



Technical Brief 1:

Africa Parliamentary Research & Information Management Association

APRIMA³⁶

The **APRIMA intends to become** a network to foster cooperation and exchange of information between parliamentary libraries, research departments and IT departments of the African Parliaments.

What is the APRIMA

The **APRIMA** is a cooperative body operating under the aegis of the Pan African Parliament. It is an international network of African Parliamentary research and documentation departments. It brings together officials responsible for information gathering and dissemination and the preparation of legislation on one side, and people involved in ICTs and knowledge management on the other side.

The goal is to facilitate contacts and exchanges between the officials of member parliaments which will be of benefit to all. The ever widening international dimensions of parliamentary activities and concerns render it necessary to strengthen exchanges between African parliamentary assemblies in an organised and effective way. Sharing experiences, learning from best practices and promoting cooperation can enhance the skills and capacities of parliaments in the overall policy process by enabling the legislature to act more independently through offering additional options for consideration in policy debate.

The **APRIMA** is meant to provide a structure for facilitating cooperation and exchange of information and best practices among African Parliaments and also for collaborating with similar structures like the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) with its more the 15 years of experience.

Rationale

The experience of the ECPRD has confirmed the importance and potentialities that initiatives like APRIMA can bring in improving the quality of legislation and as a virtual centre for the sharing of parliamentary data and knowledge management techniques.

Membership

APRIMA, will develop under the aegis of the Pan African Parliament, and will seek the membership of all Parliamentary Assemblies of Africa. In the case of parliaments having two chambers, each chamber could become a member in its own right. Parliaments outside Africa wishing to cooperate in the work are also welcome with the special status of guest or observer.

Each member assembly should appoint a senior official to act as correspondent. The correspondent is the foremost point of contact for the member assembly and, as such, should have access to the Secretary-General/Clerks and must be in a position to coordinate the contributions given by the officials of his or her chamber to APRIMA. The success of APRIMA largely depends on the input provided by the correspondents.

Administrative structures

Conference of Speakers

The Conference of Speakers, consisting of the Presidents or Speakers of parliamentary assemblies, of members and special guests, is the supreme authority for the APRIMA and meets every second year.

³⁶ Name and acronym will be eventually agreed by the participating Parliaments, this is just a working proposal.



Secretaries-General

The Secretaries-General have administrative responsibility for the activities of the Association and these are discussed when they meet during the Conference of Speakers.

Director and Secretary

They are appointed by the Clerk of the Pan African Parliament. These officials, who work for the Centre in addition to their normal duties, are responsible for the day-to-day running of the APRIMA, including coordinating of the planned activities of APRIMA.

Conference of Correspondents

The Conference of Correspondents is the annual meeting of correspondents at which the activities of the APRIMA are reviewed, discussed and planned and also strategic policy decisions are taken.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee comprises the Director and three correspondents appointed by the Conference of Correspondents in order to ensure the continuity of work between annual meetings. It meets at least twice a year.

ARIMA's Secretariat should be provided by officials of the Pan Africa Parliament, with the support of the Programme.

Agenda

APRIMA will organize working groups and/or seminars to embrace specific subject areas, viz. libraries, thesaurus, informatics, research and macroeconomic research, et. These events will be organised as planned at the annual meeting of correspondents, though Parliaments at their own initiative may host events with the approval of the APRIMA. Seminars can be on any subject of common interest to parliaments. The structure of a seminar will depend on the subject under consideration and the wishes of the host parliament. External speakers may be invited, or the meeting may be restricted to internal debate. Following the seminar, it may be decided to issue the contributions and the conclusions as a publication.

It is foreseen that the issues of the development of libraries, documentation centres, research departments and support services to MPs in the context of the new and powerful Information and Communication Technologies will be central in order to reap the benefits that ICTs can bring in terms of access to information, sharing of experience, cooperation and capacity-building.

APRIMA will also be a member of the Board of Directors of the "Resource Centre for ICTs and Knowledge Management in African Parliaments". APRIMA will benefit from the Resource Centre for its information technology and knowledge management capacity building initiatives and training activities in order to enhance the collaborative exchange of information and experience among its members.

The consolidation of parliamentary democracy in Africa will be a high priority for the Association. The need to strengthen parliamentary participation in the legislative process, to improve the quality of legislation and to monitor technological developments closely will be important topics that will need to be dealt with.

Virtual forums and meetings and other methods of exchanging information that can foster parliamentary cooperation will be explored and are considered of crucial importance.

APRIMA, with the widespread use of modern telecommunications and networks, will also provide a forum for electronic exchanges and, if required, the definition and governance of common standards.

The statutes of the ECPRD are shown below for reference:



Statutes of the ECPRD

The Statutes of the ECPRD were adopted by the ECPRD Secretaries-General meeting at the Conference of Speakers in Budapest on 7 June 1996.

PREAMBLE

The European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) was created in 1977 at the request of the Conference of Speakers of European Parliamentary Assemblies.

I. AIMS

Article 1

The objectives of the ECPRD are to promote the exchange of information, of ideas and of experience on subjects of common interest which fall within its competence; to strengthen close cooperation between the member services in all fields of parliamentary information, research and documentation; to collect, exchange and publicise the studies of parliamentary services.

II. COMPOSITION OF THE ECPRD

Article 2

The European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the WEU Assembly and chambers where the President is a member of the Conference of Speakers of European Parliamentary Assemblies, are members of the ECPRD.

Article 3

A parliament possessing special guest or observer status at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe may participate in the different activities of the ECPRD but without the right to vote in its bodies. The ECPRD may cooperate with non-European parliamentary chambers.

III. GOVERNING BODIES OF THE ECPRD

i. THE CONFERENCE OF CORRESPONDENTS

Article 4

The Secretary-General of each parliamentary chamber appoints a senior official (Correspondent) to represent the chamber within the Conference of Correspondents of the ECPRD.

The Correspondent is selected from amongst those officials whose activities bring him into close contact with the ECPRD and has direct access to the Secretary-General of the chamber. He can thereby coordinate the activities of those officials of his chamber who are asked to play an active role in the ECPRD.

Article 5

The Conference of Correspondents is responsible, in cooperation with the Co-Directors, for the organisation of the activities of the ECPRD. It examines the draft report on the activities of the ECPRD, drafted and presented by the Co-Directors, which contains the action programme of the ECPRD for the following two years. The report is then submitted to the Secretaries-General and to the Conference of Speakers of the European Parliamentary Assemblies.

Meetings of the Conference of Correspondents, chaired by the Co-Directors, take place at least every twelve months.

Decisions of the Conference of Correspondents are reached, in principle, by consensus. If a consensus cannot be reached, issues will be decided by a vote with a necessary majority of at least two-thirds of the votes cast, representing a majority of members of the ECPRD, as indicated in Article 2.

ii. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Article 6

The Executive Committee is composed of the two Co-Directors and three Correspondents appointed by the Conference. The Committee will meet as often as necessary, at the request of the Co-Directors or of at least five Correspondents.



The members of the Executive Committee, other than the Co-Directors, are to be renewed with one member being replaced each year, so as to ensure continuity. Elections to this end will take place at the Correspondents' annual meeting.

iii. THE CO-DIRECTORS

Article 7

The Secretaries-General of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe each nominate a senior official as a Co-Director of the ECPRD.

The two Co-Directors are responsible for the management of all activities of the ECPRD and are assisted by the two Secretaries of the ECPRD and by other officials of their respective institutions.

The Co-Directors are the Correspondents for their assemblies.

IV. WORKING METHODS

Article 8

Cooperation between the ECPRD and member chambers takes place by the exchange of information and by the compilation of documentation and studies.

For special topics, seminars may be organised. The ECPRD may also participate in other activities organised within its fields of interest.

If necessary, the Conference of Correspondents or the Executive Committee may create Working Groups intended to promote close cooperation between member chambers in areas that require a continuity of activity.

V. FINANCING OF THE ECPRD

Article 9

Member chambers of the ECPRD meet the travelling expenses of their officials and the costs of communication with the ECPRD.

Member chambers may organise activities of the ECPRD, such as meetings, seminars etc., and bear the costs of such events. They may also make voluntary financial contributions to the ECPRD.

The operating costs of the ECPRD are covered by the budgets of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in conformity with current practice.

The ECPRD may accept outside donations following a favourable opinion from the Conference of Correspondents.

VI. REVISION OF THE STATUTES

Article 10

The revision of these Statutes is the responsibility of the Secretaries-General of the member assemblies.
