



**IPU PANEL DEBATE ON GENDER-SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS:
PARLIAMENTS FREE FROM SEXISM, HARASSMENT AND
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

MADAM PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT OF THE IPU

SECRETARY GENERAL

HONOURABLE PRESIDING OFFICERS

HONOURABLE PARLIAMENTARIANS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

ALLOW ME TO EXPRESS MY GENUINE GRATITUDE TO THE IPU PRESIDENT, FOR INVITING THE PARLIAMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 145TH IPU ASSEMBLY. MAY I FURTHER EXTEND OUR HEARTFELT APPRECIATION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA, FOR THE WARM RECEPTION UPON OUR ARRIVAL.

MADAM SPEAKER, THE 145TH IPU ASSEMBLY THEME: *"GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS AS DRIVERS OF CHANGE FOR A MORE RESILIENT AND PEACEFUL CHANGE"*, SETS THE STAGE FOR LIVELY DEBATE ON GENDER-SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS: PARLIAMENTS FREE FROM SEXISM, HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, RECOGNISES GENDER EQUALITY AS A PREREQUISITE FOR PROGRESS ACROSS ALL ITS SEVENTEEN (17) SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs).

SDG NO. 5 - THE GENDER EQUALITY GOAL, INCLUDES A SPECIFIC INDICATOR (NO. 5) THAT COMMITS COUNTRIES TO PUT IN PLACE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS WHICH: PROMOTE, ENFORCE AND MONITOR GENDER EQUALITY, AND DEVELOPS SYSTEMS TO ENSURE FULL PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE.

FUTHER, EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP, MATTERS — NOT ONLY FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY, BUT ALSO FOR MAKING SOUND DECISIONS IN THE POLITICAL ARENA, THE WORKPLACE, AND EVERY AREA OF PUBLIC LIFE. MOREOVER, EQUAL LEADERSHIP ENSURES THAT DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES AND VOICES MAKE IT TO DECISION-MAKING FORA, INCLUDING PARLIAMENT.

IN LINE WITH THE IPU's PLAN OF ACTION FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS, A GENDER-SENSITIVE PARLIAMENT IS DEFINED AS ONE THAT RESPONDS TO THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF BOTH MEN AND WOMEN IN ITS COMPOSITION, STRUCTURES, OPERATIONS, METHODS AND WORK. IN THAT REGARD, ESWATINI HAS TAKEN GREAT STRIDES IN ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY, THROUGH THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION; AND THE COUNTRY HAS GUARANTEED THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN. SEVERAL NATIONAL LAWS PROVIDE FOR THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY AND EQUITY.

MADAM PRESIDENT,

ESWATINI, THROUGH ENACTMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION AND OTHER PIECES OF LEGISLATION, HAS MADE CONSIDERABLE STRIDES IN OBSERVING GENDER EQUALITY. I WILL LIST FEW PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION WHICH ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF GENDER EQUALITY.

- SECTION 79 PROVIDES THAT THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT FOR ESWATINI, IS A DEMOCRATIC, PARTICIPATORY, TINKHUNDLA-BASED SYSTEM WHICH EMPHASISES THE DEVOLUTION OF STATE POWER FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TO TINKHUNDLA AREAS AND INDIVIDUAL MERIT AS A BASIS FOR ELECTION AND APPOINTMENT TO PUBLIC OFFICE; HENCE I CAN BOLDLY SAY - MEN AND WOMEN ARE ACCORDED EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ESWATINI.
- SECTION 28 PROVIDES THAT WOMEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO EQUAL TREATMENT WITH MEN, AND THAT RIGHT SHALL INCLUDE, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
- THE SECTION FURTHER PROVIDES THAT GOVERNMENT SHALL PROVIDE FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES NECESSARY TO ENHANCE THE WELFARE OF WOMEN, ENABLING THEM TO REALISE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND ADVANCEMENT.
- SECTION 59 PROVIDES THAT THE STATE SHALL AFFORD EQUALITY OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY TO ALL CITIZENS, AND, IN PARTICULAR, THE STATE SHALL TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS SO AS TO ENSURE FULL INTEGRATION

OF WOMEN INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

- SECTION 84 PROVIDES THAT THE WOMEN OF ESWATINI AND OTHER MARGINALIZED GROUPS, HAVE A RIGHT TO EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT AND OTHER PUBLIC STRUCTURES.
- IT FURTHER PROVIDES THAT WHERE (AT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE HOUSE AFTER ANY GENERAL ELECTION) IT APPEARS THAT FEMALE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WILL NOT CONSTITUTE AT LEAST THIRTY PER CENTUM (30%) OF THE TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF PARLIAMENT, THE HOUSE SHALL FORM ITSELF INTO AN ELECTORAL COLLEGE AND ELECT NOT MORE THAN FOUR (4) WOMEN (QUALIFIED TO BE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT), ON A REGIONAL BASIS TO THE HOUSE.

NATIONAL LAWS THAT HAVE BEEN PUT IN PLACE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- *THE ELECTION OF WOMEN MEMBERS TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ACT OF 2018* - THIS PIECE OF LEGISLATION GIVES EFFECT TO THE ABOVE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION, WHICH STIPULATES THAT WHERE AT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE HOUSE AFTER ANY GENERAL ELECTION IT APPEARS THAT FEMALE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WILL NOT CONSTITUTE AT LEAST THIRTY PER CENTUM OF THE TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF PARLIAMENT. INSTEAD, THE HOUSE SHALL FORM ITSELF INTO AN ELECTORAL COLLEGE AND ELECT NOT MORE THAN FOUR WOMEN (QUALIFIED TO BE

MEMBERS) OF PARLIAMENT, ON A REGIONAL BASIS TO THE HOUSE.

- *THE SENATE (ELECTIONS) ACT, 2013* – THIS PIECE OF LEGISLATION PROVIDES FOR THE MANNER OF ELECTING SENATORS IN TERMS OF SECTION 94(2) OF THE CONSTITUTION, AS IT PROVIDES THAT AT LEAST 50% OF THE ELECTED SENATORS SHOULD BE WOMEN.

IN CONCLUSION, IN ESWATINI, THERE ARE NO BARRIERS; SUBSTANTIVELY, STRUCTURALLY OR CULTURALLY TO WOMEN'S FULL PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, BOTH THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AND SENATE HAVE A FAIR NUMBER OF WOMEN. EQUALLY, PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES AND COUNTRY DELEGATIONS, INCLUDING THE IPU COMMITTEE, ALSO HAVE A GOOD REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MEN.

ONCE AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR AFFORDING ME THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE MY BRIEF PRESENTATION.