

NEWS DAY

'We will pile pressure on public officials to declare assets'

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THE African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption (APNAC) has vowed to keep piling pressure on public officials to declare their assets.

VENERANDA LANGA
SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY REPORTER

Chairman of the APNAC Zimbabwe chapter Kambuzuma MP Willias Madzimore yesterday said it was a pity that some public officials like Transport and Infrastructural Development minister Obert Mpfu ended up being forced by the courts to declare their assets when they should already have done so in line with the provisions of Parliament's Standing Rules and Orders.

Section 19 of the Standing Rules and Orders reads: "Every member shall register all his or her financial interests in a book to be maintained under the direction of the Speaker and such registration shall be in a manner specified in the Code of Conduct and Ethics for members approved by the House."

Madzimore said during the Seventh Parliament in 2012, APNAC met in Bulawayo and developed a code of conduct, which was approved by Parliament to compel MPs to declare their assets upon being sworn in.

"Ever since that code of conduct was developed during the Seventh Parliament, only 25 legislators declared their assets, and when the Eighth Parliament MPs were being sworn in, no one was made to sign a declaration of assets form as required by the Standing Rules and Orders," Madzimore said.

"Even those 25 MPs who declared their assets should have updated the forms upon swearing in, and declaration of assets would have cleared questions that people had about Mpfu where he is now being forced by the courts to declare how he acquired his wealth," he said.

Speaker of the National Assembly Jacob Francis Mudenda yesterday said MPs were indeed compelled by the Standing Rules and Orders to register their assets, but since the swearing in of members in the Eighth Session of Parliament none had their assets registered.

"I can confirm that none of the MPs in the Eighth Parliament have registered their assets because we are still revising the format (forms) for registration. Hopefully we will complete that by the end of the year," Mudenda said.

Madzimore said the Standing Rules and Orders was the product of the Constitution and, therefore, its provisions should be respected to avoid instances where the courts ended up forcing public figures to declare assets.

"There is nothing private about lives of public figures because once elected, people want to know how one's wealth was acquired," he said.