APLESA Report 2008-2009

by Simon Joseph Engitu

Presented to the IFLA Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section
Prepared by Simon Joseph Engitu, Chairperson

Association of Parliamentary Libraries in Eastern and Southern Africa (APLESA).
Secretariat Parliament of Uganda- Kampala- Uganda

Background
The strategic vision of the Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Eastern and Southern Africa (APLESA) is directed by its Vision and Mission.

The Vision of APLESA is “to be an Association of excellence, advancing inter-parliamentary library co-operation within Eastern and Southern Africa.”
The APLESA Mission is “to enable Parliaments, through networking and information resource sharing, to make informed decisions.”

The objectives of APLESA are provided for in the APLESA constitution, Article III, section 1-4. The objectives are:

To promote co-operation and resource sharing among members Parliaments (APLESA);
To promote communication and networking among APLESA;
To promote capacity building among members;
To promote best services in service delivery.

The origin of APLESA dates back to 1986 when a suggestion was made for an interim committee to constitute an interest group of parliamentary librarians as an organ of the Standing Conference of Eastern and Southern Africa Librarians (SCECSAL). Particularly the committees was to comprise those who were able to attend SCECSAL conferences so that they could avail themselves and meet as a distinct group in order to share experiences and compare notes on parliamentary issues. This idea was given support by other regional parliamentary associations and hence, in August 1990 when it was introduced at the Satellite meeting of the IFLA section on Libraries and Research services for parliaments and at the main meetings of IFLA in Oslo and Stockholm respectively, a lot of encouragement to spearhead its formation was given by the following:

Association of Parliamentary Librarians in Canada (APLIC)
Association of Parliamentary Librarians in Australasia (APLA)
Association of Parliamentary Librarians in Asia and the Pacific (APLAP)

Parliament of Zimbabwe did a lot of work between 1990 and 1993. Funds had to besought for the consultation visits to parliaments of Kenya, and Namibia to be made. International Development Research Centre (IDRC) provided funds for the feasibility study that was carried out in March 1992 where the parliament of Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia were visited.

A steering committee was thereafter established to plan the establishment of the network
of parliamentary librarians in eastern and southern Africa which later came to be known as APLESA. The committee members included:

R.R Mwale of Zambia, Chairman
P.A Ntomola of Tanzania, Vice Chairman
W.H.C Gurure, Co-ordinator
B.B Liyawo of Malawi, Vice Co-ordinator.

APLESA was then established in Zimbabwe in a meeting that took place between 11th and 13th October, 1994 with the aim to serve as a forum for professional networking and resource sharing amongst parliamentary libraries in the sub-region.

During the inaugural meeting in Harare, elections were held to fill the vacant positions of the APLESA Executive. The following were elected:

Ms. Tembi Chalabase Mtine (Zambia), Chairperson
Mr. Ntoloma P.A (Tanzania), Vice Chairperson
Mr. Liyawo B.B (Malawi), Secretary
Ms. Molebatsi (Botswana), Vice Secretary
Mr. Songoro (Kenya), Committee Member
Mr. Masawi (Zimbabwe), Committee Member.

Since then, APLESA has had the following Chairperson namely:

Ms. Tembi Mtine - 1994/98
Mr. Raliile Donovan T. - 2000/02
Ms. Butale Florence - 2002/03
Ms. Mwakio Grace - 2003/09
Mr. Engitu Simon Joseph - 2009 to date

Current state of APLESA

Having taken about 6 years since APLESA held its last annual conference in 2003 hosted by the Kenya National Assembly, the APLESA activities had somewhat stagnated. The Parliament of Uganda which hosts the APLESA Secretariat considered hosting APLESA annual conference for the second time having done the same in 2002. It is the first member of APLESA to host the APLESA conference twice since APLESA was formed in 1994.

Thanks go to the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) for funding some of the activities during the 10th APLESA conference. The intervention by the Parliament of Uganda in regard to hosting annual APLESA conferences in particular was timely. We thank Parliament of Uganda and INASP for their support.

To date APLESA membership has reached 15 parliaments namely Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Namibia, Swaziland, East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), Angola and Mozambique and Ethiopia. We have also received a communication from the Pan African Parliament (PAP), Burundi and Rwanda indicating their intention to join APLESA. We are reprocessing their invitations for them to join.
As mentioned above, challenges of stagnation of APLESA activities reduced enthusiasm of some members. The current APLESA Executive is doing what its best to revamp the members’ participation and enthusiasm.

The eligible member countries are those within the SADC[1] region, the East African Community and those in the Horn of Africa including but not limited to Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea. In addition, the islands of Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Reunion are also eligible. However, quite a number of these have not joined the Association yet.

During the 10th APLESA Conference and Meeting in Kampala in May 2009, a number of decisions were made. A new APLESA Executive was elected. The new line-up is as follows:
Simon Joseph Engitu, Chairperson
Esther Kamau, Vice Chairperson
Fanwell Banda, Secretary
Marriane C. Gei-Khoibes, Member
Maxwell Banda, Member

The APLESA Treasurer Mr. Rugambwa Innocent was retained.

In addition, the new composition for the APLESA working committees is as follows:

a. Constitution Committee
Innocent Rugambwa (Uganda), Chairperson
Maria J. (Angola), Member
Manuel Bembele, Member

b. Training and Capacity Development Committee
T.C. Mtine (Zambia), Chairperson
Fanwell Banda (Zambia), Member
Esther Kamau (Kenya), Member

b. Marketing and Communication Committee
This committee came up after a suggestion to combine the Marketing Committee and the Communication / Website Committee
Simon Joseph Engitu (Uganda), Chairman
Julio da Silva (Mozambique), Member
Esther Nxumalo (Swaziland), Member
Maxwell Banda (Malawi), Member
Marianne Gei-Khoibes (Namibia), Member

Other issues that were resolved include:
The APLESA website to be re-activated and production of APLESA Newsletter to resume.
The new Executive should open a local APLESA account instead of waiting to accumulate foreign currency to enable the opening of the foreign account. Members observed that in the long run, a foreign account would be too expensive to operate.
The Marketing and Communication Committee to intensify the pursuit for possible funders for the APLESA activities. APLESA proposed revised annual subscription, membership and conference registration to be US$ 200, US$100, and US$50 respectively.

The hosting of the APLESA Conferences and Meetings to be open for competitive bidding. Hence the following countries were selected to host the conferences and meetings in the years indicated according to decreasing preference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority/ Choice</th>
<th>Parliament</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>EALA</td>
<td>2012</td>
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**Recommendations**

A number of recommendations were made that the new APLESA Executive are supposed to implement and these included the following:

1. adoption of a uniform library system notably the Koha Integrated Library System that can enable creation of a Union catalogue for APLESA region among others;
2. re-activation of APLESA website and production of APLESA Newsletter. Members were collectively given the mantle to take-up the matter to establish if anyone of their parliaments can host the website and whoever comes up with the solution first communicates to before the end of June 2009;
3. the APLESA secretariat to urgently open a local APLESA account instead of waiting to accumulate foreign currency to enable the opening of the foreign account. Members observed that in the long run, a foreign account would be too expensive to run;
4. the hosting of APLESA Conferences and Meetings be open for competitive bidding to avoid failures in hosting the said conferences and meetings like it was the case between 2003 and 2009;
5. need for training of Library and Research staff on Access to Information, follow-up of which the
International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) has already invited selected beneficiaries from the APLESA region;
6. APLESA Executive and the Secretariat to implement the activities approved during the APLESA conference and meeting 2009;
7. The new Executive to implement the revised annual subscription, membership and conference registration fees;
8. AGM to decide on how funds collected for APLESA will be spent.

Achievements
APLESA was able to hold the 10th Annual conference and General Meeting which culminated into the election of the new APLESA Executive.
The new Executive has started implementing the recommendations made during the 10th APLESA Conference and Meeting of May 25-29 May 2009. APLESA has opened a Barclay account in Kampala- Uganda.
Negotiations are going on with possible hosts and funders for the APLESA website. Issues of the website address are being raised. Many members want to retain the original URL www.aplesa.org. The issue of hosting of the APLESA annual conferences has been agreed and is now open for competitive bidding. The current winner of the 2010 hosting bid is Malawi Parliament. The APLESA Chairman has already officially communicated this information to the Clerk to Parliament of Malawi.
Implementation of the revised annual subscription, Membership and conference registration fees is expected to take effect from the year 2010.

Challenges
The number one most challenge is inadequate funding given the activities that APLESA plans to undertake. For example, the issue of the APLESA website wouldn’t have been a big issue if funds were available.

The training during the 10th APLESA Conference and Meeting focused on enhancing the enthusiasm of the delegates and at the same time equipping them with effective leadership skills and hence improve on their Confidence, Self Esteem, Communication and Leadership. There are still many challenges that members face in those areas though it was agreed that some of them could be addressed by ensuring that the flow of information by members be taken apriority by all members.

[1] SADC is abbreviation for Southern Africa Development Cooperation.