



A PROPOSAL FOR SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON CREATING A WORLD-CLASS INTERNATIONAL LEARNING CENTRE AND LIBRARY

1.0 Introduction

SADC-PF has owned a property in 66 Eros Way, Windhoek, Namibia for some years. It has faced compliance issues and the property has never provided a return on investment. There have been many proposals to dispose of the asset, and even to accept a loss to remove it from the books.

In 2022, the treasurer of SADC-PF of the time, recommended in a financial sub-committee meeting, that it might be a more prudent move, to look into upgrading the asset into a compliant unit and then to market it as a diplomatic guest house or museum for the sole use of SADC countries which might generate resources. The asset could be placed within a trust at limited cost until the right buyer came along.

Recent discussions between Darren Bergman and John Rowett have indicated the potential to develop further this idea. ¹

As will be seen from the attached documents, Dr Rowett has enjoyed a distinguished career at the University of Oxford, and as global CEO of two international organisations. Most importantly, in the context of this proposal, Dr Rowett was the conceiver, with the late Professor Jakes Gerwel, former cabinet secretary of South Africa, and chief counsellor to the late President Mandela, of the Mandela Rhodes Foundation of which President Mandela was the Patron. Dr Rowett also oversaw, at the request of President Mandela, the Mandela Global Fellows programme which was funded for several years by the Sainsbury foundation. As a result of this collaboration and friendship, Dr Rowett was invited by President Mandela to relocate to South Africa to develop a new project focused, inter alia, on building innovative programmes to foster the development of new generations of young African global citizens. In developing the ***Bridges of Knowledge*** project Dr Rowett is now honouring that invitation.

Also relevant is the role of Dr Rowett in developing with his colleagues, Professor Njabulo Ndebele, then Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, and Professor Aki Sawyer, then the Secretary General of the Association

¹ The CV of Professor Rowett, Emeritus Fellow of Brasenose College, the University of Oxford, founding chairperson of ***Bridges of Knowledge***, and a description of the foundation are attached.

of African Universities, the US \$5 billion programme, *Renewing the African University*, which was adopted in the recommendations of the Commission for Africa, by the AU and by the then presidents of Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania as the leading African priority at the Gleneagles Summit in 2005. One of the central proposals of RAU focused on rebuilding library capacity and developing new capacity for the study of the rest of the world. More recent discussions in South Africa, in other SADC countries, and in West Africa have underlined that the problems remains acute.

Following discussions with President Mandela and Professor Gerwel, and later the then South African High Commissioner in London, Dr Zola Skweyiya, Dr Rowett agreed to donate his library of 25,000 books, currently in store in Oxford, and supporting gifts from his academic colleagues and friends, to establish a new global library and international centre focused on developing new generations of young African global citizens and contributing to building new African expertise on the study of the rest of the world. Agreement was reached with the former Mayor of Cape Town, Ms Patrica de Lille, to house the new initiative and library in the Cape Town City Hall but that agreement lapsed after her resignation from office. Immediately before the Covid pandemic, through the good offices of Prince Ntsika Mandela-Dlamini, Dr Rowett was invited to Eswatini for discussions with Prince David Dlamini, the elder brother of the king, on locating the centre and library in Eswatini, and with the Minister of Education and her senior officials for discussions on collaboration in developing school programmes on global citizenship, and on the the relationship between the arts and sciences.

2.0 The vision.

Recent discussions between Darren Bergman and John Rowett have revealed the potential for a partnership between the SADC-PF and ***Bridges of Knowledge*** which would:

- a) bring to Windhoek the library benefactions to create a SADC-PF global library of international quality which would be at the heart of the proposed SADC-PF international centre and develop a libraries, education, culture, and open societies initiative to the benefit of the region and the Continent;
- b) develop SADC-wide programmes with education institutions from schools to tertiary institutions and think tanks focused on global literacy and on the study of the Atlantic, Indian, and southern oceans worlds, and on global citizenship;
- c) offer the opportunity to base at the new international centre the proposed Mandela Global Fellows initiative;
- d) develop programmes focused on enhancing global understanding through the arts and education;

- e) develop programmes for business and for journalists focused on offering in depth introductions to major themes and issues in key Atlantic Basin, Indian Ocean and southern ocean countries.²

3.0 Logistics

The Rowett library is currently in store with an expert storage company in Oxford who would oversee the shipping of the books and their placement in the new library. ³ During the discussions with former Mayor de Lille, it was indicated that the COCT would oversee the landing arrangements in South Africa and also ensure corporate sponsorship of the shipping costs. Dr Rowett offered to waive any recouping of the accrued costs of storage arising from the delay in bringing the project into operation.

4.0 The SADC-PF International Centre

It is envisaged that the international centre would be multi-purpose incorporating a library, learning spaces, spaces for workshops, an auditorium and , if space allows, a museum and gallery, and linked residential facilities Due to the scale and broadness of this project, and also its potential, it would be important to ensure that the initial stage of this project is both small and manageable, with defined targets and budgets that would be convincing both to the SADC-PF countries, relevant foreign embassies and potential financial benefactors.. Once a stable existence is established over a span of 2-3 years then the potential can be stretched to incorporate more goals and objectives.

5.0 Initial objectives

- a) Creating an international cultural knowledge space promoting SADC-PF and its relations with the Atlantic Basin, Indian Ocean, and southern ocean worlds in the manner called for by the late President Mandela.
- b) Creating a centre of academic excellence in an affordable space focused on the countries of the Atlantic Basin, Indian Ocean and southern ocean worlds and their relationships with SADC.
- c) Provide opportunities for internships and learnerships for students and young scholars from across the region.
- d) Review options for how best to create accommodation for visiting scholars and students, along the lines of the American Academy in Berlin, the Salzburg Centre in Austria, the Bellagio centre in Italy and the Kettering Foundation in Dayton, Ohio.

² Income generating programmes of this type have been developed at Oxford. Dr Rowett and Oxford colleagues also provided for British diplomats taking up positions in the United States seminars on key issues.

³ The company concerned handled the storage of a significant part of the holdings of the new Bodleian Library at Oxford during its major redevelopment.

6.0 The proposal

- a) Create an advisory committee to oversee the project.
- b) Register the company as an appropriate institution.
- c) Appoint a person to liaise with Dr Rowett and the Oxford storage and shipping company and oversee the logistics to ship the books to Namibia and to the “SADC state house”.
- d) Appoint a project manager to oversee the upgrade to SADC state house and the furnishing and fitting of finishes.
- e) Invite submissions for the museum to be housed in the appropriate section.
- f) Advertise and prepare for a launch of the initiative.

7.0 Timelines and action plans

The agreements in principle should be reached before the SADC executive meeting at the end of May 2023.

It is important by then to ensure that the secretariat of SADC, the President of SADC have had sight of the proposal. It is important that there is a proposer and seconder for this proposal. A proper budget has been undertaken and consultation to ensure that a fair and proper picture is presented.

It would be in line with the theme to appoint an ambassador(s) and/or country/countries to sponsor the project. In view of the proposed focus, consideration should be given to joint sponsorship, for example, by a European country (or by the E.U.), by India, by a southern ocean country, and by the United States, alongside Namibia as the host country. If the preference is for single country sponsorship then consideration should be given to creating, for example, a dedicated Academy within the International Centre.

There is also a potential corporate sponsor and foundation in Namibia with a focus on the arts and culture, education, the environment, and community development. There is potential for a significant public private partnership.

8.0 Creating an advisory committee

It is envisaged that the stakeholders to this project should be members of the executive of SADC-PF, ***Bridges of Knowledge***, sponsors and supporters. It is proposed that Professor John Rowett should make an approach with Hon. Darren Bergman to the Speaker of Parliament of Namibia Professor Peter Hitjitevi Katjavivi both in his role as an executive member of SADC-PF, his role as Speaker, and as a distinguished champion of education, democracy and social justice and an international statesman. At the same time an approach will be made to the Secretary General of SADC-PF Ms Boema Sekgoma to also

sit as a founding board member. The current Speaker of the Seychelles who is at present serving as the President of SADC-PF, should also be a member of this committee. Co-options should then be made to sponsors and influencers that can assist in promoting and/or financing this project. Significant lessons may be drawn from the Advisory Committee of Distinguished Persons who were appointed from the United States and the United Kingdom when Professor Rowett was leading the development of the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford.

1. Register the company as an appropriate institution.

It is important that a law firm or a person with sound legal and financial knowledge advise the committee as to the best body to register for to fundraise/operate and to be sustainable.

2. Delivery and placement of books

It is important that someone oversees the books when they reach port and that they are delivered to the SADC house in good state. Any preparations that have to be made to house the books appropriately must already be planned and effected.

3. SADC House preparations

Since SADC house needs to be upgraded to a compliant state it is likely that there might be considerable cost to prepare the house to a state whereby it can host schools and tours and offer lectures or lessons. It might be envisaged to have a state guest house or the like and/or museum and gallery.

4. Invite submissions for the gallery and museum.

Through this initiative it is envisaged that this project would educate people on the history and culture of the different countries that make up the SADC region and their relationships across the Atlantic Basin, Indian Ocean, and southern ocean worlds. As will be seen from the attached documentation, this focus is derived from ideas of the the late President Mandela.

Consideration should be given to the sourcing for display of art work and cultural artefacts It is, therefore, opportune for this new initiative to source historic artefacts and artworks that could be put on display that could attract people to the ‘SADC-PF world house’ for tours.

5. Launch of the initiative

Decisions will be required to decide on whether to outsource or plan from within strategy and implementation, and to plan an appropriate launch that would honour the great name of the the late President and great statesman Nelson Mandela.

9.0 Conclusion

At this stage, I distribute this proposal for your comments and additions. The final draft will be submitted at the executive committee meeting of the SADC-PF meeting in Seychelles in May 2023.