



REMARKS

BY

**THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNITY (SADC), HIS EXCELLENCY MR ELIAS M. MAGOSI,**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MIOMBO FOREST INITIATIVE**

WASHINGTON DC, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

17 APRIL 2024

Your Excellency, Mr Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique;

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government present here;

Honourable Ivete Maibaze, Minister of Land and Environment of the Republic of Mozambique;

Honourable Ministers from SADC Member States;

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners from SADC Member States;

International Cooperating Partners and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished delegates;

Organisers and all partners present;

Members of the Media;

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning!

I am greatly honoured this morning to be accorded this opportunity to address this important International Conference on the Miombo Woodlands, at the invitation of His Excellency Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique. Firstly, allow me to applaud Your Excellency, for championing this initiative and indeed, for hosting this Conference which aims at promoting the potential of the Miombo Forest in contributing to global efforts towards achieve goals on climate change, biodiversity conservation, and integrated sustainable development.

The Miombo woodlands are one of the many vegetation types in Southern Africa, covering more than 2.5 million square kilometers across Southern Africa, and representing approximately one quarter of the total Southern African region's land mass. The woodlands cover nine SADC countries, namely Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This specific area is home to more than 8,500 plant species, of which over 300 are trees.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Miombo Woodlands are crucial to economic and environmental security of the region for a variety of reasons. First, they provide goods and services that sustain the livelihoods of more than a 100 million rural people and 50 million urban inhabitants. Added together, these figures represent 41.6% of the total SADC population which derive its livelihood from the Woodlands, subsisting on fruits, honey, tubers, medicines, fuel wood, charcoal, poles, and fodder, among others. Secondly, they provide ecosystem services such as water catchments, climate regulation, and soil conservation, as well as provide resilience against floods, drought and other extreme events, and more importantly, act as a sink reducing Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere. Third and lastly, Miombo also provides food and shelter for a large variety of iconic wildlife species prevalent in Southern Africa. These include the majestic elephant, the sneaky leopard, the deadly African buffaloes, the endangered black rhino, the colourful zebra, the towering giraffe, and other wildlife species that beautify our region, making it a tourist marvel and attraction.

This international conference could not have come at an appropriate better time, as the Miombo Woodlands face numerous challenges that threaten their survival and sustainability. Indiscriminate deforestation, effects of climate change constitute the major challenges, and compounded by a growing population that has put pressure on this natural resource with increased demand for its exploitation.

The SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030, which is our blueprint for socio-economic development, places conservation and management of natural resources at the centre of our development agenda. The strategy recognizes that natural resource management is a cross-cutting issue, and calls for enhanced sustainable management and conservation of these resources in the region.

To protect forests like the Miombo Woodlands, SADC adopted the SADC Forestry Strategy 2020-2030, aim at promoting the protection, management, and sustainable use of forest resources through sound policy guidance and the application of existing knowledge, skills and technology. Effective implementation of this strategy should ideally translate into multiple benefits leading to a sustainable economic development and the anticipated improvement of the quality of life of SADC citizens.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, SADC is also addressing issues of land degradation which threaten the sustenance of forests including the Miombo woodlands. We have, therefore, developed a Regional Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) as part of the implementation of the SADC Climate Change Strategy. Through this initiative, we hope to address and combat land degradation challenges, building on already existing land-based initiatives and programmes, as we seek to promote environmental sustainability across the region. With the regional Great Green Wall Initiative, we expect to restore an estimated 228 million hectares of dry and degraded land in Southern Africa, including the regeneration of the Miombo woodlands. This is a huge challenge that not only requires a serious commitment and concerted effort from our leaders, as shown by President Nyusi today, the affected communities, and our partners who share the same ideals with us, of sustainable management of our natural resources, it will also consume a considerable amount of resources for achieve the end goal. We look up to our partners and the climate change related funding vehicles to support and prioritise these initiatives.

The “Sustainable and Integrated Management of the Miombo Woodlands and the Protection of the Greater Zambezi Basin”, which is championed by the Republic of Mozambique and was endorsed as the “Maputo Declaration on the Miombo Forest” in August 2022, is a regional initiative that addresses some of the key outcomes of the RISDP on sustainable utilisation and conservation of natural resources, and the effective management of the environment.

We would like to thank, once again, His Excellency President Nyusi, for his visionary leadership in enabling and driving this process, and all other SADC Member States that are part of the Maputo Declaration on the Miombo Forest, for their unwavering commitment, not only for this specific initiative, but also for the overall sustainable development agenda of our region.

For us, the gauge of success for this Conference will be the concrete, practical and impactful resolutions that will positively affect the lives of our communities, while promoting and ascertaining a sustainable use of our environmental and natural resources. It is only then that we, as a collective, can reflect and agree that the meeting was worth the effort and resources put behind it.

Let me also thank these following partners; the International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), the Rainforest Foundation, the Wildlife

Conservation Society (WCS), and the International Foundation for Animal Welfare (IFAW) for partnering and walking with the Republic of Mozambique and SADC in organising this important Conference. We genuinely appreciate this partnership and do not take it for granted because you made a conscious choice and decision that you will play this supportive role to this noble cause. We urge, very humbly but nudgingly, other partners to join in on this bandwagon to support the SADC region to exploit and realise the enormous potential the Miombo forest presents in the economic transformation of our region.

Muito Obrigado! Merci Beaucoup! Asante Sana!

I thank you for your kind attention!