

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA



PARLIAMENT OF TANZANIA

**STATEMENT OF HON. DR. TULIA ACKSON (MP), SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF TANZANIA ON GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER-SENSITIVE
PARLIAMENTS AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE FOR A MORE RESILIENT AND
PEACEFUL WORLD**

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**PARLIAMENT OF TANZANIA
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President of the Assembly

Hon. Speakers;

**Hon. Members of Parliament,
Dear colleagues and friends.**

At the outset allow me to take this opportunity to thank the Rt. Honorable Duarte Pacheco, the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), for inviting the Tanzania Parliament to participate in this important assembly. We are grateful.

Dear colleagues and friends,

The theme for this Assembly's general debate: "**Gender Equality and Gender-sensitive Parliaments as Drivers of Change for a more resilient and peaceful world,**" comes very timely. In the world we live in today, gender equality is at the front and center of all development imperatives.

It is now a thing of the past that the responsibility for gender equality was seen as a matter for women and women alone. Gone are the times when gender equality and women's rights fell on the shoulders of female Members of Parliament. Given the centrality of gender equality, gender equity and women's rights, the responsibility has

rightly been taken up by Parliaments as peoples' representative. Clearly, there cannot be any sustainable development if half of national populations, and sometimes more than half, who are women, are left behind. There cannot be peace in the world if gender inequality is left to intensify in times of conflict. There cannot be sustainable peace if mediation and peace-making efforts leave out women. Recovery will be impossible from such crises as the COVID-19 pandemic without addressing gender issues. It is therefore absolutely critical that Parliaments play their role in addressing squarely issues of gender equality, gender equity and women's rights as part of their mainstream work.

It is in this regard that the Parliament of Tanzania, has signed, ratified and domesticated several regional, continental and international instruments on gender equality, women's rights and empowerment.

Dear colleagues and friends,

As I stand before you today, am proud to share with you very recent efforts that the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, H.E. Mme Samia Suluhu Hassan, has undertaken to ensure gender equality. She has graciously agreed to champion the implementation of the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) commitments, which are crucial to achieving gender equality. An Action Plan for implementing the GEF has been developed to make it a reality. It focuses on achieving the following six areas: -

- Community Early Child Development
- Entrepreneurship Skills
- Innovation and Technology
- Digital Technology
- Access to Land, and

- Financial inclusion

This has definitely set the stage for our Parliament to further support these efforts through legislative action. This Plan of Action comes in the backdrop of what the Parliament of Tanzania has already done to solidify gender equality. In its oversight responsibilities, the Parliament has supported government in ensuring that there's consistent implementation of various policies such as the Free Education Policy for Primary and Secondary Schools since 2016; taking special measures to ensure that girls enroll in large numbers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects by building at least one Special Girls' Secondary School for STEM subjects in 26 regions.

As regards land, which is the major form of property ownership, the Parliament of Tanzania has enacted legislation guaranteeing women's equal access to land use and ownership. The law requires that a minimum of one third of all members of the crucial village and ward committees that deal with land governance and ownership should be women.

In addressing Gender-Based Violence, the United Republic of Tanzania has implemented a National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (2016/17-2020/21) for Tanzania Mainland, while in Zanzibar a five-year National Action Plan to End Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) 2017-2022 is underway. The two Plans focus on three key issues: prevention; creating a conducive environment for the victims; and strengthening support services. To support the implementation of the Plan, the Parliament of Tanzania has put in place the Legal Aid Act 1, 2017, which recognises and registers paralegals at the community level to provide free legal services to the most vulnerable and needy groups.

Overtime, the Parliament has, on its part, done the following:

- i) In 1998, the Parliament enacted the Sexual Offences (Special Provisions) Act, to address among others, issues of gender violence and the protection of female victims;
- ii) In 2004 the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania was amended to provide for affirmative action to guarantee a minimum of thirty percent (30%) women's representation in Parliament and thirty-three percent (33.3%) in local councils.
- iii) In the spirit of this amendment, today we have witnessed an increase of women MPS from 21.5% in 2005 to 37% in 2020. The current Parliament has 146 female MPs out of the total of 393 MPs.
- iv) A good number of women MPs lead Parliamentary Standing Committees. Out of 18 Parliamentary Committees, 6 are chaired by women, including the Steering Committee, which I chair as the Speaker. Also, 5 of the 11 Commissioners on the Parliamentary Services Commission are women.
- v) In order to ensure girls remain in school, the Education Act was amended to establish a minimum penalty of 30 years' imprisonment for any person found guilty of marrying or making a school girl pregnant.

Dear colleagues and friends,

Given this experience in Tanzania, I have no doubt in my mind that national parliaments have a significant role to play in their own countries in achieving gender equality. It is obvious in doing so, we shall need international partnerships. We need to bring disjointed efforts together and form new partnerships. The IPU will be an important bridge in attaining this objective. The fact that we are meeting today, under this theme of gender equality and the role of parliaments, attests to this reality.

I would, therefore, like to call on all Parliaments to fully exercise our oversight role in ensuring that our governments meet their commitment to address gender inequality by providing sustainable solutions to make our institutions more gender sensitive. Tanzania stands ready and willing to work with other Parliaments to exchange experiences and share best practices, including the good works done by the very able and capable women caucuses in our respective parliaments, exemplified by the Tanzania Women Parliamentarians Group.

Dear colleagues and friends,

His Excellency Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda said yesterday, when addressing this Assembly: “ **SETTING UP QUOTAS FOR WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS IS NOT ENOUGH**”, and I agree.

Nelson Mandela, the first President of a democratic South Africa, once said, “**IT ALWAYS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL IT’S DONE,**” and I agree.

Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the Father of the Nation of Tanzania, once said, “**IT CAN BE DONE, PLAY YOUR PART**”; and I agree;

I would also add my voice to theirs: **DON’T BE A STORY TELLER, BE A STORY MAKER.**

TODAY, AS ONE FAMILY UNDER IPU, MEETING IN KIGALI - RWANDA, IN 2022, LET US ALL PLEDGE AND SAY, IN UNISON, “IT CAN BE DONE, WE WILL ALL PLAY OUR PART”

Colleagues and Friends, thank you for your kind attention.