



REMARKS

BY

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AT

**31ST SADC REGIONAL ADJUDICATION COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL MEETING FOR THE 2026 SADC MEDIA AWARDS
CHAired BY THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

23RD JUNE 2026

Honourable Kenny Morolong, Deputy Minister in the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa,

Mr. William Baloyi, Chief Director for Media Engagement at the Government Communication and Information System in the Republic of South Africa, and SADC National Media Coordinator for the Republic of South Africa, and Chairperson of the 31st SADC Regional Adjudication Committee,

SADC National Media Coordinators,

Members of the SADC Regional Adjudication Committee representing SADC Member States present here,

Senior Government Officials and Chief Executive Officers from the Media Institutions in the Government of the Republic of South Africa,

Colleagues from the SADC Secretariat,

Esteemed Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning, and a very warm welcome to you all. It is a true honour, on behalf of the Secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to deliver remarks at this 31st session of the Regional Adjudication Committee for the 2026 SADC Media Awards.

Today, we gather to select winners, and to celebrate the power of journalism, its ability to shape narratives, inform societies, and strengthen our shared vision of regional integration, and cooperation. Journalism is more than reporting; it is a force that connects communities, amplifies voices, and builds bridges across borders.

I extend heartfelt appreciation to the Republic of South Africa, our current Chair, for the support and collaboration in hosting this session. We are honoured to be joined today by Honourable Kenny Morolong, Deputy Minister in the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa. Your dedication to advancing strategic communication leadership is deeply valued.

Equally, I express sincere gratitude to Mr. William Baloyi, Chief Director for Media Engagement at the Government Communication and Information System of the Republic of South Africa, who is the SADC National Media Coordinator and our Chairperson for the 31st SADC Regional Adjudication Committee. Together with his committed team, he has provided invaluable support and worked closely with the SADC Secretariat in organising this year's Regional Adjudication Committee meeting. Their professionalism, dedication, and spirit of partnership have been critical in ensuring the success of this important process, exemplifying the unity and cooperation that define our region.

The media plays a critical role in our community. In our interconnected regional community, media transcends boundaries. A headline in one nation can spark dialogue in another, a local story can inspire regional, and even, global solidarity. The media tells our stories, highlights our achievements, and challenges, and gives voice to our aspirations.

Through the SADC Media Awards, we honour professionalism, creativity, and the dedication of journalists who inspire and empower the citizens of Southern Africa. Established in 1996, following the approval of the SADC Council of Ministers in 1995, the SADC Media Awards celebrate outstanding reporting on regional cooperation, integration, and community-building. More than individual recognition, the Media Awards reinforce the importance of elevating awareness of SADC's transformational role in driving sustainable development, peace, and economic growth.

Honourable Minister, distinguished Media Coordinators and Adjudicators,

This year, we are adjudicating 28 entries from 11 of the 16 SADC Member States: Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The entries include: 9 in Print, 4 in Photo, 6 in Radio, and 9 in Television categories. We thank our National Media Coordinators and Ministries responsible for Information, Publicity, and Broadcasting Services for their efforts in promoting the Media Awards in the SADC Member States. To the journalists, editors, and media professionals whose work brings SADC closer to its people, we salute your contribution to strengthening regional integration through the power of storytelling.

The winners of the 2026 SADC Media Awards will be announced at the 46th SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government in Durban, South Africa, on 17 August 2026. First-place winners will receive Certificates and cash prizes of US\$2,500, while runners-up will be awarded US\$1,000 and a Certificate. These prizes are more than rewards, they are symbols of our collective appreciation for excellence in communicating stories of SADC's regional integration agenda.

To the Regional Adjudication Committee, I express deep gratitude for your time, expertise, and commitment. Your role is important in upholding fairness, diligence, and integrity, ensuring that the best work receives the recognition they deserve. To our new members on the Regional Adjudication Committee, welcome to this distinguished team.

Honourable Minister, distinguished Media Coordinators and Adjudicators,

In August last year, the SADC Council of Ministers approved the SADC Communication, Awareness and Visibility Strategy 2025–2030, which is designed to strengthen public understanding of SADC's mandate, its priorities, and its impact. Key to this Strategy is the need for collaborative efforts of the Secretariat and Member States through the National Contact Points, National Media Coordinators and the communicators present here today.

Through our joint efforts in promoting SADC, its programmes and impact, we can showcase the value of regional integration and cooperation and bring our citizens closer to SADC. This Strategy ensures that the achievements of SADC are communicated brightly, inclusively, and proudly across every Member State. Communication is our spotlight, because progress without visibility risks being unseen. With effective communication, our achievements will not only be seen, but they will also inspire.

Honourable Minister, distinguished Media Coordinators and Adjudicators,

SADC is more than an institution. It is a trusted platform. A platform for harmonising policies, pooling resources, and confronting shared challenges. SADC enables countries to achieve more together than they ever could alone. Since its establishment in 1980, SADC has delivered transformative outcomes, harmonising trade regulations, building cross-border infrastructure, strengthening governance, responding to security threats, advancing regional integration, and promoting peace and economic development.

These milestones are engines of progress, driving integration, advancing sustainable development, and uplifting the lives of millions. They remind us that unity is strength, and that when SADC stands together, we rise together toward a future of prosperity and peace.

As we move forward, I call upon all stakeholders, SADC National Contact Points, Media Coordinators, development partners, and media houses, to join hands in building a regional narrative that inspires pride, unity, solidarity, and hope. Together, let us ensure that every citizen feels part of something greater, something transformative.

To the Member States that did not submit entries this year, I urge you to make extra efforts to submit entries next year. That will require intensifying awareness and promotion of the SADC Media Awards at national level, working closely with media houses and media professional bodies. Surely, every Member State has a SADC story to tell, a story of regional cooperation, integration, and development that deserves to be shared through this competition.

Honourable Minister, distinguished Media Coordinators and Adjudicators,

As I conclude, I wish to pause and pay special tribute to a colleague in the Communications and Public Relations Unit at the SADC Secretariat, Mr. Peter Mabaka, who retired from the Secretariat on the 14th of this month. Since joining in May 2016, Peter has been a driving force in coordinating the SADC Media Awards, safeguarding professionalism and credibility with patience, care, and dedication.

Ahead of this meeting, Peter shared a message with us at the Secretariat, and I quote: *“In the past 10 years RAC has done tremendous work to honour deserving journalists. I*

encourage them to continue to work hard to promote the Awards and increase the participation of more Member States as well as the quality of the entries.”

Please join me in expressing our heartfelt gratitude to Peter for his years of service, and in wishing him a blessed and fulfilling retirement.

I wish you a productive and insightful meeting. May this week’s deliberations reward the talent and dedication of our journalists, and may they strengthen the bonds that unite us as a region.

Thank you! Muito Obrigada! Merci Beaucoup! Asante Sana! Siyabonga!