



CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS & HEADS OF AFRICAN PARLIAMENTS (CoSAP)
'Enhancing Africa's Post-COVID Economic Recovery Through Parliamentary Leadership'

Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria
Monday 9th – Tuesday 10th May 2022

COMMUNIQUÉ

INTRODUCTION

1. The Conference of Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments (CoSAP) was initiated by Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila, the Speaker, House of Representatives (Nigeria) and fellow African Speakers: Rt. Hon. Tadesse Chafo (Ethiopia); Rt. Hon. Justin Muturi (Kenya); Rt. Hon. Donatille Mukabalisa (Rwanda); Rt. Hon. Moustapha Niasse (Senegal); and former Speakers, Rt. Hon. Mike Oquaye (Ghana); and Rt. Hon. Thando Modise (South Africa).
2. CoSAP aims to facilitate increased *deliberation, collaboration and cooperation* between Speakers, Heads of Parliaments and National Assemblies across Africa to address common challenges, devise joint solutions and mobilise collective action to advance Africa's development. It was officially launched on 12th October 2020, after three key meetings between founding Speakers, which took place on 17th August 2020, 17th September 2020 and 12th October 2020.



3. Following the launch of CoSAP, the founding members initiated the African Speakers' Debt Cancellation Campaign Initiative (DCCI). DCCI was established as a cohesive pan-African parliamentary voice to advocate for and support the global campaign for Africa's debt cancellation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also seeks to provide effective oversight regarding local and international policy interventions in combating the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure accountability in public financial management on the continent.

CONTEXT

4. As Africa struggles to recover from the multifaceted effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the damage that it has wrought on her societies and economies, CoSAP recognises the crucial role that parliamentarians play as custodians of Africa's respective democracies. As such, CoSAP is committed to ensuring that Africa's parliamentary leadership addresses these challenges in a concerted and effective manner.
5. This informed the organisation of the first in-person CoSAP gathering of Africa's parliamentary leaders under an indigenous pan-African platform of Speakers and Heads of Parliaments between the 9th & 10th of May 2022 at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria. The overarching theme of this inaugural CoSAP is *"Enhancing Africa's Post-COVID Economic Recovery Through Parliamentary Leadership."*



6. This inaugural CoSAP in-person gathering has sought to:
- a) collaboratively explore measures for catalysing an inclusive and sustainable economic recovery process for African countries in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - b) provide a platform for discussion, dialogue and action by Speakers and Heads of African parliaments to advocate for more effective approaches in Africa's public financial and economic management; and
 - c) develop collaborative strategies for tackling related issues of common concern and devise legislative interventions and solutions on a wider continental scale

OPENING CEREMONY

7. The opening ceremony served as a platform to introduce the programme theme and for invited special guests to set the context, highlight expectations, articulate aspirations and exhort all stakeholders to take critical action. It opened with a Welcome Address from the host and convener, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila, Speaker, House of Representatives, Federal Republic of Nigeria and an Opening Address by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, H.E President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, represented by the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, GCON, SAN.
8. The Keynote Address was delivered by the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Dr. Akinwunmi Adesina. He congratulated CoSAP



for their vision and leadership, adding that the conference should be focused on optimising the legislature's response to the multifaceted challenges posed by COVID-19 and also harnessing the opportunities that exist. He charged the Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present to emerge from the conference with concrete solutions and legislative interventions in key areas such as healthcare, food security, economic growth and regional trade.

9. There were also goodwill messages from several key stakeholders, including the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union (APU) and Speaker of the National Assembly of Djibouti, Rt. Hon. Mohamed Ali Houmed; Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Jarvis Matiya; and a pre-recorded goodwill message from the Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Martin Chungong.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS/PLENARY SESSIONS

10. The panel discussions and plenary sessions were framed around the following topics:
 - a) Africa's Public Financial Management in the COVID-19 Era: *Challenges, Opportunities & Way Forward*
 - b) Africa's Debt Trap: *Implications, Imperatives & Impact in the COVID-19 Era*



- c) National Budgeting & Effective Legislative Oversight in the COVID-19 Era
- d) Financing Africa's Pandemic Response: *Legislative Imperatives & Interventions*
- e) Gender Inclusive Budgeting & Policy Planning in the COVID-19 Era and;
- f) Investing in Human Capital Development: *Legislative Priorities in the COVID-19 Era.*

11. *Resource persons* that provided overview presentations were: Dr. Shubham Chaudhuri (Country Director, World Bank Nigeria); Dr. Ari Aisen (Country Director for Nigeria, International Monetary Fund (IMF); Dr. Lamin Barrow (Country Representative for Nigeria, African Development Bank (AfDB); Dr. Walter Kazadi Mulombo (Country Representative, World Health Organization (WHO); Ms. Beatrice Eyong (UN Women Country Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS); and Mohamed Yahya (Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

12. *Facilitators* of panel discussions were Ifeanyi Peters Ugwuoke (National Programme Manager, FCDO PERL-ARC); Dr. Folashade Soulé (Senior Research Associate, Global Economic Governance Programme, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford); John Mutu (Deputy National Team Lead, DFID Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL); Dr. Ifeanyi Nsofor (Senior Vice President for Africa, Human Health Education and Research Foundation); Adaora Onyechere (Head, Women Affairs and Gender



Cluster Committee, African Union ECOSOCC Nigeria); and Yosolaoluwa Akinbi (Coordinator, Core Working Group on Human Capital Development).

CoSAP OBSERVATIONS & RESOLUTIONS

13. The participating Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments at CoSAP shared some observations and came to the following resolutions:

- I. **African Parliaments Must Take Decisive Action to End Unconstitutional Overthrow of Governments in Africa:** There has been an increase in the unconstitutional overthrow of democratic governments on the continent, and this constitutes a clear and present danger to our fragile democracies. Although all member states of the African Union do not support these coups, little effective, decisive and punitive action towards mitigation has been taken. Tackling and ending this scourge requires collective agreement, solidarity across all African parliaments and bold action to deter *coup d'états* across the continent. All CoSAP members must speak with one voice and collectively take concerted action to end these threats to our democracies.

Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present resolved the need to be firm and stand together to resist military coups in all parts of the continent, while collectively advocating for more punitive measures as a deterrent and consequence. An agreement not to recognise regimes that did not emerge from the ballot box was also discussed.



II. **Africa's Rising Debt Must be Stemmed Through More Effective Parliamentary Oversight:** As a result of the impact of COVID-19 on economic productivity and government revenues, most African countries are currently struggling to service debts and are at high risk of debt distress and defaults, further threatening their economic growth prospects. African countries that are struggling to provide essential services in health, education and employment cannot be expected to deploy the little resources they have left to service debts from wealthier nations. Having to choose between saving lives and servicing debts is morally questionable. Thus, international lenders must factor in the reality of the impact of COVID-19 on African economies. Debt cancellation should be considered, while in the same vein, African countries must exercise more caution before taking loans from creditors and also be more frugal and transparent in spending. Parliamentary leaders today should not superintend over the bequeathing of debts to posterity tomorrow. They must intervene and stem the tide of Africa's rising debt.

Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African parliaments present resolved to insist on more effective debt management frameworks and possibly, legislation mandating its implementation, demanding a) regular publication of public debt reports; b) requirement of parliamentary approval prior to all borrowing; c) setting of borrowing ceilings and; d) demanding properly structured spending and project



implementation plans. They also resolved to collectively advocate for debt cancellation, which will enable African countries to invest more revenue towards social protection programmes. They further pledged to ensure more effective oversight regarding the spending of funds from loans through better public financial management in their respective countries.

III. **Reliance on External Creditors and Vulnerability to External Shocks**

Must be Mitigated: Africa's co-dependent reliance on donors and international financial institutions for funding its development has become unhealthy. The COVID-19 pandemic has also revealed the vulnerability of African countries to external shocks, which have threatened their financial stability, health system functionality, infrastructural development, and created governance failures. Africa must strive to stand on its own feet by innovatively harnessing its own resources for its development and also for its insulation from external shocks and economic vulnerability.

Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present resolved to create legislation supporting the accelerated mobilisation of domestic revenues by helping to create a more inclusive and enabling environment for enhanced intra-African economic productivity, job creation, regional trade through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and providing accessible capital for MSMEs. Expanding tax bases by providing more tax



incentives, improving compliance strategies, and harnessing technological innovation and automation were also proposed.

- IV. **The Role & Powers of the Legislative Arm of Government Must be Safeguarded and Strengthened:** In some countries, the legislature has increasingly been considered a lesser arm of government subservient to the Executive, incorrect as this may be. This has affected the legislature's ability to carry out its oversight activities and to ensure effective representation of the citizenry. Concerted efforts are needed to strengthen and safeguard the powers of the legislative arm of government across the African continent.

Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present resolved that member countries will ensure that the legislature's capacity is built to more effectively assert its role and carry out its constitutional functions, particularly through increased solidarity amongst parliamentary leaders as facilitated through CoSAP. More intra-African parliamentary exchange programmes and peer-to-peer learning between parliaments were proposed.

- V. **Africa Must Build the Capacity to Feed itself by Tackling Food Insecurity:** It was also noted that Africa currently lacks the productive capacity to meet its food demands and is highly dependent on agricultural imports, as evidenced by the recent Russia-Ukraine



conflict and its effect on Africa's food security. This exposes the continent to acute food shortages, and a continent that cannot feed itself cannot lead itself. Ensuring legislation that prioritises agricultural and wider sustainable food production across Africa is urgently required.

Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present resolved to foster agricultural productivity by prioritising legislation to enhance farmers' access to inputs and credit, as well as exploring how to boost critical sectors in the agricultural supply chain.

- VI. **Human Capital Development Must Be a Parliamentary Priority:** The pandemic has caused major disruption to human capital development, especially in healthcare, education and labour force productivity. However, Africa's greatest asset is its people. As such, every effort has to be made to ensure that legislative priorities create an enabling environment for human capital development and ensure there is adequate budgetary allocation as well as policy attention by the executive arm of government to address this challenge.

Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present resolved to prioritise and accelerate investments in human capital development, focusing on key areas such as healthcare, education, skills development and labour force participation. They also resolved to support the expansion of social protection and safety nets to



achieve equitable growth through legislative interventions that cater to the needs of the poorest and weakest in society.

- VII. **Inclusive Budgeting and Policy Planning are Key for Building a Continent that Caters for All:** COVID-19 had a far more significant impact on women across the continent, both at formal and informal levels, with job losses for several in the informal sector. Also, people living with disabilities and other marginalised groups have been severely challenged by its multifaceted impacts, as well as largely excluded from COVID-19 interventions. Adequate legislative and policy attention has not been paid to address this inordinate impact, and Africa's Speakers need to ensure that economic recovery works for all in society without excluding the most vulnerable groups.

Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present resolved to put concrete legislation in place that will ensure all budgeting and policy planning processes factor in and prioritise addressing the needs of women, youth, and people living with disabilities and ensure they are provided with the same opportunities as all citizens. They also applauded and resolved to consider and implement the disability inclusion initiative introduced by the Speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila.

- VIII. **Regional Trade and Integration Must be Leveraged in Post-pandemic Recovery:** Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present agreed



that regional trade and integration are crucial for unleashing Africa's economic capacity, and that the implementation of AfCFTA is key to developing competitive regional and global value chains.

Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present resolved to drive regional trade and integration through legislation that promotes the above, particularly the implementation of the AfCFTA.

IX. Enabling Legislative Environment for Public-Private Partnerships

Must be Created: Governments cannot do everything alone and should not do everything alone. Speakers at CoSAP noted that there are competencies, capabilities and resources within the private sector that governments can tap into to bolster economic development and also respond to other pressing social needs such as housing, infrastructure, healthcare, educational facilities, etc.

Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present resolved to work with the Executive to ensure that bureaucratic processes that stifle public-private partnerships are reduced and, where possible, removed totally to enhance economic growth across the continent.

X. The Capacity and Effectiveness of African Inter-parliamentary

Institutions Must Be Bolstered: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present reaffirmed the critical role parliaments play



across Africa as bastions of democracy, advocates of the people and catalysts for development. However, the capacity and effectiveness of the continent's inter-parliamentary institutions have been weakened and their impact reduced, at a time when needed the most. The need to reverse this trend was noted as key and expedient.

Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present resolved to foster inter-parliamentary exchange and encourage existing inter-parliamentary institutions such as the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) to rise to the responsibility of fostering enhanced inter-parliamentary cooperation by, for example, ensuring that it regularly sits to address pressing issues across the continent in accordance with its constitution, and make decisions that align with the spirit and letter of the purpose for which it was created in Africa's interest. Africa urgently needs its interparliamentary institutions like PAP, the African Parliamentary Union (APU) and others, at this crucial time in its history. CoSAP will seek to complement and support these institutions as a key priority.

- XI. **CoSAP Approved as a Standing Conference:** It was resolved that in the interim, CoSAP should function as a Standing Conference while the modalities of its structures, processes and funding are worked out by its Technical Working Group (TWG), which has now been expanded to cover all participating countries.



Key Resolution: Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments present charged the Technical Working Group (TWG) with the responsibility for developing and presenting recommendations for consideration at the next Executive Session on how CoSAP can operate optimally and be structured to achieve its goals. The CoSAP-TWG will report to the Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments by 28th July 2022, after which they will convene another meeting to agree on next steps.

14. Agreed to this day in Abuja, Nigeria, on 10th May 2022, at the National Assembly Complex by the following participating Speakers and Heads of African Parliaments:

1. Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila, Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Nigeria (Convener)

2. Rt. Hon. Ibrahim Boughali, Président of the National People's
Assembly, **Algeria**

3. Rt. Hon. Lawson Tabot Bakia, Member of Parliament, **Cameroon**,
representing the Speaker of the National Assembly, **Rt. Hon. Cavayé
Yéguié Djibril**



4. **Rt. Hon. Mohamed Ali Houmed**, Speaker of the National Assembly,
Djibouti

5. **Rt. Hon. Bonginkosi Humphrey Madala Mhlanga**, Deputy Speaker,
Parliament of the **Kingdom of Eswatini**, representing the Speaker, **Rt.
Hon. Petros Mavimbela**

6. **Rt. Hon. Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin**, Speaker of the Parliament,
Ghana

7. **Rt. Hon. Madalitso Kwaderanji Kazombo**, First Deputy Speaker,
Malawi representing the Speaker, **Rt. Hon Catherine Gotani Hara**

8. **Rt. Hon. Donatille Mukabalisa**, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies,
Rwanda

9. **Rt. Hon. Hamma Salama Ali Salim**, President of the Saharawi National
Council, **Saharawi**



10. Rt. Hon. Delfim Neves, Speaker of the National Assembly, **Sao Tome & Principe**

11. Rt. Hon. Abdou Mbou, Honorable Députe de l'Assemblée Nationale, **Senegal**, representing the Speaker of the National Assembly, **Rt. Hon. Moustapha Niasse**

12. Rt. Hon. Nosiviwe Noluthando Mapisa-Nqakula, Speaker of the National Assembly, **South Africa**

13. Rt. Hon. Jemma Nunu Kumba, Speaker of Parliament, **South Sudan**

14. Rt. Hon. Jacob Francis Nzwidamililo Mudenda, Speaker of the National Assembly, **Zimbabwe**

