



CPA News

Friday 30 July 2010

4th Edition



Editorial Team

Editor: Momelezi Kula
Writers: Sakhile Mokoena
Abel Mputing
Thulile Nkambule
Sub editor: Oswald Gibson
Photographer: Mlandeli Puzi
Layout and design: Muzi Goodwill Xulu

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of CPA Africa Region or Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature.

Publisher

Published by the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature

Copyright

© Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature 2010.



Editorial



Editor, Momelezi Kula.

The ability of some African countries to prudently spend their way out of trouble during the global recession, dealing with the effects of teen pregnancies and legislating on termination of pregnancy and other socio-economic issues impactting on the democratisation of Africa, have come up for debate at Mbombela in Mpumalanga, Mozambique's neighbour and South Africa's true "garden province".

Ensuring that girls return to complete their education after a pregnancy has a multiplier effect on the economy, it was stated. Besides, all young people should have the right to education, in terms of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Termination of pregnancy is legal in some member countries, but not in others, and members suggested lobbying to make abortion safe and legal. But there is no "magic bullet" to halt teen pregnancies, was the conclusion.

It is common cause that the global depression was caused by overheated borrowing and bad debts, which started in the free-wheeling USA and spread rapidly to the rest of the closely-connected economies of the northern hemisphere. Sound fiscal and monetary practice and cool heads have been useful in helping to keep some of the peoples of Africa out of this mess, as much as possible, says the CPA Africa Region. Being a "long-haul" destination often works against us, but in this case it has to an extent worked to our advantage. African countries rich in sought-after natural resources have been luckier than others, and a resourceful few have even been able to use the "lean years" to their advantage, building schools, hospitals and roads: thereby minimising local job losses. While tourism has begun to suffer in Africa, apart from "one-offs" like the World Cup, it has mostly been case of slower growth, with pockets of attrition. Not shedding jobs is the crux, particularly in but not limited to industrialised countries, given the keenly-felt need for development in the first years of the new millennium. Protecting regional interests, is where the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Africa Region comes in. The CPA's Africa Region is in fine fettle. It is determined to form a united front against poverty, however it may be caused, and to assist others who also are under-developed and marginalised in Africa.

In this issue we feature the voice of the MPs at this Conference. They tell us how and what they feel should be done. We already know why- because they care for democracy, want to share its benefits and goals and are determined to work out how best to do this, in unison.

RIDING THE WAVE



Ms Alfreda Mwamba of Zambia

African countries responded in various ways to the global recession. Speakers at the CPA Africa Region Conference in Mbombela, Mpumalanga, said most economies on the continent experienced sharp exchange rate depreciations against the world's big currencies, reflecting weaker economies and resulting in big reductions in profits. This led to the closure of companies and massive loss of employment, according to Ms Alfreda Mwamba of Zambia, in her paper entitled "How effectively African countries responded to the global financial crisis."

She said the crisis had sharply reversed the commendable recent economic gains recorded in Africa: "The economic crisis undermined significant progress made in the years prior to the crisis. It dampened the growth prospects of the continent by diminishing trade opportunities, access to finance, migrant remittances and foreign direct investment."

Disrupting the equilibrium had caused African currencies to drop, triggering rapid depreciation and widespread declines in stock market prices. Foreign investors in securities and equities sold off large parts of their holdings. What made things worse was the manner in which some countries responded.

Zambia's response to the global financial crisis was a case study of how the negative impact could be cushioned, depending on the country's resources.

"The government has put in place appropriate fiscal and monetary policy measure to mitigate its effects. These measures enabled the country to record a positive economic growth of 6.3% in 2009, in spite of the crisis. The Zambian government was therefore successful in containing the negative effects of the global economic crisis."

New fiscal measures were the first wall to be thrown

into place. "The government realised that the mining sector was the most vulnerable to the effects of the global economic crisis and it had the biggest potential to drag down the rest of the economy," she said.

In the end, the high world price of copper and other mineral exports helped Zambia emerge relatively unscathed by the crisis, compared with its African counterparts. Ms Cletus Apul Avoka of Ghana, who seconded the adoption of Ms Mwamba's paper, said her own country had adopted policy changes to buffer the impact.

"In view of the crisis, some policy measures were taken by Ghana which included interest rate reductions, recapitalization of financial institutions, increasing liquidity to banks and firms, fiscal stimulus packages, trade policy changes and regulatory reforms, to curb the effects of the crisis."

But their main strategy was to enforce fiscal discipline. "This led to a significant reduction in unproductive recurrent expenditure and improved generation of revenue. This was pursued within the process of monitoring and evaluating all the activities of Ministers, departments and agencies, to ensure that government policies were effectively implemented, and that objectives and set targets were achieved," she said.

Back to school



Mr David Were of Kenya

Parliamentarians should help combat unsafe abortions by teenagers and ensure that young girls return safely to school after pregnancy. The legislators can do this by developing policies that allow adolescent mothers to continue their education, after taking maternity breaks.

This was suggested during a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Africa Region discussion on the “Role of Parliaments in addressing teenage pregnancies, their return to school and abortion in Africa.”

Kenya’s Mr David Were said one of the most cost-effective interventions by legislators to get teenage mothers back to school, was to introduce more flexible school policies.

“The current tendency of a teacher-centred approach must be replaced by a pupil-centred approach, to make the classroom atmosphere more democratic and conducive to learning,” he said.

Members of Parliament could also encourage their Executives to develop and implement programmes to provide access to sexuality and reproductive health services, including family planning, contraception and safe abortion services.

Enhancing young people’s access to information on sexuality and reproductive health and appropriate services was essential in reducing unwanted adolescent pregnancies and unsafe abortions.

Ms Yvonne Makume of South Africa, where termination of pregnancy is legal, said her country’s liberal policy of allowing pregnant girls to remain in school and to return to school afterwards, protected the teen mother both in terms of keeping up her education and delaying her second pregnancy. She believed instituting strategies to retain girls in school by addressing both financial and school performance aspects, and ensuring early return post-pregnancy, could be the most effective social protection that the education system could offer in terms of early pregnancy.

“When learners drop out of school, concerted efforts are required to re-enrol them in school or in alternative systems of education,” she said.

When they were denied access to school, young girls and boys needed to be empowered about their right to education, and to demand it.

“Parliament and governments must ensure that teachers and fellow learners must ‘buy into’ the policy to reduce the stigma that often turns mothers away from the doors of learning,” she said.



Ms Yvonne Makume of South Africa

SOCIETY OF CLERKS GETS SET



Clerks: Mr Fairchild Chibomba, Mr Emmanuel Ogele and Mr Rolson Moropa

“The Society of Clerks Constitution has come into existence today and we must congratulate ourselves on this achievement.” With these words, the outgoing Chairperson of Society of Clerks, Mr Emmanuel Ogele of Riverside Nigeria, signalled that after two days of deliberation the Constitution of the Society of Clerks had been adopted at Mbombela.

He said members of the Society of Clerks should be proud of their product, being able to craft a constitution. The body had also taken the big step of appointing someone to look after its affairs. Mr Rolson Moropa, the new Chairperson of the Society of Clerks, said the first meeting of the Society of Clerks would be held in Ghana, where an action plan would be worked out.

Mr Moropa asked members to influence their Speakers to host meetings of the Society of Clerks meetings and to find a venue for the 42nd Conference of the CPA Africa Region. He also suggested that a vice-Chairperson be appointed to assist him in running the affairs of the society. “I congratulate the outgoing chairperson for his wonderful work, and I promise that we will make sure that Parliaments of the association function properly,” said Mr Moropa.



Clerks: Adv ME Phindela, National Council of Provinces and Mr P Skosana of Gauteng Legislature



Clerks meeting to adopt Constitution

Seen and heard at



Ms Noxolo Ntantiso, Eastern Cape.

I was impressed by the spirit with which the need for the equitable presentation of women at our Parliament was discussed. Although we have registered some strides in this regard, many African countries are still lagging behind. They must address this by our next meeting, next year.



Mr Daniel Bockarie, Sierra Leone

The research that went into the papers was impressive: implementing such noble ideas is still a problem. The solution is for respective Parliaments to strengthen their oversight on resolutions and issues raised. The CPA has shown we must act in unison to get things done.



Ms Alfreda Mwamba, Zambia

I think the conference has been very well organised, the discussions are also very good with positive effects. We can also feel a sense of oneness: like the FIFA World Cup, the conference has united us as Africans.



Mr Bagalatiya Arone, Botswana

This is the first time I have attended a CPA conference and I think it is important as African MPs to discuss issues affecting the continent. We must use our strategic position to influence legislation in our countries, ring in the changes, and unite Africa.



Mr AK Kapere, Namibia

The conference is quite impressive, with very important topics touching on current issues like global warming and financial crisis. If it is arranged again in Mpumalanga I will return to enjoy the serenity.



Mr S Chisanga, Zambia

What I enjoyed most about the conference was the respect shown by South African citizens. The welcome was excellent. The topics that were discussed are relevant to the South African situation. We salute South Africa for organising the conference.



Mr Andre Pool, Seychelles

I am very pleased to be part of the conference, it is so well organised. I also think topics that discussed here are very relevant to our region (CPA Africa) especially the theme itself, the Democratisation of Africa and the Role of Parliaments. It is relevant not only to Seychelles but to other countries as well.



Ms Grace Mganga, Malawi

The conference has been well organised and the discussions are also very fruitful. I think many Parliaments can benefit if delegates share the information with their colleagues back home.



Mr Benjamin Ayeh, Ghana

I was very impressed by the presentations. We are indeed good in analysing our problems, but we are found wanting when we have to implement them. It's time we dealt with that seriously. It means we must lobby our government to commit themselves to the CPA's resolutions.



Mr Mcebisi Skwatsha, Western Cape

The conference consolidated Africa's position for the forthcoming CPA conference in Kenya. It also assisted in strengthening constitutional democracy on the continent to facilitate smooth transitions. Renewing the term of the current General Secretary of CPA means that for the first time an African will be allowed a second term.



Ms Olly Mlamleli, Free State

We, as South African Women, are now reaping the benefits of our sacrifices. But if we want to determine our destiny we need to be independent and break the cycle of dependence, especially in our fight against Aids. It's time for an African Fund to address Aids and poverty.

CPA Africa Region



Ms Lindiwe Maseko, Gauteng

There is maximum participation of African countries. As Africa, we are doing well, and the choice of topics are relevant to the current situation, both nationally and internationally. The issue of the 50/50 ratio in parliament must be taken seriously by African countries. I am happy because Rwanda will be joining us.



Mr David Were, Kenya

I was impressed by the papers, which were well thought out. The members participated well. But when we go back to our respective countries we must look at how to internalise what we have discussed.



Mr Clever Silavwe, Zambia

The conference showed the proud unity of purpose to ensure there is a total reign of peace, an end to civil wars and that Africa is now in control of her destiny. That is the hope and the political pride we are taking back home with us.



Mr Freddy Shea, Lesotho

The multiplying effect of Aids, the economic crisis and global warming may reverse Africa's developmental gains. But equally, they can help us to be more innovative in addressing our challenges. Exchanging views and best practices at this conference partly serves that purpose.



Mr John Steenhuisen, KwaZulu Natal

It is so nice to meet people from other countries, and to get a different perspective of their challenges and share ideas in trying to find solutions. However I would have preferred more debate on topics such as funding the fight against HIV/AIDS.



Rev Mare Yansaneh, Sierra Leone

I feel blessed to be part of it all. I was particularly interested in the discussion on climate change. We will continue to campaign for increased representation of women in the CPA and lobby the men to support this move rather than challenge it.



Ms Rebeca Kadaga, Uganda

The discussion on teenage pregnancy was very important and interesting, it brought out different aspects of different countries on the subject. Many have not ratified the Maputo protocol. For the first time we had our conference in a stadium and we all got a vuvuzela, an African invention.



Ms Mirriam Ramadwa, Limpopo

The conference has provided a platform for African parliamentarians to identify challenges in different countries and to come up with solutions to some. It also helps in strengthening relations in Africa.



Mr Mela Bem, Benue State, Nigeria

I think it is a well hosted conference, topics for discussion have a serious impact on the African continent and I hope when we go back to our Parliaments we can implement most of the resolutions adopted, to make laws that will impact positively on the lives of our people.



Ms Nomsa Mtsweni, Mpumalanga

I must say we were apprehensive about hosting the event. But enthusiasm won out, and the topics went down well, helping us to share experiences and best practices. Now we must track our progress as the CPA Africa Region.

**‘Well done, SA & Mpumalanga:
next stop Kenya’**

Through the lens

