



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

OPENING REMARKS BY

**HONOURABLE EPHRAIM MGANDA CHIUME, M.P.,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF THE 2014 SADC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING**

TO BE HELD AT

**THE BINGU wa MUTHARIKA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
CENTRE**

IN LILONGWE, MALAWI

10th AND 11th MARCH, 2014

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation,
Lilongwe 3.

March, 2014

- **Honourable Ministers from the SADC Member States;**
- **Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers from the Republic of Malawi present here;**
- **Your Excellency, Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax, Executive Secretary of SADC;**
- **Your Excellencies, Deputy Executive Secretaries of SADC, and Officials from the SADC Secretariat;**
- **Your Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Distinguished Delegates;**
- **Esteemed Members of the Press;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

It gives me great pleasure, to welcome you all this morning, to this very important meeting of the SADC Policy Organ of the Council of Ministers which is being held here at the Bingu International Conference Centre (BICC), in Lilongwe.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Malawi, and indeed, on my own behalf, I wish to extend a warm welcome to you all to Malawi, the “**Warm Heart of Africa.**” I trust that you will have spare time to explore the attractive sceneries and memorial places in this Garden City of Lilongwe.

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am encouraged with the level of attendance, despite your busy schedules to come to Lilongwe, and participate in this important meeting. Your positive response, gives a clear testament of the great

importance that the SADC Member States attach to the goals and objectives of SADC, as enshrined in the Treaty.

I am also delighted as this gesture can be used as a vehicle to further promote and enhance cooperation at all levels of development among SADC Member States, through interaction and collaboration in such fora.

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let me begin by extending a special welcome to this meeting, and to the SADC family, distinguished delegates from the Government of the Republic of Madagascar, following your re-admission by SADC and the African Union, in January this year.

I would, therefore, like to commend and congratulate the people and Government of the Republic of Madagascar, for holding peaceful and credible elections in your country in October and December last year.

The election of the new President of the Republic of Madagascar, His Excellency Hery Rajaonarimampianina, and the restoration of constitutional order, is a great achievement not only for the Malagasy people, but also for SADC and the African Union, as well as the international community.

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of the SADC Member States, and indeed, on my own behalf, I would like to pledge our firm commitment to support and cooperate with

the people and Government of the Republic of Madagascar, in their bold efforts, towards national reconciliation, social and economic recovery that will ultimately lay a path for sustainable economic development and inclusive growth.

I also wish to welcome and congratulate Dr. Thembinkosi Mhlongo, Deputy Executive Secretary, responsible for Regional Integration, as he is attending the first substantive meeting of the SADC Council of Ministers, since his appointment to this post by Council here in Lilongwe, in October, 2013.

Let me, also, reiterate our assurance to Dr. Thembinkosi Mhlongo, that the SADC Group is readily available to assist you in the discharge of your responsibilities at the SADC Secretariat. Colleagues will surely agree with me when I state it categorically that the issue of capacity or indeed lack of it at the SADC Secretariat, is a well rehearsed and sung song. To the extent that colleagues have posed the question, is it the issue of capacity or non performance? Therefore, your coming, Dr. Mhlongo, is a great relief.

**Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Our meeting comes at a time when the world economy is showing signs of slowing down, coupled with major political developments in Europe, in particular, that will likely exacerbate the struggling global economy. This may have the domino effect on the economies of SADC and African countries. The slump in the global economy calls upon us to find innovative ways of subduing the adverse effects on our economies. The

2014/2015 SADC Budget, which we will consider and adopt in due course, should take into account to these global events.

Honourable Ministers

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I must also state that the Agenda for our meeting is robust and will keep us busy for the next two days. We, therefore, need to dedicate our energies to fairly dispense the issues within the time allocated. But that should not defer colleagues from getting to know Lilongwe City.

While we are on this welcome, let me just share with you some headline news doing the rounds in this country. You might have heard of a breach of Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS), by some unscrupulous civil servants, who, it is believed, made away with around 13 billion Kwacha(US\$29 million) of public funds. I am sure your media has reported on this unfortunate development, now locally branded “the Cashgate” scandal. Having suspected some unexplainable inadequacies in the government coffers, H.E. President Dr. Joyce Banda demanded answers, leading to the bringing in of a team of Forensic Auditors, to trace and track the illegal money flow. Some 68 suspects have been arrested by Police and cases are in court. In addition 33 bank accounts have been frozen and 86 properties have been profiled.

However, President Dr. Joyce Banda, has stated that her government will not shield anybody involved. The President has gone further, to publicly declare, that the plunder of public resources, which could have started as far back as 2005, must be stopped, once and for all.

**Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As a way of an update, and as you are aware that the boundary dispute between Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania along Lake Malawi, is being handled by a High-Level Mediation Team comprising former Heads of States and Governments the Republics of Mozambique, Botswana and South Africa.

The work of the High Level Mediation Team is currently at a stage where both Malawi and Tanzania made their submissions early last year. Both countries also submitted their responses following questions that the Team raised. The next stage is a meeting between the two parties and the Team which is scheduled to take place in Maputo from 20th to 21st March, 2014. This meeting is supposed to discuss the submissions and responses submitted by the two countries.

I wish to assure you Honourable Ministers that Her Excellency the President Dr. Joyce Banda, the Government and the people of Malawi would like to see a peaceful but speedy resolution of this long standing border dispute so that our two peoples can continue to co-exist in a peaceful environment.

**Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Malawi goes to the polls on 20 May, 2014, in seventy (70) days time. The people of Malawi will vote in, their Councilor, Member of Parliament, and President. You will recall, President Dr. Joyce Banda came into office, to complete the two years left of the Late President Prof. Bingu

wa Mutharika's tenure. We intend to conduct free, fair peaceful, transparent and credible elections. We will adhere to the SADC Principles and Guidelines governing the holding Democratic Elections. We look forward to your usual support by coming to observe the poll.

Meanwhile, in accordance with our Constitution, Parliament stands dissolved on 20 March, 2014, in readiness for the elections. For your information, our electoral system is one of "First Past the Post" whereby each candidate contests as an individual rather than the proportional representation electoral system obtaining in several SADC countries where they vote for a party and then they utilize the party list to select Members of Parliament.

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

Turning to the substance of this meeting, I wish to underline the fact that, we will address key issues concerning the SADC integration agenda, as well as institutional matters. This will include the review of the implementation of Council Decisions; SADC-EU Cooperation, that is, the 11th European Development Fund Programming and SADC-EU Political Dialogue; the roadmap for the appointment of the Deputy Executive Secretary, responsible for Administration and Finance; and SADC Tribunal Staff Issues.

We, will also take note of progress made in the implementation of the SADC Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan, and holding of SADC Infrastructure Investment Conferences; Food and Nutrition Security Strategy; Establishment and Operationalisation of the SADC

Committee of Ambassadors and High Commissioners; African Union Agenda 2063; and Africa-EU Summit, just to mention, but a few.

Allow me to commend and congratulate our officials and the SADC Secretariat for working tirelessly in order to come up with the documents that are before us for our use during this meeting this morning.

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

Allow me also to say a few words regarding the ongoing mid-term review of the SADC Regional Indicative Development Strategic Plan (RISDP). This process will lead us into remodelling and redirecting the new modus operandi of SADC, for the period 2014-2018.

I would, therefore, like to urge the RISDP Task Force, the Cluster Ministers, in conjunction with the SADC Secretariat to expedite action, to ensure timely finalisation of the Revised RISDP (2014-2018), in accordance with the revised roadmap. We will consider and approve the revised roadmap at this meeting. The Revised RISDP is expected to be approved by Council and Summit in Harare, Zimbabwe, in August, 2014.

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

In conclusion, I am hopeful that the outcome of this meeting will assist in re-energising and driving the implementation of the SADC integration agenda, with the ultimate objective of advancing economic equality and poverty eradication in the SADC region. Therefore, let us forge ahead together in solidarity and in hope.

With these remarks, I declare the SADC Council of Ministers Meeting officially open.

Let me now hand over the floor to the SADC Executive Secretary to take us through the draft Agenda and Annotated Agenda.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Zikomo Kwambiri; Asante Sana; Merci bu; Mwinto brigado; Tatenda; Thank You very much!!

End