

# SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

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## **MEDIA STATEMENT SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM STATEMENT ON TRAVEL BANS**

**WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA: Sunday, 28 November 2021** The Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum is cognisant that the Covid-19 pandemic is causing worldwide fears and tensions, especially with the upsurge of new virus variants.

While public health remains a priority, the Forum considers that there is a need to rely at all times on verified scientific and empirical data, such as those shared by the World Health Organisation (WHO), before imposing travel bans that may seem unjust or harsh for some countries. The need for international cooperation to share information buttresses the recent action of the SADC Group at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held from the 26th-30th November 2021 in Madrid, Spain, which called for greater equality in the procurement and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines.

This echoes the reflection made that nobody is safe until everybody is safe from Covid-19. Indeed, if vaccine equality was in place, the virus may have been long overwhelmed instead of mutating into more threatening variants in some countries.

The IPU General Debate unanimously debated this issue as an emergency Item, where all Parliaments of the world gathered. There is no doubt that policy makers, officials, as well as Parliamentarians from the SADC region are engaging counterparts to react to the travel ban and to find solutions for safe travel.

It is imperative that remedial measures be found, especially bearing in mind the human rights of travellers who are stalled in foreign destinations pending the re-opening of the flight routes back home. Perhaps the most important question currently is which vaccine would respond best to the new variants, and if this information is known, vaccine deployment strategies must be engaged to respond accordingly.

Travel bans are never favourable to the economy, whether it is the economy of the imposing country or the one of the affected country. Travel bans are also devastating to airline companies who are struggling to stay afloat and to rebuild after almost 2 years of travel slowdown.

It is thus important for bans to be imposed only based on verified and reliable information that has been preferably endorsed by the WHO.

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