SPEECH BY THE FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER, HON CATHERINE NAMUGALA, MP

DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TRAINING WORKSHOP ON THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN RATIFYING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS, ON WEDNESDAY, 19TH JUNE 2019, AT 09:00 HOURS, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, LUSAKA
• Hon Cabinet and Provincial Ministers present;
• The Vice Chairperson Executive Committee of the CPA Africa Region, Hon Mwansa Mbulakulima, MP;
• The Central Africa Sub-Region Representative, Hon Lazarous Chungu Bwalya, MP;
• The Representative of the CPA Secretary General, Mr Jarvis Matiya, Director of Operations;
• Members of the Executive Committee of the CPA Zambia Branch;
• Hon Cabinet and Provincial Ministers present;
• Hon Members of Parliament;
• The Clerk of the National Assembly;
• Resource persons for the workshop;
• Members of staff of the National Assembly;
• Members of the Press;
• Distinguished invited guests; and
• Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the National Assembly of Zambia, and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to warmly welcome all of you to this training workshop.

Let me begin by thanking you, honourable Members, for taking time off your busy schedules to attend this workshop. This demonstrates your commitment to the values of the Commonwealth that we all share.
Let me take this opportunity to warmly welcome our guests to the CPA Secretariat. In addition, let me thank the CPA, not only for its generous support towards the holding of this workshop, under its Technical Assistance Programme (TAP), but also for the support it has continued to render to the National Assembly of Zambia over the years.

Allow me also to extend my appreciation to all the resource persons for accepting our invitation to partner with the National Assembly of Zambia in facilitating the sessions of this workshop. We highly value your expertise and wisdom, and look forward to fruitful discussions and exchange of views.

**Honourable Members,**

**Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

The main focus of this two days training workshop is to provide you with an opportunity as Members of Parliament, to gain a greater understanding of Parliament’s role in ratifying international agreements.

I have been reliably informed that the workshop discussions will put special emphasis on how the current ratification mechanisms, processes and procedures at the National Assembly of Zambia can be strengthened and enhanced, in line with best practices and international standards.

This is extremely important, if our Parliament is to play a significant role in national decision-making, especially in this period when the distinction
between national and international decision-making is slowly fading, and many public matters are settled by means of international law and practice. Parliaments are, therefore, expected to scrutinise and subject governments’ Foreign Policy to the same degree of oversight as domestic policy.

**Honourable Members,**

**Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

You may wish to note that although international policy has traditionally been, and still is a key responsibility of the Executive, Parliaments are increasingly establishing their role in foreign and international policy decision-making through their representative, legislative, oversight and budgetary powers and functions.

This new position is informed by the fact that through their legislative, oversight, budgetary and representative functions, Parliaments can guarantee the successful domestication of international agreements by ensuring that the agreements that Executives sign are transposed into national legislation, supported by appropriate budgetary allocation and robust oversight of government performance in the implementation process.

Furthermore, through their involvement, Parliaments can ensure that the citizens they represent are consulted and included in international decision-making processes. This, therefore, makes Parliament indispensable in the
realisation of international decision making such as the Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local and national levels.

**Honourable Members,**

**Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

It is in recognition of the important role required for Parliament to play in ratifying international agreements that the Constitution of Zambia (Amendment) No. 2 of 2016, has for the first time in the history of our Parliament, provided for the National Assembly to ratify international agreements before they are acceded to. In addition, the National Assembly of Zambia enacted the Ratification of International Agreements Act No. 34 of 2016, to provide for the ratification of international agreements and the domestication process. As you may be aware, the Standing Orders were also revised to provide for the procedure for ratifying international agreements and treaties, among other things.

**Honourable Members,**

**Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

Following the enactment of relevant legal provisions on the ratification of international agreements, it has become necessary for our Parliament to quickly build the capacities of both its Members and staff so that it can perform this added function properly and effectively. Therefore, this workshop would not have come at a better time than now, when as an Institution we are expected by the citizens to ratify agreements that serve their interests. I am confident given the wealth of expertise and experience
of the resource persons selected for this workshop, that Members will learn and share a great deal of information that will strengthen our Parliament’s current position in so far as ratifying international agreements and treaties is concerned.

Let me conclude by reiterating the fact that the role of Parliament in the approval process of international agreements and treaties, should not be underplayed, especially in this period, in which many public matters are settled by means of international law, and the status of international bodies is becoming progressively stronger. Parliament should, therefore, rise to the occasion and play a greater role in international affairs, especially by means of effective ratification of international agreements. This will not only enable Parliament to deliver society’s expectations, but will also increase its influence in international affairs through parliamentary diplomacy.

Once again, I would like to thank the CPA for making this workshop possible and wish all the participants fruitful deliberations.

Honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen, it is now my honour and privilege to declare this two-day training workshop officially open.

I thank you.

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