



**PARLIAMENT**  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES**  
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**OPENING REMARKS, OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES BY THE  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES,  
HONOURABLE N. A. MASONDO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
LAUNCH OF THE COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION (CPA) NATIONAL  
BRANCH AND COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS  
(CWP) CHAPTER**

**DATE:** 10 SEPTEMBER 2021    **VENUE:** VIRTUAL    **TIME:** 10H00

Programme Director, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and  
Convenor of CPA Delegation, Honourable Lechesa Tsenoli

Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula

Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Honourable Sylvia Lucas

CPA Africa Region Chairperson and Speaker of the National Assembly of  
the Republic of Kenya, Honourable Justin Muturi

Former CPA Africa Region Chairperson, Honourable Lindiwe Maseko

Former Chairperson of Africa Region CWP and Minister of Agriculture,  
Land Reform and Rural Development, Honourable Thokozile Didiza

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Honourable Naledi  
Pandor

Honourable Speakers and Deputy Speakers of Provincial Legislatures

Honourable Members of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures

Deputy Secretary-General of the CPA, Mr Jarvis Matiya

CPA Secretariat

Ladies and gentlemen

Programme Director, allow me to thank you for the opportunity to make the opening remarks and to outline the strategic significance of today's launch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) National Branch and the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chapter.

We have, for some time now, been planning to schedule this important exercise. However, owing to the challenge of the availability of time as a result of competing engagements taking into account our diverse participants, we took much longer than initially anticipated. This obviously suggests that we must try to find ways of creating space for the coordination of the work of the CPA and the CWP.

As many would be aware, this session is necessitated by the fact that the constitutions of the CPA International and CPA Africa Region require that all Parliaments and Legislatures should establish branches and CWP Chapters. This is in order to enable parliamentarians to operationalise the activities of the Association, in their quest to advance parliamentary democracy and to respond to the objectives of promoting gender equality and equity in the work of the CPA.

Further motivation for this session is that:

1. The resolutions of the 50<sup>th</sup> CPA Africa Regional Conference held in Zanzibar, Tanzania in 2019, placed more demands on all the

Commonwealth Parliaments to establish branches and CWP chapters as vehicles of implementing the strategic objectives of the region;

2. The resolutions of the 64<sup>th</sup> CPA International Conference, held in Uganda, Kampala also in 2019, require the Branch to operationalise them in responding to the strategic objectives of the Association; and
3. The South African Branch and Sub-branch leaders continue to serve in governance structures of the CPA and attend Executive Committee Meetings of the Association, and as such deal with issues which require operationalisation domestically.

Therefore, Programme Director, it stands to reason that we should formally organise ourselves so as to undertake these important tasks. Our overall purpose is to build an informed parliamentary community that is able to contribute to deepening the Commonwealth's democratic commitment and to further cooperation among its Parliaments and Legislatures.

As the programme reflects, we expect to deal with some critical matters in the context of the CPA. These include the issue of the transformation of the CPA and the ongoing contradictions. The issue here, which will be expanded on, is the transformation of the status of the CPA from a charity to a diplomatic organisation.

Programme Director, as you are aware, the mission of the CPA Africa Region is:

“To promote and protect the interests and perspectives of CPA Africa Regional Parliaments and countries, into the Commonwealth and beyond, and to promote gender equality, emancipation of women, and respect for human rights, freedoms, democracy and good governance”.

In his address to the 38<sup>th</sup> CPA–Africa Region Conference held in Parliament, Cape Town, in July 2007, then President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Thabo Mbeki, posed a question that remains critical about what is common in Commonwealth. He framed his question as follows:

“If a question was put to all of us gathered here in Cape Town under the umbrella of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association as to, ‘What gives us our shared commonality, what would our answer be?’

“Would the answer be that we are a commonwealth because we speak the same language as that of our erstwhile coloniser? Or is it that we are a commonwealth because we share a common and unique destiny?”

I submit that our commonality in the CPA Africa region should be defined by what we seek to achieve in the context of the broader advancement of the continent, irrespective of our individual colonial ties. As our mission

suggests, we should go ‘into the Commonwealth and beyond’ to promote our own interests and perspectives.

For decades now, since the birth of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 and its transformation into the African Union (AU) in 2002, the true unity of Africans has remained somewhat elusive. Within and beyond the Commonwealth, our collective mission should therefore be to achieve greater unity and solidarity between African countries and their people.

It is for this reason that, through its Agenda 2063, the AU has identified key programmes and initiatives that can help to facilitate the unity of Africans. These programmes and initiatives are intended to accelerate Africa’s economic growth and development and to promote our common identity by celebrating our history and our vibrant culture.

Our common and unique identity lies in us preserving and promoting the African cultural heritage. In short, it lies in us focusing on what unites us rather than what divides us.

When it comes to economic development, the new African Continental Free Trade Area, which is a project of the AU, provides us with a unique opportunity to commonly shape our destiny. It is an instrument to assist us to attain inclusive and sustainable development across the continent. It is a

response to the need to create an 'expanded and secure market' for the goods and services of State Parties.

These, in my view, are just some of the key strategic issues that are central to us building genuine and lasting unity with a view, of course, of sharing a 'common and unique destiny'.

Clearly, we should, through the Commonwealth Africa Region, seek to pursue our collective interests as the continent, the basis of which is the unity of the African people. It is true that the process of decolonisation did not leave the colonisers without a neo-colonial agenda on Africa. Even as we speak, we are experiencing a "New Scramble" for Africa by super and middle powers which will further divide us, if we fail to address the question of unity.

Programme Director, in conclusion, our mission today is to reinforce our CPA machinery and to calibrate it so as to pursue our interests and perspectives as part of prioritising the African agenda.

I thank you.