



SADC Parliamentary Forum

Strategic Plan 2006-2010

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I. Executive Summary

This strategic plan is the result of a protracted process that included a review of the 2000-2005 strategic plan and its implementation, identifying priorities and making strategic choices by the Forum's Standing Committees and Secretariat staff, as well as consultations between all the national parliaments. The plan was subsequently adopted by the 19th Plenary Assembly of the Forum.

The analytical work involved a review of the implementation of the 2000–2005 strategic plan. It also involved a review of regional trends and challenges, the Forum's strengths and weaknesses, as well as programme options. Consultations were held at a staff retreat, as well as at a round table session of chairpersons and vice chairpersons of the Forum's Standing Committees. At these consultations, both groups of participants went through a process to identify challenges facing the region, define the Forum's comparative advantages and its role in promoting regional integration. The whole process culminated in the revision of the Forum's vision and mission statements and identification of strategic objectives that the Forum will seek to achieve by 2010. The draft strategic plan was presented and adopted by the 19th Plenary Assembly held in Gaborone, Botswana, December 2005.

The SADC Parliamentary Forum (the Forum) was established in 1997 in terms of section 9 (2) of the Treaty of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Its main aim is to provide a platform for parliaments and parliamentarians to promote regional integration in SADC.

In 1999 the Forum developed a strategic plan for 2000-2005. At its 18th Plenary Assembly held in Mbabane, Swaziland, however, the Forum resolved to develop a new strategy that would cover the period from 2005 to 2010. The strategic plan identifies and acknowledges major opportunities and addresses the challenges that the region faces as it moves towards deeper regional integration in an effort to improve the quality of its citizens' lives and livelihoods. The region is made up of young democracies, most of which are in the process of consolidating their democratic systems of governance. Institutions of democracy and governance that check on parliaments in most SADC member states are fragile and in need of nurturing for them to effectively play their respective roles in governance.

Economic development and levels of regional integration/cooperation are uneven and fall short of requirements for poverty reduction and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Poverty levels in the region are extremely high. The region is perilously dependent on primary commodity exports that leave it vulnerable to the unfair global trade environment. Debt levels are high and inflows of foreign direct investment are low. Generally, the region has low levels of productivity.

Cyclical droughts have eroded the region's food security situation, making member countries particularly vulnerable to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Southern Africa has some of the highest national prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS. The cumulative impact of the pandemic is not only stretching the health delivery systems to the limit but is undermining gains made in human development in the 1980s and 1990s.

However, the plan builds on various evaluations of the Forum that recognize inter alia the fact that the Forum has made significant progress in implementing its programme especially by regionalizing governance issues such as the conduct of elections and gender equality. Through the development of regional electoral norms and standards (a first in Africa) and advocacy on gender equality, the Forum has been able to galvanize regional and international interest and recognition around these issues, apart from an environment of accountability for governments. The Forum has also been able to establish a firm foundation for capacity building for parliaments, parliamentarians and staff through knowledge-sharing programmes and the creation of the SADC Parliamentary Leadership and Resource Centre.

Through implementation of the 2000-2005 strategy it has become evident that parliaments and parliamentarians have the ability to influence regional policies because of their direct access to high level policy makers and their direct link with citizens. In the same vein the Forum has been able to carve a niche as the link between regional integration initiatives and citizens. The challenge is how to bring the benefits of regional cooperation of SADC to the citizens who are represented by MPs.

The plan acknowledges, however, that despite the significant successes achieved by the Forum, there is still substantial work to be done in order to give meaning to the notion of mainstreaming regional integration within national parliaments. Critical areas of concern include enhanced capacity of parliaments and parliamentarians to deal with integration issues both at regional and national levels; the need for more formalized relations that recognize the statutory role of parliaments in SADC; concerted efforts to establish a SADC parliament and clarity regarding relations between the Forum and the Pan African Parliament (PAP). The issue of the roles of parliaments in ensuring implementation of regional and international agreements and conventions remains a vexing one. Above all, there is urgent need for parliamentarians and parliaments to share knowledge and experiences among themselves, with the SADC Parliamentary Forum as the facilitator.

In order to respond to some of the challenges facing the region, the Forum has identified four areas of strategic intervention:

1. Strengthened Institutions of Democratic Governance in the SADC Region:

This objective responds to the need to consolidate and deepen democratic governance and peace building in the region. It is premised on the fact that regional development, integration and peace and stability require an environment in which citizens participate freely and effectively in political decision making. The Forum will continue to contribute towards improving political and legal frameworks on the conduct of elections and inclusive electoral systems from a gender perspective as critical components of political competition. The Forum will also step up its advocacy campaign for gender equality by strengthening the capacities of parliamentary and other regional institutions to advocate for gender equality in political processes. A key focus will be developing the role of parliament in strengthening institutions of governance such as political parties, institutions of accountability and civil society. The objective will include programmes to strengthen the role of parliamentarians in developing policy and regulatory frameworks to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on governance and all aspects of human development.

2. Effective Implementation of Regional Integration Programmes:

The slow pace at which regional agreements and programmes are being implemented is adversely affecting the quality of life of citizens. Part of the problem is the slow pace with which national laws are being harmonized and aligned in order for SADC Protocols to be implemented. The Forum believes that through this objective parliamentarians will become more involved in regional integration issues and provide the link between the regional and national platforms. Activities under this objective will include information dissemination to parliamentarians on regional integration issues, strengthening parliamentary committees to deal with regional integration issues, advocacy for the establishment of a regional parliament, establishing networks that include business organizations to lobby for speedy implementation of SADC Protocols, and developing areas of development through regional cooperation.

3. Improved Professional development Capacity for Parliaments, Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff:

The Forum proposed the establishment of a regional institution for knowledge and experience sharing as well as information dissemination. This objective will be achieved mainly through the Parliamentary Leadership Training and Resource Centre. The aim is to contribute to a sustainable and ongoing capacity building process for parliaments, parliamentarians and staff. Activities under this objective will include effective use of information technologies, regular orientation programmes for newly elected members of parliament and staff, provision of technical expertise in specific areas such as election monitoring and electoral reform, gender advocacy, trade and investment policies, HIV/AIDS policy formulation and application to provide remedies to all segments of societies, as well as research on critical issues facing the region.

4. Establishment of Strategic Partnerships and Alliances for Parliamentary Cooperation:

The Forum will need to develop structured relations with other institutions at sub-regional, regional and international levels in order to influence processes at these levels that have a bearing on the SADC region and the Forum's work. Key institutions include the SADC Secretariat, other regional parliamentary bodies (ECOWAS, EALA, and PAP), NEPAD, the APRM, the AU, CPA, AWEPA, IPU, UNDP and the UN system, World Bank Institute, Anti-Corruption Commissions of SADC countries, African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption (APNAC), parliamentary networks and institutions of governance.

The new strategic plan builds on the achievements and demonstrated strengths of the Forum over the last five years. It also takes into account the challenges and opportunities that the region faces. In order to implement the strategy, adequate financial and human resource levels will need to be maintained. The Forum will also need to continue building the capacity of the Secretariat. It is the firm belief of the Forum that accomplishment of the objectives set above will significantly contribute towards improving the well being of the people of the SADC region, as well as peace and prosperity.

II. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF SADC COOPERATION

The role of the SADC Parliamentary Forum should be placed in the broad context of the desire for regional integration in Southern Africa over the years and centuries.

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region comprises 14 member states¹ with a combined population of about 200 million. Geographically it covers Southern Africa and includes parts of central and east Africa. Boundaries of SADC member states, like the rest of Africa, are a result of the partition of Africa through colonization. Present day SADC states were previously colonies of Britain, France, Germany or Portugal. The period between the 1900s and the 1990s saw protracted struggles against colonial domination and racial inequality culminating in the attainment of political self determination. Most SADC nations have been preoccupied with nation building with the aim of improving the quality of citizens' lives. Regional cooperation has been at the centre of development efforts in SADC.

An examination of Southern Africa's history shows evidence of interaction among Southern African communities that pre-dates the advent of colonial domination. The struggles against colonialism and apartheid, coupled with the need to accelerate economic and social development through collective actions, have given impetus to the current drive for deeper regional integration. More recently the need for regional collaboration has been given more urgency by the forces of globalization that threaten weak and fragmented developing economies and indeed continue to marginalize Africa in the world economic order.

For Southern Africa the institution driving regional integration is the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), established in 1992 in Windhoek, Namibia. The goal of SADC is to *"promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development through efficient productive systems, deeper cooperation and integration, good governance and durable peace and security, so that the region emerges as a competitive and effective player in international relations and the world economy"*². SADC is the successor to the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) that was established in 1980 with the primary aim of coordinating the fight against apartheid. The establishment of SADC heralded new and intensified efforts by Southern African countries to promote deeper regional integration and accelerate economic and social development. **SADC's regional integration agenda according to the Treaty (1992) is predicated on a commitment to good governance, democracy and protection of fundamental rights.** Despite efforts by both state and non-state actors aimed at economic, political and social development, the SADC region continues to face serious challenges that impede economic, political and social development.

Political Trends and Challenges

Since the establishment of the Forum, the region has made some gains regarding democratic consolidation. Post-conflict Mozambique has maintained peace and continues to sustain multiparty democracy. Peace in Angola is holding following the cessation of armed conflict in 2002 and the process of writing a new Constitution has been completed. Elections are now scheduled. A shaky truce has held in the DRC although the situation remains fragile with a real

¹ SADC member states include Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Madagascar, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe

² SADC Treaty

potential for the outbreak of violent conflict. The conflict that had threatened to engulf the region in the 1990s has largely been contained. The situation however remains tenuous with the real possibility of conflict hotspots erupting. Elections are also on the cards.

The late 1980s and 1990s witnessed political transitions mostly from one-party, autocratic and racist regimes to pluralistic and multi-racial political systems. Popular support for democracy through popular participation and involvement in governance has remained widespread throughout the region. Several countries have held more than one post transition election, reflecting a commitment by SADC citizens and member states to political competition as a key element of democracy as a legitimate method of choosing who governs. Constitutionalism has taken root with several countries reviewing their constitutions to provide for democratic institutions, often times though, constitution making remains acrimonious and not institutionalized. Other notable challenges include the adoption of new electoral systems that have ushered in more inclusive politics.

The process of democratic consolidation has not been even. Some countries have made more progress than others through legitimate electoral processes and systems. The legitimacy of electoral processes has been heavily contested in a number of countries. Disputes related to elections continue to have the potential to trigger large scale conflicts and instability. Divisive presidential term debates have resulted in uncertain and unstable political environments.

Overall the region faces serious challenges regarding the legitimacy and capacities of political and civic institutions to play an effective role in consolidating democracy and good governance. The dominant party phenomenon, coupled with the dominance of the executive branch of governments, has meant that the role of other players in the area of governance has been diluted especially on regional matters. This scenario is particularly relevant for the Forum since it has meant that in most countries member parliaments have had their powers eroded by the overbearing nature of the executive, especially when numbers of the executive are drawn from parliaments. This in turn has had an impact on the quality of democracy especially regarding accountability. It also has implications on how the Forum relates to SADC. Civil society organizations including the media have operated in different political environments that exhibit vastly differing capacities. In some countries civil society organizations operate in a regulatory framework that allows them to advocate citizens' interests, whereas in others they operate in repressed environments. Except for the ruling parties that in most instances have held state power since the transitions, most political parties are poorly resourced with very limited institutional capacity. Intra-party democracy remains a challenge and inter-party cooperation on governance issues is equally not guaranteed.

Socio-Economic Trends and Challenges for SADC

Economic growth in the region is uneven. South Africa accounts for about 70% of the GDP of SADC, 22% of its total population and has the fourth highest per capita income in the region. It is the region's most dominant force in trade and has the ability to affect the economies of all the other SADC countries. Mauritius and Botswana rank the highest in terms of per capita GDP and have maintained positive GDP growth rates for the past 10 years and more. The remaining countries have experienced both positive and negative changes in their economies.

The region has a wide spread of mineral and natural resources. The potential for growth in the non-performing economies in SADC is great but it is hampered by ineffective economic and political policies.

SADC has experienced a positive economic growth trend that began in the early 1990s although it has been characterized by fluctuations. Average growth rate in 2000 was 3.1%; 1.2% in 2001; 3.6% in 2002, and 3.2% in 2003. The region achieved a growth rate of 4.1% in 2004, which was marginally behind Africa's average growth rate of 4.5% for the year. There were, however, large disparities in the growth rates of member countries in 2004. Angola, Mozambique, and DRC registered the highest rates of 11%, 7.8% and 6.3% respectively, whilst Botswana's growth was 4.8% and Malawi 4.9%. On the other, hand Zimbabwe was the only country that registered a negative GDP growth rate of - 4.8% in 2004.

The overall increase in the GDP growth in the SADC has been attributed to a combination of factors that include the improvement of sound macro-economic reforms, improved prices for major export commodities and growth in agricultural production. The initial prospects for 2005 appeared bright due to the promised debt cancellation programme from the G8. However, the recent hike in the price of oil is likely to adversely affect economic performance in the SADC region, as this tends to permeate all economic activities of member countries.

The SADC region continues to face a number of economic challenges that militate against sustainable socio-economic development and regional integration. Of these challenges, the following are highlighted:

- Low economic growth - SADC's current economic growth rates range between 1% and 4.1% over the past five years, a far cry from the 6-7% growth rates required to reduce poverty in the region. Moreover, the average growth rates are below the growth rates of the region's population.
- Poverty - SADC is ranked as one of the poorest regions in the world, with a large segment of its population living on less than US\$1 a day. Poverty is an acute problem, coupled with the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the world. Life expectancy is the lowest in the world. Many social and poverty-related indicators are worsening, while high Gini co-efficients suggest that poorer communities are not benefiting from new growth.
- Primary commodity dependency - Most SADC countries rely on the exports of primary commodities to earn foreign currency. The region and Africa in general has been vulnerable to declining and volatile commodity prices, especially given its dependence on a narrow range of products. This is exacerbated by the continuing decline in agricultural productivity that is also as a result of the frequent droughts that have recently affected the region.
- High population growth and urbanization - these factors are putting pressure on the region's economies. The increase rate of 2.7% per year is resulting in the population doubling every 25 years, with an increasing level of its population under 15 years old (44%). This population growth is also resulting in rapid urbanization. The region's urban population is currently 36% and over the next 30 years is expected to increase almost three-fold, largely due to rural to urban migration. This urbanization is occurring against a background of economic stagnation that will put immense pressures on the region's and Africa's infrastructure investment for housing, water supply, sanitation, etc.
- The region suffers from low domestic and foreign investment, high capital flight and low remittances flows, when compared to other developing countries. Africa's investment-to-GDP rate of 18% is below the 24% for all developing countries. It is also estimated that around 40% of private wealth is held outside Africa compared to 3% for South Asia. The challenge is to create an attractive investment climate that will attract the locals to invest in their own enterprises. Africa

and the region continue to attract a disproportionate share of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and SADC's share of world FDI continues to drop. Most of the FDI attracted by the region is going into Angola (oil) and South Africa and recently, significant flows have gone into Mozambique.

- SADC's average debt service ratio was 12.5% in 2000. Zambia had the highest ratio of 37.2% followed by Zimbabwe at 26.9%. The high level of debt causes stunted economic growth and development, and has become economically unsustainable. Some SADC member states qualified for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, but the onerous conditions that were stipulated for them to qualify were very prohibitive, and no economic benefits were reaped.
- The region's and Africa's productivity efficiency is very low in comparison to the rest of the world. This is compounded by obsolete machinery and equipment, low levels of capacity utilization and high transportation costs for raw materials and finished goods, resulting in high production costs and products being uncompetitive on the global markets. This situation is further compounded by the existence of trade barriers in the region, in Africa and in the developed world. The region needs to improve its capacity to trade within itself and with the rest of the world, as well as improved market access for its produce into the global markets. Whilst the global value of exports has almost trebled over the past 50 years, Africa's share of this has almost halved over the same period.
- The HIV/AIDS pandemic - prevalence rates are 17 times higher in the SADC region than the average global rate. In 2001, the global total adult HIV prevalence rate was 2.1%. The SADC average prevalence rate was 20.6%. Out of 12 SADC member states, nine contained populations of which more than 10% of the adults between the ages of 15 and 49 years were living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2001. The 10 countries with the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world are, with the exception of Kenya, SADC member states. Life expectancy has been declining and is expected to decline even further in SADC member countries. The United Nations Development Programme projects that between 2005 and 2010 life expectancy will decline to 44 years instead of rising to 61 years as projected in the absence of AIDS³.

³ UNDP HIV/AIDS Statistical Fact Sheet, <http://www.undp/hiv>

III. THE ROLE OF SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Genesis of SADC Parliamentary Forum

The trends and challenges described in Section II characterize the environment in which the SADC PF was founded and has been operating. The Forum was established in 1997 largely in response to lack of participation by parliaments and parliamentarians in regional cooperation and integration initiatives. Its main aim is to improve regional integration efforts through parliamentary involvement.

The Forum defined its vision as:

To achieve comprehensive, effective and sustainable regional integration and prosperity based on democratic governance and freedom in SADC region; and to bring about a united SADC family conscious of its common identity and sense of dignity

The mission was:

To bring about convergence of economic, political and social values in SADC and help create appropriate environment for deeper regional cooperation through popular participation

Aims and Objectives

In order to accomplish its vision and mission the Forum set itself to accomplish the following objectives during the period 2000-05:

1. Increased awareness and knowledge of SADC objectives, protocols, Summit declarations and programmes by SADC parliamentarians and staff of national parliaments
2. Facilitating the implementation of SADC protocols through awareness and advocacy
3. Advancing and defending the principles of democracy and human rights throughout the SADC region; promoting the implementation of multi-party democratic practices in institutions for democracy, including parliaments and political parties
4. Encouraging and supporting inter-parliamentary cooperation in pursuit of regional integration
5. Increasing advocacy for women's rights and gender equity and equality
6. Developing the capacity for training and development of parliamentarians and staff of SADC national parliaments
7. Promoting the establishment of a SADC Regional Assembly

Achievements

Within a fairly short space of time the Forum has been able to demonstrate comparative gains in areas that parliaments and parliamentarians can have an impact. The Forum has been able to regionalize issues that, had it not been for the Forum's intervention, would have remained largely of national concern. Issues such as elections and gender have been firmly placed on the regional agenda. Because of its broad and representative base as an inclusive/representative institution of governance, the Forum has been able to mobilize for and develop regional norms and standards in the area of elections and gender. There are few organizations that enjoy the same reach and

legitimacy as the Forum. The creation and expansion of space for parliamentarians as policy makers and legislators to dialogue about issues of common interest is a key comparative advantage of the Forum.

A review of implementation progress made under the 2000-2005 strategy made the following findings:

- The Forum achieved a significant part of its 2000-2005 strategic objectives.
- The Forum has been able to carve a niche for itself and demonstrate comparative advantage in the areas of gender advocacy, elections and capacity building for parliamentarians and staff.
- The Forum has not been able to participate fully in regional integration policy making because its formal role on SADC matters has not been realized.
- SADC's regional integration project has met with little success and needs to be overseen by parliaments to accelerate implementation of regional agreements.
- There is need for more robust discussion within the Forum regarding the long-term objective to bring parliaments into mainstream regional issues by transforming into a regional parliament. The feasibility, implication, advantages and disadvantages of going that route need to be carefully considered in light of experiences of other regional bodies.
- More investment is needed in developing working relations between the Forum and SADC in order to create space for parliamentarians to participate more formally in regional integration processes.
- The Forum needs to develop capacity among its members, national parliaments and staff to engage in issues of regional economic integration at the same levels as in the areas of gender and elections.
- Programmes in the areas of gender and elections should be carried over to the next strategic plan but with a sharper focus on strengthening institutions of good governance and democracy.
- The Forum should seriously consider accelerating the implementation of the HIV/AIDS strategic objective/action plans by playing a leading role.
- The Leadership Development Centre and the Resource Centre should form a nucleus of the next strategy, providing the much-needed capacity for the Forum's overall operations for future sustainability of legislatures and their programmes.

The following is a more detailed review of the seven objectives that the Forum set itself to achieve in 2000:

1. Increased awareness and knowledge of SADC objectives, protocols, summit declarations and programmes by SADC parliamentarians and staff of national parliaments

The main activity under this objective is the facilitation of information sharing and building of a knowledge base among parliamentarians and staff. Specific activities include coordination of information dissemination to member parliaments, dissemination of documents on SADC structures, objectives and protocols including stages of implementation, establishment of an electronic information centre (website) with connectivity to the Forum's member parliaments, and the establishment of the Forum's newsletter.

The hypothesis for this objective was that increasing awareness and knowledge about SADC programmes and processes would make parliamentarians more involved in regional integration and decision-making. This would in turn ensure that citizens' interests are adequately represented in regional initiatives. Despite the Forum's continued commitment to this objective as evidenced by the plenary discussions, there is little evidence of progress made in its accomplishment.

One set of activities that had originally been planned was to conduct national and regional workshops aimed at orienting and creating awareness about SADC among parliamentarians. A website was successfully launched during the strategy period on which some information on SADC is posted. To the extent that SADC parliamentarians access the website, this could be a useful vehicle through which information on SADC can be made available to members of parliament. A visit to the website indicates that it requires regular maintenance and updating. It could contain much more information and made easier to navigate than is currently the case. An IT assessment was carried out with the view to setting up an IT system that would aid information flows as well as improve inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Activities under this objective were either not implemented for a number of reasons that include the Forum's limited human and financial resource capacity, or were implemented at a slow pace. This objective remains largely unachieved and there is no evidence of improved participation by parliamentarians in regional integration issues.

2. Facilitate the implementation of SADC protocols through awareness and advocacy

This objective was considered to be at the centre of the regional integration process. The initial focus was to be on the SADC Free Trade Protocol that had come into force in January 2000. The aim was to involve parliamentarians in order to speed up harmonization of legislative frameworks needed to operationalize the free trade area.

Planned activities included the following:

- Strengthening the capacity of the Forum's Secretariat to coordinate information exchange and harmonization of legislative infrastructure among member parliaments, including establishing an efficient electronic information centre hooked up with member parliaments.
- Conducting regional roundtables, workshops and seminars in order to accelerate the implementation of the protocol.
- Establishing committees and Forum desk officers in national parliaments to strengthen the Forum's monitoring and coordination capacity of regional integration activities.

One of the Forum's standing committees is on regional integration issues, indicating the significance attached to the role of the Forum in monitoring implementation of regional integration initiatives. While the initial objective was narrowly focused on the Free Trade Area Protocol and the harmonization of laws to allow speedy implementation of the free trade area, there was no systematic implementation of activities to achieve the stated objective. At the outset it was recognized that there should be a position for an officer responsible for regional integration issues who would be responsible for coordinating efforts to improve the implementation of SADC protocols. The appointment of desk officers at member parliaments was considered critical in order to effectively coordinate efforts under this objective. Progress was reported in the appointment of desk officers.

Due to resource constraints it proved difficult to appoint an officer responsible for regional integration. The issue of accelerating implementation of SADC protocols was dealt with mainly by the standing committee on regional integration issues. Because of limited capacity at the Secretariat, the committee tended to respond to ad hoc initiatives as they arose or were presented by other institutions without a coherent strategic path that would lead to achievement of tangible deliverables. The committee took on board a number of critical issues that had regional implications such as poverty reduction, issues related to the WTO and the EU Cotonou agreement, trans-boundary natural resources, etc. The implementation of the Free Trade Protocol has continued to move at an extremely slow pace as is the case with most SADC protocols. There was not much interaction between the Forum and SADC on this issue, which seriously limited the Forum's ability to play an overseer's role in protocol implementation. To the extent that the objective was intended to contribute to improved protocol implementation, therefore, the objective was not met.

3. Advance and defend the principles of democracy and human rights throughout the SADC region; promote the implementation of multi-party democratic practices in institutions for democracy including parliaments and political parties

The aim of this objective is to facilitate the development of frameworks for regional standards, norms and practices of democratic governance and human rights. The hypothesis for this objective is that good governance and protection of basic rights are fundamentals of any development agenda. SADC parliamentarians, being products of democratic processes, have a vested interest in maintaining vigilance regarding democratization in the region.

The following are specific activities identified for implementation in order to achieve the objective:

- Conduct national and regional training workshops for SADC parliamentarians to create knowledge and understanding of democratic governance, elections and electoral systems, and human rights;
- Observe elections, election campaigns, pre-election and post-election developments, including conflict management;
- Collaborate with civil society organizations and the intellectual community in developing standards, norms and practices;
- Build regional consensus to support regional norms, standards and practices and assist national legislatures to develop agendas to identify national issues requiring corrective action; and
- Monitor application of electoral norms and standards through election observation standards.

Significant results were achieved under this strategic objective. In fact, achievement of the objective can be said to have exceeded expectations due to the impact on the region. Success of this objective can be attributed to a number of factors that include strategic choices regarding activities for implementation, successful mobilization of resources, involvement of large numbers of parliamentarians and commitment by member parliaments to facilitate election observation by the Forum.

In the initial stages of the programme, the Forum focused on developing regional electoral norms and standards that would be used as a framework for conducting elections in the region. The Forum went through a fairly rigorous process of developing such norms and standards that drew from experiences in monitoring elections in Namibia, Mozambique and Tanzania. The process also involved relevant regional and international organizations. Once adopted the norms and standards became the basis on which the Forum monitored elections in SADC member states. There is no doubt that the Forum has established a solid track record as a credible election observation agency.

Tangible achievements under this objective include the development and adoption of norms and standards for elections by SADC member parliaments, capacity development for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in election observation, gender mainstreaming in electoral processes and women's political participation and representation, observation of a total of 15 elections in SADC countries and recommendations made regarding electoral reforms. The decision by SADC to adopt principles and guidelines for elections in SADC was to a large extent influenced by the Forum's activities in this area. The Forum has thus made a significant contribution to democratization processes in the region that has had a profound impact on how SADC approaches elections.

4. Encourage and support inter-parliamentary cooperation in pursuit of regional integration

The primary focus of this objective is to facilitate cooperation and networking among SADC parliaments as well as information sharing and building the knowledge base of parliamentarians and staff.

The following activities are considered necessary for the achievement of the objective:

- Organizing and conducting thematic, issues-based and action-oriented meetings for parliamentarians and staff of SADC countries facing common cross-border issues/problems/opportunities (e.g. shared natural resources);
- Facilitating linkages between parliaments and relevant SADC institutions in addressing common cross-border issues;
- Organizing and facilitating exchange visits among national parliaments and appropriate international bodies such as the Pan African Parliament, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa, Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Parliamentarians for Global Action.

It is evident that the intention of this objective is to involve parliamentarians directly in practical initiatives dealing with trans-boundary issues, the most obvious of which is trans-boundary natural resource management.

It appears that this objective has met with little success due to the limited number of activities implemented.

5. Increased advocacy for gender equality and women's empowerment

The aim of this objective is to increase the capacity of SADC parliamentarians to influence democratization processes through engendering parliaments.

Some of the activities identified for implementation include the following:

- Creation of a database of women MPs and their areas of expertise;
- Developing an MPs' guide on gender and development;
- Monitoring the implementation of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development;
- Conducting training sessions for MPs in gender advocacy and analysis skills;
- Strengthening of women's parliamentary caucuses;
- Establishing a regional women's parliamentary caucus;
- Repackaging of materials on gender to make them more accessible to parliamentarians;
- Establishing/strengthening gender resource centres in member parliaments.

The objective was initially implemented through a project that was carried out in partnership with the Southern Africa Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) and the SADC Gender Unit. The project was able to lay the groundwork for implementing processes and activities that enhance democratic performance through engendering parliaments. The Forum's gender programme has produced tangible results that have had significant impact on promoting gender equality in the SADC region.

Such results include:

- Strengthened capacity of the Forum to implement gender policies especially the Standing Committee on Gender, Democracy and Conflict Resolution.
- Other institutions such as women parliamentary caucuses, parliamentary committees responsible for gender, the Gender Advisory Team were established or strengthened.
- Space was created for parliamentarians to interact and share experiences, as well as access gender related information and knowledge.
- Collaboration was enhanced between civil society and inter-governmental organizations like SARDC, the Forum and the SADC Gender Unit.
- Article 6(3) of the Forum's constitution was amended to provide for at least 50% women in the membership of the Forum at representative level.
- Training was provided to parliamentary committees on gender mainstreaming.
- The Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus was established.
- A gender checklist was developed as part of electoral norms and standards.

The results under this objective have exceeded expectations. There is no doubt that a critical mass of parliamentarians has been sensitized about gender issues and the importance of gender in the democratization processes. The lobbying and advocacy on gender carried out under this objective has influenced regional decisions such as that by SADC to increase the number of women in political decision making positions from 30% to 50%. The Forum has been a critical player in gender networks in the region and internationally, where it is regarded as a pace-setter on gender issues.

6. Develop the capacity for training and development of parliamentarians and staff of SADC national parliaments

This is a long-term objective whose aim is to set up a leadership and development training centre for the Forum. The objective is driven by the need for capacity building for SADC parliamentarians, realizing that piecemeal and unsystematic training interventions will not make the necessary impact.

The following activities were to be undertaken during the strategic period:

- Conduct needs assessments and develop orientation and training programmes for SADC national parliaments;
- Conduct a feasibility and viability study for the development of a SADC Parliamentary Leadership Training and Development Centre for coordinated training;
- Articulate the range of scenarios for meeting the ongoing training and development needs of parliamentarians and staff in areas of skills development, information technology, election observation and management, gender issues and legislative drafting; and
- Provision of training programmes as identified in the training needs assessment.

Over the course of the strategic period the Forum facilitated ad hoc training sessions for parliamentarians on diverse issues such as HIV/AIDS, budgeting, gender, poverty reduction, conflict management, etc. More importantly however, the Forum undertook a fairly rigorous process that included a feasibility study and fundraising for the establishment of a Leadership and Development Centre for SADC Parliaments. With funding from UNDP, the feasibility study consulted with a wide range of stakeholders and established an urgent need for the centre. The feasibility study also made recommendations on areas of focus for the centre, structure and required resources. Based on the feasibility study, a project document was submitted to the Africa Capacity Building Fund (ACBF). After successful negotiations a grant agreement was signed between the Forum and ACBF on May 6, 2005 providing some US\$2.6 million with the Forum contributing 10% of the costs. Recruitment of staff for the centre is already underway.

Significant progress has been made to achieve this objective. What the Forum set out to achieve under the 2000-2005 strategic plan has largely been accomplished. The next phase of this objective should focus on the operation of the Centre.

7. Promote the establishment of a SADC Regional Assembly

The thinking in 2000 was that by 2005, enough groundwork would have been done through implementation of the Forum's programme for the establishment of a SADC Assembly.

The following activities were to be undertaken:

- Assess the need for a SADC Assembly;
- Prepare establishment instruments (constitution, structure, operational procedures, etc.);
- Promote support and launching of the Assembly;
- Constitute the SADC Assembly (through an electoral process);
- Secure premises for the regional Assembly (building a facility may be necessary);
- Integrate the SADC Parliamentary Forum into the SADC Assembly. The Forum may assume the status of a "Secretariat" for the Assembly and also serve as a capacity building instrument for parliamentary levels in the region.

It is clear that the Forum was convinced of the need to constitute a regional assembly right from the outset. The issue of a regional assembly was a consistent item on the agenda of the Forum plenary sessions. The Forum made concerted efforts to promote the establishment of a regional parliament, for which it submitted motivational documentation to the SADC Secretariat. After review of such submissions the Council of Ministers recommended the approval for the establishment, in the long term, of a SADC parliament by the Summit.

The Summit in turn concluded that while the proposal to establish a regional parliament would be welcome, the institutionalization of the recently established Pan African Parliament (PAP) should take precedence. The Summit resolved that as the region hosting the PAP, Southern Africa should, for the time being, work for the successful establishment of the continental parliament.

Consequently, the establishment of a regional parliament was deferred, to be considered as a long-term objective.

The Forum invested a lot of time and resources in trying to achieve this objective. There were, however, serious challenges as well as developments at a continental level that necessitated a review of this objective.

IV. SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Parameters for Strategic Planning

The Forum's 18th Plenary Assembly mandated the Secretary General of the Forum to develop a draft strategic plan covering the period 2006-2010, for presentation at the 19th Plenary Assembly. It was recommended that chairpersons of standing committees be actively involved in the development of the new strategy.

The Plenary Assembly approved the Executive Committee's recommended parameters for the new strategy that included the following⁴:

- Establishment of the SADC Parliament;
- Formalizing the policy and relationship between the PAP, the Forum and national parliaments;
- Establishment of a permanent link between the Forum and national parliaments, possibly through parliamentary caucuses on SADC matters;
- Rationalizing the institutional linkage between SADC and the Forum;
- Harmonization of the capacity building programmes for parliamentarians and staff through the establishment of the parliamentary leadership development centre;
- Building regional consensus on election observation instruments and strategies in the context of the electoral norms and standards and the SADC Guidelines and Principles for Democratic Elections;
- Strengthening Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus lobbying and advocacy activities;
- Strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat to implement programmes.

Methodology

In order to have a basis for discussion and consultations, the Secretariat commissioned a review of the 2000-2005 strategic plan and its implementation. A staff retreat and a consultative meeting with chairpersons, vice chairpersons and/or members of standing committees were convened to review implementation of the 2000-2005 strategy.

Various methodology tools were used to gather information from the staff and the Thematic Committee members about the following:

1. the current contextual environment in which the Forum is operating (PEST analysis⁵);
2. the present strengths and weaknesses of the organization; as well as
3. identifying challenges and threats that may hinder the effectiveness of the organization during the next five-year period;⁶
4. the Vision and Mission Statement was also scrutinized in order to evaluate its relevance for the next five-year period;
5. the interdependencies and strategic partnerships required for effective delivery of programme objectives; and finally
6. the institutional capacity and organisational capabilities required to implement the Vision and Mission (strategic objectives) of the Forum.

⁴ Item 8.4 of minutes of the 18th Plenary Assembly

⁵ Identifying the Political, Economic, Social and Technological context in which the Forum operates

⁶ SWOT analysis

A SWOT Analysis of the Forum

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p data-bbox="159 218 625 282">Indicates where the organization is strong. It is important to build upon strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of membership representing all shades of political opinion • Information sharing at a regional level • Ability to mobilise human and financial resources • SADC chapters established in national parliaments providing important linkages between parliaments and SADC • Link with parliamentarians to the grassroots • Ability to influence legislation - members to share decisions made at Forum level at national level • Ability to facilitate political transformation at national level • Election observation training and capacity • Vibrant Secretariat • Independent and autonomous body • Established in terms of SADC Treaty • Unique mandate – not competing for space • Diverse programmes • Potentially self sufficient • Institutional ability to establish mechanisms to address issues of regional concern • Strong constituency in the form of MPs and staffers and support from national parliaments • SADC Treaty recognises popular participation of the populace. This provides the mandate for the Forum to ensure its implementation • Represents arm of government (legislature) • Not donor driven • Reputable/good reputation • Accountable to the people and to public representatives • High level of commitment and buy-in by member parliaments • Access to high level political leadership and policy makers • Effective gender programming • Credible track record in election observation with a global reputation • Enjoys goodwill of host government • Effective processes and institutions of internal governance and implementation supervision, e.g. Plenary, Executive Committee, Standing Committees and Secretariat 	<p data-bbox="659 218 1117 312">Indicates where the organization is weak. Weaknesses often provide clues as to where improvements will lead to organizational gains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building of MPs – no measurable impact at grassroots • Weak parliaments (threat and opportunity) • Unclear definition of membership – executive domination • Lack of formal institutional linkages at national level/parliament and with SADC institutions – absence of formal recognition of the role of parliament in regional integration • Lack of mechanisms to channel Forum discussions into SADC processes • Donor dependency for its programmes • Flat subscription fee scale that is not dependent on national GDP • Limited language capacity • Lack of clear definition of parliaments • Lack of research capacity • Lack of ability to retain capacity (institutional memory and/or alumni) especially in relation to Thematic Committee members • Lack of information dissemination mechanisms (newsletters, etc.) • No substantial sharing of best practices at regional level • Membership of more than one regional entity to be discouraged • Not sufficiently robust vis a vis the Executive • Failure to deal directly with regional integration issues and to transform into SADC parliament • Limited implementation capacity within the Secretariat on account of numbers constituting a critical mass • Limited use of information technology • Weak links with national parliamentary agendas • Too broad a focus • Unresolved lines of communication between SADC Secretariat and the Forum

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities are presented by the external environment to the organization • Increased demand for good governance at regional level • Commitment to good governance by SADC member states • Commitment by SADC member states to regional integration • High interest by development partners • Reformed SADC Secretariat • Regional agenda facilitates linkages with the populace • PAP • Economic and Political reforms being undertaken by SADC member states, e.g. constitutional reforms • Need for parliamentary reform at national level • Continued democratic consolidation in SADC region • The African Peer Review Mechanism • Elections in Angola and the DRC • Regular elections and plural political systems • Commitment by member states to the Millennium Development Goals • International NGOs and inter-governmental organizations are established in the SADC region • Globalisation • Inability of the SADC Secretariat to harmonize legislation 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats are those factors beyond the organization's control that could significantly affect success. They need to be managed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited resource base • The reversal of democratic gains in SADC member states • Pan African Parliament may be viewed as a competitor • Extra parliamentary formations supporting national parliaments and PAP • Ambiguous distribution of power at national level. This needs to be resolved at regional level in order to ensure the accountability of the executive • Lack of a common poverty reduction strategy • Lack of capacity of parliament staff • Lack of common policies regarding key issues, i.e. poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS, gender, norms and standards • Insufficient funding for parliaments at national level • Intolerance of different perspectives about regional issues • Globalisation • Donor policies • Lack of economic development • Electoral malpractices – resulting in tensions leading to regional instability and conflict • Terms of trade that undermine developing economies • Corruption • Poor service delivery • Failed/ineffective regional integration policies and programmes • Conflicting interests and priorities between the AU and SADC and between PAP and the Forum • Continued marginalization of SADC parliamentarians from decision making and representation at Secretariat level

A New Vision and Mission

Based on the Forum's comparative advantage, the regional context, accomplishments and the SWOT analysis, a review of the current mission and vision was undertaken. The following describe the Forum's new vision and mission:

Vision

A delivery-focused, people-centered institution that accelerates and promotes parliamentary participation in regional decision making for the benefit of the citizens of SADC

Mission

To facilitate strategic partnerships within the SADC region, promote information sharing, initiate and implement projects that enhance regional integration and promote effective and professional parliamentary practice

Values

The realization of both the vision and mission will be underpinned by the following values:

- respect for basic human rights
- effective service delivery
- responsiveness to the electorate/voters/people
- promotion of democracy and good governance
- promotion of gender equality and equity
- respect for individual freedoms and group rights
- tolerance and inclusiveness
- transparency and accountability

V. STRATEGIC CHOICES

Through the strategic planning process undertaken by the Forum, some choices have been made regarding priority areas of intervention by the Forum, from lessons learned and opportunities identified. The shift is from focusing on an environment of regional integration to addressing regional integration thematic issues in which parliaments perform a core role.

The hypothesis is that the involvement of parliaments and parliamentarians in regional integration initiatives will significantly improve the effectiveness of regional integration programmes as well as accelerate their implementation.

The Forum firmly believes that a parliamentary dimension is critical for effective regional integration that will improve the quality of life for peoples of the region. The Forum will build on and consolidate its past achievements through implementation of a set of initiatives aimed at realizing its mission and vision.

In this new strategic plan the links between SADC Parliamentary Forum and people of the SADC region will be strengthened. One way of achieving this is by establishing SADC Committees in national Parliaments in order to popularize SADC Parliamentary Forum initiatives. The driving force for such an approach is to bring the benefits of regional integration to the peoples of SADC.

Under the new strategy the Forum's goal will be to Increase Parliamentary Participation and Supervision in SADC Regional Integration Processes.

The Forum will implement activities in the following strategic areas to achieve this goal:

1. Consolidation of institutions of democratic governance in the SADC region;
2. Promotion of regional integration programmes;
3. Enhancing the professional performance of parliaments, parliamentarians and staff; and
4. Establishment of strategic partnerships and alliances for parliamentary strengthening.

In addition to on-going activities being implemented in relation to gender, HIV/AIDS and information technology, these issues will also be treated as cross-cutting issues that will be factored into all Forum projects. The Forum has set itself four strategic objectives to be accomplished during the 2005-2010 period.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic objective 1: Improved Institutions of Democratic Governance in the SADC region

Most SADC member states and their citizens/people are committed to consolidating democratic transitions that saw an end to one-party states, authoritarian and racist regimes. However, institutions of democracy such as legal frameworks, parliaments, political parties, civil society and many others remain weak with the executive arm of government occupying more than its share of political space. Democratic governance implies popular control of political decision making and political participation by citizens to choose their leaders from any party of their choice. Parliamentarians as elected representatives of citizens embody these critical tenets of democracy. Regional integration can only be deepened and sustained in an environment where citizens participate freely and meaningfully in political processes. A democratic system of governance is likely to guarantee protection of basic rights, peace and security. A democratic system of governance is likely to ensure that policy formulation for critical issues such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic involve citizens through their elected representatives. The Forum's comparative advantage regarding the HIV/AIDS pandemic is its ability to influence the legal and regulatory framework for addressing the pandemic at national level.

During the 2000-2005 strategic period, the Forum succeeded in regionalizing key aspects of democratic governance. Through the development and application of regional norms and standards, the Forum has successfully regionalized issues of elections and gender. The collective efforts of the Forum and other regional institutions and networks such as the Electoral Commissioners' Forum, the Electoral Institute for Southern Africa and electoral monitoring groupings did have a bearing on SADC's adoption of electoral principles and guidelines for the conduct of elections within the SADC region. The conduct of elections in SADC is no longer the preserve of national players since it has been brought under regional scrutiny. The Forum has significantly contributed to this development. An environment of democratic governance is critical for regional integration, and legitimate elections that allow citizens to participate in political decision making are a critical part of that environment.

Participation and non-discrimination are equally important aspects of democracy. The present ideal of participatory democracy implies the contribution of all parts of the population without regard to class, sex, gender, ethnic or religious background. Including women, who constitute half of the populations of SADC countries, will certainly imply great advancement. Women are often marginalized and excluded from political processes due to historic inequalities that exist in SADC communities. The Forum will build on achievements it has attained in advocating for gender equality in the region. Increased participation of women in political processes will be a significant contribution to democracy.

The following activities will be undertaken to achieve this objective:

Activities

- a) Elections and Electoral Systems
 - i) Domestication of regional electoral norms into national laws, including national electoral law reform through parliamentary processes;
 - ii) Observation of elections in order to keep a watching brief on the proper conduct of elections and to contribute to best practices and the development of norms and standards;

- iii) Strengthening networks with other organizations working in the area of elections with a view to rationalize regional electoral standards;
 - iv) Developing conflict mediation capacity to assist in situations of election related conflict; and
 - v) Monitoring compliance with recommendations of the Forum following observation.
- b) Gender
- i) Advocacy for the adoption of Protocols to accelerate Gender Equality in SADC;
 - ii) Domestication of gender agreements and conventions;
 - iii) Information dissemination and repackaging for member parliaments;
 - iv) Strengthening of women's caucuses and gender committees in national parliaments so that they perform an effective role in engendering parliaments and legislation; and
 - v) Strengthening of regional institutions and networks that advocate for gender equality.
- c) Strengthening Institutions of Democracy and Good Governance – working with institutions such as civil society, political parties, institutions of accountability, e.g. anti corruption bureaux in order to strengthen their capacities;
- d) Developing best practice and policy frameworks through parliaments – for laws and regulatory frameworks aimed at mitigating and combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Strategic Objective 2: Effective Implementation of Regional Integration Programmes

Elected representatives, if made aware of the benefits of regional integration, could be the engine that drives the integration agenda. A critical mass of champions of regional integration could be created if parliamentarians participated in shaping the regional integration agenda.

The primary reason for the Forum's coming into existence is to contribute to effective regional integration through involvement and participation of parliamentarians in regional economic policy making. To date parliamentarians have had little or no influence on regional agreements regarding a free trade area, the environment, transport, free movement of people, anti-corruption initiatives, etc. It is usually at the ratification stage that parliamentarians are roped in to endorse what the executive has already agreed to. This often happens with parliamentarians having little knowledge of the implications of what they are ratifying. The ratification of SADC agreements and harmonization of municipal laws has been painfully slow. Equally slow and ineffective has been the implementation of such agreements.

Efforts by the Forum to involve parliamentarians in issues of economic integration remained ad hoc and yielded little results. This was due to a number of factors that included limited capacity at the Forum Secretariat and lack of properly coordinated working relations between the Forum and the SADC Secretariat to allow input into regional policy making. The fact that little was achieved during the previous strategy does not in any way diminish the critical importance of, and enthusiasm for this objective.

Activities

The following activities will be implemented to achieve this objective:

- a) Facilitate activities that ensure full participation of parliaments and parliamentarians in regional integration issues at levels of SADC and the African continent, such as NEPAD;
- b) Information dissemination to parliamentarians on key regional integration issues as well as SADC agreements;
- c) Coordinating and promoting debates in national parliaments on SADC protocols and their impact at constituency level;
- d) Monitoring progress regarding trade negotiations at sub-regional, continental and international levels as well as implementation of the SADC Trade Protocol and establishment of a Free Trade Area, including advocating and promoting positions that benefit citizens of the region;
- e) Strengthening the capacities of parliamentary committees dealing with issues relevant to regional integration such as tourism, transport, trade, investment and resources utilization;
- f) Establishing networks that include business organizations to advocate for the speedy implementation of SADC Protocols on development, investment and anti-corruption initiatives;
- g) Lobbying SADC structures for parliamentarians to be involved in the development of SADC protocols; and
- h) Lobbying and advocating for the establishment of a regional parliament.

Strategic Objective 3: Increased Professional Performance of Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff under the Parliamentary Leadership Centre

The Forum realized, early in its existence, the need to strengthen the capacities of parliamentarians in order for them to play an effective role as law makers and oversee the functions of the executive. In the previous strategy the Forum set as one of its long-term objectives, "Developing the Capacity for Training and Development of SADC Parliamentarians and Staff of SADC National Parliaments". Steady progress has been made in achieving this objective. The Forum commissioned a comprehensive feasibility study that clearly identified the needs and defined the structure for a parliamentary leadership development and training centre for parliamentarians and staffers in the year 2000. Based on the feasibility study, adequate funding covering a four-year period has been secured.

Areas of focus for the Leadership Centre will include:

- Providing orientation programmes for MPs;
- Training MPs and their staff on the role of multi-party democracy;
- Leadership skills including committee effectiveness, relationship between members and the government, conflict management, legislative oversight through the budgetary process as well as members' relationship with the media;
- Election observation training; and
- SADC Protocol programmes.

Also included under this objective is the establishment of an online resource centre, whose activities will include policy research and analysis, documentation centres and libraries, publications, electronic networking, an e-parliament and the enhanced use of information technology.

Activities

The following activities will be implemented under this objective:

- a) Consolidate the establishment of a SADC Parliamentary Leadership and Development Centre to ensure institutionalized coordinated information sharing and knowledge transfer;
- b) Facilitate orientation programmes for newly elected members of parliament and staff;
- c) Establish an effective ICT system, an updated website and the production and distribution of a regular newsletter;
- d) Create awareness about critical issues facing SADC including agreements, conventions and regional issues through well researched documentation;
- e) Facilitate monitoring and assessment mechanisms including election monitoring techniques and processes;
- f) Be responsive to specific capacity building and training needs from the Forum's Standing Committees and member parliaments; and
- g) Develop advocacy and lobbying strategies and communication skills.

Strategic Objective 4: Strategic Partnerships and Alliances Established for Parliamentary Cooperation

The Forum will need to develop strategic partnerships with regional, continental and international stakeholders that share affinities and common strategies and that complement its work based on economies of state and comparative advantage, such as the SADC Secretariat, other regional parliamentary bodies (e.g. ECOWAS, EALA, etc.), NEPAD, the APRM, the AU, Pan African Parliament, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parliamentarians for Global Action, intergovernmental organizations as well as civil society organizations and electoral assistance/ observation institutions.

The partnerships are to provide linkages for information sharing and strategic leverage in instances where necessary. This will enhance the ability of the Forum to effectively engage at an international level (e.g. G8, UN) and continentally (e.g. AU). Under this objective the Forum will establish mechanisms for monitoring progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

VI. IMPLEMENTING AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Plenary Assembly:

Is the policy-making body and deliberative body of the SADC Parliamentary Forum which is constituted of Speakers and four representatives elected by each national parliament. In electing the four representatives, each Parliament is required by the constitution of the Forum to ensure equitable representation of women and political parties represented in that Parliament and include the Chairperson of the National Women's Parliamentary Caucus. The Plenary Assembly meets twice a year in the member states on a rotational basis and representatives serve for a period of five years. The Plenary Assembly advises SADC Summit on matters of regional policy issues and promotes the objectives and programmes of SADC. In addition, it scrutinizes, gets briefed and make recommendations on all SADC sectoral reports.

Executive Committee:

Is responsible for the management of the affairs of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, giving direction to the Secretariat and ensuring that decisions of the Plenary Assembly are implemented. It appoints staff for the Secretariat headed by the Secretary General on terms and conditions as per the constitution of the Forum. The Executive Committee is answerable to the Plenary Assembly and also gives direction. The Executive Committee is constituted by six Speakers of national member parliaments and seven MPs elected by the Plenary Assembly every two years and the Secretary General serves as the Chief Executive of the SADC Parliamentary Forum and coordinates programmes of the Forum.

Standing Committees of the SADC Parliamentary Forum were initially established by the Plenary Assembly in 1999 as the think tanks or "clearing houses" of the core business of the Forum. At that time only three such committees were established, namely Gender, Democracy and Conflict Resolution/Peace Building; Inter-parliamentary Cooperation, and Regional Cooperation and Integration. Over time, two more committees were added: the HIV and AIDS and the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus. Taken together, the five committees articulate in a succinct manner, the raison d'être of the Forum as a regional institution comprising parliaments of SADC member states. The five committees address the 15 objectives of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, chief among which is strengthening the implementation capacity of SADC by involving parliamentarians in the activities of SADC. Principally, the Forum seeks to bring regional experiences to bear at the national level, to promote best practices in the role of parliaments in regional cooperation and integration as outlined in the SADC Treaty and the Forum Constitution.

The objectives of the Forum address a wide range of issues, including but not limited to:

- (i) Promotion of human rights, gender equality, good governance, democracy and transparency;
- (ii) Promotion of peace, security and stability;
- (iii) Hastening the pace of economic cooperation, development and integration on the basis of equity and mutual benefits;
- (iv) Facilitating networking with other inter-parliamentary organizations;
- (v) Promoting the participation of non-governmental organisations, business and intellectual communities in SADC activities;
- (vi) Familiarising the peoples of SADC with the aims and objectives of SADC; and
- (viii) Informing SADC of the popular views on development and issues affecting the region.

The objectives outlined above are complementary to and in tandem with those of SADC as outlined in the SADC Treaty (1992) and subsequently enunciated in the various protocols of SADC in general and the RISDP⁷ and SIPO⁸ in particular.

The SADC Treaty (as amended) outlines the following objectives, among others:

- (i) Achieving development and economic growth as well as alleviating poverty and enhancing the standard and quality of life of the peoples of southern Africa;
- (ii) Evolving common political values, systems and institutions;
- (iii) Promoting and defending peace and security;
- (iv) Achieving complementarity between national and regional strategies and programmes;
- (v) Promoting interdependence and integration of the national economies of member states for the “harmonious, balanced and equitable development of the region”; and
- (vi) Mobilising of own and international resources for the promotion of national, inter-state and regional policies, programmes and projects to advance regional integration.

The Treaty further states that in order to achieve the above objectives (and others related), SADC (and its institutions) shall:

- (i) Harmonise political and socio-economic policies and plans of member states;
- (ii) Create appropriate institutions and mechanisms for the mobilisation of requisite resources for the implementation of programmes and operations of SADC and its institutions;
- (iii) Promote the coordination and harmonisation of the international relations of member states;
- (iv) Promote the development, transfer and mastery of technology and the development of human resources.
 - These strategic objectives and the constitution of the Forum are the take-off point for the Forum’s contribution to the realisation of the SADC regional cooperation and integration agenda.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR STANDING COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Democratisation, Governance and Gender Equality

- Promote and strengthen parliamentary-based gender equality lobbying and advocacy, research and monitoring the implementation of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, along with domestication of related continental and international conventions on gender equality;
- Enhance and influence parliamentary debates and processes for the promotion of gender equality;
- Engender all structures of governance, peace building and regional integration;
- Lobby for the review and development of inclusive and participatory electoral systems, practices and processes to advance peace, mitigate conflict, and deepen democracy and good governance;
- Strengthen constitutional institutions of democracy such as electoral management bodies, gender, media and anti-corruption commissions;
- Engaging with civil society, business and intellectual communities in promoting popular participation and deepening democratic practice;
- Consolidate and deepen democracy and working to avert reversals in democratic consolidation;
- Lobby and advocate for the facilitation of governance and gender issues through the use of ICTs;
- Lobby and advocate for the improvement of the political and legal environment within which elections are held; and
- Undertaking election-related missions, peace and conflict vulnerability assessments.

⁷ The SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) is the blueprint of the strategic and implementation programme of SADC over the next fifteen years.

⁸ The Strategic Plan for the Organ on Defence, Politics and Security Cooperation (SIPO) guides the work of one of the organs of SADC, the Organ on Defence, Politics and Security Cooperation.

Regional Cooperation and Integration

- Agenda setting, articulating and strengthening the parliamentary dimension of regional cooperation and integration through knowledge and information sharing on regional protocols and declarations of SADC, the continent (NEPAD, Pan African Parliament) and at the global level (United Nations, etc);
- Empowerment and sensitisation activities on parliament's representation, supervision and legislative functions to advance regional cooperation and integration;
- Research and review of opportunities and obstacles to regional cooperation and integration;
- Lobbying for the ratification and domestication of protocols in national laws and monitoring the implementation of protocols; and
- Build capacities of parliaments and parliamentarians to interrogate, debate and address issues of regional integration.

Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation and Capacity Development

- Empowerment of parliaments as institutions of democracy, parliamentarians and parliamentary staff through knowledge, information sharing, lobbying and advocacy and sensitisation;
- Agenda setting on best practices for good parliamentary corporate governance, inter-party collaboration and intra-party democratic principles;
- Cooperation and collaboration with other inter-parliamentary bodies on matters of mutual interest (PAP, ECOWAS, EALA, CPA, IPU, etc);
- Capacity building in all areas of parliamentary practice and procedures;
- Research, information management and documentation of parliamentary practices;
- Effective and efficient utilisation of ICTs to promote legislative practices; and
- Promoting inclusive corporate governance in the Forum organs and practices.

HIV and AIDS

- Promoting and sustain dialogue and collaboration in HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support particularly among elected leaders;
- Ongoing collaboration with the Executive, members of parliament, the private sector, relevant civil society organizations, in particular networks of People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA);
- Develop and lobby for the adoption, by all parliaments, of model legislation on HIV and AIDS relating to issues of discrimination and prejudice, protecting women, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), among others;
- Identify and respond to emerging technologies and therapies as they relate to the optimal prevention, care and treatment of people living with, or at risk of HIV, including non-conventional therapies;
- Lobbying for and share best practices on effective parliamentary committees on HIV and AIDS;
- Identifying and promote educational opportunities for the people of SADC that relate to the optimal care and treatment of people living with, or at risk of HIV;
- Developing mechanisms for ensuring accountability and among leaders and governments; and ensure ongoing funding, both public and private, for the treatment and management of HIV in the SADC region.
- Ensuring through legislative supervision, ongoing excellence in HIV research and evaluation of treatment, care and support;
- Building national and regional capacity to exercise effective budget monitoring;
- Generating goals and priorities for policy and legislation review;
- Mainstreaming guidelines and standards of care for PLWHA throughout all programme activities of the Forum;

- Identifying emerging issues; tabling motions in parliament and within their political parties, ensuring stakeholder communication and collaboration;
- Addressing the gender dynamics and gendered nature of HIV and AIDS;
- Strengthening linkages and liaisons, with cooperation and integration agendas and promoting patient and provider education; and
- Collaboration with the media.

Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus

- Advocacy and lobbying campaigns to promote women's representation in all decision making positions in political parties at national and regional levels;
- Develop a women's agenda for the Forum and national parliaments including developing strategic programmes, creating a plan of action and outcome document to ensure effective implementation of programmes in the region;
- Complement the agenda of the National Women's Parliamentary Caucus in monitoring/supervisory role on women's political participation and representation;
- Ensure effective participation and representation of women in the institution of parliament, its structures in the Forum and other relevant international initiatives;
- Compile and share a database of women role models in the region based on good practices to promote women in positions of power and decision making;
- Provide substantive input in the national processes of political parties' decisions making bodies, intra party democracy reviews, electoral systems reforms and legislation on women's participation and representation;
- Lobby for the ratification, implementation and dissemination of information on international and regional treaties/protocols and conventions on women's rights in collaboration with committees responsible for gender and human rights.
- Facilitate additional empowerment and knowledge transfer strategies for national women's parliamentary caucuses and women candidates;
- Monitor and disseminate information on women's participation in positions of power and decision making;
- Work to increase women's political opportunities and visibility by developing regional messages on women's representation and leadership.
- Advocate for electoral and other legislative and constitutional reviews and reforms that guarantee equal participation and representation of women and men in positions of power and decision making;
- Advocate and contribute to the creation of a conducive and peaceful environment for women to participate in elections and
- Advocate and lobby for the implementation of Millennium Development Goals with a special focus on improving the general livelihoods of women.

The premise and operating framework for each standing committee is to deliberate issues, explore, stimulate, catalyse, proactively pursue and seek practical solutions, enhance efforts, building capacities and monitor developments and implementation in the committee areas of focus.

In the long term it is envisaged that there will be:

- A separation of Finance Department from Administration/Parliamentary Forum Resources Management.
- Parliamentary Support Services to be established under the Deputy Secretary General.
- Administration Assistant Support to Deputy Secretary General/Assistant Secretary General.
- Professional Staff – SO4 + Interpreters/Translators.
- Use of resource persons will complement Secretariat staff.
- Internal Audit systems of PLC.

VII. RESOURCES

The policy position of the Forum on resource mobilization to implement the new strategic plan is that all core activities, in terms of the institutional management shall be funded by parliaments. The Forum will be open to cost-sharing contributions with international partners and a corresponding increase in the use of parliaments' training budgets is envisaged as a mechanism for cost sharing, and ultimately a decrease in external funding for programme activities. It is inevitable that adjustments on contributions would come by the transformation of the Forum into a parliament, with a full fledged department to support the parliament.