



REPORT 6 OF 2014

REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, PETITIONS AND MEMBERS' LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL OF THE 5TH MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE: RELIGIOUS PARLIAMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa empowers the Legislative arm of the state, particularly the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature with responsibilities inclusive of Law-making and Executive Oversight. Section 118 indicates that the legislature in executing its responsibilities must involve the public. As part of the mechanism, noting that public involvement in the Legislative process must find expression in all committees and activities of the Legislature, the Legislature has established a Select Committee on public participation, petitions and members' legislative proposals hereinafter referred to as the Committee to intensify public involvement in the Legislative Activities.

The Committee, in line with its delegated function, presides over sectorial parliaments. One of the Sectorial Parliaments which the Committee presided over is the Religious Parliament. The Legislature has therefore delegated the Committee to conduct a Religious Parliament.

1.1 THEME OF THE RELIGIOUS PARLIAMENT

The Theme of the Religious Parliament is: "Working together with our Religious communities to improve lives of our people"

1.2 OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the Religious Parliament were outlined as follows:

- (i) To do oversight on matters affecting the sector.
- (ii) To educate and share information with the religious communities of the province.
- (iii) To facilitate participation of the religious sector in evaluating progress made thus far in entrenching democratic values within our communities.

2. METHOD OF WORK

The project team conducted three districts workshops in preparation for the Religious Parliament. The Committee met on 12 November 2014 to discuss the state of readiness to host the Religious Parliament; subsequently, the Committee hosted the Religious Parliament on 14 November 2014 at the Legislature Chamber in Mbombela. The event focused on drawing the religious communities from three

districts in the province, i.e. Ehlanzeni, Nkangala and Gert Sibande. Each district was represented in all the debates, deliberations and commissions of the parliament.

3. INPUTS BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER

The Hon. Speaker, Mr.s. BT Shongwe started by stressing the important role played by religion and pastors in nation-building, as some of them are well trained around God's work. She further indicated that in South Africa everyone is allowed to praise God in his or her way and language of choice.

The African National Congress, which is the ruling party, had pastors in leadership when it was established, and was started in church. The pastors are also role models, marriage counsellors and they are also of great help to our people in many ways. The elders of the church are very important and respected.

The National Development Plan as the vision of our government also needs the support of different religious formations, thus the Legislature will also conduct workshops around the province of Mpumalanga on the Development Plan.

She urged the priests to invite politicians to their churches, and pray for all politicians working in Mpumalanga Legislature to able to fulfil their mandate as elected representatives of the people.

She also encouraged priests to write petitions to the Legislature about all issues affecting their communities, such as houses, water, roads and electricity, and also support all those people living in poverty.

Church members also need to learn to open their hands to assist others and not discriminate them. She thanked all participants present at the Religious Parliament for the good work that they are doing.

4. COMMISSIONS' INPUTS

During the Religious Parliament the commissions gave reports on issues affecting the religious and general communities. These issues included:

4.1. On Celebrating 20 years of democracy

The Commission noted the following:

- Provision of grants appreciated
- The cognition and safeguarding the rights of children appreciated in Isizulu – "ligotshwa lisemanzi".
- Houses built within such a short space of time appreciated,
- Appreciated that the Liquor Act that has been passed
- Early pension age appreciated
- Disability grant appreciated
- Ill-health grant appreciated

- School nutrition programme appreciated
- Social grants appreciated

4.2. The Challenges:

- Under-age parents getting grants and are abused
- Contraception for the under-age children
- Religious and guidance education at schools discontinued
- Schools prayers assembly and opening points/activities discontinued
- School children no longer achieving good marks
- No monitoring on grants provided
- No community developmental projects are given to churches
- Banishing of corporal punishment
- Reduced places of worships, increased taverns due to liquor act
- Churches should not pay for the sites to build churches

4.3. The Recommendations:

- There must be monitoring mechanisms on grants provided to beneficiaries.
- Religious leaders to be given responsibility to raise their kids as they believe
- Budget to be created for people who contribute positively in lives of the people within communities.
- Government to consider subsidising churches on community development programmes.
- There is a need to working together with Love Life, in fighting the scourge of HIV and Aids.

4.4. On regenerating the morals of society in contemporary communities

- Home is where education should start.
- Parents should not give the responsibility of bringing up children to teachers
- Greetings among community members.
- Men should learn to be providers within a family.
- Fathers should pay back the grant money given to their children by the government once they get employment.
- There is a need to revisit the issues of corporal punishment (considering references like the Proverbs in the Bible)

- Early child-hood marriages, vulgar language, sexual activities in front of the children should be discouraged at all costs.
- Men should be taught around the damages caused by the phenomenon of the “Ben 10s and Sugar Daddies”
- Women should be encouraged to remember their place within a family arrangement, this notwithstanding the basic human rights.

4.5. The rights in religions

- There is a need to appreciate the rights of every religion to be practised within society.
- Government should put in place mechanisms to protect the rights of all the regions.
- Religions other than Christianity like the Islam are discriminated when it comes to sites allocation within the local municipality areas.
- All the churches must be registered with government.
- The religious desks must be established to be responsible for registering churches within the different spheres of government.
- There is a need to urgently put an effort towards the revival and strengthening of the Mpumalanga Council of Churches.
- It must be an offence for a pastor to preach without a recognised licence.
- Pastors from outside South Africa must have work permits when they come to do work in the country.
- To give permission to the youth to use the community halls to praise God
- To support those orphanages of parents who come from outside South Africa

5. FINDINGS

The Committee made the following findings:

- The Mpumalanga Council of Churches is not functioning as it is expected to be.
- There are not enough sites that are allocated for the construction of churches within the Local Municipalities.
- There are pastors from outside the countries that are doing criminal activities in their churches.
- The Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM) is not properly supported to discharge its functions within society.

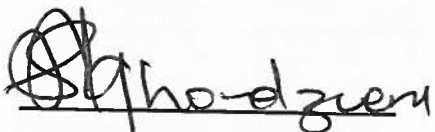
6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommended the House to resolve that:

- The Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation must assist to revive the Mpumalanga Council of Churches and South African Council of Churches.
- The local municipalities must involve churches in their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) processes.
- The Department of Home Affairs and Department of Safety, Security and Community Liaison must do courtesy and unannounced visits to all churches.
- The Department of Culture, Sports and Recreation, and the Department of Education should promote, educate and facilitate campaigns on the right to religion and free worship.

7. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson of the Select Committee on Public Participation, Petitions and Members' Legislative Proposals thanked Honourable Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature, Honourable Members, and Legislature staff for their contribution to the success of Religious Parliament of 2014. She also thanked officials from the Office of the Premier, Department of Health, and Department of Social Development together with the political parties and the religious community for their meaningful participation and contribution in the Religious Parliament.



HON J.L. NGHONDZWANI

**CHAIRPERSON: SELECT COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, PETITIONS AND MEMBERS
LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS**

04/09/2015

DATE