



**REMARKS BY SENATE PRESIDENT SENATOR PS. LINDIWE DLAMINI AT A
HIGH-LEVEL MEETING WITH UNAIDS REGIONAL DIRECTOR HELD IN THE
PARLIAMENT CONFERENCE ROOM – 17 MARCH 2023 -10:00AM**

Introduction

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the Parliament of the Kingdom of Eswatini, which I also do on behalf of my colleague, the Hon. Speaker who is out of the country on official business.

Your Excellency, your visit comes at a very crucial time when, as Parliament, we are reflecting on our achievements in the 11th Parliament.

As we wind up, we are proud and privileged to have served at such a time as this under the wise leadership of His Majesty King Mswati 111. His wisdom has held the country together during the devastating global health crisis of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Like many establishments, Parliament had to quickly adapt to new ways of doing business and His Majesty was at the fore, encouraging Emaswati to be innovative. We were able to execute Parliament's mandate when the Pandemic was at its worst. It is, however, unfortunate that COVID -19 destabilized our footing and path in the aggressive fight against the spread of HIV and AIDS, an area in which we had confidently prevailed as a country.

As reflected in the Speech from the Throne by His Majesty when he opened the final session of the 11th Parliament, last month, Eswatini successfully met the AIDS Global targets and became one of the two countries that have successfully done so. We add our voice in expressing our gratitude to yourselves (UNAIDS) and other UN Agencies who have not only spoken of commitment to partner with Eswatini but have ensured that your support is recorded through successful various programmes.

Support to Parliament Administration

We also want to commend the UNAIDS country Office for the tremendous support to the Parliament Administration towards proper execution of its fundamental responsibility of administrative support services to Parliamentarians, primary focus being service delivery.

Areas of support and achievements

The UNAIDS office is a main Parliament stakeholder in HIV and AIDS related capacity building for Parliamentarians and members of staff.

They have also partnered with us in areas which include:

- i. Supporting Parliament during the formulation of Strategic Plan at consultative stage
- ii. Supporting Parliamentarians during the Mapping exercise towards the development of National AIDS Strategic Framework
- iii. Capacitated relevant Parliament Committees portfolios are dealing directly with HIV and AIDS. These include SADC PF , HIV/AIDS Sessional, Education, Health Portfolio Committee , on SRHR Governance project especially on (Access of HIV/AIDS services) especially during the dire times of Pandemics.
- iv. Commemoration of International WORLD AIDS Day Activities
- v. They have been part of Parliamentarians workshops and retreats, providing technical assistance and the much-needed awareness on HIV and AIDS Global response trends.

Formulation and launching of HIV and AIDS and Wellness Strategic Plan

We still look forward to working with you in implementation of the Parliament Strategic Plan and mainly our 2022/27 HIV and AIDS and Wellness Strategic Plan. The support we received from UNAIDS during formulation and launching our 2022/26 HIV and

AIDS and Wellness Strategic Plan is immeasurable. The plan is a huge milestone and achievement for Parliament. It is a component of the broader Parliament Strategic Plan and it provides practical framework and structural approach in ensuring effective response to HIV and AIDS and general Wellness, especially through Legislation.

Areas of Future Partnership

Restructuring -Parliament embarked on an institutional restructuring process and one of the objectives is to establish and align systems and processes in order to provide effective and efficient support to departments and Committees. This will result in more effective and intentional approaches in addressing topical matters including HIV and AIDS. This activity or activities will require a lot of capacity building for Parliamentarians and staff.

As we are going to be welcoming new Parliamentarians, comprehensive induction and capacity building on passing laws, representation and oversight is a priority. Parliament is a key institution where a missed opportunity or a misinformed vote is detrimental to society. This means our partnership with UNAIDS must be scaled-up as we plan for the induction on newly elected Parliamentarians and going forward.

Outgoing Country Director Ms. Rose Craigie

I trust His Excellency the Rt Hon. Prime Minister, as you met him yesterday, expressed the country's appreciation to have had a person of your calibre in the Kingdom, doing what you did in such a short period.

Parliament was short of providing office space for you because you were visible in all our activities as if your main responsibility was Parliament. Seeing you in every corner of the country, equally energetic and committed to national, regional and community activities was formidable. We can only wish you all the best in your next assignment and as we have become global citizens, we hope we will meet again.

National Elections

It would amiss of me not to share our excitement about the forthcoming elections as I have already mentioned above that Parliament will soon be welcoming new Parliamentarians.

Eswatini are looking forward to participating in shaping their own through a very open and democratic process of electing their representatives. Their Majesties, the King and Queen Mother recently encouraged voting women into Parliament and this is commendable because most of the social ills we are faced with are related to lack of women empowerment. May I congratulate the both of you for breaking all the glass-ceilings and your achievements as women in leadership.

As I conclude, may I implore you to continue to be the true partner you have proven to be, a partner who will support this country even during a period of negative external forces against our system of government. We are very grateful and we look forward to more cooperation in future.

Let me now pose here and, once again, I welcome you to the Parliament of the Kingdom of Eswatini.