



## **Statement by the SADC Secretariat on the Commemoration of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, 30 July 2020**

On the 30<sup>th</sup> July each year, the SADC region joins the rest of the world to commemorate World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, following the proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/68/192. This year's commemoration is under the theme "*Committed to the Cause - Working on the Frontline to End Human Trafficking*". The theme underscores the important role played by Front Line Officers, who are responsible for providing service of first.

Trafficking in Persons (TIP) is one of the fastest growing crimes in the region and across the globe. The sophistication of TIP lies in the complex web within which it happens. With the advent of COVID-19, it can be expected that Traffickers will upscale their activities taking advantage of reduced vigilance by law enforcement officers who are largely involved in enforcing COVID- 19 regulations. The capacity of Member States and other Non-Governmental Organisations to provide essential services to the victims of TIP has also been heavily impacted.

In recognition of the importance of TIP front line service providers, whose commitment and contributions, SADC has over the years, provided a coordinated response at Regional and Member States Level. Capacity Building as well as legislative reform have been the cornerstones of the response mechanism in the region. The *Revised SADC Strategic Plan of Action on Combatting Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2016-2023)*, provides a blue print for Regional Response at both Regional and Member States level. The SADC-UNODC Regional Programme on "Making the SADC Region Safer from Drugs and Crime" (2013 – 2023), has also contributed towards the fight against TIP, while leveraging human and financial resources.

SADC commends the Frontline service providers, and implores them to remain vigilant and adapt responses to the changing methods of the traffickers and especially in this COVID – 19 pandemics. Member States are also called upon to continue capacity building and awareness programmes to frontline service providers, and strengthen information sharing on TIP amongst stakeholders in order to provide tailored expertise to address TIP.