



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **MINISTERIAL WORKSHOP ON FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY ERADICATION HELD AT GABORONE, BOTSWANA, 16 MAY 2016**

1. The Ministerial Workshop on Food Security and Poverty Eradication was held at the Gaborone International Convention Centre in Gaborone, Republic of Botswana on 16th May 2016.
2. The Workshop was convened by His Excellency Lieutenant General Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama, President of the Republic of Botswana and Chairperson of SADC.
3. The Workshop took place under the theme: "Towards Poverty Free and Food Secure Region."
4. The Workshop was attended by Ministers and Senior Officials representing SADC Members States, Members of Diplomatic Corps, Private Sector Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, Farmer Organisations, United Nation's Agencies and other International Development Partners.
5. The Workshop recommended that the SADC Chairperson should champion a binding monitoring and evaluation mechanism of continental and regional commitments. To this effect the Secretariat should be empowered and capacitated to monitor and report to Summit.
6. The Workshop underscored the need for substantive resources (financial and human) to be mobilized in order to effectively address poverty and food insecurity. The importance of collaborative efforts among public sector, private sector and social sector was also emphasized in order to leverage additional investment and financial resources. Considering the importance of agriculture in addressing poverty, the Workshop appealed to Member States increase budgetary allocations and investment for agriculture.

7. The Workshop identified access, ownership and use of land and agricultural inputs, particularly for women and youth, as critical to increasing production, productivity, competitiveness and reduce poverty.

8. The Workshop observed that in order to improve productivity and efficiency there **is need for increased access to mechanization and therefore** recommended the promotion of investment into the local manufacturing of farm machinery and implements and access and utilisation by farmers.

9. The Workshop recommended increased investment in critical infrastructure for agriculture such as market access roads, storage and cold chain facilities, energy (especially alternative energy sources), ICT, water harvesting and irrigation schemes.

10. The Workshop recommended strengthening of the design and implementation of social protection programmes targeted at the poor and vulnerable population in areas such as quality education, skills development, employment, health, safety nets and risk management. However, in implementing these, there is need to minimize dependency syndrome and market distortions.

11. The Workshop recommended the promotion of sustainable utilisation of natural resources as a viable land use option for Poverty Reduction and Food Security. Special focus should be placed on exploiting the use of indigenous species of flora and fauna for nutritional, medicinal and industrial purposes.

12. The Workshop recommended promotion of farming as a business. This will require identification of farmers who have the potential to operate farming as a business. Aggregation of farmers should be promoted to realise the economies of scale in production and marketing. Farmers should be supported to establish small and medium enterprises for agro-processing and value addition. Deliberate efforts should be made to create an enabling environment for the youth to participate in agri-business.

13. The Workshop recommended that production should be linked to markets to open opportunities for finance and investment. Promotion of value addition and beneficiation should be given priority in order to increase farmers' incomes.

14. The Workshop recommended the strengthening of regional and national information systems including early warning and monitoring systems, and acceleration of the establishment of the regional disaster preparedness fund. In addition, Member States should scale-up risk insurance and management initiatives to safeguard vulnerable households against loss of assets and income during disasters.

15. The recurrent food crises in the region are largely a result of growing poverty, high vulnerability and low resilience to climate change. This is compounded by an increasingly uncertain and complex economic environment that has led to the erosion of household assets and reduced crop production.

16. The Workshop recommended the adoption of climate smart technologies such as drought tolerant varieties, conservation agriculture, water harvesting and efficient use of water and the use of renewable energy. Diversification of livelihood support systems should be promoted in order to enhance resilience.

17. Member States expressed their appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Botswana for hosting the Workshop and for the warm hospitality extended to all the delegates and Stakeholders.

**DONE AT GABORONE, BOTSWANA MAY 16, 2016**