

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA



PARLIAMENT OF TANZANIA

**OFFICIAL OPENING SPEECH BY RT. HON. DR. TULIA ACKSON, MP,
SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF TANZANIA, DURING
THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF SENSITIZATION WORKSHOP TO
COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP) AFRICA
REGION ON 20TH OCTOBER 2022 AT RAMADA RESORT,
DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA**

“WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN LEADERSHIP AND POLITICS”

OCTOBER, 2022

Rt. Hon. Dr. Zainab Gimba, MP.
**Chairperson,
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians
(International and Africa Region)**

Hon. Kayanga Baroda Watongola, MP.
**Vice Chairperson,
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Africa Region;**

Hon. Ntombi Mekgwe,
**Treasurer,
CPA Africa Region**

Stephen Twigg, MP.
**Secretary General,
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association International;**

Madame Hodan Addou,
UN Women Country Representative;

**Members of the Steering Committee,
CWP Africa Region;**

Hon. Members of Parliament;

Distinguished Delegates;

Members of the Press;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

A VERY GOOD MORNING TO YOU ALL!

It is my great honour and pleasure to be invited today to this important gathering among great women from around Africa to officiate this Sensitization Workshop of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) under the Theme **“WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN LEADERSHIP AND POLITICS”**.

First and foremost, please allow me to welcome you to Tanzania - the land of Mount Kilimanjaro, the Serengeti National Park, and the Spice Islands of Zanzibar. I especially welcome you to Dar es Salaam, the largest and most developed commercial city in Tanzania.

I am aware that the last physical CWP seminar was held in 2019 in the City of Arusha, located in the Northern part of Tanzania. In this regard, I must say that Tanzania is lucky to have hosted two physical CWP seminars consecutively, and we thank the Steering Committee of CWP for entrusting us with such a noble task.

I am informed that some of you have travelled long distances to come and participate in this important workshop, including the Secretary General, who has travelled all the way from the United Kingdom. I must say that your presence here gives me immense pleasure, and I am immensely inspired by the commitment you have demonstrated towards the political emancipation of women.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate Hon. Dr Zainab Gimba, MP. (Nigeria), for being elected to the position of Chairperson of CWP International during the CWP Business meeting held in the margin of the 65th CPC in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, in August 2022. We, the women of the 19 Commonwealth countries in Africa, are counting on you to represent our best interests.

I sincerely hope you will create your legacy by championing women's causes as you strengthen this important organ of CPA. I wish you all the best in your new role.

Honourable Members, Distinguished Guests,

Having perused your program, I understand that you have gathered here to share your achievements as women MPs while exploring the challenges facing women in political participation and how they can be addressed. I am also aware that, during this workshop, you will discuss the impact of increased women's representation in Parliaments.

Let me emphasize that while the impact of an increase in the number of women in Parliaments cannot be underestimated, the focus should now be on how women MPs can have meaningful participation and visible contributions, thereby making a difference for women and girls as well as the entire society.

Ladies and Distinguished Guests,

Sustainable Goal No 5 acknowledges that gender equality is necessary for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Notably, around the globe, there has been progress over the last decade where more girls are going to schools, and more women are serving in Parliament and leadership positions, amongst others. Despite these gains, Women continue to be underrepresented at all levels of political leadership. For instance, amongst the 19 Speakers of the National Parliaments of CPA Africa Region, 7 are women, which is equivalent to 36.8%.

Among the 19 National Parliaments of CPA Africa Region, it is only one Parliament (Rwanda) whose composition of women MPs has surpassed 50%, three Branches (South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique) surpassed 40%, and other three branches (Tanzania, Cameroon and Uganda) surpassed 30%. The composition of women MPs in the remaining 12 Branches is still below the threshold of 30%, with Gambia and Nigeria having a composition of less than 10% of Women MPs. With this reality on the ground, it is evident that achieving gender parity in the political arena is still a farfetched milestone.

I should, however, acknowledge that in some countries, including Tanzania, legislated quotas have successfully increased the number of women in Parliaments. However, one can argue that the use of quotas comes with a stigma that women who enter Parliament through these mechanisms may be treated differently by other Parliamentarians and sometimes the society.

Ladies and Distinguished Guests,

Women's equal participation in politics and leadership is essential to sustainable development. In 2005, while addressing the United Nations.... Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, said:

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”

I urge my fellow women to redouble our efforts to increase the number of women in Parliaments and strive for leadership positions that amplify women's voices. Increasing the number of Women in Parliaments and strengthening their leadership role improve the life of a society and give elected bodies more trust and credibility while ensuring that decision-makers have a more robust understanding of the people they represent.

Ladies and Distinguished Guests,

In Tanzania, I must say, Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan, the first female President of the United Republic of Tanzania, is committed to this agenda. While addressing the UN General Assembly’s 76th session in September 2021, she spoke at length on gender equality, a cause she keenly advocates.

“As the first female President in the history of my country, the burden of expectation to deliver gender equality is heavier on my shoulders. Being passionate about gender equality is not sufficient, and as such, my government is reviewing policy and legal frameworks to come up with actionable and measurable plans to ensure the economic empowerment of women and other aspects of gender equality and gender parity”

Since she came into power in March 2021, H.E Samia Suluhu Hassan has gained more trust and credibility by breaking the gender glass ceiling in appointing women to senior government positions. Evidently, in September 2021, Her Excellency appointed Hon. Stergomena Tax as Defense Minister, making her the first woman to hold a critical portfolio since the country's Independence. Further, in 2021, Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan appointed Ms. Nanelwa Mwihambi, *ndc*, as Clerk of the Parliament, making her the first woman to hold the position in the history of the Parliament.

Equally impressive is the Legislative's trust towards women in senior positions. In the CPA Africa Region, with 19 Countries, Tanzania is among the 7 Countries with Female Speakers. This makes me one of the 63 Women out of 190 Speakers worldwide. This is a tremendous honour for me, and I am glad to carry this enormous task on behalf of all women and men.

More has been done to increase the number of women in Tanzania: Out of 25 Ministers, 9 are women. This makes the women's representation in Cabinet 36%, which is higher than in many countries. In the Judiciary, which in most countries is still considered a male-dominated jurisdiction, out of 97 judges of the High Court, 36 are women. Moreover, 10 out of 26 judges of the court of appeal are women. Overall, women make up 37.4% of all Judges in the country, which is an increase of 5.6% compared to 2019. Studies have demonstrated that, as more women are elected to office, there is a corollary increase in delivering better policy, legislation and services to others.

Ladies and Distinguished Guests,

We all know that it is not easy. Women are particularly vulnerable during campaign periods, which can become 'hunting season' for women candidates. Moreover, many women elected to public offices endure increasing levels of violence, harassment and abuse, specifically designed to undermine and threaten them because of their gender. I am very proud of all the women who have faced such challenges and weathered the storm of political leadership.

A recent Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) report indicated that despite their increasing presence in many Parliaments, women still face numerous obstacles to being treated as equals in politics. Women often face preconceived notions of how they should look, speak and behave. By engaging in politics, women often challenge traditional roles and prompt a redistribution of power away from its traditionally male base.

In many cases, the harassment and abuse of elected women remain under-reported, understudied and frequently invisible. Undoubtedly, this has a profoundly negative impact on the ability of any woman MPs to carry out their responsibilities effectively, and as a result, more women are deterred from entering politics.

Ladies and Distinguished Guests,

I must stress that being a woman in Politics and leadership is a challenging task. However, no matter how difficult, we must know it is worth it. We should continue to use our position as Women MPs to amplify the work and achievement of other women to encourage more women to enter politics and ultimately bring sustainable development to our societies.

Honourable Members,

The Former United Nations Secretary Ban Ki-moon once noted:

“Women hold up more than half the sky and represent much of the world's unrealized potential. They are educators. They raise the children. They hold families together and increasingly drive economies. They are natural leaders, and we need their full engagement in Government, business and civil society.”

Generally, society expects more from women leaders. It is a unique position we find ourselves in as we struggle to find our way towards meaningful participation in leadership positions. Therefore, I hope this workshop will allow you to firm up strategies for increasing the number of women with visible contributions in leadership positions and decision-making bodies.

I am aware that in this workshop, you will discuss and share ideas on different areas. It is my sincere hope that at the end of this workshop, you will be able to: -

1. Identify specific factors that facilitate the success of women in attaining political leadership positions.
2. Ascertain strategies for increasing the number of women MPs and meaningful representation.
3. Solicit views on how women can be better prepared for political leadership.
4. Come up with suggestions to address women's apathy to participate in politics.
5. Discuss the way forward on all bottlenecks for women's meaningful participation in politics.
6. Discuss more policy-driven strategies /policies which can be adopted to create awareness in our societies on the importance of women in Political leadership.

Let us take it as a challenge to not only aim at increasing women's representation in Parliament but also at making their contributions more meaningful when they are in Parliament.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Africa Regional Secretariat under the leadership of Ms. Neneh Muihambi, *ndc* and her team for their tireless efforts in coordinating CPA programmes, including those of CWP Africa Region.

Having said that, it is my honour to declare this Workshop officially opened, and I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you so much for your kind attention

Asanteni sana!