



شبكة المعلومات البرلمانية الأفريقية
Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network
Réseau d'informations parlementaires africaines

Charter

Preamble

Considering the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society held in two phases in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005;

Acknowledging the resolutions of the Pan African Parliament inviting African assemblies to strengthen inter-parliamentary cooperation, especially through information and communication technologies, for improving coordination of information exchange, capacity building and collaborative development;

Taking into account the outcome and recommendations of the World e-Parliament Report 2008 issued by the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union;

Recognizing the importance of establishing an institutional mechanism for sharing knowledge, experiences and practices among parliamentary administrations of African assemblies to better meet their representative, legislative and oversight responsibilities;

Acknowledging that to ensure the institutional strengthening of parliamentary assemblies it is critical to sustain the professional development of parliamentary officials;

Building upon the results of the Conference held in Abuja, Nigeria, in March 2007, on these matters;

We, the Speakers and Presidents of African assemblies, do hereby resolve to form an African-wide mechanism named Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network (APKN).

Article 1 Mission

The mission of the APKN shall be to:

- support the work of African assemblies by establishing mechanisms and procedures for exchanging information, ideas, experience and practices in all areas of parliamentary administration of common interest;
- strengthen cooperation among parliamentary services for capacity building and staff training; and
- collaborate on technology development and implementation to serve parliamentary functions.

Because of their importance to parliaments, the APKN shall give special attention to the areas of:

- legislative processes
- information and research services
- information and communication technologies and tools
- communication and public information

The APKN shall cooperate with other networks dealing with the exchange of information among parliaments in Africa and at the international level.

Article 2 Composition

The members of the APKN are:

- The Pan African Parliament and all regional parliamentary assemblies and forums in Africa wishing to be members of the APKN, as determined by their Speaker or President or by their governing body.
- All national parliamentary assemblies of African countries wishing to become members of the APKN, as determined by the Speaker or President of the Assembly or by their governing body.
- The APKN may cooperate with non-African parliamentary assemblies by granting observers' status.

Article 3 Structure and organization

Plenary

The APKN operates under the authority of the Speakers and Presidents of APKN member assemblies. Speakers and Presidents, or their delegated representatives, will meet in plenary every two years. The plenary shall approve the reports of activities and the strategic plan of action of the APKN as presented by the Executive Committee, and set new priorities and goals. The plenary shall approve requests for new membership and grant observer status to requesting non-members.

Executive Committee

For its functioning, the APKN shall establish an Executive Committee composed of five Secretaries General, identified by the Speakers and Presidents of member assemblies.

The Executive Committee shall represent the five African regions, namely, North, West, Central, East and Southern Africa, and shall serve for the tenure of two years.

The members of the Executive Committee shall elect among themselves the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson.

Under the guidance of the Chairperson, the Executive Committee shall have the following duties:

- formulate the policies of the APKN
- monitor the annual activities of the APKN and propose mechanisms to benchmark its effectiveness
- approve the budget of the APKN
- take such measures as to ensure the proper management of the APKN

The Executive Committee shall meet at least once a year in conjunction with the meeting of the Council of Coordinators, and as often as necessary at the request of three of its members.

The Executive Committee shall report to the Plenary and shall take decisions by the majority of votes.

Council of Coordinators

The Speakers and Presidents of each member assembly shall appoint a senior parliamentary official as APKN Coordinator to represent the assembly in the Council of Coordinators of the APKN.

The APKN Coordinators shall have direct access to their respective Speakers and Presidents and Secretaries General in dealing with APKN matters and shall receive the delegation of authority to coordinate the activities of the parliamentary officials in their assembly who are requested to play an active role in the APKN activities.

The APKN Coordinators shall be responsible for interacting with the APKN Secretariat throughout the year and for initiating, organizing, and supporting knowledge-related activities in their assembly.

In particular, APKN Coordinators shall be responsible for:

- coordinating the systematic collection of information and lessons from the experiences of their assembly and disseminating them to other members of the APKN;
- promoting a knowledge driven learning culture and raising awareness among parliamentary officials about the benefits of the adoption and use of modern tools for information management and knowledge sharing;
- supporting the exchange of information and documents among members by responding in a timely way to requests for information and documents from the Secretariat;
- initiating requests for information and documents on behalf of their assembly through the APKN Secretariat.

The APKN Coordinators will meet once a year in the Council of Coordinators, chaired by the Secretary of the APKN.

In cooperation with the Secretary of the APKN, the Council of Coordinators shall be responsible for the drafting of the report of the activities and the strategic plan of action of the APKN, as well as for supporting the organization of the activities of the APKN.

The report and the strategic plan shall be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval, and subsequently by the Executive Committee to the Plenary for endorsement.

The Council of Coordinators shall take decisions by consensus. If consensus is not reached, the matter shall revert to the Executive Committee.

Secretariat

The APKN shall have a small Secretariat hosted by a member assembly to be identified by the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee shall appoint a Secretary to lead the APKN Secretariat.

The Secretary shall be supported by parliamentary officials and by technical and support staff as needed and as resources permit.

The Secretary shall be responsible to the Executive Committee for the following duties.

- heading the Secretariat and administering its affairs;

- acting as Secretary to the Executive Committee;
- implementing the decisions of the Executive Committee;
- coordinating and executing the activities and programmes of the APKN, in cooperation with the Council of Coordinators.

Article 4

Working modalities

The APKN shall promote cooperation among its membership through the exchange of information and documentation, production of joint studies, and the organization of seminars of significant common interest.

The APKN Secretariat shall facilitate the above by establishing a virtual forum for the Council of Coordinators, through which requests of information from members will be channelled, documents exchanged and activities coordinated.

The APKN shall also promote the production of shared training materials and training services, including e-learning modules, training sessions and courses, and mechanisms for providing continuing education with the aim of sustaining the capacity of parliamentary officials and increasing their level of knowledge and expertise.

When it considers that a given area requires a continuity of activities, the Council of Coordinators may decide on the appointment of a Coordinator responsible for promoting close cooperation among the members in that area.

On a proposal from the Secretary, in cooperation with the Council of Coordinators, and to meet specific terms of reference, the Executive Committee may decide to establish specific thematic working groups composed of parliamentary officials from member assemblies. The Executive Committee shall determine their duration and the working group coordinators.

Article 5

Financing

Member assemblies shall meet the cost of participation of their officials in APKN activities, as well as the cost of communication with the APKN Secretariat.

Member assemblies undertaking or organizing activities of the APKN shall bear the costs of such activities.

The operating costs of the Secretariat of the APKN shall be covered by the budget of the host assembly.

Member assemblies may voluntarily contribute resources to the APKN Secretariat.

Upon the opinion of the Executive Committee, the APKN Secretariat may accept outside contributions and donations from non-member institutions to support its functioning and activities related to its programme of work.

Article 6

Operational aspects

The founding members of the APKN are the parliamentary delegations who attended the Conference in Abuja, Nigeria on 20 March 2007 or those present in Cairo this 5th day of June

2008. The APKN shall become operational after a minimum of ten assemblies have signed for membership within six months from this date.

Article 7
Amendment of the Charter

The responsibility of the revision of the Charter shall rest with the plenary of the APKN member assemblies.