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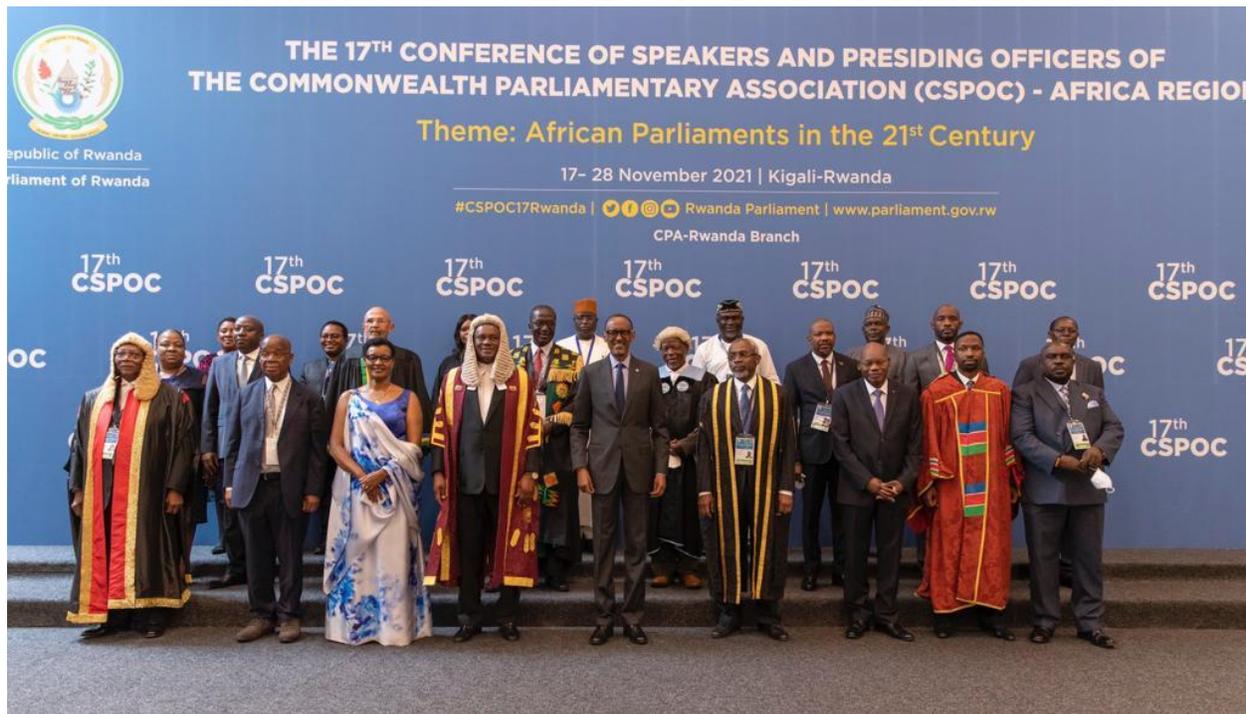


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**PRESS RELEASE**

**CPA AFRICA REGION RECOGNIZES ABASS BUNDU AS PRESIDENT DESIGNATE**



At the Kigali Convention Centre on Wednesday 24/11/2021, the Speaker of Sierra Leone Parliament, Rt. Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu was recognized as President Designate for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Africa Region, during the official opening of the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers Africa Region by President of the Republic of Rwanda, Paul Kagame.

In his remarks, Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya, Rt. Hon. Justin B.N Muturi thanked President Kagame for honouring the Conference with his presence and the people of Rwanda for the warm reception accorded to delegates since their arrivals to their country that could best be described as "a thousand hills". He also recognized the transformative leadership of President Kagame that has led to the realization of strides in political, and socio-economic development of Rwanda and the Region at large. He also commended President Kagame's commitments to the promotion of women's empowerment and environmental awareness

which has made Rwanda one of the outstanding countries in our Continent. Thanking President Kagame for his commitment to CPA, he said he had built lasting networks with Parliamentary Leadership across the Continent. Speaking on the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, he said it has exposed the vulnerability of African Governments in terms of their abilities to adequately and effectively deal with the external shocks resulting from COVID-19. He said limitations in health financing were far below the 15% of annual budget agreed on by Heads of State in AU countries in 2001 according to the Abuja Declaration. In order to combat the pandemic, he said needed resources for health, education and women's empowerment were reallocated and that some of the achievements made under the SDGs were reversed, and Africa was left on its own to contain the virus. He said, the more reason for the nurturing of a concept of collective self-reliance for the promotion of Africa's resilience in similar situations.

Submitting on successful virtual and in-person meetings this year amidst COVID-19, he said implementation of those resolutions would contribute to the development of the Continent. Speaking on judicious and fair handling of proceedings for the benefit of the people, he emphasized the need for Parliaments to maintain close relations with the people, whom he said wield the power of sovereignty. Speaking on oversight and holding government to account, he said next year Kenya and other countries would go to the polls for the renewal of mandate, and stressed the need for free, fair, transparent elections and peaceful transition and transfer of power.

Speaker, Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of Rwanda, Rt. Hon. Donatille Mukabalisa thanked President Kagame for his attendance despite his tight schedules. She said the theme of the Conference was deliberately a wake up call to review, readjust procedures, and share experiences for the realization of socio-economic transformation in the Continent. Speaking on shared values and principles of the Commonwealth Nations and People, she spoke on the need for consensus, common action, responsiveness, inclusiveness, legitimacy, transparency and accountability. In furtherance, she said Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers Conference has always been a great platform for MPs to actively contribute to the management and handling of continental and other global issues affecting the world.

President of the Republic of Rwanda, Paul Kagame during the official opening, whilst welcoming delegates, he said at the beginning of the pandemic, many African countries took the lead on the response with support from their Parliaments. He commended MPs for the role they played at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking on recovery efforts, he said Parliaments still need to be at the forefronts of building Africa's resilience against mainly health and other threats.

He suggested four ideas on how to make progress and called on Parliaments to ratify the African Medicines Agency Treaty which has entered into force with the view of ensuring that vaccines of high quality are locally produced, that legislatures should be the driving force for the implementation of the African Continental and Free Trade Agreement and Paris Climate

Accord requiring enabling legislations to put them into effect should be a priority and provision of budgetary allocation for the attainment of SDGs and AU Agenda 63. On health, he observed that there was too much dependence on its financing, adding that the pandemic had exposed Africa's vulnerability and reversed some of the gains it had made on the SDGs. To get back on track, President Kagame spoke on the need for working together with a sense of urgency by using shared knowledge, skills and resources with one another in respect of multiplicity.

Rt. Hon. Amos Masondo gave the vote of thanks and spoke about African unity, respect for human rights, and the promotion of democracy and good governance for the development of the Continent.

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