



## **2021 gLOCAL Evaluation Week**

### **Webinar**

**Date: June 4, 2021**

**Time: 09:00 – 11:00am GMT**

### **Topic: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN AFRICA'S POST COVID-19 RECOVERY.**

The Coronavirus pandemic has affected people worldwide. It has caused countries to submit to strict measures including lockdowns, travel restrictions and working from home. From March 2020, many African countries decided to close their borders due to the pandemic and to develop response plans to tackle the disease. More than a year later, the pandemic is still a current affair and multiple initiatives such as testing protocols/centres, Covid-19 treatments facilities, and vaccination rollouts are being applied to create a safer environment and a return to pre Covid-19 norms.

Throughout the evolution of the pandemic, African parliaments have been actively involved in the prevention and recovery processes. At the onset of the outbreak, in many sub-Saharan African countries for instance Senegal, Cabo Verde, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, the executive branch of government took the lead on the outbreak response with the backing of parliaments. In Senegal, for instance, the National Assembly adopted a draft law allowing the President to take relevant legal measures to deal with Covid-19. The law facilitated taking the necessary economic, budgetary, financial, legal, and health measures. Likewise, in Cabo Verde, MPs debated and approved the Government's legislative proposals that included emergency measures in response to the epidemiological and socioeconomic situation caused by Covid-19, which resulted in a law.

These initial efforts notwithstanding, Covid-19 posed some unique challenges for parliaments' thanks to remote work, lockdowns, social distancing and other containment measures. In some cases, Ghana being a good example, parliament had to even take a pause due to members contracting the virus. However, overall, most parliaments managed to continue operations without much disruption. One year on, many countries have managed to weather the storm, organized presidential and parliamentary elections, and are working tirelessly to normalize their economies and lives.

Parliamentarians across Africa are key players in the immediate and long-term Covid-19 recovery efforts, given their power to enact laws and oversee government policy. Their legislative oversight and budget approval responsibilities make them vital players in efforts to improving public health. Parliaments continue to help advance responses and support measures that will be for the benefits of

the populations. Parliamentarians also participated in awareness-raising initiatives for example educating their citizens on need to protect themselves, follow mandated guidelines of social distancing, and more recently vaccine safety, while promoting transparency regarding the health crisis, something crucial for preserving the public's confidence in government responses to the pandemic. They likewise voiced the socio-economic needs and demands of their constituents – supported the executive to effect tax cuts, reduce and/or waive the cost of utilities, and provision of incentives to industry.

Going forward, as Africa looks to its post-recovery phase, Parliamentarians need to again be at forefront of efforts. For example, as governments design measures to address the post pandemic recovery, MPs will need to ensure resilience of economies and societies, which results in stable long-term livelihoods. Again, MPs political leadership and initiative are vital to ensure stimulus and recovery packages adopted are people-centered. Parliaments will further need to shore up the continent's public health systems such that lessons from the covid-19 pandemic inform efforts of resilience going forward, much like West African countries that went through the Ebola crisis did. Similarly, strengthening intra-Africa initiatives by leveraging the just rolled-out African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) will not only enhance cross-border responses to health issues, but go a long way to boost economies devastated by the pandemic by boosting African trade, lowering external borrowing, and spurring on job creation and employment.

By working together in solidarity and leveraging regionalism, African countries can improve the outcome of the health crisis. Initiatives such as the 'Partnership to Accelerate Covid-19 Testing (PACT): Trace, Test & Track (CDC-T3)' launched by the AUC<sup>1</sup> and the Africa CDC<sup>2</sup> to facilitate implementation of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for Covid-19 and expand capacity for testing, contact tracing and treatment; or the decision by ECOWAS<sup>3</sup> to standardize Covid-19 tests across the region are testament. Both initiatives required parliaments' oversight and accountability roles for success. Moreover, legislative measures taken now by parliamentarians will have long-term effects on the continent's future.

Thus, this webinar will aim to discuss the invaluable role of parliamentarians in the fight against the coronavirus and recovery process. It will focus on the concrete actions and processes parliamentarians have put in place for the continent to come out of the crisis. It will discuss on the relations the legislature is maintaining with the executive to ensure an effective post recovery process, as well as highlight the challenges envisaged. Panelists will further draw on their individual and country experiences to shed light on lessons learnt too-date, and the way forward.

#### **Moderator:**

- **Ms. Josephine Watera**, Head M&E Division, Parliament of Uganda.

#### **Speakers:**

- **Sen. Langton Chikukwa**, National Assembly of Zimbabwe & APNODE Executive Member.
- **Hon. Elise Pokossy Doumbe**, Parliament of Cameroon & APNODE Executive Member.

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<sup>1</sup> African Union Commission

<sup>2</sup> Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

<sup>3</sup> Economic Community of West African States

- **Sen. Sylvia Kasanga**, Parliament of Kenya.
- **Hon. Rahhal El Makkaoui**, House of Councillors, Morocco & APNODE Executive Member.
- **Mr. Germain Mbav Yav**, Advisor to the Senate's Research Department, Democratic Republic of Congo & APNODE Member.

## Guiding Questions

- The Coronavirus pandemic has affected all economies on the continent. Even big players such as South Africa or Nigeria are facing difficulties as they try to negotiate the pandemic. What steps should parliamentarians take to propel their economies? Should they cede authority to the executive, as this is an emergency, and just support via their oversight role?
- The Covid-19 pandemic has again reinforced the fact that the implementation of targeted excellent health measures are key to having a strong public health system. How can African parliamentarians ensure that the executive places the appropriate emphasis on health measures that will protect their populations?
- The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) is touted as an initiative that will offer an opportunity to countries to bolster trade and increase revenue. If yes, what should parliamentarians do to advance AfCFTA to drive post-recovery efforts?
- Should parliamentarians commission impact evaluations on the different governmental actions to determine what worked, what did not, and why?
- To-date many African countries have developed national recovery plans. Do you believe these plans would be more effective and impactful if designed with a regional or continental focus and guided by the RECs and/or AUC?
- Several initiatives, such as the COVAXX, have been launched on the continent to combat the pandemic and enhance post-recovery, what steps should African parliaments undertake to ensure that such initiatives yield the maximum benefits to the citizens?
- In your opinion, how should APNODE, which is a big advocate for parliamentarians demanding and utilizing evaluation in the oversight and budget appropriate roles, position itself to support Africa's post-recovery efforts at the national, regional and continental levels?