



The Senate
Of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea



ASSECAA 11th Retreat , Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

September 26-27, 2024

Final Communiqué

We, the presidents/ Speakers and representatives of parliaments of member states of the Association of Senates, Shoora, and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World

(ASSECAA), have convened at the 11th Retreat of the Association, titled "**Enhancing Joint Parliamentary Action Among Global South Nations to Address Development and Environmental Challenges,**" which was organized by ASSECAA in collaboration with the Senate of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in Malabo, the capital of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, on the 26th and 27th of September 2024;

Expressing our profound gratitude to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the warm reception and generous hospitality accorded us;

Commending the Senate of Equatorial Guinea under the leadership of H.E Teresa Efua Asangono, as well as the Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECAA), chaired by H.E Ena'am Mayara, Speaker of the House of Councillors of the Kingdom of Morocco, for the kind invitation to and meticulous organization of this Retreat;

Extending our sincere greetings to the continental and regional parliamentary unions in Africa and the Arab World for their support of ASSECAA's initiatives;

Seizing this opportunity to express our utmost appreciation and immense gratitude to the President of the Pan-African Parliament H.E Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbira, H.E Adel Bin AbdulRahman Al Asoomi, President of the Arab Parliament, for attending the activities and proceedings of this meeting;

Highly appreciating and valuing the insights offered and discussions made by the Presidents/ Speakers and representatives of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World, as well as the studies and reports submitted during this Retreat;

Fulfilling our parliamentary role of contributing to the formulation of opinions , proposing legislative measures, and making recommendations to the summits of African and Arab leaders as well as government agencies and conferences in Africa, the Arab World and Latin America,



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regarding the various issues addressed during our Retreat, especially those related to regional integration and enhancing joint parliamentary action among Global South nations to tackle development and environmental challenges, in addition to promoting logistical factors to combat desertification and land degradation, while also addressing the prospects and challenges posed by artificial intelligence in the Global South;

We hereby express and call for :

- Affirming that African and Arab countries face numerous challenges that necessitate collective action, coordinated stances, and the strengthening of strategic partnerships across all economic, social, and humanitarian spheres. This collaborative effort aims to achieve mutual development, integration, and establish foundations of cooperation, solidarity, peace, stability, and prosperity.
- Parliaments should work together to enhance efforts and build bridges of cooperation at various levels, promoting consultation and intensifying joint meetings and initiatives between national parliaments and regional and continental parliamentary unions in Africa and the Arab world regarding strategic issues.
- It is imperative to harness all available resources to develop a common parliamentary agenda that effectively addresses current challenges and implements legislative measures and policies fostering strategic partnerships, achieving integration, and promoting sustainable development among Global South countries.
- It is essential to bolster the role of parliamentary diplomacy as a complement to governmental diplomatic efforts, strengthening cooperative ties between peoples across all domains. This includes fostering dialogue with regional and international parliaments, unions, and organizations to garner support for priority issues of interest to Arab and African countries.
- Governments in Global South countries are urged to articulate national strategies for South-South cooperation and establish dedicated national structures to facilitate this collaboration. Emphasis should be placed on enhancing joint economic cooperation, coordination, and solidarity at the bilateral level, alongside reinforcing regional integration mechanisms and avenues for inter-country cooperation. It is crucial that all stakeholders collaborate to eliminate obstacles hindering economic policies and the flow of trade and investment, in addition to fostering cooperation and solidarity in investments in continental and transcontinental infrastructure in such a way that ensures genuine integration and connectivity between African and Arab countries, positively impacting their economies.



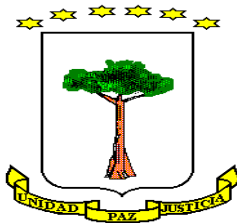
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- Global South governments should expand opportunities for the private sector to participate as a partner in South-South cooperation, leveraging its accumulated expertise in various fields such as technology, science, trade, and industry.

Given that development goals cannot be achieved without peace, and that there can be no peace without sustainable development, it is essential to build a culture of peace through respect for international law, the development of friendly relations between nations and parliaments, and the promotion of peaceful conflict resolution. Therefore, the participants emphasized the necessity of ending wars and resolving regional and international conflicts through peaceful means. In this context, they expressed their appreciation for His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain's call to convene an international conference on peace in the Middle East during the Arab summit hosted by Bahrain in May 2024.

Regarding artificial intelligence, participants recommended the following:

- Policymakers and stakeholders—including the private sector, educational institutions, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and civil society—should engage in collective efforts concerning the formulation of artificial intelligence legislation. They must collaborate to establish robust governance mechanisms relevant to AI. States should adopt an appropriate regulatory approach to address risks while maintaining a framework that protects privacy, data, and copyright, allowing for the use of publicly available information while respecting legitimate rights. Additionally, countries should contribute to developing international technical standards for AI, implementing national strategies, and enhancing the legislative environment to keep pace with rapid technological changes.
- Governments should develop new educational curricula for universities and schools that focus on technology aligned with advancements. Moreover, they should organize workshops and training programs to enhance youth skills in innovation and digital technology, preparing the workforce to mitigate the negative impacts of technological developments and AI on employment and social stability.
- There should be concerted efforts to support research and innovations in AI technologies and responsible practices aimed at promoting the use of these technologies to enhance economic development in Africa and the Arab world. This includes allocating financial resources to support research and development and fostering partnerships between academia and industry.
- It is vital to promote cooperation among Global South countries, as well as regional and international collaboration, to exchange knowledge and expertise on AI technologies, especially those that bring significant innovations in various fields such as agriculture, health, education, among others.



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Emphasis should be placed on the collective efforts of all countries, regional bodies, the technology community, civil society, and academia to develop regulatory frameworks that promote safe AI systems and protect against misuse. An integrated ethical framework should be adopted to address all matters related to ethical standards, alongside appropriate oversight mechanisms to supervise activities related to AI development. This is essential to ensure that these new technologies contribute positively to human development without compromising security and the ethical foundations of society, which are fundamentally rooted in freedom, equality, justice, and solidarity among individuals and social groups.

Regarding the issue of desertification, the participants recommended the following:

- Urge Arab and African governments to make more efforts to confront desertification, neutralize land degradation, mitigate drought, develop natural resources, and adopt strong environmental policies and a legislative framework to confront desertification. This can be done in partnership with specialized bodies and local communities. These policies should include enhancing the sustainability of agriculture, managing water resources, and preserving biodiversity. Arab and African governments should also work to implement the following strategies:
- Raise awareness among local communities and stakeholders about the risks of desertification and its impact on the environment and local communities, the importance of preserving the environment, rationalizing the use of water resources, and educating the population about the importance of protecting natural resources and adopting sustainable practices.
- Encourage sustainable agricultural practices, develop effective irrigation techniques, smart management of water resources and soil, and use biotechnology to rehabilitate degraded lands, improve soil fertility, improve agricultural techniques, and use organic and integrated agriculture.
- Enact laws and regulations that facilitate the transition to green energy. Also encourage investments in green economy sectors, and provide them with attractive incentives such as tax incentives, credit facilities and customs exemptions.
- Increase vegetation through implementing desert and arid area afforestation programs, including by planting trees adaptive to drought conditions.



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- **Combat sources of pollution.**

- Enhance cooperation and joint work between the international community, governments, parliaments, environmental institutions and non-governmental organizations through harmonious and coordinated efforts to deal with the issue of desertification and land degradation, through the exchange of knowledge, experiences and expertise, cooperation in the field of scientific research and the development of new technologies to combat desertification, in addition working together to implement joint projects to combat desertification, manage land, protect natural resources and enhance environmental sustainability.
- Parliaments , governments and communities play a significant vital role in combating desertification, through enacting laws and legislation aimed at combating desertification, and spreading awareness of the importance of preserving the environment. Cooperation on this issue should also be enhanced between governments, environmental institutions and non-governmental organizations. The local community plays an important role in preserving natural resources and implementing desertification control projects.
- -The participants commend the Green Middle East Initiative led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which aims to combat soil erosion, protect biodiversity, and mitigate the effects of climate change. They also express their appreciation for Saudi Arabia's hosting of the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) next December in Riyadh, marking the 30th anniversary of the Convention.

With regard to the issue of women's empowerment, the participants highly appreciated the accomplishments that have so far been made by the Network of Women Parliamentarians in Africa and the Arab World despite the fact that it has just been recently established. These included the signing by the Network of two agreements with both the Eurasian Women's Forum ,and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

In this regard, the participants recommend the following:

- Remove the social, cultural and economic obstacles that hinder women from performing their noble mission in terms of bringing about change and nation building by identifying priority and necessary policies and procedures to support women in Africa and the Arab world.

It's also imperative to provide education to women and children.



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- Encourage the inclusion of women in political, electoral, legal, and national governance processes, and take legislative measures to address the specific challenges women face in conditions of war and conflict.
- Involve women in training programs and workshops aimed at their political, social, and cultural empowerment, and encourage their participation in national, regional, and international activities. This includes coordinating with forums, networks, and global organizations working in the field of women's empowerment to enhance their initiative, competitive abilities, and to highlight their roles and influence in their local, regional, and global environments.
- Emphasize women's contributions to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as enhance their roles across various political, economic, and social spheres.
- Affirm women's involvement in the formulation of legislation and laws that support comprehensive development.
- The participants emphasized the importance of increasing women's representation in committees and organizations specializing in artificial intelligence.

At the conclusion of the Retreat, the participants expressed their sincere gratitude to the government and people of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, particularly its Senate, for the generous hospitality and warm reception extended to delegates during their stay in the country. They also expressed their wishes for further progress and prosperity for the people of Equatorial Guinea under the leadership of H.E. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo.

**Malabo, Republic of Equatorial Guinea,
September 27, 2024**