

MAHÉ DECLARATION

We, Members of Parliament, attending the ‘Africa Regional Seminar for Members of Parliament on the Role of Parliamentarians in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights’, on 19-21 March 2014 at Mahé, Seychelles:

Recognize Parliament as a key institution safeguarding and upholding the rights of citizens and its corresponding role in the promotion and protection of human rights,

Affirm the values and principles as contained in the Commonwealth Charter,

Take note of the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles which govern the relationship between the executive, legislature and the judiciary,

Affirm the necessity of Parliament’s awareness and understanding of the international, regional, and national human rights systems,

Reaffirm the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and recall the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other core human rights instruments,

Emphasize Parliament’s primary responsibility for ratifying international human rights treaties, integrating international and regional norms and standards in national legislation and holding governments accountable for the enforcement of laws,

Understand Parliament’s unique position to influence policies and budgets at the national level, monitor policy implementation programmes at local levels, address the needs and concerns of their constituencies and act as a catalyst in the realization of human rights at all levels,

Note the Paris Principles and the significant role that national human rights institutions can play in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and in developing and enhancing public awareness of those rights and freedoms,

Cognizant of the Belgrade Principles and their guidance on the relationship between Parliaments and national human rights institutions,

Acknowledge the importance of active engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review, the Treaty Bodies and the Special Procedure mandate holders.

Therefore, we declare as follows:

1. To take forward our responsibility as Parliamentarians in raising awareness of international, regional and national human rights mechanisms, and Parliamentarians’ concomitant roles and responsibilities in engaging with them;

2. To ensure that human rights norms and principles are reflected in new laws; addressing gaps in existing legislation where necessary;
3. To take steps to integrate human rights education into curricula at all institutions of learning, and to strengthen it where already in place;
4. To establish Parliamentary committees with express responsibility for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
5. To proactively seek and avail ourselves of international technical assistance in the field of human rights where necessary;
6. To promote the establishment of Paris Principle compliant national human rights institutions, and strengthening the independence and security of existing ones;
7. To encourage dialogue and promote the exchange of information and experience on salient human rights issues and challenges in Africa;
8. To take appropriate steps to increase our engagement in the reporting and implementation process of international and regional human rights mechanisms, including the Treaty Bodies and Universal Periodic Review;
9. To establish the Commonwealth Africa Parliamentary Human Rights Group (CAPHRG), a network of advocates and lawmakers to promote inter-parliamentary co-operation with the view of ensuring best practices and strengthened engagement in regard to the implementation of Universal Periodic Review recommendations.

*Adopted at Port Launay, Mahé, Seychelles
21 March 2014*