



**WELCOME REMARKS BY**

**HER EXCELLENCY DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX  
SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE**

**OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE SADC REGIONAL APPEAL FOR  
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE  
IN RESPONSE TO TROPICAL CYCLONE IDAI**

**11 APRIL 2019**

**WINDHOEK, REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

Your Excellency, Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia and Chairperson of SADC;

Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of Namibia, and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers;

Honourable Ministers;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

International Cooperating Partners;

Distinguished Delegates;

SADC Secretariat Staff;

Our Partners from the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning!

It is my great honour to welcome you to this momentous event to witness the official launch of the SADC Regional Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance in response to Tropical Cyclone Idai. As you are aware, Cyclone Idai made its landfall in March 2019, and affected three of our Member States, namely Republics of Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Allow me to thank you all, for responding positively to our invitation and attending this important event. Your participation demonstrates the high level of commitment and resolve to work together with us to help communities affected by the impacts of the cyclone and respond to their immediate and urgent needs.

## **Your Excellency, distinguished Guests**

Allow me to thank ~~to thank~~ Member States and our International Cooperating Partners for rendering support to alleviate the suffering of the affected communities during the floods and the period immediately after, until now. Your support has gone a long way in saving lives and livelihoods, and will be remembered by the affected communities for a long time to come.

Permit me to also thank the Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency, Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia for promptly approving the allocation of US\$500,000 to the affected Member States to assist with immediate relief efforts, and also for mandating the Secretariat to work with Development Partners to develop the Regional Appeal being launched today. The Appeal aims to complement the efforts by Governments and other stakeholders in helping communities with the recovery and rebuilding efforts in the three countries.

It is also worth noting that over the past few years, the region has experienced extreme weather –conditions and events, including the increased frequency of floods, cyclones, and droughts, that have had devastating impacts including, loss of lives, injuries and destruction to property, infrastructure, agricultural fields and crops. This is largely due to the Region's unique susceptibility compounded by weak adaptive capacities of our communities in the region.

The SADC region is expected to experience higher land and ocean surface temperatures than in the past, with the potential to increase the

frequency and severity of these climate-related extreme weather events. This notwithstanding, the region's response to the impacts of Cyclone Idai has highlighted shortfalls in the disaster management capacity, including in early warning, preparedness, response and recovery, that the region needs to address as a matter of urgency. In recognition of this, the Secretariat in collaboration with Member States is in the process of developing a strategy for effective coordination of responses to disasters. Finalisation and implementation of the Strategy will require the usual dedication and commitment from Member States, and adequate resources from own sources as well as from Development Partners.

May I call upon Member States to work with the Secretariat in finalizing and operationalizing this important strategy, and to prioritise the speedy operationalisation of the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund, as part of the SADC Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategy, so as to ensure that mechanisms and adequate resources are promptly put in place for the effective management of disasters.

The impacts of cyclone Idai were aggravated by the level of deforestation that has taken place on an industrial scale, stripping the land of any vegetation cover that would have slowed down the flood waters and the speed and strength of the winds. In this regard, there is need to encourage and implement afforestation and reforestation programmes in areas facing high levels of deforestation, among other programmes to ensure environmental sustainability.

May I, therefore, call upon Member States to scale up reforestation programmes and enforce laws and regulations to reduce the rates of deforestation, as well as to limit development in areas that are prone to

the destructive impacts of floods and related disasters. There is a revelation that as climate change intensifies, Cyclone Idai will be remembered as a relatively insignificant weather event. The era of superstorms and cyclones is just around the corner. Therefore, the earlier we undertake measures to reduce global warming, lessen the impacts of climate change and variability, and be better prepared for the impending disasters, the better.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change aims to facilitate adaptation to the impacts of climate change, and to provide financial assistance to developing countries affected by a changing climate. We therefore call upon our development partners to help developing countries including SADC Member States in their efforts to adapt to the impacts of climate change in line with the Paris Agreement.

**Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests,**

As I conclude, allow me once again to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency, Dr. Hage G. Geingob, for his visionary leadership and guidance, particularly for promptly intervening to address the devastating impacts of the cyclone in the region. We are humbled Your Excellency, by your unwavering commitment, and finding time from your busy schedule to come and launch this Regional Appeal.

Allow me also to thank the Governments of the Republics of Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, for moving swiftly to declare national disasters and for mobilising resources for immediate response to save lives. We also thank individual Member Countries, all our partners who

quickly moved in to alleviate the suffering and disruption of livelihoods in the affected communities.

At this juncture, it is my humble honour and privilege to invite the Chairperson of SADC, to launch the Regional Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance in Response to Cyclone Idai.

**Your Excellency, Sir**