



**Statement by the Executive Secretary of SADC, H.E. Mr. Elias Mpedi Magosi,
on the 2023 World Food Day Commemoration**

16 OCTOBER 2023

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) joins hands with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the global community in commemorating World Food Day which falls on 16 October every year to raise awareness about the crucial need for food security and nutrition globally.

SADC acknowledges the importance of solidarity in our shared commitment to ending hunger and the pivotal role that the FAO plays in advancing global food security.

This year's World Food Day theme, "**Water is Life, Water is Food. Leave No-one Behind,**" underscores the critical role that water plays in ensuring food and nutrition security. Water is an indispensable resource for life on Earth, constituting over 50 percent of our bodies and covering approximately 71 percent of the Earth's surface. However, only 2.5 percent of the world's water is fresh, suitable for drinking, agriculture, and most industrial uses. The SADC region has two of the largest rivers of the continent, namely Congo and Zambezi; the region also has two of the largest deserts of the continent, namely Kalahari and Namib. This shows that the availability of water resources is not uniform across the region.

In Southern Africa, access to clean water remains a challenge for many of our citizens. According to research, only 63 percent of the SADC population have access to clean drinking water. Due to increased stress exerted on our water resources as a result of factors such as rapid population growth, urbanization, social and economic development, and climate change, our region needs to implement sustainable and effective water management practices.

In recognition of the significant contribution water makes to food and nutrition security, currently around 19% of the region's population is estimated to be food insecure, SADC continues to advance water resources development for agricultural, socio-economic, and environmental purposes through the implementation of water-related regional instruments and interventions. Most recently, SADC adopted the Regional Water, Energy and Food Nexus Framework, Regional Irrigation Policy and the Blue Economy Strategy, three critical instruments in the strategic management of water resources for poverty eradication, energy generation and agricultural uses including promoting the fisheries and aquaculture industry.

As we commemorate the World Food Day, I reiterate SADC's commitment to supporting Member States through constant engagement and capacity building so that together, we can improve water infrastructure and distribution, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Our long-standing partnership with FAO is emblematic of our dedication to addressing the challenges that threaten food and nutrition security in our region. I am delighted that our partnership continues to bear fruits. For instance, in our collaborative interventions in the '*Support Towards the Operationalization of the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy Project*', we have made good efforts in improving agricultural practices, enhancing food systems, and promoting sustainable development in the region, including the development and implementation of Food Fortification, Agricultural Information Management System (AIMS), Regional Strategies of the relevant transboundary animal and crop pests and diseases, and opening regional and international markets to regional agricultural commodities.

I reiterate our commitment to continue working closely with FAO to advance food security aspirations as well as work with all relevant stakeholders to prioritize water in policy and planning across key sectors while recognizing the interdependencies within the water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus. Let us remember, and demonstrate through collective action, that "**Water is Life, Water is Food**," by committing to manage this invaluable resource wisely and sustainably. Together, we can ensure that we leave no one behind in our pursuit of a truly hunger-free and prosperous SADC region.