



**Statement by the SADC Executive Secretary, H.E. Mr Elias M. Magosi,
on the occasion of the 2024 Commemoration of the
16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign**

25 November to 10 December 2024

**Theme: “Towards 30 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:
UNiTE to End Violence Against Women and Girls”**

Once again, we join the international and regional community to add our voice to the call against Gender Based Violence (GBV), as we participate in the **16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence** Campaign which runs annually from 25th November to 10th December.

The theme for this year’s campaign, **“Towards 30 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: UNiTE to End Violence Against Women and Girls”**, presents a unique opportunity to increase awareness on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and to call for action towards preventing and eliminating this social ill.

Gender Based Violence, particularly violence against women and girls, is the most prevalent and pervasive human rights violation globally, and in the SADC region. Nearly one in three women have experienced either physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, non-partner sexual violence, or by both at least once in their lives. The killing of women and girls, which is the most brutal manifestation in a continuum of violence against women and girls, is, regrettably, also on the rise. This femicide affects countries and regions alike, and our very own region is not spared. Violence against women and girls in the digital space is also intensifying with prevalence ranging from 16 to 58 per cent, and younger women and girls at the receiving end.

GBV inhibits the achievement of health and well-being, hinders progress towards education and economic goals, curtails women and girls’ freedoms, alters their future, and impedes peaceful co-existence and justice. The associated cost and impact of this violence are incurred by the society as a whole which have unfortunately continued to

affect the ultimate achievement of commitments already made by the region and globally.

It is for this reason that SADC have placed elimination of Gender Based Violence among the key priorities of the SADC regional integration agenda, as reflected in the *SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2016)* and the *Regional Strategy and Framework of Action for Addressing GBV (2018-2030)*. This year's campaign aims to coalesce around the priorities of the *Beijing +30 Review*, emphasising the urgency of strengthening accountability to end the violence. It calls for concrete action, including holding perpetrators accountable, well-resourced national strategies and increased funding to women's rights movements. This action requires recommitment, taking accountability, and resourcing transformative and comprehensive strategies to end the scourge. By investing in comprehensive approaches that work on multiple and mutually reinforcing pillars, GBV can be effectively prevented and ultimately eliminated.

The region also continues to implement the Regional Strategy for Addressing GBV by strengthening the capacity of SADC Member States on effective GBV prevention strategies and promoting research to inform evidence-based, tailored and targeted interventions. We commend SADC Member States who adopted laws and policies to address GBV, domestic violence and related matters. This achievement notwithstanding, there is a very weak enforcement of these laws. We call on all stakeholders including government, private sector, development partners, media, civil society organisations and communities to join hands and make impactful policies and programmes as well as meaningful financial commitments to accelerate transformative action to end all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls.

As we commemorate this year's 16 Days of Activism Against GBV, I call upon Member States and all stakeholders to take deliberate action and accelerate implementation of relevant laws using whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to respond to and prevent GBV. Equally important in this equation is the role of the private sector and the women's rights organisations in addressing the root causes of violence against women and girls. I am convinced that, with our collective efforts and commitment, we can change harmful masculinities, challenge discriminatory and demeaning social norms and eliminate structural gender inequalities and stereotypes, all to achieve a peaceful and inclusive society. Let us choose to end GBV, not in rhetoric and empty speeches, but in deeds! Let us walk the talk!

Thank you!