Statement by the SADC Executive Secretary, Her Excellency Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax on the Commemoration of Southern Africa Liberation Day
23 March, 2020

Every year, on 23rd March, the Southern African Development Community commemorates the Southern Africa Liberation Day. The 38th SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Windhoek, Republic of Namibia in August 2018 endorsed 23rd March, as the day for commemorating the liberation of Southern Africa.

As we celebrate this day, we pay tribute to the men and women who sacrificed their lives for the liberation of our region, as well as the spirit of togetherness that existed among Member States. When the Frontline States came together in 1974, their aim was to achieve political liberation in the Southern African region, and their efforts resulted in the attainment of majority-rule and independence in Angola and Mozambique (in 1975), Zimbabwe (1980), Namibia (1990), and South Africa (1994).

Without the commitment and selflessness of the men and women who sacrificed their lives, we would never have achieved the political liberation of our region. We owe a great deal to our Founders, we might have lost the majority of them, unfortunately, but their legacy lives on, may their souls rest in eternal peace.

We express our gratitude to the international community for their support to our struggle for freedom. This year's liberation day comes a few days before the 40th Anniversary of SADC, which offers us a unique opportunity to reflect on the journey we have travelled together as a regional community.

No doubt, the freedom we enjoy today is one of the many achievements we can all be proud of as a region. We must endeavour to ensure that our unique liberation history is not forgotten. To achieve this, it is important for our Member States to, among others, incorporate the Southern African liberation history into the school curriculum, so that our youth and the future generations appreciate the sacrifices of that generation of young men and women who liberated us.

While we celebrate our liberation, we must collectively work to transform our economies and liberate our people from the bondage of poverty. We must all commit to our shared vision of a common future, that will ensure economic well-being, improvement of the standard of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice and peace and security of our people. Let's all do our best to ensure that our hard-earned freedom is sustained for posterity.

This year’s commemoration of the Southern Africa Liberation Day is coming at a time when the world at large, and all of us, are grappling with COVID-19, which has been declared by the World Health Organisation, as a Global pandemic and public health emergency. I appeal to everyone to adhere to all measures being put in place by our Governments to avoid or minimise the spread of the virus. We shall not fail, let us cooperate and move in Unity, everyone MUST play their part, a paradigm shift in the way we conduct ourselves and our businesses is a must.