



**THE ROLE OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS AND THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM IN
ENSURING SECURITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**
21 – 22 February, 2008
Luanda, Republic of Angola

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 February 2008, the National Assembly of Angola hosted a regional seminar on *The Role of National Parliaments and the SADC Parliamentary Forum in Ensuring Security in Southern Africa*. The Seminar was attended by chairpersons and members of parliamentary defence and security committees, and officials from Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia. The Seminar was aimed at strengthening the capacity of parliamentary defence and security committees to effectively address security concerns, with special emphasis on committee effectiveness, conflict management, legislative oversight and budgetary control. The Seminar also sought to create a platform for interactive regional dialogue and exchange of experiences between the legislature and experts on security sector governance.

The Seminar was officially opened by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Angola, the Honourable Dr. Roberto de Almeida. The opening ceremony was also addressed by Ms. Bookie Kethusegile-Juru, Assistant Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) who is also the Director of the Parliamentary Leadership Centre (PLC); Dr. Naison Ngoma, Head of the Programme on Governance of the Security Sector in Africa (ASSG) at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS); Mr. Martin Chungong, Director, Division for the Promotion of Democracy at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and Dr. Phillip Fluri, Deputy Director of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF). Also present were a number of resource persons and officials from the partner institutions, namely SADC PF, ISS, IPU, DCAF, Safer Africa and the Southern African Defence and Security Management Network (SADSEM).

In his opening address, Dr. Roberto de Almeida underscored the need for peace and security in Africa through the enhancement of systems of conflict prevention and management. Other presenters also underscored the importance of ensuring human security for the people of Africa; nurturing appropriate, effective, efficient and accountable security services to underpin the call for peace and security and human security; and the development of effective regional and sub-regional collaborative security initiatives in Africa.



OBSERVATIONS

The Seminar noted that parliament is the bedrock of democracy, governance and democratic accountability. Through its functions of representation, approval and monitoring of public expenditure (budgets), legislation, and in some cases, ratification of international treaties and conventions, parliament acts as the bridge between the people and government. Noting the important organic linkages between State security and human security, the Seminar participants agreed that security policy and action should aim primarily to safeguard the rights of citizens, understood in the broadest sense. They recognized that national security is a collective responsibility and can only be the product of the collective work of all stakeholders.

Against this background, participants emphasized that as a basic precept of democracy, no sector of society or government should be above parliamentary oversight. It was further noted that parliamentary oversight of the security sector was sometimes mitigated by lack of information, expertise, specialized knowledge resources, inadequate staff, materials and financial resources. Often, this was exacerbated by the dominance of the executive branch of government over the legislature.

The following were identified as some of the factors that could enhance parliamentary oversight of the security sector:

- a) A robust parliament that actively debates issues and ensures that legislation and/or policy is passed by rather than passes through parliament;
- b) Vibrant multi-party committee(s) with adequate human, financial and other resources to effectively shadow the security sector and, where necessary, undertake site visits and inspections;
- c) Effective multi-party public accounts committee to scrutinize expenditure;
- d) Well-resourced statutory bodies such as Auditors-General to ensure prudent management of public resources;
- e) Ombudsmen or independent bodies that are empowered to investigate public complaints against public bodies, including the security services sector;
- f) Plural and vibrant media;
- g) Active civil society sector (non-State actors);
- h) Independent and effective Human Rights Commissions to promote and protect human rights; and
- i) Specialized research institutions that monitor trends and good practices in security sector governance and share findings with the parliament.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Seminar made the following recommendations:

- a) Establish a clear understanding among members of parliament and parliamentary officials of the security sector discourse to ensure that parliaments are placed at the centre of analysis and approval of relevant policies and legislation. This would enhance parliaments' capacity to develop national security and defence policies as frameworks against which plans and budgets can be measured and evaluated, thus effectively exercising democratic control of the security sector.
- b) Promote awareness-raising among MPs and parliamentary officials about the workings of the security sector, including enhancing appreciation of existing linkages between security policy, standard operating procedures and budget demands.
- c) Promote, through information-sharing, appreciation of the fact that security governance - including the military, police and intelligence services - is far too important to be left to the executive and "securocrats".
- d) Sensitize national parliaments on security sector governance analysis through a gender lens, including enhancing women's participation in security policy formulation and implementation.
- e) Encourage parliaments and MPs to tap into the resources available in specialized bodies such as ISS, DCAF, IPU, SADC PF and others to build the relevant capacity and facilitate exchange of best practices to ensure informed parliamentary oversight of the security sector. Related to this is facilitation of ongoing inter-parliamentary dialogue on security policy issues at the regional, continental and global levels.
- f) Promote civil society-parliament cooperation in the security sector governance policy dialogue.
- g) Promote joint initiatives among the PLC, national parliaments, civil society and policy think tanks to enhance parliamentary oversight capacity of the security sector.
- h) Develop training module(s) on parliamentary oversight of the security sector to facilitate capacity development for parliaments and relevant parliamentary committees.
- i) Establish a regional network of security sector parliamentary committees, civil society and research organizations to facilitate networking and sharing of best practices, including through the PLC's Online Resource Centre and quarterly newsletter.
- j) Commission demand-driven policy research on the security sector and filter the findings and recommendations into parliamentary processes.

- k) Accelerate ratification and domestication of relevant regional and international conventions and promote the development of relevant implementation plans. This should include re-packaging such protocols in user-friendly language. Related to that is the need to develop and domesticate appropriate legal and policy frameworks and mechanisms for judicial and parliamentary oversight of the intelligence services.
- l) Enhance the role of parliaments in regional security governance in particular and regional integration in general including through motivation by parliamentarians at the national level for the transformation of the SADC PF into an SADC Parliament. This would significantly enhance parliamentarians' contribution to the regional integration agenda of SADC as provided in the founding instruments of the SADC PF.
- m) Facilitate joint capacity building and information sharing between the legislative and executive branches of government to promote mutual learning and cooperation in order to enhance democratic accountability.
- n) Recognize the critical role of parliamentary staff who normally have to work with very limited resources. In this regard, the Seminar noted the DCAF-SADSEM proposed regional initiative to strengthen in-house research expertise.