



**Remarks on  
“Being an Effective Presiding Officer: A Shared Experience of  
Challenges and Opportunities”**

**By**

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**Voila Hotel  
Bagattelle Shopping Mall  
Port Louis  
Mauritius**

*Check Against Delivery*

**Speaker, National Assembly of the Republic of Mauritius, our host,  
Fellow Speakers of the Parliaments represented here,  
Secretary-General SADC-PF,  
Distinguished Invited Guests,  
Our Staff,  
Members of the Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me take this opportunity to thank our host, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Mauritius, for the warm hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this very beautiful country. Let me also thank all those that have made it possible for us to meet here today.

In commenting on the subject of my discussion, *“Being an Effective Presiding Officer: A Shared Experience of Challenges and Opportunities”*, I would like to indicate that my contribution is based on my personal experience. Experiences may differ from parliament to parliament. I would like to start my remarks by highlighting the following:

***In dispensing the duties of a Speaker, these items guide the process:***

- The Constitutional Requirement
- Parliamentary Standing Rules and Orders
- Parliament Committees structure, and their significance in resolving issues amicably and in a guided manner
- The fact that in the Chamber, there are usually heated debates because members want to score political points before national television, particularly nowadays when most of our parliamentary debates are broadcast live on television and radio.

### ***On Challenges:***

- When issues of divisive nature come onto the floor of the House and the Speaker rules in a manner that may not necessarily favour some sections within Parliament. What is critical here is the need to uphold the Constitution as well as maintain the integrity of the institution of Parliament.

**Honourable Speakers,  
Secretary-General of the SADC PF,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For us in Namibia and myself in particular, I was elected as the Speaker of the National Assembly unanimously by all Members of National Assembly and as such, Parliamentarians and the nation at large, expect me to discharge my duties fairly and even-handedly in the House.

Furthermore, the convention governing the role of the Speaker, expects the Speaker to be fair, objective and firm, as guided by the Rules and Procedures of the House. Anybody who transgresses the Rules expects to be dealt with accordingly.

If we consider the Namibian Parliament, our Committee structures usually work on issues to create a common understanding on such issues before they are brought on the floor of the House. This easily facilitates a consensus approach in the House. However, the debate within the Chamber tends to get more heated because then, MPs are aware that they are on National television and they want to score political points.

It is essential that Parliaments are able to explore ways and means of developing effective lines of communication within their structures, using our Rules and Party Whips in Parliament.

For example, when a Party has a motion it wants to present, it helps to undertake internal consultation within the Party Caucus, especially on issues that may present a crisis in the House. Internal consultation prevents friction and presents a position of better acceptance of even thorny issues, within the House.

Equally important is the Whips Forum, which is a platform that facilitates cross-party consultation. In this manner, MPs across the party divide agree on critical issues before they are tabled on the floor of the House. This also enhances cooperation and consensus, usually on a basis of a win-win outcome.

All of us as Presiding Officers and all political parties in Parliament must strive towards working together for the common good of our respective countries and above all commit to upholding the Constitution. I believe the Supreme Law of our respective countries should serve as a unifying factor for most of our parliaments.