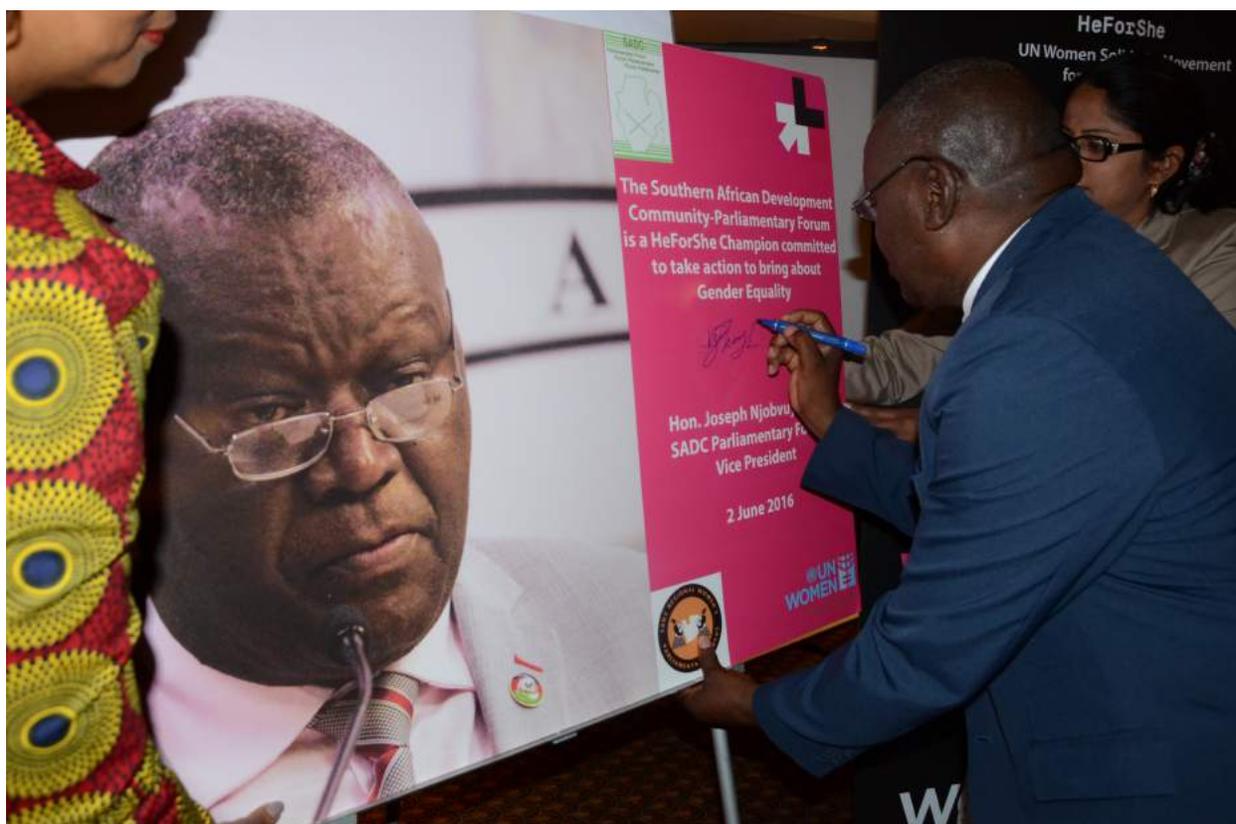


HeForShe gains momentum in the SADC Region

Swaziland: The Southern African Development Community-Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) Vice President, Hon Joseph Njobvuyalema, Secretary General, Dr. Esau Chiviya and several National Parliament Speakers within the SADC region signed up as HeForShe champions for Gender Equality on 2nd June 2016 at the Royal Swazi Sun Hotel in Ezwulini, Swaziland.



SADC-PF Vice President, Hon Joseph Njobvuyalema sign up as a HeForShe champion. Photo credit: UN Women/Martha Wanjala

UN Women Regional Office organized the sign up ceremony for Eastern and Southern Africa (ESARO) in partnership with the SADC-PF secretariat during the 39th Plenary Session of SADC-PF. The event was as a result of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UN Women's Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa (ESARO) and SADC-PF to partner in areas of mutual concern to enhance the two organizations' development efforts, as well as enhance SADC-PF's initiatives on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in political and socio-economic sectors in the SADC countries.



SADC-PF Vice President, Secretary General, Dr. Esau Chiviya sign up as a HeForShe champion. Photo credit: UN Women/Martha Wanjala

In his opening remarks, Hon Joseph Njobvuyalema, SADC-PF Vice President noted that one of SADC-PF’s strategic objective is to assist the National Parliaments within the SADC region to implement and domesticate the SADC protocol on Gender and development and various other United Nations Conventions and Resolutions that seek to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

“At SADC-PF, we recognize that beyond the intrinsic value of gender equality and women’s empowerment, investing in women’s rights and gender equality is critical to our socio-economic advancement, political stability and development..we work with our national parliaments and the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) to sharpen parliamentarians’ gender analyses and planning skills with the aim of promoting sustainable development and eradicating feminized poverty in the region.” Said Hon. Njobvuyalema.



Speaker of the House of Assembly of Swaziland Hon. Themba Msibi arrives at the sign-up event. Photo credit: UN Women/Martha Wanjala

Ms. Anne Githuku-Shongwe, UN Women Representative for South Africa Multi-Country Office pointed out that at our current rate of progress, we will close the educational gap by 2086, and achieve equal pay for women by 2089. *“The world cannot wait this long. By engaging our male counterparts in the fight for gender equality, we know we can bridge misconceptions and reach parity faster. Ultimately, this is not about women or men, it is about crafting a shared vision of human progress for all - about creating a solidarity movement between women and men for the achievement of gender equality,”* said Ms. Githuku-Shongwe.

Ms. Githuku-Shongwe also emphasized the need for monitoring and tracking of all HeForShe commitments made to ensure they are implemented and reflected in the parity reports. Sentiments echoed by the members of the Regional Women’s Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) from different National Parliaments within the SADC region.



Hon. Jacob Mundenda, Speaker of the Parliament of Zimbabwe after signing up as a HeForShe champion. Photo credit: UN Women/Martha Wanjala

While making her closing remarks, Hon. Francisca Domingo's Tomas (Chairperson-RWPC) said that the caucus will work with different stakeholders to ensure that the HeForShe movement is replicated in all SADC countries and urged all National Speakers to be HeForShe champions.

The sign up ceremony concluded with Ms. Githuku-Shongwe sharing with the RWPC a declaration by rural women and women smallholder farmer's organisations, civil society and media in the southern African region on their concerns about the impact of climate change on rural women smallholder farmers.

The 39th Plenary took a resolution to decentralize the campaign to each National Parliament, where it will be championed by each Speaker and Chairperson of the Senate, and HeForShe be a reporting item of each Plenary.



Ms. Anne Githuku-Shongwe, UN Women Representative for South Africa Multi-Country Office hands over the declaration to Hon. Francisca Domingo's Tomas (Chairperson-RWPC). Photo credit: UN Women/Martha Wanjala