed with Parliament of Namibia's committee system, stressing that although the Seychelles had a longer history of independence, her legislature lagged behind in fully assuming their constitutional role of "taking parliament to the people." Speaker Herminie, who also met with various parliamentary standing committees of the National Assembly, said exposure similar to his visit was needed.

During his four-day stay in the country, Speaker Herminie met with the Governor of the Khomas Region, Mrs. Sophia Shaningwa; the Mayor of the City of Windhoek, Councilor Mathew Shikongo; and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Marco Hausiku. He also visited the Heroes Acre national shrine where he laid a wreath at the grave of the late Dr. Mosé Tjitendero, the founding Speaker of Namibia's National Assembly. The Seychellois delegation had also exposure visits to Namibia Breweries and the LLD Diamond Cutting and Polishing Company in Windhoek.

The Seychelles, with a land area of 404 square km and a population of 80 000 inhabitants, has a unicameral Parliament established in 1993, following the introduction of multi-party democracy in that country. The Constitution, which provides for the creation of the National Assembly, was adopted on 18 June 1993. Elections for Members of the National Assembly are held every five years. The National Assembly consists of 34 members, of which 25 are elected directly by popular vote. The remaining nine seats are allocated proportionally, according to the percentage of votes received by each political party. All Members of the National Assembly serve for a five-year term.

The Seychelles is a member of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), La Francophonie (the Union of French Speaking Countries), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).

UGANDAN SPEAKER OPENS SCIENCE WORKSHOP

Participants from thirteen African countries, including Namibia, attended a five-day training workshop on communicating science to parliamentarians held in Kampala, Uganda, from 22 to 26 September 2008.

Officially opening the workshop, the Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament, Rt. Hon. Edward Ssekandi, expressed support for science and technology as a way through which poverty could be addressed. He observed that science and technology had a crucial role to play in sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. He urged Africans to study science and technology and utilise the expertise to conduct extensive research that would yield better results for African development.

The holding of the workshop was essential because "Members of African Parliaments are increasingly required to address the science, technology and innovation aspects of important

policy issues, such as climate change, infectious diseases, ICT infrastructure, agriculture and food security," according to the workshop organisers.

According to the organisers, Members of Parliament relied, to a large extent, on parliamentary staff to provide them with the information they need for informal debate on proposed new laws and in carrying out effective scrutiny of governments. Parliamentary staffs, therefore, act as "middlemen" in the communication between scientists, producers of new technologies and policymakers. "But as few staff come from a scientific background, they are likely to lack some of the relevant skills needed to communicate scientific and other technical knowledge effectively to parliamentarians and vice versa."

The primary focus of the workshop was to help participants develop skills required to effectively communicate scientific and technical information to policymakers in forms that are readily accessible and easily understood.

The Nigerian High Commissioner to Uganda, His Excellency F.M. Ayogu who also addressed participants said: "The importance of this type of training could not be gained both in Africa and elsewhere. Science mediates between man and nature and has remained the fundamental underpinning of growth and development in every society.



**TRAINING WORKSHOP ON COMMUNICATING
SCIENCE TO PARLIAMENTARIANS
IMPERIAL ROYALE HOTEL
22nd-26th SEPTEMBER 2008**

Participants at the training workshop on communicating science to parliamentarians.

History shows that the progress and strength of any people is critically dependent on the extent to which they know and do science”.

High Commissioner Ayogu, a trained engineer and architect, said that “MPs need scientists to provide them with scientific theories, categories, standards, evaluations and descriptions required for thorough analyses and definitions of problems and for weighing and predicting the gains, risks, the impact and consequences of different lines of action”.

Mr. Ayogu added that in practice there was a huge gap between African MPs and African scientists. African scientists, he argued, seemed completely detached from those who took critical decisions that shaped their lives. “Science in Africa is often construed as an academic enterprise with little or no practical content. The result is that many policy decisions are reached and implemented based on assumptions, imported knowledge and one-size-fits-all approach,” he said. He added that the consequences of the above

practices were monumental as “they find their concrete expressions in an array of failed policies and abandoned projects littered across Africa”.

According to Mr. Ayogu parliament was a mixed bag of educated ones and others with less than basic skills for logical and rational analysis. It was, therefore, the duty of the parliamentary staff to understand the education and skill levels of their MPs as well as the nature of support that the MPs needed to develop science based policies.

He said the duty of a parliamentary staff who understood the peculiar circumstances of an MP was to ensure, without compromising the substance and standard, that the scientific information reaching an MP was reduced to a form in which the MP could have the patience to read and understand it. Where necessary, the parliamentary staff should attach to this information a note showing the MP’s understanding of the information.

During discussions, it became clear that most parliaments that attended the

workshop had Standing Committees on Science and Technology and had employed scientists as staff to help the decision-makers deal properly with issues of science. The said committees made it easier for such parliaments not only to depend too much on the advice of the executive, but also to take initiatives in the pursuit of the best science and technology policies.

Participants observed that in some parliaments, issues of science and technology might not be noticed or had been ignored during the deliberations as the decision-makers were unable to identify them or are perceived to be difficult.

The workshop was organised by the United Kingdom Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (UK-POST), the African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) and the Science and Development Network (SciDev.Net). Presenters were experts in the fields of science communication and science policy, with a combination of lectures, practical exercises and discussion sessions.

CPA SECRETARY-GENERAL TOURS AFRICA REGION

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Dr. William Ferdinand Shija toured the Association’s Africa Region from 15-27 September 2008 during which he visited Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique and Tanzania. This was announced in a press release issued by the Association in Windhoek on 14 September 2008.

While in Lesotho, Dr. Shija conducted a post-elections seminar for the Members of the Kingdom’s Parliament from 17-19 September, following the general elections held in that country on 17 February 2007. CPA post-elections seminars are designed to assist new Members of Parliament in the conduct of their parliamentary work in order to strengthen their role and responsibilities.



CPA Secretary-General, Dr. William Shija

The topics covered at the Lesotho seminar were: the work of the CPA, parliamentary democracy, ethics and accountability of MPs, the relationship between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, women in parliament, practice and procedure in the House, Standing Orders, parliamentary committees, and parliament and the media.

One of the major constitutional responsibilities of the CPA Secretary-General is to advise and assist branches in strengthening the work of the Association. The visits to Namibia, Botswana and Mozambique were the first since Dr. Shija, a Tanzanian national, took office on 1 January 2007. Africa is the largest among the nine regions of the CPA. Other regions are Asia, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic, India,

the Pacific, South East Asia, the United Kingdom and the Mediterranean. CPA has 170 national and state parliamentary branches and an estimated 16 000-strong membership.

During his visits to Namibia, Botswana and Mozambique, Dr. Shija exchanged views with parliamentary leaders, MPs and staff. He also paid courtesy calls on government and political party leaders of the countries he visited as well as providing information on the CPA's annual events, particularly the 54th Conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in August 2007. Tanzania is expected to host the 55th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in 2009.



Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Hon. Doreen Sioka with CPA Secretary-General, Dr. William Shija (left).

NEWS FROM THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

PARLIAMENTS PLEDGE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The newly elected President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, added his voice to those of other parliamentarians at the 119th IPU Assembly in Geneva as they pledged to make ending violence against women a national and international priority. Gurirab signed up to the United Nations Development Fund for Women's (UNIFEM) 'Say NO to Violence against Women' campaign.

"Violence against women remains a major issue on the international human rights and parliamentary agenda. We all have to be committed and mobilised against this unacceptable reality which needs to be addressed as a matter of

urgency by the political leaders of the world. Together - men and women - we can make sure that putting an end to this tragedy becomes a priority," said IPU President Gurirab, who is also the Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia.

More than 200 Members of Parliament from over 70 countries signed the campaign, including Mr. Pier Ferdinando Casini, the outgoing President of the IPU, in addition to Speakers of



Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab

Parliament from several countries, including Indonesia, Lesotho, New Zealand, the Philippines and South Africa.

The initiative received a boost from the IPU when all the members of its Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians signed the campaign and agreed to champion the cause within the IPU, in their respective national parliaments and in their public advocacy efforts.

The IPU has pledged to step up action in this field and launched a three-year programme aimed at supporting parliaments in making an end to violence against women a national priority. This undertaking serves to complement, from the parliamentary perspective, the United Nations Secretary-General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women, launched in February 2008. UNIFEM's Say NO to Violence against Women campaign is supported by a number of well-known figures, including actress Nicole Kidman.

PARLIAMENTS MUST LEGISLATE TO PROVIDE MORE ARVs

As people everywhere commemorate World AIDS Day on 1 December 2008, the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, said that "more had to be done to get drugs and treatment to people who desperately need them. Thirty-three million people are living with HIV, only one third of whom have access to antiretroviral (ARV) drugs".

The provision of affordable ARV treatment, which has improved and extended the lives of many people

infected with HIV, is a subject that encompasses human rights, intellectual property law, and trade regulations. It is a complex field, in which the legislator can do much to set the right framework for enlightened policy. It is also one of the key themes being pursued by the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS, which placed it high on the agenda of the first Global Parliamentary Meeting on HIV/AIDS held one year ago. It will be taken up next in Cape Town, at an IPU training seminar for African parliaments to be

held at the National Assembly of South Africa, in late January 2009.

In order to encourage legislators to act, the IPU has published a Handbook for Parliamentarians entitled Taking action against HIV and AIDS. This Handbook, produced jointly with UNAIDS and UNDP, is both a call for parliamentary leadership and a reference book to which legislators and their staff may turn for guidance on specific issues in the response to HIV and AIDS.

Source: www.ipu.org

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) held a three-day seminar on the achievements and challenges of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, sixty years after its adoption.

Legislators from some 50 national parliaments attended the seminar along with international experts. The event was opened by Ms. Elissavet Papademetriou, Vice-President of the IPU Executive Committee and Second Vice-President of the Hellenic Parliament, and Mr. Bacre Waly Ndiaye, Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaties Division at the OHCHR. The seminar is part of the IPU's efforts to strengthen the capacity of parliaments to promote and protect human rights. Since 2004 the IPU yearly seminars have given chairpersons and members of parliamentary human rights committees an opportunity to exchange views with international experts on human rights issues. This year, the seminar analysed the

international legal human rights framework which has been set up since the adoption of the Universal Declaration. In addition, it should help to pinpoint ways in which parliaments can respond effectively to challenges to the promotion and protection of human rights.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights gave increased legitimacy to human rights issues worldwide and put them firmly on the agenda of national governments and the international community. Yet, along with these achievements, the last sixty years have also shown that, in the absence of political will and adequate resources, full respect for human rights has yet to become a reality. Economic, social and cultural rights in particular have fallen by the wayside. More recently, the fight against crime and terrorism has put a strain on fundamental rights. Some, moreover, feel that increasing claims for respect of cultural specificity appear to challenge the very notion of the universality of human rights. Source: www.ipu.org

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LAYS SOLID FOUNDATION FOR PARTNERSHIP

by Prof. Nico Horn, UNAM

The Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs of the National Assembly, academics from the University of Namibia (UNAM) Law Faculty and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) have laid solid foundation for a new partnership with Parliament.



Round table discussions between the National Assembly, UNAM academics and KAS.

On the initiative of the National Assembly Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs, Hon. Loide Kasingo, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation facilitated a historic meeting at the foundation's offices in Sanlam Centre in Windhoek at the end of September 2008. The three UNAM academics were Prof. Andre du Pisani, Mr. Sam Amoo and Prof. Nico Horn. The meeting was also attended by the Secretary of the Committee, Ms. Justina Katepe and the Legal Counsel to the National Assembly, Mr. Petrus Husselmann. The discussion focussed on the mandate of and the challenges facing the Committee.

The importance of the work done by select committees in the democratic process is well-known and highly valued by constitutional experts and legislators. However, the majority of

the members are not lawyers. And, unlike old democracies, they cannot rely on advice and the expertise of colleagues who served on Standing Committees for decades before them. The parliamentarians of the young Namibian democracy are learning as they go along and are creating traditions and writing the first chapters of the Namibian constitutional history.

The question of the first meeting was simple: how can the academics (usually not very practical people) assist the committee in executing its mandate in a responsible manner? In other words, how can parliamentarians who are not

lawyers deal with the Parliamentary Bills in a meaningful manner?

The academics were requested to come up with programmes to empower and equip the Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff with skills and knowledge that would enable them to stand their ground in the legal environment and to serve Parliament.

A second meeting took place between the UNAM academics and the Standing Committee two weeks later at the National Assembly. The UNAM academics came up with two proposals: the Faculty of Law will introduce a three-month certificate programme for Parliamentarians and support staff in Constitutionalism and Legal Drafting. They proposed a curriculum which consists of Administrative Law; Criminal Law; Legislation Drafting; Constitutional Law; the

Role of Parliament in a Constitutional Democracy and Human Rights Law. The committee members suggested two additional subjects: Interpretation of Statutes and Customary Law while the Registrar's Office added English for Law Students. The course can be presented at any time during the academic year agreed upon between the Faculty and Parliament. Courses can even be presented in the Parliament building if deemed necessary.

During the discussions the members of the committee made a second proposal: regular workshops to prepare new members for their task and to expand the knowledge and skills of sitting members. The committee requested the Konrad Adenauer Foundation to facilitate (and fund) a workshop with the academics in November to lay the foundation for the working relationship between them and the academics.

The purpose of the workshop, held at the Midgard Country Estate, was threefold: firstly, a trial run of hopefully regular future workshops and interaction between the committee and academics; secondly, the preparation of programmes for 2009; and thirdly, the creation of relationships of trust between the academics and Parliamentarians and the co-operation necessary for the future.

Since 2009 will be election year, high demands will be placed on the shoulders of the committee. The organizers and facilitators of the workshop made sure that the parliamentarians left Midgard with a clear understanding of their mandate and some tools to execute their functions in a responsible and trustworthy manner in a legal environment.

The many highlights of the workshop included the opening address by the Speaker of the National Assembly and acclaimed statesman, Hon. Dr. Theoben Gurirab; the thought-provoking paper of Prof. Andre du Pisani on the role of Standing Committees in a democratic society; the paper by Mr. Fritz Nghiishililwa on the functioning of Parliament in a constitutional democracy and the subsequent

discussion on constitutional issues; and the lively discussions on the road ahead, to mention but a few.

On the last day, before the Parliamentarians challenged the academics to become practical and assist the Committee in its endeavour to be excellent legislators in a young democracy, the meeting made the following recommendations:

Certificate Course: it was recommended that the certificate course be implemented already in 2008, even if some of the present members would not return to the committee after the elections. Hon. Kasingo proposed that the programme be open for all Parliamentarians, since members of other Standing Committees would also benefit from the training. She also suggested that drafting, report writing and lobbying skills be included in the programme.

Topical Workshops: the meeting resolved to have regular topical workshops on matters of interest to the Committee, such as the Electoral Act, the Community Courts Act, the Constitution, the Parliamentary Review and Criminality.

Electoral Act: it was agreed that the Committee should be well prepared for its role in the election year. One way to prepare would be a brainstorming workshop where the

Electoral Act could be discussed and analysed.

Community Courts Act: it would be crucial for the Committee to consider the position of the Community Courts, especially as it relates to the relevant legislation. Included in this study is to consider examples from other countries such as Botswana.

The Constitution: the Committee requested an intensive workshop on the Namibian Constitution, since it forms the foundation of their work. The members wanted to be in a position to educate both their colleagues and people at the grass root level.

Parliamentary Review: a suggestion emerged that a parliamentary review should be done, concentrating on the effectiveness of the Committee. It should include what the Parliament has done and what it has neglected and what impact this had. This could lead to an "own" Act of Parliament.

Criminality: it was further pointed out that one should not only concentrate on how crime can be punished but also search for the reasons why it happens and find solutions on how to move forward. A workshop on the reasons for crime, with special attention to the relationship between poverty and crime, was envisaged.

COUNCIL CONCLUDES STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATION

Effective planning strategies are important for any organisation seeking to move in a certain direction to reach its operational goals. In this light, the National Council is no exception. It is for this reason that the National Council Secretariat embarked upon a process of Strategic Planning in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS).

The Strategic Plan spans over a period of five years and is a result of a situational analysis from which strategic issues, themes and objectives were developed. One of the stages of this strategic planning was to bring together all stakeholders of the National Council. Among the stakeholders were Regional Councils, Local Authorities and Town Councils with the objective to garner their perspective on what the Strategic Plan should include.

The National Council deems stakeholders consultation as an important insurance for the long-term effectiveness of the institution. Inputs received from stakeholders is vital and add value in that they create an enabling environment that builds sustainability which supports the institution to deliver its mandate effectively and efficiently.

The institution believes that good governance, transparency and open communication is served when it communicates with and receives feedback from its stakeholders. In this light, the motivation behind arranging the stakeholders' conference was to re-affirm and identify stakeholders' needs and expectations; to sensitise stakeholders about the National Council's mandate, vision and core values; to emphasise the importance of coordination between National Council and Regional Councils; to



Left to right: National Assembly MP, Hon. Tommy Nambahu; Dr. Anton Bösl, Resident Representative of KAS; Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Speaker of the National Assembly; Hon. Loide Kasingo, Chairperson of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs; and Prof. Nico Horn, Dean of the Faculty of Law at UNAM.

gather a range of quality input that would guide the National Council Secretariat to make quality decisions; to ensure greater stakeholders satisfaction by involving them in shaping the institution's future for the next five years; and to increase the chances of successful implementation of the Strategic Plan by ensuring commitment and support from stakeholders.

The conferences took an interactive format designed to obtain the best input from the stakeholders. They were conducted in all the thirteen regions, with the Regional Governors entrusted with the opening of the deliberations in their respective regions. In addition, the conferences were fully consultative as members of the Strategic Planning Committee

attended to answer questions emanating from the conference participants.

The participants were fully encouraged to voice their opinions on what their real needs and expectations were from the National Council. One concern repeatedly raised was the lack of consultations on the Bills which the National Assembly refers to the National Council for review. The stakeholders opinion was that Regional Councils could not give their input as the Parliamentarians who represented the regions did not table the Bills for discussions at the regional level. Thus, their participation in the law making process had been limited. These and other concerns will be considered, taking into account the mandate of the

National Council.

Stakeholders consultation points to the fact that the National Council does not exist in a vacuum. On the contrary, there are many role players affecting and influencing the business of the institution. The responses and inputs received from the stakeholders were beneficial and overwhelming, which made the exercise not only worthwhile but also important.

Despite that, the National Council still needs to do more to increase the capacity of the MPs to better represent and address issues of regional concern. In this light, for the National Council to improve its operations, it should be aware of the full spectrum of the expectations of its stakeholders.



Chief Regional Officer of the Otjozondjupa Region Mr. D. Kazombiaze, delivering welcoming remarks.



Hon. Clemens Kashiupulwa Governor of the Oshana Region.



The Otjiwarongo Town Council representatives brainstorming in one of the sessions.



Mr. Petros Kuteeue from the Otjiwarongo Municipality presenting group expectations in a plenary session.



SADC-PF USHERS IN NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Speaker of the Parliament of Swaziland Hon. Prince Guduza Dlamini is the new Chairperson of the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF). Prince Dlamini assumed the post when the Executive Committee of the SADC-PF stepped down on rotation at the 24th Plenary Assembly which ended its eight-day summit on 27 November 2008 in Arusha, Tanzania. Article 9 (2) (aa) of the Forum's constitution limits the term of Executive Committee members to two years.

Other top office bearers of the Forum who assumed new positions were Hon. Anne Makinda of Tanzania who was elected Vice-Chairperson while the position of Treasurer went to Hon. Monica Mutsavangwa from the Parliament of Zimbabwe. Tanzanian Prime Minister Right Hon. Mizengo Pinda (MP) officially opened the Assembly on 25 November 2008 at the Simba Hall, Arusha International Conference Centre (AICC) on behalf of that country's President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete.

The 2008 SADC PF summit was under the theme "Role of Parliamentarians in addressing challenges and crises to sustainable development facing the SADC region, notably food shortages, electoral disputes, energy crisis, xenophobia, climate change, floods and drought among others".

The summit also reviewed steps taken as well as outstanding issues towards establishment of the SADC Parliament which will be a milestone in the organisation's history. Among other related topics discussed were the concerted measures to curb the HIV and AIDS pandemic across the sub-region through right-based legal approach, underscored by the unanimous adoption of the SADC-PF Model Law on HIV and AIDS.

"According to the available data, it is without doubt that Africa is the most affected and devastated continent by this disease. Although it is inhabited by slightly over 12 percent of the world's population, Africa is estimated to have more than 60 percent of AIDS infected population," said Prime Minister Pinda, calling for measures to combat the pandemic.

The Plenary Assembly, which is the supreme policy-making body of SADC-PF, comprises Presiding Officers and four Members of Parliament (MPs) from each of the 13 National Parliaments of the Forum. This year's Assembly drew 12 Speakers, one Deputy Speaker and 59 Members of Parliament. Several Parliamentary staff representing the Parliaments of Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania were also in attendance.

The meeting started on 20 November with parliamentarians discussing in small groups level of the policy organs and members of the Executive Committee, Steering Committee and the Regional Standing committees namely: Trade, Development and Integration, Inter-Parliamentary Co-

operation and Capacity Development, HIV/AIDS Committee, Regional Women Parliamentarians Caucus and Democratization, Governance and Gender Equality.

The Assembly noted with concern the on-going conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and called upon the rival parties to consider mediation to stop the displacement and deaths of civilians. The summit observed that the fighting threatened peace and security in the whole sub-region and called for an immediate ceasefire.

The meeting upheld the importance of its members abiding by the set SADC-PF's Norms and Standards for Democratic Elections, the Principles and Guidelines for Elections and other elections instruments for sustainability of peace and maintaining a democratic culture in the region. This followed signs of rampant electoral disputes in the region, which impeded the flourishing of democracy and undermined the will of the people.

The Parliamentarians also welcomed the recently inaugurated SADC Free Trade Area (FTA) in August 2008 as a milestone towards integration of the sub-region. The FTA is expected to create a larger market, thus releasing potential for trade, economic development and employment creation in the region. The delegates expressed their optimism and support for the timely implementation of the remaining integration targets of the SADC which include the Customs Union, Common Market, Monetary Union and ultimately a single currency at various stages.

The meeting noted progress on the on-going national and regional consultations on the proposed agenda of transforming the SADC-PF into a Regional Parliament of SADC, an essential element for the oversight of the SADC regionalisation.

It re-affirmed and welcomed the long awaited historic Protocol on Gender and Development endorsed by the

Heads of State and Government during the SADC Summit held in South African in August 2008. This landmark development will provide for total 50-50 gender parity in all positions of decision-making between men and women, including parliaments and cabinets, by 2015.

With regard to the regional efforts in combating the HIV/AIDS, the plenary saw the adoption of the Model Law on HIV and AIDS for the region. This piece of legislation aims at assisting member states, in particular policy makers and legislative drafters, to redress their health and HIV-specific legislative reforms, based on what is known to work in prevention, treatment, care and research strategies, international human rights, without usurping the authority of national legislatures. The Model Law builds on the collective experiences of the SADC legislatures, providing a pool of wisdom from which a particular legislature may select and adapt provisions to suit its own circumstances and needs.

In another development, the Plenary endorsed the recommendation of the Executive Committee for the Seychelles Parliament to become the 14th member. The country has met the constitutional membership requirements to become one of the Forum's family members. The delegates also had the opportunity to visit various spots of socio-economic activities conducted in Arusha, such as entrepreneurship in handcrafting and tourism. They also toured the eighth wonder of the world, the 600m deep Ngorongoro Volcanic Crater, home to about 40,000 wild animals and birds in their diversity found in this conservation area of about 8,000 sq km.

SADC-PF PLENARY ASSEMBLY'S COMMUNIQUÉ

At its 24th Plenary Assembly Session held in Arusha, Tanzania, from 20-

27 November 2008, the Southern Africa Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) issued a communiqué on 27 November whose edited version reads as following:

- The SADC Parliamentary Forum warmly welcomed and admitted the Seychelles, bringing the number of member parliaments to 14. The Plenary congratulated the Government, Speaker, Parliamentarians and people of Seychelles for their decision to join the SADC parliamentary fraternity.

- In accordance with its vision – the promotion of the role and effective participation of parliamentarians in the development and integration agenda of SADC the Plenary deliberated on the various crises and challenges the region faced. These are the energy crisis, poverty and vulnerability, climate change, water scarcity, trans-boundary governance, xenophobia, HIV and AIDS, the ongoing EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) negotiations and the recently launched SADC Free Trade Area (FTA).

- Noting that as a result of the climate change, the SADC region was periodically faced with floods and droughts, that the current energy crisis in the region has exacerbated poverty, the Plenary acknowledged the need for parliamentarians to raise their commitment to fighting poverty, climate change and other regional crises and challenges.

- Further acknowledging incidences of electoral disputes in the region which have the potential to undermine the will of the people and the credibility of democracy, the Plenary called on member-governments, in accordance with the SADC-PF's Norms and Standards for Democratic Elections, the Principles and Guidelines for Elections and other elections instruments, to promote and sustain a democratic culture.

- Noting the failure of the Government of Zimbabwe to invite SADC-PF to observe the 2008 elections in that country, the Plenary called upon the Government of

Zimbabwe to allow observations without hindrance.

- Whilst appreciating financial assistance from cooperating partners, the Plenary stressed the need to mobilize more internal resources to enhance the sustainability of the Forum's election observations programme.

- Applauding the election of the Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia, Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, to the high Office of the Presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Plenary extended its appreciation to the membership of the Forum for their support without which this historic election would not have been possible. The Plenary, individually and collectively, committed itself to supporting Speaker Gurirab's Presidency.

- Welcoming the historic signing of the Protocol on Gender and Development in August 2008 by SADC Summit, the Plenary appreciated and congratulated the Heads of State and Government for this landmark development which provides for total equality at 50-50 gender parity in all positions of decision-making, including Parliaments and Cabinets, by 2015.

- Observing with concern the conflict in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which has resulted in the tragic deaths and displacement of civilians, the Plenary strongly urged all concerned parties through mediation to earnestly resolve the conflict in the interest of the people of Congo and the region.

- Acknowledging that Southern Africa was recorded as one of the poorest regions in the world not likely to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the rampant and growing poverty exacerbated by the multiple challenges and crises the region faces at a time of a global recession manifested in food, credit and fuel shortages which further threaten the attainment of SADC's Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), the Plenary called on the scaling up of the provision of social

transfers including direct cash to the poor and vulnerable as a viable and practical poverty alleviation strategy.

- Recalling that as was rightly forecast that by 2007, SADC would face a serious energy shortage which is now being experienced in many scheduled and unscheduled power outages across the region, thus threatening development and investment in the region, the Plenary called for greater investment and regional cooperation in this sector.

- Noting the seriousness of the energy crisis in the region, the Plenary committed itself to greater oversight of the sector and demanded continuous appraisal by the executive, in particular by the SADC Energy Ministerial Task Force (EMTF) of the measures being undertaken at national and regional levels to resolve the power shortage in the short, medium and long term. Furthermore, the Plenary called on member-governments to prioritise investing in the untapped potential of the Inga Dam (Phase III) and other projects which would not only address the current and future energy deficit in the region, but also turn the region into an energy exporter.

- Recalling that water scarcity was forecast to be a potential source of major conflicts in Africa, the Plenary encouraged the change of the perception viewing water as a shared resource and therefore a catalyst for the promotion of regional cooperation, peace and security. In this regard, the Forum promotes the adoption and rigorous implementation of regional approaches to trans-boundary water utilization, management and governance, and effective participation in the oversight of the water sector.

- Aware of the ongoing Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) being negotiated by the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states and the European Union (EU), on an extended deadline which expires on 31 December 2008, the Plenary encouraged member-governments to continue to reject the indirect inclusion of the detrimental Singapore issues, such as services, competition,

government procurement and intellectual property rights which were already rejected by the G90 in Doha at the level of the World Trade Organization (WTO). In this regard, the Plenary encouraged member-governments to insist on the inclusion of a clear development agenda in the final EPA.

- In accordance with the SADC integration targets, the Plenary welcomed the recently launched SADC Free Trade Area in August 2008 and expressed support for the timely implementation of the remaining integration targets such as becoming a Customs Union (2010), Common Market (2015) Monetary Union (2016) and ultimately adopting a single currency (2018). In this regard, the Plenary reiterated that SADC and Africa's integration agenda not be allowed to be derailed by EPAs or any other negotiations.

- In appreciation of the region's resolve to deeper integration as manifested in the FTA and in response to being a formidable regional block for the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), the Plenary reiterated its call for the transformation of the SADC-PF into a regional parliament to ensure the requisite regional oversight in tandem with a regionalizing SADC.

- Noting that HIV/AIDS remained a poignant threat to SADC development, the Plenary adopted the HIV/AIDS Model Law on 24 November 2008, thus demonstrating and reaffirming that parliamentarians, notwithstanding their diverse backgrounds and legal systems, were united in honouring human rights with regard to HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support.

- The Model Legislation is aimed at assisting member-states, in particular policy makers and legislative drafters, to address all the relevant areas in need of legislative reform without usurping the authority of national legislatures. An important benefit of the Model Law is that it builds on the collective experiences of other legislatures, providing a pool of wisdom from which a particular legislature might select and adapt provisions to

suit its own circumstances and needs.

- Disappointed by incidences of xenophobia in the region, the Plenary condemned these unwarranted events and called on its people to embrace unity and cooperation in the spirit of ubuntu and pan-africanism through which the African liberation was attained.

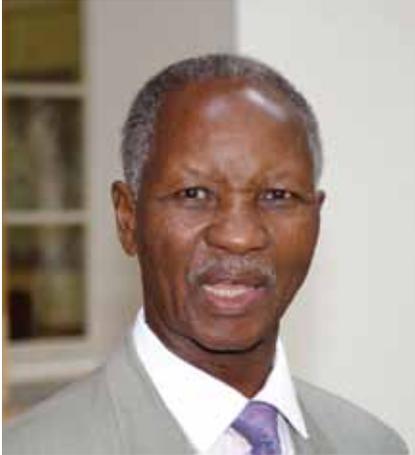
- In light of the challenges of post election violence, xenophobia, crime, violence against women, AIDS and unemployment in the region, the Plenary noted that the youth were the most affected either as perpetrators or victims. The Plenary therefore undertook to create a Regional Youth Parliamentary Caucus which would aim at motivating and increasing youth's direct participation in legislative issues in SADC member-states parliaments.

The Constitution of the SADC-PF provides that "Members of the Executive Committee shall hold office for a term of two years and shall retire by rotation". Thus, the 24th Plenary Assembly held elections for the positions of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer. Additional members were nominated to the Executive Committee, with the duly elected office bearers being Hon. Speaker Prince Guduza Dlamini, MP (Swaziland) as Chairperson; Hon. Deputy Speaker Anne S. Makinda, MP (Tanzania) as Vice-Chairperson; and Hon. Monica Mutsvangwa, MP (Zimbabwe) as Treasurer.

The additional Members of the Executive are Hon. Deputy Speaker João Lourenço, MP (Angola); Hon. Moggie Mbaakanyi, MP (Botswana); Hon. Deputy Speaker Mario Philippe Losembe (DRC); Hon. Hlonpho Ntsekhe, MP (Lesotho); Hon. Duarte Acucena, MP (Mozambique); Hon. Speaker Louis Chimango, MP (Malawi); Hon. Speaker Theo-Ben Gurirab, MP (Namibia); Hon. Pamela Daniels, MP (South Africa); and Hon. Speaker Amusaa K. Mwanamwambwa, MP (Zambia).

The next Plenary Assembly will be held in Windhoek, Namibia, in March 2009.

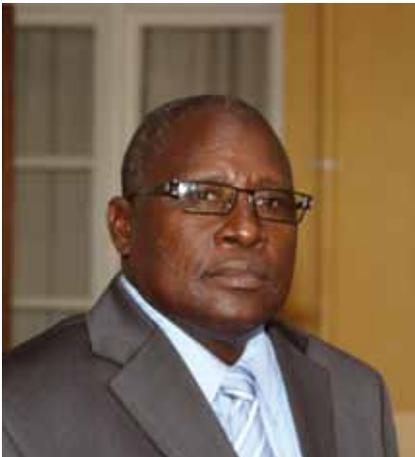
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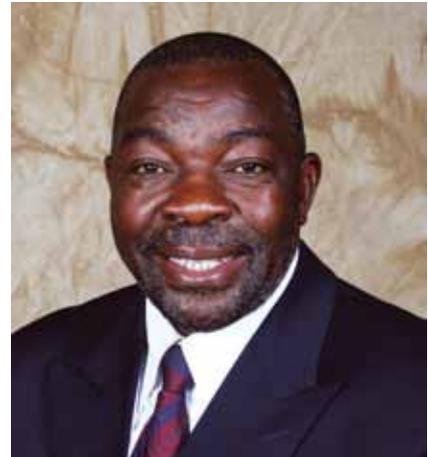
Ambassador Nickey Nashandi has been sworn in as Member of the National Assembly on 16 September 2008, replacing the late Gabes Shihepo who died in July this year. Chief Justice Peter Shivute conducted the swearing-in ceremony for the SWAPO Party parliamentarian.



COD President, Hon. Ben Ulenga, has resigned from the National Assembly with effect from 21 November 2008 to concentrate on his party's organisational work in preparation for the Presidential and National Assembly elections scheduled for November 2009.



Honourable Alfred Chilinda, the Vice-President of the Congress of Democrats (COD) was sworn in as a Member of the National Assembly on 27 November 2008 by Chief Justice Peter Shivute. Hon. Chilinda succeeded COD President, Hon. Ben Ulenga, who resigned from the National Assembly in late November 2008 to concentrate on his party activities.



Councillor Bartholomeus Shangheta has been suspended from National Council sittings for seven consecutive days with effect from 9 December 2008. The Standing Committee on Privileges of Members of the National Council found Hon. Shangheta, the Councillor for the Otavi Constituency in the Otjozondjupa Region, guilty of contravening Article 74 of the Namibian Constitution, in addition to Chapter 3 of the National Council Code of Conduct. Article 74 (4) (a) of the Namibian Constitution obliges all Members of the National Council to "maintain the dignity and image of the National Council" during sittings and outside the National Council. Two other councillors have been reprimanded by the Committee for failing to disclose their financial interests.

STAFF ON THE MOVE



Mr. Nama Goabab has been relieved of his duties as Secretary to the National Assembly with effect from 9 October 2008. Mr. Nama was appointed Secretary to the National Assembly on 6 November 2006 following the resignation of former Secretary Mr. Moses Njarakana in October 2005.



Mr. Johannes (Jakes) Jacobs has been appointed as Acting-Secretary to the National Assembly with effect from 9 October 2008. Mr. Jacobs, the Director for General Services, is acting in the position following the relief of Mr. Nama Goabab from that position in October this year.



Mr. Arthur Platt has been appointed as System Administrator at the National Assembly's Directorate of Library and Computer Services with effect from 1 October 2008. Mr. Platt completed his BSc Degree in computer science and economics at the University of Namibia (UNAM) in June this year.



Mr. Jan Christiaan has been appointed as System Administrator at the National Assembly's Directorate of Library and Computer Services with effect from 1 October 2008. Mr. Christiaan completed his BSc Degree in computer science and economics in June this year at the University of Namibia (UNAM). Between February 2007 and December 2007 Mr. Christiaan was a teacher at the Suiderslig High School at Keetmanshoop in the Karas Region.



Ms. Annelise Meroro has been promoted from Parliament Clerk to Senior Parliamentary Clerk at the National Assembly with effect from 1 November 2008. Ms. Meroro has also been moved from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social and Community Development to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.



Mr. Johan Frederick from the National Assembly has been promoted from Chief Registry to System Controller with effect from 1 September 2008.



Mr. Michael Muuondjo has been promoted from Assistant Information Officer to Information Officer at the National Assembly with effect from June 2008.



Mr. Tutu Haukena has been appointed as Private Secretary to the Director of Library and Computer Services at the National Assembly with effect from 1 December 2008.



Ms. Ndahafa Kaukungua from the National Assembly has been promoted from Information Officer to Chief Information Officer with effect from June 2008.



Mr. Brian Riruako Kandinembo has been appointed as Information Officer at the National Assembly with effect from 10 November 2008. Before joining the National Assembly, Mr. Riruako was employed by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) from January 2007 until October 2008.



National Council Parliamentarians lighting candles in remembrance of those affected by or infected with the HIV/AIDS.