

SADC DAY MESSAGE

BY

SADC CHAIRPERSON

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PRESIDENT OF
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Dear citizens of SADC,

Eighteen years ago, on the 17th August 1992, our organization was transformed from the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference into the Southern African Development Community.

Since then, on the 17th August of each year, we celebrate the SADC Day.

The commemoration of this historic day allows us to rekindle the flame that the founding fathers of our Community had lit thirty years ago. Indeed, it was in 1980 that the pioneers of our Community laid its founding stone, thereby deciding to merge the struggle for independence and political emancipation with that for economic and social development.

With Namibia achieving independence and the abolition of apartheid in South Africa, the first of these struggles resulted into a resounding victory. The Community has, since then, fully dedicated itself to the well-being of our people.

The 30th Summit of Heads of State and Government which is meeting today in Windhoek, Namibia, coincides with the celebration of the 30th anniversary of our Community. Therefore, it affords us the unique opportunity to take stock of what we have achieved this far so as to chart a course

for the future and increase the effectiveness of our integration and development strategies.

Dear SADC citizens,

When our organization was established, the main concern was to reduce the development backlog accumulated in various areas during the many years of resistance and liberation wars.

Rightly, the cooperation which was forged among our States was aimed mainly to meet the challenges of the time, namely poverty, the spread of highly debilitating diseases, particularly HIV and AIDS, food insecurity and insufficient trade among the countries of the Region.

We are still faced with these challenges.

However, other challenges have emerged.

Besides maintaining peace, security and stability, our Region must everyday face new challenges and keep abreast of the latest developments in order to become and remain competitive in an increasingly globalised world.

In this regard, the interconnectivity of our transport and energy infrastructure, the free movement of people, the sustainable and responsible management of our natural resources and the establishment in our region of a Free Trade Area are new priorities for our Community.

These challenges are not easy to overcome. But the history of our Region in the last three decades shows that we have collectively the will and means to address them.

Dear SADC citizens,

During the last thirty years, we have experienced times of political turmoil, wars and instability. But we have also demonstrated the effectiveness of our mechanisms of cooperation and mediation.

Thanks to these mechanisms, most of our countries have effectively managed to overcome major challenges, restore peace, achieve national reconciliation and put in place democratic systems.

Overall, we can submit a positive report in the areas of politics, defence and security.

However, the results are mixed in the social and human development sector. It is true that notable achievements have been recorded in the field of gender in the last decade.

Similarly, some member States have made significant progress on the human development index (HDI), thanks mainly to the achievements made in the education sector.

However, the challenges have proved more difficult to overcome in the area of health as our region already the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate on the continent.

It is nevertheless gratifying to note that, thanks to the concerted efforts in SADC and to the multisectoral approach defined in the Maseru Declaration, a growing number of patients has access to antiretroviral therapy. Better still: the spread of the pandemic is decreasing across the Region.

Similar efforts are required in order to fight malaria, as well as other diseases which affect a great number of our population.

In the area of agriculture and food security, a significant increase in agricultural production has been recorded.

However, we still fall short of the objectives that we set in terms of universal access to food and in relation to the Maputo Declaration which requires that all African countries allocate 10 % of their national annual budget to agriculture.

I invite the Member States to make stronger commitments in this area.

Dear SADC citizens,

On the economic front, our Organisation is striving to create an enabling environment for growth and poverty reduction. To attain this objective, it is focusing on

investment incentives, job creation and the growth of intra-regional trade.

This has enabled our Region to record on average a growth rate higher than 3, 5% in the last fifteen years.

This remarkable result is due to the Member States who have understood the need for instruments such as the Protocol on Finance and Investment, the Memorandum of Understanding on Economic Convergence and the Protocol on Trade.

The Protocol on Trade was signed ten years ago, came into force in 2008 and has to date been ratified by 12 of 15 Member States. It enshrines the establishment of a SADC Free Trade Area.

It is our obligation to create without any further delay the conditions to make the Protocol effective in the entire Region so that all the member States may benefit from this vast Free Trade Area.

Similarly, we have to pursue with determination our march towards the other milestones of our regional integration strategy, namely the Customs Union, the Common Market, the SADC Central Bank, the Monetary Union and the single currency.

In this regard, in addition to our economic convergence efforts, the development of our basic information and

communication technology infrastructure is more than ever a priority if we want to reduce the Region's dependence on third parties.

In this instance, we need not only to consolidate our achievements but also take bold action.

Thus, in the field of transport, while capitalising on the benefits derived from the development of the various corridors that are already operational, it is necessary and urgent to develop a new master plan encompassing all the member States so as to remove major obstacles which continue to hamper this vital sector.

Concerning Information Technology, urgent measures have to be taken so as to benefit from the newly-established regional optic fibre connectivity, by developing internal telecommunication networks and by linking to the said fibre those countries which do not have yet access to it.

Coming to the energy shortfall, the problem has been partially resolved downstream with the establishment of the South African Power Pool (SAPP).

Challenges however still persist upstream.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is willing to participate in any equitable institutional arrangement that can help to improve regional power supply in a sustainable manner. She

is equally available to assist in resolving other problems facing the Region.

I am aware that the same determination exists in all member States, as well as at the Secretariat.

It is for this reason that without any hesitation, I am inviting all of you to celebrate this SADC 30th anniversary with passion and commitment and express thus our faith in our Community as well as in a better future for each citizen of our region, Southern Africa.

Thank you.