STATEMENT BY THE SADC SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE ON WESTERN SAHARA REGARDING THE EFFECTS OF CYCLONE IDAI IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

26 March 2019, Pretoria, Republic of South Africa

In support of the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people, consistent with the United Nations (UN) Charter and the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) held a Solidarity Conference with Western Sahara on 25 and 26 March 2019, in Pretoria, Republic of South Africa.

Participants at the Conference included Heads of State and Government of SADC Member States, and invited Heads of State and Government from the African Continent, Latin America, Europe and Asia, and Former Heads of State and Government; Leaders of former Liberation Movements and Governing Parties in the SADC Region; and Civil Society Organisations.

The Conference expressed its deepest condolences and solidarity with the people of the Republics of Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe which bore the brunt of the effects of the recent Cyclone Idai. To date, the cyclone has led to a loss of 661 lives, injured 2,284 people, displaced 208,621 people and affected more than 429,141 people. The Cyclone has also resulted in extensive damage to the infrastructure and property as more than 3,140 classrooms have been damaged affecting more than 90,756 children, inundated more than 497,714 hectares of crops which will worsen the already compromised food security situation in the affected areas. Access to health care has also been affected as more than 45 health facilities were destroyed by the cyclone.

The Conference also took note of the recent statement of the Chairperson of SADC, H.E. Dr. Hage G. Geingob President of the Republic of Namibia, in which the President noted that the Cyclone, which killed hundreds of people and displaced thousands others, left a trail of destruction to land and infrastructure, affecting accessibility and provision of health care and welfare to the affected communities.

The Conference emphasized the need for all affected families and communities in the three SADC Member States to be assisted to recover from the effects of the Cyclone, and for the global community to implement the relevant measures to reverse the effects of climate change, particularly on vulnerable communities in the developing world.

The Conference expressed its gratitude to all countries and organisations who have, and continue to provide moral and material assistance to the affected countries.