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Empowering the Pan-African Parliament to amplify the voices of the African citizens: PAP Day commemoration.

The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) commemorated 18 years since its inauguration as the first legislative body of the African Union on the 18th of March 2004. The commemorative event was held during the “PAP Day”, a day marked on every 18th March to serve as a reminder to African citizens of the potential of the Parliament, intended as a platform for people from all African states to be involved in discussions and decision-making on the problems and challenges facing the continent. The day is also meant to remind African leaders of their commitment to empower the continental representation of the peoples of Africa.

The 2022 PAP Day commemoration was convened under the theme: “Empowering the PAP to amplify the voices of the African citizens”. The Pan-African Parliament Day celebration reignites a conversation about the vision and purpose of the institution, which can be traced directly to the Pan-African ideals of cooperation and unity among African states. These ideals inspired the signing of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (the Abuja Treaty) on 3 June 1991, and the adoption of the Sirte Declaration of 1999.

The Sirte Declaration called for speedy establishment of the institutions provided for in the Abuja Treaty. The PAP was envisioned as a platform from which the African peoples, and not states or leaders, could be represented in the decision-making processes affecting the continent. The PAP Protocol enjoined the institution on among other things, to facilitate effective implementation of the AU’s policies and objectives.

Stakeholders, including Parliamentarians, Speakers of regional Parliaments, civil society organisations and media representatives, gathered at the launch of the PAP Day in 2021 were unanimous in their assessment that the integration of the African continent will only be achieved through constant interactions and involvement of the grassroots in the affairs of the AU.

Mr. Vipya HARAWA, Clerk of the PAP says that formal celebrations of the 2022 PAP Day will be held upon resumption of Parliamentary activities underpinned by the upcoming elections of the Bureau of the PAP. The event will include, among others, the launch of the PAP compendium of the 3rd Parliament resolutions, recommendations and declarations disseminated.

PAP is one of the nine organs of the AU with the mandate to promote economic and social integration through making laws. As it stands, its mandate extends to consultation, and playing an advisory and oversight role for all AU organs pending the ratification of its protocol.

In October 2021, the Executive Council of the African Union reiterated its call to Member States to sign and ratify the Protocol to the Constitutive Act of the African Union relating to the Pan-African Parliament (also known as the Malabo Protocol) adopted in 2014 by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The Malabo Protocol is intended to extend the powers of the PAP into a fully-fledged legislative organ. It requires a minimum of 28 countries to ratify it before it comes into force.

The Republic of Niger became the 13th AU Member state to have ratified the PAP Protocol in the recent past, joining Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Togo as the African countries that have so far heeded the call to empower the continental Parliament.

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