

African Union, African Regional Bodies

Activity Report of the Pan-African Parliament, July to December 2009

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I. Introduction

- 1) The present report outlines the activities undertaken by the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) during the period July to December 2009.

It shows the commitment of the Pan-African Parliament to work towards achieving the objectives of the African Union as set out under Article 3 of the Constitutive Act and also under Article 3 of the Protocol to the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to the Pan-African Parliament.

- 2) The Pan-African Parliament was inaugurated on 18 March 2004 as one of the organs of the African Union, whose mandate is to work towards achieving the political and economic integration of our continent.
- 3) It is to be noted that the report covers a period entirely managed by the Bureau elected on 28 May 2009, which solemnly undertook to ensure the full implementation of the African Union decisions and to work in strict adherence to Union texts and regulations.
- 4) Lastly, the report reflects the political and institutional issues that PAP had to deal with or discuss in the period under review.

II. Activities and programmes

The Sessions

- 5) Article 14 (2) of the Protocol governing the Pan-African Parliament clearly states that PAP "shall meet in ordinary session at least twice a year." These sessions represent an important floor where issues related to the objectives of PAP and the African Union are debated and discussed. They are also an important means of information for the peoples of Africa on all issues affecting the African citizen, in accordance with the provisions of Article 3 of the Protocol.
- 6) In line with this, the PAP Committees met in October 2009 the week before the opening of the first Ordinary Session of the Second Legislature.
- 7) Pursuant to the provisions of the African Union Executive Council Decision 459 and the motion adopted at the 11th Ordinary Session of PAP, the Committees and the Regional Parliamentary Groups elected their new bureaux, each made up of a president, a vice-president and a rapporteur (refer to list in Annex 1).
- 8) The first Ordinary Session of the Second Legislature of PAP was held from 26 October to 5 November 2009. The debates and discussions centred mainly on the important items on the Session Agenda. These included among other things, themes relating to:
 - (i) disaster risk reduction, a climate change related subject,
 - (ii) PAP's contribution to the Assembly theme "Information and Communication Technologies in Africa: Challenges and Prospects for Development",
 - (iii) the PAP President's Report on the activities of the Bureau from June to October 2009, including the participation of PAP in the various meetings at the last African Union Assembly in Sirte, Libya,
 - (iv) the 2008 Audit Report and the 2010 PAP Draft Budget,
 - (v) the motions on Human Rights in the Saharawi Republic, the situation in Guinea, Somalia and Niger,

- (vi) the Ad Hoc Committee Report on the Institutional, Political, Administrative and Financial Evaluation of PAP __ (refer to Agenda in Annex 2).
- 9) The Opening Session was especially marked by the address of His Excellency Mr Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa and Guest of Honour of the Pan-African Parliament. In his message to the Members of PAP, His Excellency President Zuma emphasised the need to strengthen the organs of the African Union and to equip each of them with the necessary means to enable it to fully carry out the role for which it was created. In line with this, he highlighted that his country which was hosting the PAP headquarters would spare no effort to provide PAP with the best possible conditions to enable it to successfully discharge its mandate.
 - 10) He also stressed that it was imperative that other Union Member States ratify the Protocol relating to the Pan-African Parliament to accede to it, pointing out that the Parliament was the proper institution to carry out monitoring and control and ensure that Governments implement the African Union programmes.
 - 11) With regard to democracy in Africa, His Excellency President Zuma stated that the Pan-African Parliament was the embodiment of democratic values; hence, with the important role of election observation, the Parliament's work needed to be broadened to include adopting standards for the holding of elections, so that the right of the people to choose their own representatives democratically was not undermined.
 - 12) On another level, His Excellency President Zuma emphasised the fact that the Parliament formed an important part of the political integration of the continent and was called upon to play an increasingly important role in the way forward towards the formation of a Union Government for Africa.
 - 13) The Opening Session was also marked by messages of solidarity delivered by their Excellencies the President of the Arab Transitional Parliament, the Presidents of the National Assemblies of South Africa, Burundi, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Chad, Zimbabwe, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and the European Parliament Representative.
 - 14) Members of the Pan-African Parliament had the privilege of welcoming His Excellency Mr Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission who gave a presentation on the status of the review process of the Protocol relating to the Pan-African Parliament ordered by the Union Assembly in February 2009 and on the situation of our continent in general.
 - 15) A meaningful and rich discussion followed His Excellency Mr Jean Ping's presentation during which PAP Members raised questions and comments related to the transformation of the PAP into a legislative body, of the Commission into an Authority, to conflicts in Africa and the efforts leading to their resolution, the Union's relations with other organisations and international partners....
 - 16) During the Session the Pan-African Parliament in addition completed the consideration of the amendment proposals to the Protocol to the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to the Pan-African Parliament. The proposals represented the contribution of the Members of PAP in the process of reviewing the Protocol decided upon by the African Union Assembly in February 2009.
 - 17) In accordance with Executive Council Decision 459(XIV), the Pan-African Parliament reviewed proposals for the amendment of its Rules of Procedure.

Relations with National and Regional Parliaments

- 18) Pursuant to the provisions of Article 18 of the Protocol, the Pan-African Parliament held on 8 and 9 October 2009 at its Headquarters in Midrand, Johannesburg, a major conference regrouping the Presidents of the National Parliaments and Senates of the countries it represented and the Parliaments of Regional Economic Communities.
- 19) The Agenda of the conference mainly focused on the issues of the transformation of the PAP into a body with legislative powers, the awareness building of national authorities on the need to ratify the Treaties and Conventions entered into by the African Union, the implementation of Union decisions and lastly, the computer-based parliamentary data network.

- 20) During the two days, the participants discussed and exchanged views on the above-mentioned issues and adopted a communique in which they welcomed the initiative to organise the conference and undertook to carry out an awareness building campaign for the ratification of Treaties and Conventions and invite their respective Governments and the Civil Society to disseminate the decisions of the African Union (refer to Communique in Annex 3).
- 21) The Pan-African Parliament, jointly with the ECOWAS Parliament, organised from 23 to 24 November 2009 in Abuja, Nigeria, a Regional Economic Communities seminar focussed mainly on continental integration and the transformation of PAP into a body with legislative powers.
- 22) The seminar was the fourth to be organised by PAP in line with pursuing the objective of the Continent's integration and the role PAP had to play in harmonising programs and policies falling within this context. PAP planned to hold the last seminar that had yet to be organised for the North African region in 2010 and thereafter make a comprehensive report of the conclusions and recommendations emanating from this series of regional seminars.

International relations

- 23) Over the last six months the Pan-African Parliament took part in several international meetings on various themes which included the:
 - (i) European Union Presidency Seminar on Africa: Promoting African-European Parliamentary Dialogue on Climate, Food Security and Development, Sweden;
 - (ii) Working Group on Innovative International Financing for Health Systems, Ethiopia;
 - (iii) The International Day of Democracy, Botswana;
 - (iv) Round Table of Members of Parliament to Combat Desertification, Argentina;
 - (v) Conference of Parliamentarians for UNESCO and UNESCO Partners Forum, France;
 - (vi) Deliberations on Climate Change, Denmark.

Good governance

- 24) In order to ensure transparency, good management and to be better informed on the general situation of PAP, the Bureau, upon its election, conveyed upon the Ad Hoc Committee that had supervised the elections during the Eleventh Ordinary Session, the mission of carrying out an institutional, political, administrative and financial assessment of the Pan-African Parliament.
- 25) The Ad Hoc Committee pinpointed, in a detailed report, the weaknesses noticed during the first five (5) years of the Parliament and recommended solutions and actions to be undertaken to address them. The report was discussed and adopted at the First Ordinary Session of the Second Legislature held from 26 October to 5 November 2009.
- 26) Similarly and in a bid for good governance, the Pan-African Parliament, by virtue of a motion and in accordance with its Rules of Procedure, established an Administrative and Financial Evaluation Committee made up of ten (10) members, to carry out an annual assessment and audit of administrative and financial matters at PAP.
- 27) The observation of elections in Africa falls directly under the heading of good governance which is one of the objectives for which PAP is called upon to play a predominant role. The year 2009 saw the holding of many general elections from which PAP was conspicuously absent due to its inability to secure funding. Only one mission to Namibia was carried out by PAP with respect to election observation.

Empowerment of African women

- 28) In accordance with the provisions of Article 3 of the Protocol which advocate the need to familiarise the peoples of Africa with the policies aimed at integrating the African continent and with due respect for the human being, his rights and his freedom, the Pan-African Parliament held a Women's Conference from 5 to 6 October 2009 at its Headquarters to mainly discuss female genital mutilation, a harmful practice which, unfortunately, is still being carried out in Africa.
- 29) The Conference also included experience sharing on its Agenda and the state of implementation of the laws initiated by African countries to fight against the practice of female circumcision, the proposal of future actions in this field and the adoption of recommendations to be submitted to the relevant African Union bodies (refer to Annex 4).

Relations with African Union organs

- 30) In an endeavour to further draw the Pan-African Parliament and the African Union organs together and achieve closer cooperation between them, His Excellency the President of the Pan-African Parliament met His Excellency the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Commissioners of Agriculture, Infrastructure, Education and Peace and Security. The meeting focused mainly on the ways and means to strengthen coordination to better undertake the African Union's objectives.
- 31) The Chairperson of the African Union Commission addressed the Members of the PAP on 27 October 2009 at the First Ordinary Session of the Second Legislature on the status of the process of reviewing the Protocol relating to the PAP.
- 32) In the same context, the PAP Bureau met the Commissioner of Political Affairs and senior administration officers from the Commission in order to review the ways and means to improve coordination to carry out the objectives of the Union.
- 33) The Pan-African Parliament had also scheduled a retreat with members of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) from 18 to 19 November 09 thanks to funds its German partner GTZ made available to it. However, the retreat could not be organised and was postponed to a later date.

Capacity building

- 34) In order to build the capacities of PAP members and familiarise them with the new vision on its transformation, the Pan-African Parliament organised two seminars from 14 to 17 November 2009 to consider the ways, means and modalities to facilitate the transition of PAP from an advisory body to one with legislative powers.
- 35) These seminars, which will certainly be followed by others in 2010, were a direct consequence of the Executive Council Decision on the launch of the review of the Protocol relating to the PAP. The conclusions of these seminars and those to come will serve as meaningful contribution that the PAP could make to this review process.

III. Conclusion

- 36) The Parliament Bureau brings a new vision consisting in giving PAP some legislative powers by 2011; this vision coincides well with the beginning of the process of reviewing the Protocol decided upon by the African Union Assembly in February 2009 in which the PAP is specifically involved and called upon to give its point of view.
- 37) It is a year since the Assembly decided on the review of the Protocol and to date the PAP has been approached only to give its comments on a draft terms of reference for the recruitment of a consultant.

- 38) Taking the provisions of Article 25 of the Protocol into consideration, the PAP took the initiative well in advance to carry out a self-evaluation of the first five years of its existence and prepared a contribution that included proposals for amending the Protocol that reflected the future vision of a continental Parliament taking on a legislative role.
- 39) The new Bureau and the PAP will continue to work tirelessly to ensure the ideals and objectives assigned to them by the Protocol and will remain committed to working closely with the African Union family in order to achieve continental integration and the well-being of the African peoples.
- 40) The Pan-African Parliament calls upon this august body, the Executive Council, to speed up the process of reviewing the Protocol so that our Union considers measures and actions that such review would require.
- 41) In order to fully play its role to achieve the objective it has been given by the Protocol in terms of good governance and transparency, the Pan-African Parliament requests that it be equipped with the necessary means so that it can accomplish election observer missions on our continent.
- 42) After five years of existence, the activities of the Pan-African Parliament have intensified but the financial means at its disposal remain insufficient and do not facilitate the implementation of such activities. In this context, the Pan-African Parliament asks the Executive Council to give the Parliament an appropriate budget, one that makes it possible to accomplish missions and achieve its objectives.
- 43) The Pan-African Parliament, which has fully implemented Decision 459 made by the Executive Council in January 2009, makes an appeal to the Council so that the Parliament's administrative structure is speedily adopted and other personnel required for its operation is recruited to compliment the 44 staff members appointed so far.
- 44) The present Report is being submitted to the Executive Council for consideration and adoption.