



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**BY HER EXCELLENCY LUCIA WITBOOI, VICE PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,**

ON THE

**OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 90TH
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (CPA)
AFRICAN REGION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**THURSDAY, 5 MARCH 2026
SWAKOPMUND, ERONGO REGION**

- **Honourable Lukas Sinimbo Muha, Chairperson of the National Council of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Right Honourable Sameer Gaffar Suleman, President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) African Region and Speaker of Parliament of the Republic of Malawi;**
- **Right Honourable Fabakary Tombong Jatta, Chairperson of the Commonwealth (CPA) Executive Committee and Speaker of Parliament of the Republic of the Gambia;**
- **Esteemed Members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association African Region Executive Committee;**
- **Mr. Baraka Ildephonse Leonard, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association African Regional Secretary;**
- **Honourable Speakers of Parliaments and Heads of delegations;**
- **Honourable Phillipus Wido Katamelo, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Honourable Natalia /Goagosos, Governor of the Erongo Region;**
- **Esteemed Honourable Members of Parliament;**

- **Distinguished Invited Guests;**
- **Members of the Media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

It is an honour to address you today at the official opening of the 90th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) African Region Executive Meeting, convened here in Swakopmund, Erongo Region.

Allow me, at the onset, to extend a warm and sincere welcome on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Namibia to you all.

Namibia, is privileged to host this important gathering, which affirms our collective commitment to inter-parliamentary cooperation and the enduring relevance of the CPA as a platform for advancing democratic governance across Africa.

Director of Ceremonies;

The CPA Africa Region stands as one of the most dynamic arms of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, uniting legislatures from across our diverse continent. Through the CPA, we come together in the spirit of

cooperation, dialogue, and mutual respect to promote the values of parliamentary democracy, good governance, and human rights. These are the foundation upon which our nations continue to build inclusive, resilient, and prosperous societies within the greater Commonwealth family.

On this occasion, we meet at an important time for our continent. African institutions are navigating complex political, economic, technological, and demographic transitions. These transitions present both significant challenges and unique opportunities—opportunities to modernise legislative practices, strengthen oversight, deepen citizen involvement, and consolidate democratic legitimacy. Our ability to adapt and respond determines our progress toward peace, prosperity, and justice for our citizens.

Director of Ceremonies;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The work of the CPA in the African Region is vital in this context. CPA's must strengthen democracy by following

the basic ideas of the Commonwealth, which include constitutional governance, separation of powers, the rule of law, respect for human rights, gender equality, and participation by everyone. For a country to be stable and grow in a way that lasts, it needs strong, independent, and robust legislatures. Parliaments must move beyond lawmaking to exercise rigorous oversight, ensure fiscal accountability, articulate the aspirations of the people, and safeguard the constitutional order. The credibility of our democracies depends on the effectiveness and integrity of our parliamentary institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Executive Committee (EXCO) is central to these efforts; it provides strategic direction, oversees programmes, and fosters cooperation among member parliaments. The deliberations and strategic decisions to be made here will influence capacity-building, guide governance reforms, and set regional priorities, impacting issues such as fiscal oversight, institutional reform, gender inclusion, youth representation, and digital transformation. The impact of the outcomes will extend

beyond this conference hall, influencing the quality of governance throughout Africa.

In alignment with the African Union's Agenda 2063, "The Africa We Want," and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 16 regarding peace, justice, and strong institutions, this gathering emphasises the necessity of robust legislatures in driving sustainable development. These aspirations urge us to be proactive, innovative, and united in our pursuit of peace, prosperity, and sustainable development. Therefore, the CPA Africa Region plays a critical role in ensuring that the voices of the African electorate are translated into actionable policies that address poverty, inequality, and the digital divide.

Director of Ceremonies;

For the people and the Government of the Republic of Namibia, hosting the 90th CPA Africa Region EXCO Meeting is not only a source of great pride but also an opportunity to showcase our unwavering dedication to democratic values and effective parliamentary practice. It is a testament to the strides we have made in fostering a stable

democracy, promoting gender inclusion—especially through the advancement of women’s leadership—and championing the rule of law and enhancement of gender representation and youth participation within parliamentary structures.

Since independence, Namibia has remained steadfast in upholding constitutionalism, multiparty democracy, and the separation of powers. Our Parliament continues to enhance legislative oversight, committee systems, and public engagement by recognising that democratic consolidation is an ongoing process. Therefore, hosting this meeting reflects both our dedication and the confidence placed in Namibia’s institutions.

Namibia is proud of its record of upholding democratic values, maintaining strong parliamentary institutions, and active participation within the Commonwealth family of nations. We have made major advances toward promoting gender equality and women’s leadership, as reflected in the work of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Chapter and in our commitment to inclusivity and representation. Namibia has been recognised for its

progress in "zebra-style" gender representation, which ensures that women occupy key decision-making roles.

However, we remain cognisant of the challenges that persist, including the rise of unconstitutional changes of government in some regions of the continent and the lingering socio-economic impacts of global crises. These challenges necessitate a renewed focus on "parliamentary diplomacy," where legislators act as bridges between national interests and regional stability. We need to fix the "democratic deficit" by making sure that our institutions are not only open and honest but also strong enough to resist corruption and outside interference. Indeed, these challenges require innovative thinking, strong leadership, and robust cooperation among all member parliaments—not challenges for Namibia alone but for all of Africa—and it is through bodies like the CPA that we find strength in unity and shared purpose.

Director of Ceremonies;

A modern and credible Parliament must be inclusive. The advancement of women, youth, and marginalised communities through legislative processes is essential for

equitable and sustainable development. Parliaments that reflect the diversity of their societies are more legitimate, responsive, and resilient. Inclusion strengthens legitimacy, and trust strengthens democracy.

Principles of democracy, human rights, equality, and respect for the rule of law unite us as members of the Commonwealth. We must nurture, protect, and continuously strengthen our democratic institutions. The deliberations of this Executive Committee are a meaningful contribution to this shared responsibility and to the advancement of ethical leadership and accountable governance in Africa.

Director of Ceremonies;

To conclude, I extend my deepest appreciation to the leadership of the CPA African Region and to all delegates for your dedication to parliamentary excellence. I also extend my deepest gratitude to the Parliament of Namibia, and all the stakeholders involved for their dedication and hard work in bringing this gathering to fruition.

As we embark on this 90th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) African Region Executive Committee Meeting, let us reaffirm our commitment to the ideals that unite us. May your discussions be constructive, your deliberations be visionary, and strengthen our partnerships. May the outcomes of this meeting advance democracy across our continent, including more inclusive parliamentary democracies—both within our respective nations and across the African continent.

Let us work together to reinforce the pillars of parliamentary democracy and promote the shared values that bind us as members of the Commonwealth and as Africans. The decisions we make and the partnerships we forge here will shape the future of our parliaments and, ultimately, the lives of the people's sovereignty.

It is with great honour that I now declare the 90th Executive Committee Meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's (CPA) Africa Region officially open and wish you all fruitful deliberations.

I thank you.