

**REFLECTIONSON THE ROLE OF THE PARLIAMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE CPA
AND THE CWP: By Thoko Didiza, MP**

Program Director

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon Nosiviwe Mapisa- Nqakula

Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Hon. Masondo

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon Tsenoli

Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Hon. Sylvia Lucas

Speaker of Parliament of the National Assembly Republic of Kenya, and the
Chairperson of the CPA Africa Region Hon Justine Muturi

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Hon Naledi Pandor

Advocate Lindiwe Maseko, Former Chairperson of the CPA Africa Region

Honorable Members

It is an honour and privilege that today we launch the South Africa Parliamentary Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Commonwealth Women's Parliament. This public launch today serves as a commitment that South Africa's Parliament has on the vision of the CPA Africa Region as well as CPA International.

Program Director, It is important to highlight that this public launch does not mean as a South African Parliament we have not been members and a branch in good standing, we are. As the sixth Parliament, we have decided to use this platform as a way in which we popularize the work of the CPA amongst our members and community.

Our Provinces, this parliament and our parliamentary staff have been active members who have participated in the structures and programmes of the association and shared valuable insight on how we can strengthen parliamentary democracy and more in particular on how we can increase the role of women in parliament and legislators.

Each term of office of the new parliament, it is always necessary to launch a branch and nominate the Executive that will manage the day-to-day programs and activities of the Association.

Program Director, Allow me to honour and pay our tribute to the late Deputy Speaker, Amelia Lefaka who was the member of the CPA and CWP Africa Region who passed away last year. Hon Lefaka was our CPA International Chairperson. In her short-term tenure saw changes in the governance of the Association at International level addressing issue of equity within the association particularly as it relates to funding of activities of regions. We wish through you Hon. Justine Muturi our chairperson, to extend our condolences to the Lefaka Family and to the CPA Africa Region and CPA International.

Program Director, in reflecting on the role of the Parliament of South Africa in the CPA and the CWP, it is important to unpack what the association represent. CPA is a membership based association which bring members of parliaments and sub-national parliament together irrespective of gender, race, religion or culture who are united by community of interest for the respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms, and by the pursuit of the positive ideals of parliamentary democracy. This association allows Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to collaborate on issues of mutual interest and to share good practice

Its mission is “to promote knowledge of the constitutional, legislative, economic, social and cultural aspects of parliamentary democracy, with particular reference to the countries of the Commonwealth”

This Association has members who also comprise of regional Associations like us in the Africa Region. Bound by this mission the CPA Africa region developed its Mission that seeks to address the challenges that our Continent face.

Our Mission as 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”

Having shared briefly, what the Association is about, I wish to reflect on what has been our participation as the branch in the work of the Association. As part of strengthening our parliamentary democracy in the Continent, we have contributed through the development of policies and statutes that govern the association. We have led in the articulation of important subjects that as an association required us to address. One amongst these has been the emancipation of women, the increase representation of women in parliament and legislators. Conducting gender sensitization workshops, one of these was hosted by our sub-national branch Gauteng in 2018.

At a country level, we have transformed our parliamentary programming to allow women's multi-party caucuses to be given space in the parliamentary and legislative programs to ensure that women parliamentarians have an opportunity to reflect on matters of common interest. As part of the transformation of parliaments and legislators, we ensured that we have a women's committee that will reflect on legislative, budgetary and executive programs and ensure that they hold the Executive accountable. One of the matters that the CWP Chapter in the fifth administration pioneered working with civil society was the issue of sanitary towels for girls.

Working with other CWP Chapters in the Region have looked at strategies to increase women participation in parliaments , legislators and councils through engaging political parties examining their policies and how these enable women's participation at a party level. Secondly, in some jurisdictions CWP members influenced changes in electoral systems in order to create space and possibilities for increased women's participation in parliaments and legislators.

During the development of the Sustainable Development Goals, our members of the CWP in the Africa contributed in ensuring that the gender agenda is not lost in the debates and programs. This work was done in collaboration with the UN Women, Commonwealth Women Ministers responsible for the portfolio of women in their countries.

Program Director, I have made these reflections in order to show how as a branch we can work with other in sharing best practice on issues that seek to strengthen parliamentary democracy. Similarly, being part of the Association enable us to

learn from others. It also create opportunities for solidarity in addressing global challenges that we face as humanity.

I thank you.