



19th CSPOC calls for reform of parliamentary systems to tackle complex governance issues in Africa

The Conference has called for robust reforms of the parliamentary system to tackle the continent's wide range of complex governance issues

During a plenary discussion on the motion "Reforming and developing innovative mechanisms and strategies for effective and proactive parliamentary leadership in Africa's development", the conference agreed on the need for parliaments to transcend the traditional functions of law-making, oversight and representation, and evolve into a proactive, innovative and development-oriented institution capable of addressing the complex governance challenges confronting African states.

Presented by the Deputy Speaker of Cameroon, Ms Mary Muyali Meboka, the motion further proposed that to achieve the reforms, African Parliaments should embrace a holistic transformation agenda that integrates institutional modernization, effective and evidence-based oversight, utilization of auditor-general reports, technological innovation, ethical leadership and institutional integrity, citizen participation, and developmental accountability.

Supporting the proposed reforms in the motion, Ms Muyali Meboka said these would help combat challenges such as weak

committee systems, inadequate legislative research capacity, executive dominance, insufficient budgetary independence, low technological integration, weak citizen engagement, political polarization, and ineffective follow-up on oversight findings.

Committees should also adopt more systematic mechanisms for monitoring implementation of recommendations and ensuring executive compliance with parliamentary resolutions.

"Specialized sectoral committees, particularly those dealing with finance, public accounts, mining, energy, agriculture, health, education, and public service delivery, should be supported with technical experts capable of conducting evidence-based analysis of complex policy and financial issues," she said.

The conference also supported the proposal of a more effective scrutiny of budgets of the continent's parliaments as opposed to instant endorsement from the Executive.

"Parliament must move beyond ceremonial approval of budgets and engage in rigorous scrutiny of fiscal policy, expenditure priorities, debt management, procurement systems, and development outcomes."

The motion was seconded by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Lesotho Mr Tlohang Sekhamane who emphasised that the "challenges of the 21st century demand that parliaments shift from reactive lawmakers to proactive, evidence-led leaders that play an active role in shaping development priorities and holding governments accountable; thereby deepening public trust".

He told the plenary that the demands and expectations of the people were changing and institutions such as parliaments must change in tandem with those demands and constantly review and reform to avoid institutional stagnation and the decline in public confidence.

"Reforms should aim to strengthen portfolio committees, ensuring that they are adequately resourced, supported by competent researchers and professional staff, and that they are empowered to produce meaningful recommendations capable of improving governance and service delivery," he said.

Participating in the discussions on behalf of the South African delegation, the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane spoke about the importance of integrating new technologies to enhance the effectiveness of parliaments, expand access to parliament and more inclusive public participation.



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CSPOC Africa delegates deliberate on landmark Hotel investment project

The second day of the Conference began with delegates convening for their first General Meeting, focusing on strengthening the financial sustainability of parliamentary cooperation across Africa

A key agenda item was the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Africa Region Five-Star Hotel Project in Dodoma, Tanzania – a strategic investment first approved in 2019 to generate sustainable income, reduce reliance on membership subscriptions, and support parliamentary programmes.

Hon. Enos K. Asimwe, CPA Africa Region Treasurer and Chairperson of the Fundraising Task Team, reported notable progress, including land acquisition through the Tanzanian government's support. However, the project faces a funding shortfall of approximately US\$6.65 million.

To close this gap, member parliaments were urged to contribute around US\$350,000 each. Rt Hon. Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane, Chairperson of the CSPOC Africa Region Standing Committee and South Africa's National Council of Provinces, reminded delegates of the collective endorsement of the initiative and encouraged renewed commitment.

The proposal received broad support, with delegates highlighting its potential to establish a self-sustaining financial model for the region. Yet, concerns were raised about affordability, governance, and implementation timelines. Kenyan Senator

Hon. Veronica Maina emphasized the need for countries to review their legal and financial frameworks before committing funds, while other representatives called for clarity on funding mechanisms and equitable benefits for member states.

The hotel project reflects a wider trend in the CPA's efforts to diversify income streams and strengthen institutional independence.

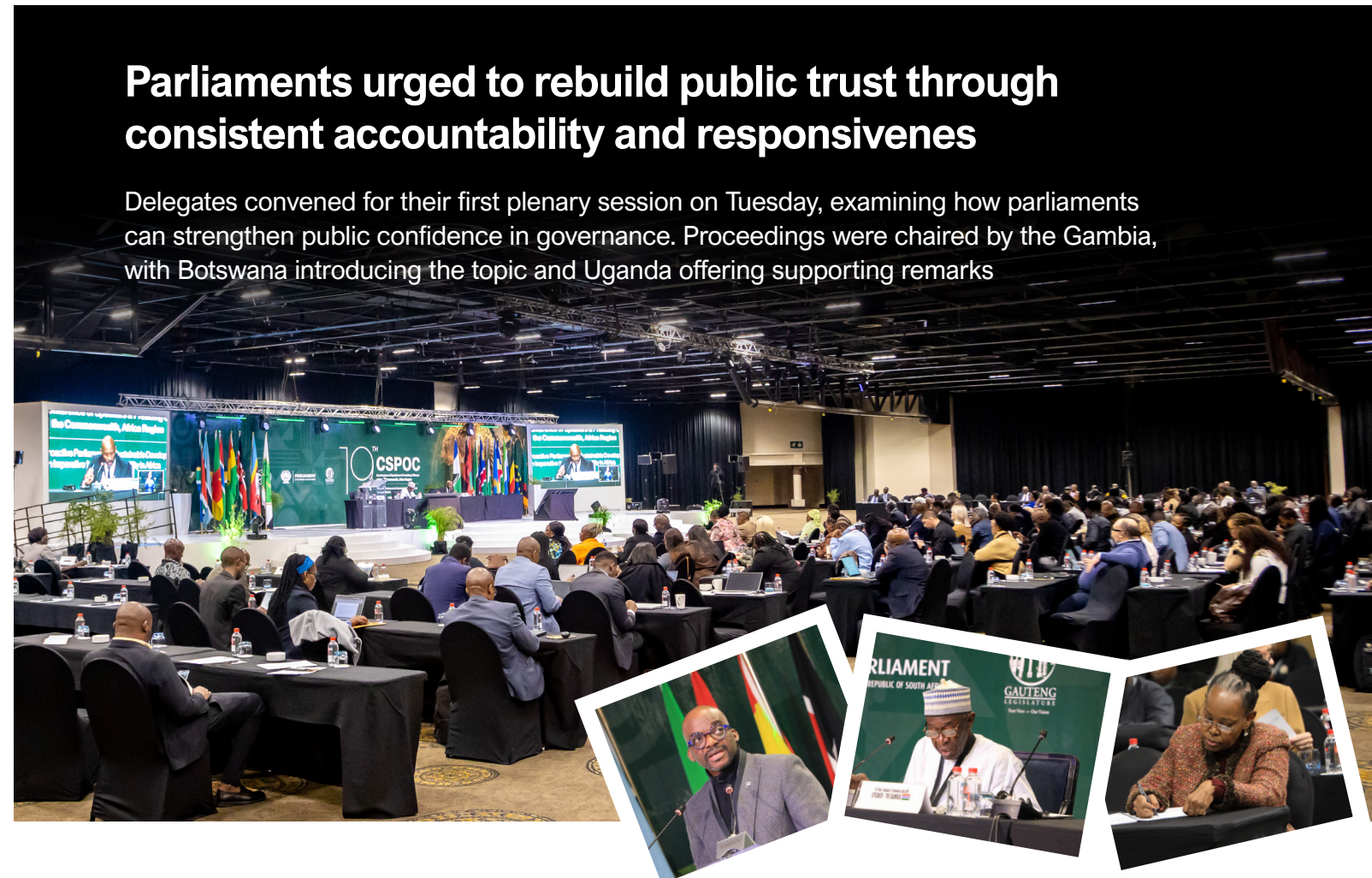
Similar initiatives in other Commonwealth regions have sought to balance financial sustainability with transparency and accountability. For Africa, the Dodoma project is seen not only as a commercial venture but also as a symbol of regional unity and long-term vision. Delegates agreed that updated information would be circulated to member parliaments for further consideration, ensuring that decisions are informed and inclusive.

The next CSPOC Africa Region Conference, scheduled for May 2027 in Kenya, will provide an opportunity to revisit the project's progress and assess collective commitments.

The deliberations underscore Africa's determination to build resilient parliamentary institutions capable of sustaining themselves while advancing democratic governance.

Parliaments urged to rebuild public trust through consistent accountability and responsiveness

Delegates convened for their first plenary session on Tuesday, examining how parliaments can strengthen public confidence in governance. Proceedings were chaired by the Gambia, with Botswana introducing the topic and Uganda offering supporting remarks



As forums for public deliberation and checks on executive power, parliaments depend on three pillars to fulfil their mandate: *transparency, inclusive representation, and democratic practice*.

Delegates agreed that where these values take root, public confidence follows; where they erode, so does the credibility of governance. Much of the discussion was devoted to confronting declining trust in African legislatures, tracing its causes and proposing remedies.

Botswana's representative, Honourable Dithapelo Lefoko Keorapetse, linked electoral integrity directly to legitimacy, arguing that elections falling short of being free and transparent undermine citizens' faith in representative institutions. He framed such confidence as a foundational pillar of good governance and, drawing on Botswana's democratic experience, noted that national unity is built through consultation and consensus rather than legislation alone.

Citing Afrobarometer survey data showing widespread perceptions that the wealthy and well-connected receive preferential treatment, he urged regional parliaments to prioritise ethical leadership and the protection of vulnerable groups, including women and children.

Meanwhile, Uganda's delegate, Enos Asimwe Kinywamacunda, took a more diagnostic approach, identifying corruption, ineffective oversight, misinformation, and political polarisation as key drivers of disillusionment, noting a steady decline in legislative trust over the past two decades.

Representatives from Lesotho, South Africa, Eswatini, Namibia, and other regions echoed the sentiment. Several stressed that elections alone cannot guarantee legitimacy if economic hardship persists, and pressed for stronger ethical codes, independent budget oversight bodies, and regular public reporting on parliamentary performance.

Delegates concluded that restoring trust cannot rest on parliaments alone, but is a shared responsibility among parliaments, governments, and citizens. Governments were urged to serve all citizens equitably and meet constitutional obligations consistently, fostering goodwill in return. The session ended with broad agreement that accountable, effective parliaments remain the surest path to restoring public confidence in governance, and that once lost, public trust must be rebuilt through consistent accountability and responsiveness, not rhetoric.