



SPEECH

BY

HON ADVOCATE J.F.N. MUDENDA

SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT

ON

GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS

AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE FOR A MORE RESILIENT AND

PEACEFUL WORLD

AT THE

145TH ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

(IPU)

KIGALI, RWANDA

11 TO 15 OCTOBER 2022

Mr President

It is a great pleasure and an honour to address this session on the critical theme of the 145th Assembly, namely, “***Gender Equality and Gender Sensitive Parliaments as Drivers of Change for a More Resilient and Peaceful World***”. To that an extent, Rwanda has achieved the phenomenal feat in achieving gender parity within its Parliament wherein 61% Members are women. Rwanda is, therefore, a torchbearer ahead of the global average of 26%. Congratulations Rwanda, especially when this sterling achievement has been attained after the debilitating genocide. Rwanda has concretely proved that adversity can be a springboard of wholesome human development that is cognisant of gender parity.

Mr President

There is no doubt that nations that promote gender equality are more likely to use diplomacy before force in conflict management and are less likely to get involved in

violent crises¹. The vital role of gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments in achieving peace and development, promoting resilience and propelling societal change is recognised in a series of UN Resolutions on women, peace and security. Among them is the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which affirms the central role of women in peace building while at the same time stressing the criticality of equal participation and gender perspectives in all conflict resolution processes.

Mr President

The Parliament of Zimbabwe has developed an Institutional Gender Policy whose principal framework lays the foundation for integrating gender perspectives within our Parliament. In fulfilment of the 2012 IPU Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments, Zimbabwe's new 2013 Constitution espouses gender parity in its Bill of Rights. Accordingly, 60 seats in the National Assembly are constitutionally guaranteed up to 2030 on the basis of proportional representation in addition to constituency representation. As a result, our Parliament now has 34% of

¹ <https://togetherwomenrise.org/gender-equality-and-world-peace>

Female Members of Parliament since 2013 as opposed to 26% before then.

Mr President

The exigencies of Covid-19 resulted in a worrying spike in the number of school going children who fell pregnant during the pandemic induced hiatus and were expelled from school. In fact these pregnant girls were ostracised and alienated. Our gender sensitive Parliament amended the Education Act in 2020 so that the erstwhile pregnant school girls returned to school after giving birth.

In tandem, our Parliament promulgated a new Marriages Act No. 1 of 2022 which unequivocally disallows early child marriages wherein it became legally impermissible to marry a girl below 18 years age of majority.

Mr President

The establishment of the vibrant Zimbabwe Women Parliamentary Caucus (ZWPC) by our Parliament in 2001 is another milestone in the quest for Gender Equality and Gender sensitive Parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world. Its mandate is to

capacitate women parliamentarians to be able to contribute meaningfully to national and international discourses. In the same vein, the Zimbabwe Government has established a fully-fledged Ministry of Women's Affairs, Small and Medium Enterprises in order to practically address gender parity challenges whereby women are supposed to be socio-economically empowered. It is that Ministry which runs a Women's Empowerment Bank to economically empower women through business ventures. Parliament passed the law to establish this Bank. Accordingly, gender parity without economic parity will remain a mirage. Equally, our President, Dr E.D. Mnangagwa's mantra of leaving no one and no place behind, has resulted in the creation of the Youth Empowerment Bank in order to ensure youth inclusivity in our national development. These efforts are in line with Sustainable Goals No. 5 and 17. In that regard, our Parliament has striven to fight inequality which is anathema to gender parity and thus enabling our Parliament to be gender sensitive as well as

being a driver of change towards a more resilient and peaceful world through positive legislative processes.

Mr President

I conclude by urging all of us to follow Rwanda's inspiring example which has achieved greater heights in gender parity within a short period of time because of Rwanda's political will that has permeated its national party political architecture and in its governmental structures. The private sector must also encompass fully gender parity mainstreaming in its leadership. However and above all, we must sanitize the chauvinistic mindset of our male Members of Parliaments who are the majority legislators so that they can bend backwards in making laws which dramatically enhance gender parity. The gender parity struggle is a composite struggle where men and women should walk side by side in establishing the gender parity matrix together as comrades in arms.

MURAKOZE!

MERCI BEAUCOUP!

I THANK YOU!