



STATEMENT

MEETING OF COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

The meeting of Committee of Ministers Responsible for Disaster Risk Management from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), was held on 21st February 2020, at the Madinat Al Bahr Hotel in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania.

The meeting was hosted by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, and was attended by 13 SADC Member States namely; Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Also in attendance were representatives from World Food Programme (WFP) Regional Bureau for Southern Africa and the Indian ocean states and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Ministers' meeting follows the SADC Council decision to activate the Ministerial Committee on Disaster Risk Management and Response to among others things, guide the Secretariat in coordinating Disaster Risk Management in the region. This is in view of the unprecedented number of disasters that the region continues to face, which include droughts, cyclones and floods that have led to the loss of lives, livelihoods, damage to property and destruction of infrastructure across the region.

The meeting was officially opened by His Excellency Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein, President of Zanzibar and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of Zanzibar. In his Remarks, H.E Dr. Shein applauded SADC Member States for strengthening regional cooperation and integration while stimulating existing efforts and interventions aimed at minimizing the impacts of disasters. He emphasized the importance of implementing Regional Strategies including the Regional Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategy and Fund 2016 - 2030, approving and implementing the Regional Resilience Strategy 2020 - 2025 and domesticating the Sendai Framework as approved by the UN General Assembly in 2015. He noted that the meeting came at an opportune time when disasters including hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts, forest fires, floods, epidemics and maritime and road accidents were on the increase. He also pointed to other challenges including pest and disease outbreaks, pollution, sea level rise, saltwater intrusion and other events caused by climate change and the destruction of natural resources and the environment and that

such disasters were resulting in loss of lives, human assets and damage to infrastructure which derail the development agendas of SADC Member States.

In her remarks, the Executive Secretary of SADC, Her Excellency Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, pointed out that over the past few months, the region has been confronted by a number of significant and devastation disaster events that claimed a lot of lives. She commended the affected Member States for putting in place measures to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the devastating impacts of climate change. She assured the region of the Secretariats commitment to support Member States and that the region was working on a number of initiatives to enhance disaster risk management. She explained that among others, SADC was putting in place mechanisms to ensure swift responses to quick onset disasters through the activation of the SADC Standby Force involvement in humanitarian support operations during disasters, and the operationalization of Emergency response teams to assist in disasters.

Speaking during the event, Hon. Jenista Joachim Mhagama, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office of the United Republic of Tanzania and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers responsible for Disaster Risk Management said the adverse effects of disaster was huge and did not only affect Member States in terms of financial costs, but also in a psychological manner. She added that disasters were a huge burden on the region which already is in need of funding to improve on its health care, education, clean and safe water, agriculture, education, infrastructure development and investment in various economic and social domains. She further pointed out that the SADC region was developing robust strategies for identifying and alerting them to new danger indicators as they begin to emerge.

Ministers expressed concern about the recurrent disaster in the region that led to loss of lives and destruction of property and infrastructure. These included among others cyclone Idai and Kenneth that killed scores of people in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, cyclone Belna that caused widespread torrential rains and floods that also to loss and destruction of property and infrastructure and cyclone Diane that let to loss of lives and destruction of property and infrastructure in Madagascar.

Ministers commended the affected Member States for putting in place response measures to mitigate the impacts of the incidences on both human life and infrastructure, as well as national and international partners who supported the efforts of the affected Member States in all the disaster events. Ministers noted with appreciation the swift approval of the US250,000 by the SADC Chairperson, His Excellency Dr John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, for humanitarian support to the people affected by floods resulting from Torrential rains in Madagascar

Ministers also noted with concern the ongoing drought in the region that continues to plunge many SADC citizens into hunger, malnutrition and poverty, The drought is exacerbated by the emergency of crop pests and diseases such the Fall Armyworm, African Armyworm, Red and Desert locusts and animal pests and diseases such Anthrax,

Foot and Mouth, contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia, and the highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza that contribute to the deteriorating food security situation.

Ministers further noted the outbreaks of human disease and infections such as the Ebola virus and Coronavirus that new and neglected tropical diseases that have had devastating social and economic impacts both in the region and globally. Ministers commended Member States for taking necessary precautions to prevent the spread of Ebola and the new coronavirus in their territories by instituting preventive measures ranging from re-enforced surveillance measures, improved coordination for emergency response, strengthening laboratory capacity, reconstituting rapid response teams. Ministers further urged Member States to step up preventive and preparedness measures against the new coronavirus and other major disease outbreaks, including.

Ministers noted the progress on the implementation of Regional Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management strategies and programmes including in undertaking climate change adaptation and mitigation actions, as well as in undertaking measures to reduce the impacts of disasters in the region.

Ministers also reviewed a number of reports and documents submitted for their consideration. Among others, Ministers also approved the draft Regional Resilience Strategic Framework 2020-2030 and urged the Member States to align national frameworks to the Regional Resilience Strategic Framework 2020-2030. The Strategy aims to entrench resilience building across the various economic sectors in the region with a view to increase resilience and adaptation to climate shocks and the recurrent disasters in the region.

Ministers also endorsed the review of Regional Strategies including the SADC Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategy and Fund 2016-2030 to be aligned to new and emerging development including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the African Union Programme of Action on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework in order to ensure that the region's interventions are in line with the continental and global frameworks.

In view of the numerous challenges the region is facing with regards to climate change related and other natural disasters, Minister called upon Member States to;

- timeously share National data on weather and climate with the SADC Secretariat to enable the production of early warning information and products for effective decision-making by climate sensitive sectors.
- continue to develop capacities in vulnerability assessments and analysis including incorporation of emerging sectors that show susceptibility to climate and natural disaster risks.
- continue to support each other and vulnerable communities that have been affected by disasters as well as accelerating implementation of resilience building initiatives, improve early warning and response, and contingency planning to minimize the impacts of future climatic disasters.

- monitor transboundary risks and strengthen engagements between neighbouring countries for the development of agreements and frameworks of cooperation to mitigate the spread of transboundary risks.
- strengthen capacities and investment in early warning systems at both regional and national levels to enable the control of cross border infection; and engage and cooperate for effective management of transboundary risks through mutually agreeable mechanisms.
- remain vigilant and work together and share information to jointly control the advance of the migratory pests that could have serious implications for the food security of the region; and direct the Secretariat to engage international partners to support the region in controlling the spread of the Red locusts.

Ministers expressed solidarity with the Government and people of the United Republic of Tanzania for the loss of lives of over 40 people and the damages to property and infrastructure following torrential rains and floods that also displaced over 15000 people and leaving over 8000 that required temporary shelter.

Ministers commended the United Republic of Tanzania for the hospitality and warm welcome, and for the successfully hosting and conduct of the Ministerial meeting.

Done in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, 21st February 2020