

SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

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STATEMENT BY THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM SECRETARY GENERAL ON WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT, 17 JUNE 2024

Dear Parliamentarians, Colleagues and Partners,

It gives me great pleasure to present this message to the Member Parliaments of the Forum and its partners in honour of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2024, which is being observed under the theme: “United for Land: Our Legacy. Our Future.” With a focus to mobilize all parts of society in support of sustainable land stewardship. The commemoration coincides with the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)—the sole legally binding international treaty on land management and drought.

As we mark this significant occasion, we are reminded of the urgent need to address the challenges of desertification and drought, which are critical issues for the SADC region. Our region is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of land degradation, which threatens food security, water availability, and the livelihoods of millions of our citizens.

It is reported that the incidences and intensity of droughts in the region is expected to increase in the coming years (SADC Drought Risk Management and Mitigation Strategy 2022-2032). In the 2021/2022 rainfall season over 55.6 million people of the region’s population faced food insecurity from the impact of El Niño-induced drought. This is indicative of the increasing vulnerabilities in the region. (SADC Disaster Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2030)The impacts of chronic droughts and intense flash floods requires a concerted, coordinated, and sustained effort from a broad range of actors, which includes Members of Parliament.

The SADC PF developed its strategic plan which reinforces its commitment to supporting Parliaments in the region to develop measures to track and assess vulnerability to drought, strengthen institutions that deal with drought, and develop mitigation mechanisms through their legislative, oversight, and representative functions. By enacting and enforcing laws that promote sustainable land management, we can ensure that our land resources are used efficiently and equitably. Furthermore, through rigorous oversight, parliaments can hold governments and other stakeholders accountable for implementing policies and programs aimed at combating land degradation.

Collaboration is key. We must work together with our communities, civil society organizations, the private sector, and international partners to develop and implement comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of desertification and drought.

This includes promoting sustainable agricultural practices, investing in reforestation and afforestation projects, and enhancing water conservation efforts.

Education and awareness are also crucial components of our efforts. By raising awareness about the importance of sustainable land management and the impacts of desertification and drought, we can empower our citizens to take action and contribute to the preservation of our land resources.

As we reflect on the progress made over the past three decades under the UNCCD, we must also acknowledge the work that still lies ahead. The theme, “United for Land: Our Legacy. Our Future,” serves as a powerful reminder that the actions we take today will determine the legacy we leave for future generations. Let us commit to working together to create a sustainable and resilient future for the SADC region. I urge all member parliaments and partners to redouble their efforts in combating desertification and drought.

Yours faithfully,

H.E. Boemo SEKGOMA
SECRETARY GENERAL, SADC PF