



AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL PARLIAMENTARIANS FORUM 2023: STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARLIAMENT AND THE SECURITY SECTOR

Information Note

- WHAT:** The Africa Center will hold an academic program for Southern African parliamentarians, their staff, and select defense and security officials to analyze current trends, challenges, and innovations in the work of legislatures to foster democratic and civilian control of the security sector. The roles of both parliamentarians and defense and security officials in oversight, accountability, and outreach processes will be discussed. Issues that are ripe for bridge-building between the security sector and parliamentarians will be explored, as well as practical ways to navigate tensions.
- WHERE:** Windhoek, Namibia
- WHEN:** 13-17 November 2023
- WHO:** The program will target 65 participants, comprised of 45 parliamentarians and staff as well as 15 senior security sector officials with duties to maintain relations with parliament. The following countries will be invited: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia. Each country will be asked to nominate four (4) participants: 2 parliamentarians, 1 clerk or staff, and 1 defense and security official who prepares and supports the Joint Chiefs, Minister of Defense, or others in their engagements with parliament. Two nominees in each delegation should be women, and nominees should include incumbent and opposition parties. Other invitees will include the SADC Parliamentary Forum, ECCAS Parliamentary Network, Pan African Parliament, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, AFRICOM's Office of Legal Counsel, the U.S Department of State's Global Peace Operations Initiative, and USAID's Center for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance.
- WHY:** While parliaments are key to achieving a healthy system of checks and balances that facilitates defense and security sector oversight, their work is also difficult in many African countries' strongly presidential systems. Legislators have the potential to

play critical security sector governance roles: overseeing security budgets and spending, helping to enhance security force transparency and accountability, and conducting constituent outreach to create people-centered security policies that reflect citizen interests and civil society expertise. African parliamentarians need knowledge, information, and vibrant working relationships with defense and security officials to excel in these roles. Frequently, however, neither parliamentarians nor the defense and security officials charged with legislative engagement are as closely networked or as mutually informed about each other's roles, responsibilities, and challenges as they could be. This hinders their ability to capitalize on common interests in using the defense and security sector governance process to build legitimacy with citizens; it also keeps officials from identifying practical ways to navigate tensions in the work that they do on defense and security oversight. This year's forum will catalyze peer learning on how to strengthen relationships between parliaments and the defense and security sector.

HOW: The forum will consist of plenary sessions, discussion groups, and a site visit. Innovations, good practices, and lessons learned will also be generated through a series of country-specific consultations between parliamentary and security officials, with conclusions presented in a comparative brief back. The program will be held in English, French, and Portuguese under a strict policy of non-attribution.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

1. Deepen understanding of parliamentary roles in providing checks and balances for democratic and civilian security sector governance and contextualize these roles in relation to those that security sector officials play vis-à-vis parliaments in the region.
2. Analyze how parliamentarians and their staff as well as defense and security officials can capitalize on synergies and navigate tensions in their work, particularly on issues like professionalism/ethics, budgets/strategy, and building community relationships.
3. Expand understanding of tools, techniques, and practices that African parliamentarians and security officials can use – both in concert and in tension – to enhance delivery of security to citizens through the 3As (ability, authority, and attitude).