

# **THE 7<sup>TH</sup> AFRICA COLLOQUIUM OF LEGAL COUNSEL TO PARLIAMENTS**

**19<sup>TH</sup> TO 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER, 2024**

**VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE**

**THEME: Law Making, Oversight and Innovation: The Centrality of Legal  
Offices in Legislatures**

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## **PATRON'S OPENING REMARKS**

**The Rt. Honourable Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Adv. J.F. N. Mudenda,**

**The President of the Colloquium, Ms. Elizabeth Hove,**

**The Secretary General of the Colloquium, Dr. Johnson Okello,**

**Esteemed colleagues and learned friends,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. It is both an honour and a privilege to address you this morning as the Patron of this esteemed Colloquium. The last time I attended this Colloquium was in the year 2015 in Mombasa, Kenya and it is exciting to see that the vision we nurtured back in 2011 is still alive and continues to grow.
2. As the inaugural Chairman of the Colloquium, I must pay tribute to successive chairs and Councils and the Secretariat who have kept our organization running. I also wish to pay homage to my first Organizing Committee, most of whom are attending this Colloquium, including Ms. Eunice Gichangi, Deputy Clerk in the Senate, Mr. Sheriffsam Mwendwa, Director Litigation and Compliance, in the National Assembly, and Mrs. Vane Akama, Director, Legal Services in the National Assembly.
3. I also take this moment to acknowledge the jurisdictions that have hosted the Colloquium over the years and, in so doing, have kept our dream alive. In this regard, I acknowledge the Parliament of Uganda, the Pan-African Parliament, the Parliament of Zanzibar and our present host, the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

4. I am also very proud of the accomplishments of our members who have gone on to achieve great things in their respective jurisdictions. To name but a few, Mr. Pius Biribwonoha, who is now the Solicitor General of Uganda, Ms. Nenelwa Mwihambi who is the first female National Assembly Clerk of the Republic of Tanzania, Mr. Jeremiah Ndombi, Deputy Clerk in the National Assembly of Kenya, Ms. Eunice Gichangi, Deputy Clerk in the Senate of Kenya, Mr. Mussa Kombo, Executive Secretary of the Zanzibar Commission for Lands, Ms. Cecilia Sikatele, Deputy Clerk in the National Assembly of Zambia, Ms. Tilly Likomwa, Assistant Clerk of the Parliament of Malawi and Dr. Johnson Okello, Director Legal Services in the Senate of Kenya and President of the Common Wealth Association of Legal Counsel. We are proud to be associated with you. Your achievements serve as a reminder of how illustrious the career of a parliamentary lawyer can be.
5. This 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Colloquium is being hosted in Zimbabwe, the land of the magnificent Victoria Falls and home to one of Africa's greatest civilizations, the Mwene Mutapa Empire, as such, a most fitting setting for this gathering. Just as the Mwene Mutapa Empire once unified the peoples and territories of Southern Africa through voluntary alliances and shared governance, our Colloquium similarly represents a convergence of legal expertise and perspectives from diverse jurisdictions for mutual growth, experience-sharing and learning.
6. This opening ceremony also falls on occasion of Kenya's Mashujaa, or Heroes Day, and to my fellow compatriots attending the Colloquium, though you are far from home, I can think of no better place to be than in Zimbabwe, a land of heroic and gallant people who, like Kenyans, took up arms and shed blood to liberate their land.
7. Ladies and gentlemen, this year's theme of the Colloquium, "*Law-making, Oversight, and Innovation: The Centrality of Legal Offices in Legislatures*," is especially timely. We are in an era marked by rapid technological advancements, economic downturns, climate change and the call for sustainability, shifting democratic spaces, and security threats. These complex challenges and opportunities, coupled with an informed and engaged citizenry which demands greater involvement and accountability, call for legal counsel's expertise in guiding our Legislatures to successfully navigate these times.
8. In this fast-changing political and legal landscape, I am reminded of the famous phrase, "*innovate or die*", attributed to Peter Drucker, the renowned public administration scholar. Ladies and gentlemen, innovation is no longer a choice but a necessity. This is especially true for us in legislative offices, where we must constantly find new ways of bringing efficiency and effectiveness in law-making and oversight.
9. The collaboration, experiences and networking this forum provides broaden our perspectives and impact our legislatures in a very practical way. I personally have

benefitted from reaching out to colleagues from the Colloquium when I have needed comparative perspectives and even learning and benchmarking opportunities for my staff.

10. In addition, the Nairobi Principles, adopted close to thirteen years ago, have continued to provide a framework for clear and widely accepted norms, ethical standards and best practices in parliamentary legal practice. Recent constitutional processes in the Parliament of Kenya and the central role played by in-house lawyers in shepherding those processes have vindicated the vision of the Colloquium. These processes highlighted the enduring relevance of the Nairobi Principles, particularly the principles of constitutionalism, autonomy, professionalism, and public service.
11. I am therefore excited by the range of topics presented in our programme as they will help us explore our ever-evolving roles and will enhance our awareness of emerging areas, including parliament/judiciary relations, post-legislative scrutiny, and the application of artificial intelligence in legislative business.
12. I also take note of the topic “*Working as Legal Counsel in Parliament: Emerging Issues, Challenges, and Experiences*,” as it offers a platform for sharing insights on recent events in various Parliaments as they relate to the roles of Legal Counsel. I would urge the Council to retain it in future programmes as it provides an excellent opportunity for Counsel from designated jurisdictions to share novel or complex questions they have recently encountered and how they dealt with them.
13. As we exchange ideas on new ways to innovate and strengthen our Legislatures, let us also take time to reflect on opportunities for expanding the reach of the Colloquium. When we started the Colloquium, we had a vision of bringing together Legal Counsel serving in Legislatures in the entire world. Africa was just the start. With the success we have achieved, I am confident that the dream of a Global Colloquium of Legal Counsel to Parliaments is closer than ever.
14. As I conclude, I wish to reiterate that I am greatly honoured to be your Patron. I want to assure you that the Parliament of Kenya remains fully committed to supporting this initiative, and we are pleased to continue hosting the Secretariat of the Colloquium and to provide any other support within our means to ensure that the Colloquium thrives.
15. Once again, it is an honour to address you this morning, and I wish you a most fruitful engagement. Thank you.

**J.M. NYEGENYE, CBS**

**CLERK OF THE SENATE / PARLIAMENTARY, SERVICE COMMISSION  
PATRON OF THE AFRICA COLLOQUIUM FOR LEGAL COUNSEL TO  
PARLIAMENTS.**