



**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF CLERKS-AT-THE-TABLE  
(SoCATT) AFRICA STEERING COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THURSDAY, 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2019, AT AVANI VICTORIA FALLS  
RESORT, LIVINGSTONE, ZAMBIA**

**BY**

**MRS CECILIA N MBEWE, CLERK OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF  
ZAMBIA AND CHAIRPERSON OF SoCATT AFRICA REGION**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Steering Committee of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SoCATT) Africa held its executive meeting on Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2019, at Avani Victoria Falls Resort in Livingstone, Zambia. The main objectives of the meeting as indicated on the adopted Agenda included:

- (i) Review of performance of SoCATT, Africa Strategic Plan 2015-2020;
- (ii) Finances of SoCATT (Payment and increase of annual subscriptions); and
- (iii) Amendment of rules of the SoCATT

The SC deliberated on the above agenda items and resolved as follows:

## **2.0 RESOLUTIONS OF SoCATT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN LIVINGSTONE, ZAMBIA, ON 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2019**

### **2.1 Submission of SoCATT Reports To CPA Africa Region Executive Committee**

The meeting extensively discussed the practice of submitting reports to CPA Africa Region Executive Committee (EXCO). In this regard, the meeting was informed that CPA Africa Region (CPA) rules and guidelines were silent on mandatory submission of reports to the EXCO.

The meeting resolved that since the Society was not obliged to submit reports, the submission of reports would only be for the information of EXCO, and not for approval.

### **2.2 SoCATT Finances**

#### **2.2.1 Perceived Difficulty in Accessing SoCATT Africa Funds and Proposal to Open Separate SoCATT Bank Account managed by CPA Africa Region Secretariat**

The Chairperson informed the meeting that in April 2019, she had an engagement with the CPA Regional Secretary regarding the perceived challenges in accessing SoCATT funds, and the need to open a separate SoCATT account. During the engagement, the Regional Secretary clarified that the Regional Secretariat was only a custodian of SoCATT funds and that the funds of SoCATT could easily be accessed by ensuring that requests for release of funds followed laid down procedures.

Accordingly, the Chairperson urged members to ensure that the following laid down procedure for requesting for funds were adhered to:

- i. make requests for funds through the SoCATT Africa chairperson;
- ii. state the purpose and activities for the requested funds;
- iii. indicate the amount required;
- iv. Indicate which item in the SoCATT Africa approved budget should the amount be drawn from; and
- v. state the receiving bank account of the Parliament where funds should be transferred to.

Following the guidance from the Regional Secretary and the Chairperson SoCATT Africa Region on the matter, the meeting resolved that there was no need for SoCATT to open a separate account for its finances and anticipated to have no challenges in accessing funds from the CPA Africa Region Secretariat.

## **2.3 Innovative Funding Models and Annual Subscriptions**

### **2.3.1 Increase in Annual Subscriptions**

The Chairperson informed the meeting that due to the ambitious programmes of SoCATT and other economic factors such as high inflation and exchange rates and non-payment of subscriptions by some members, relying on SoCATT funds alone to implement the programmes of the Society was not feasible. It was therefore agreed, in principle, that the Society would have to increase its annual subscriptions to enable it collect more funds from subscriptions to implement its programmes.

However, the meeting deferred the determination of the amount and effective date for the new subscription fees to the next SoCATT Africa Region SC and AGM meetings scheduled for August, 2019 in Tanzania.

The meeting also resolved that there was need to conduct an income/ expenditure analysis which would guide the decision to adjust the subscription fees upwards.

### **2.3.2 Subscription Payment Debtor's list**

The meeting discussed extensively the inability of some members to pay their subscription fees. Members expressed concerns on the quantum of outstanding subscription fees standing in the names of some Nigeria sub-branches.

The meeting resolved that there was need to continue encouraging and reminding members to pay subscription fees, through phone calls, emails and visits by the SoCATT Africa Chairperson and CPA Africa Treasurer to member Parliaments, especially those who have not been paying for years.

In this regard, the Regional Secretary assured the meeting that CPA Africa Region Secretariat would facilitate logistics for the Chairperson of SoCATT Africa to visit Nigeria to engage the sub branches on the activities of the Society and the need for the sub-branches to pay their subscription fees.

### **2.3.3 Payment of SoCATT Africa Observer Fees**

The meeting considered the introduction of SoCATT observer fees at SoCATT Professional Development Seminars and other SoCATT conferences as an innovative way of raising more funds for the Society. It was noted that many branches and sub branches are often prepared to bring in more delegates and participants to conferences and meetings but are restrained by the delegates/participants entitlement set by the host branch. It was therefore observed that branches who desire to nominate more than the number of delegates the branch is entitled should be permitted to do so at a fee.

The meeting agreed to the proposal, however, the modalities of how observer fees would be operationalised were deferred to the next SC and AGM scheduled for August, 2019.

It was further agreed that observer fees would be shared between SoCATT and the host parliament on a percentage to be agreed at the next meeting.

### **2.4 Establishment of a Permanent SoCATT Secretariat**

The meeting discussed the need for the establishment of a permanent SoCATT Secretariat with dedicated staff to help retain institutional memory, manage and implement the activities of the Society. It was observed that changes associated with change of leadership may not augur well for continuity in planning and retention of institutional memory.

The meeting resolved to have a hybrid system of Secretariat with at least one permanent representative from each sub region, a focal point person from within the CPA Africa Regional Secretariat and a local staff constituting the local Secretariat Staff from the Parliament of the incumbent Chairperson.

## **2.5 Publication of Second Edition of SoCATT Journal**

The meeting accepted apologies from Ms Renee Scott, a Member of the SoCATT Technical Team on the inability of the Chairman of the Editorial Board, Mr. Leonard Mofokeng to attend the meeting. She apprised the meeting that papers for publication were selected by the Team in Namibia, and that a final meeting of the Team will be held in South Africa in due course to finalise the papers and all other arrangements for publication. She assured the meeting that the Journal should be ready for distribution at the next meeting of the Society in August, 2019.

The meeting observed that the guideline for submission of papers for publication in the Journal by writers was not well circulated amongst the various parliaments. Accordingly, the meeting directed the Team to circulate widely to all parliaments the guidelines, and also write under the hand of the Chairman of the Editorial Board requesting papers from staff of Parliaments before the next publication.

In addition, the meeting resolved that members of staff especially from the Research Department should be encouraged to submit papers for publication in the Journal.

The Parliament of Zambia nominated Mr. Julius Kampamba to the Editorial Board of the Journal.

## **2.6 Amendment of Rules of the Society**

Members observed that Rule 2 of the Society's rules on the categories of staff who qualify as members of SoCATT should be broadened to accommodate senior parliamentary officers who provide direct technical support to Parliament. The meeting resolved that a draft text of the amendment should be proposed and circulated in compliance with the rules of the Society for consideration by the SC and the AGM in the next meeting.

## **2.7 Submission of Sub-Regional Reports**

The Meeting received oral sub-regional reports from the representatives of the sub-regions.

The meeting resolved that all sub-regional reports delivered orally should be submitted in writing to the Secretariat.

## **2.8 Consideration of 2020 Budget of SoCATT**

The meeting deliberated on the proposed budget of the Society for 2020. The SC advised the Technical Team to budget for all items including budget items that respective parliaments may absorb.

### **3.0 OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **3.1 Update on CPA International Affairs**

The Assistant Regional Secretary apprised the meeting on the outcome of CPA International EXCO meeting held in Ottawa, Canada and the matters arising from the decisions of that meeting on the change of status of CPA from Charity to International Organisation and the tenure of the current Secretary General of the CPA international.

Pursuant to the decision of the CPA Africa on the matters arising from the Canada Meeting, the Assistant Regional Secretary, indicated that draft Message of solidarity requested in respect of the change of status will be circulated to all Member Parliaments.

The meeting also resolved to stand by the decision of the CPA Africa Region not to support the extension of the tenure of the current Secretary General of CPA International.

#### **3.2 Capacity Building**

The Chairperson noted that continuous capacity building of Members and staff of Parliament was critical for the achievement of Parliament's objectives. It was resolved that benchmarking visits among Parliaments should be encouraged.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

There being no other matter for discussion, the meeting was adjourned to Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2019.