



INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ELIAS. M MAGOSI

SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
ORDINARY SADC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING**

HARARE, REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE

12 MARCH 2025

Honourable Professor Amon Murwira, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers.

Honourable Dr. Rasata Rafaravavitafika, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar, and Incoming Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers.

**Honourable Victor Hugo Guilherme, Minister of Planning of the Republic of Angola, representing the Outgoing Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers
Honourable Tété António, Minister of External Relations.**

Honourable Ministers of Council and Deputy Ministers in our midst.

Ambassador Albert Ranganai Chimbindi, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of the SADC Standing Committee of Senior Officials.

Senior Officials from all SADC Member States.

Deputy Executive Secretaries of SADC, Ms. Angele Makombo N'tumba and Dr. Judith Kateera.

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners.

SADC Secretariat staff and staff from the Government of Zimbabwe.

Members of the Media.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning!

I am greatly honoured to welcome you to this meeting of the SADC Council of Ministers. We thank you Honourable Ministers for attending this meeting despite your busy work schedules.

Let me also thank the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe, especially our host, Honourable Professor Amon Murwira, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers, and his team for a great partnership with the Secretariat and their support in convening this meeting, as they have done with many others before this one. We thank you for the warm reception and excellent facilities put at our disposal for the conduct of our meeting today, and for the meetings lined up in the coming days. To many of us here, Zimbabwe, and Harare especially, has become our second home. Your hospitality has indeed enabled us to have a deep appreciation of Zimbabwe's culture and strengthen our bonds of friendship with the people of Zimbabwe. I am certain that the Incoming Chair of Council, Honourable Rasata Rafaravavitafika, and her team are taking copious notes and drawing enriching lessons from Zimbabwe's hosting of and driving the SADC agenda. The reception for SADC in Antananarivo can only be better, if not at the same level.

Before I proceed, allow me with a sense of gratitude, to welcome and congratulate Honourable Ministers who are joining this Ordinary Council meeting for the first time. Honourable Ministers from the Republics of Botswana, Mauritius, and Mozambique. We look forward to working with you and drawing from your respective wisdom and experiences as we advance the ideals of our region, being deeper regional integration and sustainable development, including maintenance of peace, security and political stability.

On a sad note, the region lost one of the last living liberation and revolutionary icons, His Excellency Dr. Samuel S. Nujoma, Founding President and Father of the Namibian Nation, who passed away on the 9 February 2025. The late President Dr. Sam Nujoma was a visionary leader who dedicated his entire life to freedom, nation building, and laid a solid foundation for a free, united and prosperous Namibia and the SADC region. He holds a special place in the history of our organisation – and as the Founding President, he led Namibia to join SADC by signing the instrument of accession on 24 August 1990, close to the 10th SADCC Summit that was hosted by Botswana on 26 August 1990. Two years later, in 1992, Dr. Nujoma hosted a significant and historical Summit which transformed our regional organisation from the Coordinating Conference (SADCC) to a Development Community (SADC), through the signing of the Windhoek Declaration and Treaty. He also served as the Chairperson of SADC from August 2001 to August 2002. He was, indeed, the last man standing! As a region, we pay tribute to this statesman and thank God for sharing his life with us for so long. We wish to extend our sincere condolences to the Nujoma family, the Government and the people of the Republic of Namibia. May his soul secure eternal peace.

Honourable Ministers, this ordinary meeting, which is held every March in the SADC calendar, is a budgeting meeting for our region. Your meeting will, therefore, consider the Budget for the 2025/2026 Financial Year and SADC Annual Corporate Plan for approval. The Annual Plan is a tool that dissects and operationalises key regional priorities as outlined in the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP 2020-2030), a strategic framework guiding the direction of SADC. Your meeting will also receive a report on the implementation of the approved 2024/25 Corporate Plan, and a report on the status of implementation of past Council and Summit decisions.

During this financial year, several milestones were recorded, including the ownership of the SADC Secretariat Headquarters Building in Botswana, which, for the past 15 years, was managed through a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) Agreement. The SADC House was officially received by the Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, together with the President of the Republic of Botswana, Advocate Duma Gideon Boko, on 13 December 2024, on behalf of the SADC Heads of State and Government. This represents a significant milestone, as the SADC region now owns that magnificent building, towering at the foot of the Gaborone Central Business District. The successful handover of the SADC House is a testament to the value of the PPP arrangement in

delivering infrastructure development, fostering economic growth, and ensuring good public service delivery and private sector partnership. We extend our greatest appreciation and thanks to the Government of the Republic of Botswana for enabling and facilitating the entire process leading up to the handover ceremony. I wish to invite you, Honourable Ministers, to visit the Secretariat, your building, whenever you are in Gaborone, Botswana; we will be glad to receive you.

On the same day, the SADC Chairperson and the President of Botswana led the groundbreaking ceremony, marking the commencement of the construction of the SADC Standby Force Regional Logistics Depot in Rasesa Village, in the Kgatleng District of Botswana, again, on behalf of all SADC Heads of State and Government. This Depot will strengthen the capability of the SADC Standby Force for rapid deployment in peace support and humanitarian operations. Through our missions in Mozambique and now in the DRC, we have already secured equipment that should find a home at the depot once the construction is completed. We wish to thank the Government of Botswana for the temporary storage of our equipment.

Peace and security remain critical to our region's integration and economic development. In the spirit of solidarity and collective defence, we have been resolute in our efforts to find lasting peace and security in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The security and humanitarian situation in Eastern DRC remain precarious and worrisome to the region as a whole. We wish to reaffirm our commitment to the DRC's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. We also wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to the people of the DRC, and Member States and families of the fallen heroes and heroines who lost their lives while serving in the SADC Mission in the DRC. May the souls of our departed troops rest in eternal peace.

Honourable Ministers, energy remains an indispensable catalyst for industrialisation, economic growth and social development in our Region. Unfortunately, we continue to face power shortages due to inadequate infrastructure development across the board, and in recent times, the debilitating effects of climate change. As we speak, and this is despite the abundant rain in the last two months, the water levels in both Kariba and Cahora Bassa dams are still low. Approximately 600 million people in the Sub-Saharan Africa lack access to electricity, and out of this figure, almost 172 million or 29%, are SADC citizens. This calls for us to act with speed and avail resources to ensure an energy secure SADC region, for industrialisation and related developments to take root.

Two events on the energy sector issues took place in our region recently. First, the Mission 300 Summit, hosted by Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, in Dar es Salaam, where Heads of State and Government committed to take concrete actions to provide access to modern energy for 300 million people in Africa by 2030. Second, the inaugural SADC Sustainable Energy Week themed, "**Accelerating Sustainable Energy Solutions for an Energy Secure SADC Region**" hosted by the Republic of Botswana through the Ministry of Minerals and Energy, in collaboration with the SADC Secretariat and the SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREEE), whose key outcomes included calls for strong regional collaboration and partnership to accelerate sustainable energy solutions; and enhanced investment in sustainable energy as well as leveraging

renewable resources. These are attempts by the region and Member States to address the challenges of energy deficit and security, and are a testament that energy remains critical to drive progress across all sectors in our region.

Honourable Ministers, border crossings are vital for intra-regional trade, community building, regional integration and shared prosperity of our region. The persistent challenges encountered at the Kasumbalesa border post between the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Zambia such as congestion, trade facilitation-related constraints, infrastructure challenges and increasing insecurity challenges, particularly for truck drivers and the entire trading community, remain a source of concern for the region, for our business community and the citizens of the two countries especially. Several regional trade corridors converge at the Kasumbalesa border crossing, including the North-South Corridors, Central Development Corridor (Dar es Salaam), Walvis Bay-Ndola-Lubumbashi Corridor, Beira Development Corridor, and the Lobito Development Corridors, thereby affecting 10 SADC Member States namely Angola, Botswana, DRC, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Recognising the persistent challenges affecting the Kasumbalesa border post and its strategic importance to intra-regional trade, I wish to report that a meeting of stakeholders held from 4-7 February 2025 took a corridor-wide approach to resolving the underlying perennial challenges, cognisant that addressing challenges at a single border post is not sustainable, as efficiencies gained at one border crossing point are eventually lost due to existing bottlenecks at the next border posts and along on the corridor. We must implement these recommendations expeditiously to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Kasumbalesa border and create a blueprint for replicating best practices at other borders throughout our region. An Inter Ministerial Task Force meeting is planned for 11th of April 2025 to approve the recommendations and the corridor-wide approach action plan for further consideration by the Council in August 2025. However, those that can be implemented and are within the affected Member States, should be started without delay, to ease the burden at this border.

Honourable Ministers, as we reach the mid-point of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030, it is critical to review our progress in the six pillars of the regional strategy. While we have made significant strides in advancing regional integration and development, several challenges hinder the full attainment of our key objectives. These challenges include financial resource and capacity constraints; the slow pace of signing, ratification, and accession to legal instruments; misalignment of national plans with regional strategies; and inadequate stakeholder engagement, among many others. As we review the progress made thus far, we must deploy more innovative approaches to overcome obstacles that impede the full implementation of the RISDP 2020-2030, and ensure sustained and collaborative efforts, considering our comparative advantages and emerging opportunities presented by the region. Your meeting will, therefore, receive a preliminary report on the Mid-Term review of the RISDP 2020-2030.

With the recent global geopolitical developments already impacting countries and different sectors in our region, this means more than ever before, we must relentlessly engage in robust resource mobilisation efforts with a deliberate focus on domestic or regional sourcing. It is becoming more and more evident that our own development will be driven sustainably from within. This underscores the urgent need to fast-track the operationalisation of the SADC Resource Mobilisation Framework you approved back in 2019, which is designed to intensify and diversify the resource mobilisation efforts to drive the SADC regional integration agenda. Key to this process is to expedite the operationalisation of the SADC Regional Development Fund, a vital regional instrument for mobilising resources from traditional and non-traditional sources to support our regional programmes. I, therefore, encourage, once more, Member States that have not signed and/or ratified the Agreement on the Operationalization of the SADC Regional Development Fund to do so expeditiously. This is not my plea alone, but that of your colleagues, Ministers of Finance and Investment who are making great progress on this RDF assignment. We cannot compromise on this one, unfortunately.

Honourable Ministers, Natural disasters continue to cause devastating damage across the world, and the SADC region has not been spared in this regard. These include tropical cyclones, floods, drought, transboundary animal and crop pests and diseases, and persistent outbreaks of epidemics. We are experiencing more devastating impacts of disasters, characterised by extreme weather events, from extreme droughts to floods, affecting the livelihoods of millions of our citizens, destroying our infrastructure, and further eroding the already fragile financial and fiscal sustainability of Member States. In the current rainfall season alone, which commenced in October 2024, our region is expected to have had between seven and ten Tropical Cyclones. Already, Tropical Cyclone Chido has affected Mozambique bringing torrential rains not only in the country, but in Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, and Zambia as well. Tropical Cyclone Dikeledi which made landfall in northern Madagascar caused flash floods leading to the destruction of property and infrastructure. In Mauritius, Cyclone Garance and Honde caused heavy rains and winds, but thankfully, the impact was moderate on the population. As we indicated a few days ago in our early warning alerts, a new Tropical Cyclone Ivone has been formed, targeting Northern Madagascar and Northern Mozambique.

In the last four years, some Member States have had to deal with repeated cycles of cyclones, floods and droughts, forcing them to grapple with the immense economic burden of providing humanitarian assistance to the affected communities, rebuilding the destroyed infrastructure, and restoring essential services disrupted by the disasters. For the period 2024/2025, an estimated 67.7 million people are facing high levels of acute food insecurity, an increase of 24.5% from 2023/24, and representing 17.1 percent of the region's total population. For many who survived these disasters, they live with the psychological effects of losing loved ones and losing their most treasured and irreplaceable belongings. Our structures and instruments for disaster preparedness, recovery, and response must, therefore, be strengthened to be effective and resilient to handle and survive the new normal. Your meeting will deliberate on the state of disasters in the region. We wish to report that, as part of the operationalisation of the SADC Humanitarian and Emergency Operations Centre (SHOC), the Emergency Response

Team has been constituted, trained and equipped in readiness for deployment in the Member States during emergencies.

As I conclude, **Honourable Ministers**, I wish to recognise the excellent work and diligence of the Standing Committee of Senior Officials, under the leadership of the Chairperson of the Committee, Ambassador Albert Ranganai Chimbindi. I also wish to recognise the Secretariat Team led by my two Deputy Executive Secretaries for the support in preparing for your meeting. I wish you fruitful deliberations.

May I now humbly request the Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers, Honourable Professor Amon Murwira, to deliver his remarks and officially open this meeting.

I thank you! Muito obrigado! Merci beaucoup! Asanteni Sana! Tatenda! Siyabonga! Ke a leboga!