



**Press Conference**

**By the Executive Secretary of SADC**

**Her Excellency Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax**

**Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018, 11:30 am**

**SADC Headquarters**

**Gaborone, Botswana**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen from the various Media Houses, I thank you for coming to this morning's Press Conference. You are welcome to the Secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

**Members of the Press**, the objective of today's Press Conference is to interact with you, and encourage you to join the SADC Secretariat in communicating the SADC region and telling stories that enhance regional integration programmes, and stories that reflect the socio, economic and political progress the region is making.

The SADC's mandate as you may be aware, is to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth, and socio-economic development, in its 16 Member States through efficient productive systems, deeper cooperation and integration, good governance, durable peace and security.

The SADC mandate is driven by ourselves, here at the SADC Secretariat in collaboration with the Member States, as we are responsible for strategic planning; coordination and harmonisation of policies and strategies; monitoring and evaluation; resource mobilisation; and research.

As an institutional arm of SADC, we, as the Secretariat of SADC, are aware of the important role that the media plays in disseminating information to the citizens of the Region, and beyond our Region.

For that reason, as a Secretariat we feel it is important that we interact with the media from time to time, and share information on issues being pursued as we contribute to the realisation of the goal of SADC, which is to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth, and socio-economic development, in its 16 Member States through efficient productive systems, deeper cooperation and integration, good governance, durable peace and security.

We are mindful that, unless the citizens of the Region are constantly informed on what milestone SADC is making, and are made aware of what SADC is doing, and the contribution it is making to improve the lives of the citizens of the region, SADC will be misunderstood, and its achievements will remain invisible. Through this Press Conference, may we remind you on some of the issues we are pursuing as a Region, and appeal to you, to play a role in communicating them to the citizens of the Region.

SADC is not the 260+ people working here in the SADC Secretariat, SADC is all the 16 Member States, and the 370 million citizens.

The objectives of SADC, are among others, to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development with an ultimate objective of eradicating poverty, and enhance standard and quality of life of people of SADC; and to consolidate, defend and maintain peace, security and stability.

To pursue these objectives, SADC programmes are based on four priority areas:

- i) Industrialisation and market integration;
- ii) Infrastructure development in support of regional integration;
- iii) Peace and Security; and
- iv) Special programme of regional dimension.

Progress has been recorded in these areas, and during this press conference we will share some of the recent milestones.

**Members of the Press:** In the area of infrastructure, last month, on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018 the Ministers responsible for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Public Information, Transport and Meteorology from the SADC Member States met in Windhoek, Namibia, and deliberated on several issues of importance to the Region in the four sectors in relation to Infrastructure in support of regional integration.

In the ICT Sector, the Ministers approved the SADC Broadband Targets for the region which include broadband goals to ensure that the region reaches 50% household penetration of broadband, 60% of youth and adults with a minimum level of proficiency in sustainable digital skills, and urged Member States to ensure that their National Broadband Plan or Strategy are aligned to the targets.

The Ministers further, approved the SADC Rural Broadband Guidelines and Recommendations to ensure that all SADC Citizens in the rural areas have affordable access and benefit from broadband services.

On Cyber Security, the Ministers approved the SADC Regional Cyber Drill and the SADC Cyber Security Action Plan, which compliments the SADC harmonised Cyber Security Model laws, and includes capacity building, cyber drill, International cooperation and cyber security institutional mechanism such as the Computer Incident Response Teams (CIRTs)

In the Transport Sector, the Ministers reviewed the Status of Implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) in SADC and within the Tripartite Framework of COMESA-EAC-SADC and urged Member States who have not yet signed the *Solemn Commitment* on Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) to do so.

The full implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) is expected to reduce aviation costs and make air transport services accessible to a wider population of business and leisure-related travelers.

The anticipated growth in air passenger volumes will accelerate the growth of the civil aviation industry at the regional and continental level. Thus the implementation of the "Open Skies" policy is critical.

Ministers also considered progress on implementation of the Tripartite Transport and Transit Facilitation Programme (TTTP) which is assisting Member States to harmonise road transport laws, policies, regulations, systems and standards, and approved their programmes. The Tripartite Transport and Transit Facilitation Programme is assisting to develop and implement harmonised road transport policies, laws, regulations and standards for efficient cross border road transport and transit networks, transport and logistics services, systems and procedures in the Tripartite region. This Programme is supported by the European Union, and focuses on road transport movement in SADC, the East African Community and COMESA Regions with the ultimate goal of attaining seamless road transport operations in the Tripartite region.

Regarding the Meteorology Sector, the Ministers acknowledged the prominent role played by the SADC Climate Services Centre in generating climate and weather products through the Southern African Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF), and urged Member States to allocate resources to support the sustainability of the SARCOF process; and directed the Secretariat to sensitize policy makers on the important role that National Meteorological and Hydrological Services played in reducing the weather and climate related impacts.

To enhance popularization of the SADC identity, brand, and community building symbols, the Ministers recommended to Council to approve the singing of the SADC Anthem and hoisting the SADC flag alongside national flags and anthems in SADC Member States, during all SADC Meetings and national events and ceremonies. Furthermore, the Ministers urged Member States to promote singing of the SADC anthems in schools.

The Ministers urged Member States to facilitate the entry of Journalists assigned to cover SADC programmes, events and meetings, including the SADC Council and Summits into their countries to facilitate communication and promotion of SADC.

**Members of the Press:** In the Area of Industrialization and Market integration, it is important to note that the SADC region, with its combined population of about 370 million people, and a combined GDP of USD 607 billion, provides a huge potential for investment, that could translate to the socioeconomic development of the citizens of the region. But unless, as a region, we constantly communicate what we have to offer, to the world out there, our potential will remain un-tapped.

This year marks ten years since the launch of the SADC Free Trade Area in August 2008, following the removal of customs duty on 85% of tariff lines after an 8 year phased programme of tariff reduction provided under the SADC Protocol on Trade.

That process continued until around 2012 when most Member States removed duties on 98% of tariff lines. Intra-SADC trade between those years, 2000 and 2012, increased substantially and more than quadrupled.

The percentage share of intra-SADC trade in relation to the region's total trade with the world, however, remained at roughly 16% for the same period.

Of late between 2013 and 2017, this has increased and has been consistently above 20%, averaging at 21.6%. That increased share of intra-regional trade may however be largely due to the sharp decline during that period of exports from the region of major commodities to the rest of the world, and the general subdued global economic activity.

The comparatively low levels of intra-regional trade are attributed to the lack of diversification of exports, which remain firmly centered on minerals, fuels and agricultural produce. The SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap provides a coordinated effort for SADC to create a platform for greater participation in regional and global value chains.

It is therefore key in assisting the Member States to address the supply side constraints, as well as the stagnant levels of intra-SADC trade and the less than optimum performance of the SADC Free Trade Area.

**Members of the Press,** the Secretariat is facilitating the development of a Protocol on Industry, as a stand-alone legal instrument to support industrialisation. It is expected that the Protocol on Industry will enhance the level of industrial development both nationally and regionally, and facilitate the pursuit of unified goals, and lend cohesion to Member States' industrialization policies and strategies. The Protocol on Industry will give legal effect to the SADC Industrial Development Strategy and roadmap 2015-2063, and enhance the SADC Secretariat's mandate to co-ordinate and provide oversight to the implementation of regional industrial development measures.

In line with the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Road Map, the Secretariat has continued to assist Member States to improve their industrial competitiveness through the Identification of capacity gaps in implementing the industrialization policy, and developing regional programmes to improve competitiveness of Member States.

As private sector engagement is critical to SADC's industrialization, the Secretariat in collaboration with the private sector is developing a Plan of Action that will lead to the establishment of a SADC Business Council, which will among others, strengthen SADC's Private Sector Engagement.

**Members of the Press:** The development of regional value chains and their integration into global value chains remains the main fulcrum for regional integration, sustained growth and industrialisation of the SADC region. The Costed Action Plan of the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap, identifies six priority value chain clusters namely; Agro-processing, Mineral Beneficiation, Pharmaceuticals, Capital goods, Consumer goods and Services.

Thus far, the profiling of the minerals and pharmaceutical sectors were completed and the profiling of the agro-processing value chains are nearing completion.

The profiling of value chains allows us, as a region to start identifying the potential value chain projects where feasibility studies can be undertaken to assess if the projects could be formulated into attractive investment projects for the private sector to invest in. We are happy to inform you that the process for the development of investment projects has been initiated to investigate the feasibility of investment projects in the pharmaceutical value chains. The Secretariat is currently in discussions with a key development partner to secure finance to investigate investment projects in the mineral beneficiation value chains.

Furthermore, the Secretariat has been working closely with Member States and project promoters to submit investment projects to be compiled into a database of investment projects to be promoted both regionally and globally.

**Members of the Press:** Last week, the Executive Secretary of SADC, led a SADC delegation to Moscow, Russian Federation, where the SADC Ambassadors and High Commissioners in Moscow, organized the SADC Investment Forum as part of commemorating the 38 years of existence of SADC. The SADC Investment Forum was aimed at sharing with our Russian Partners, information on investment opportunities and investment climate in the SADC region.

I am pleased to inform you that it was a very successful event. Over 200 delegates, comprising senior policy makers, leading practitioners and experts, private sector operators, civil society, regional and international development agencies, and development financial institutions, participated.

During the Investment Forum, the SADC Secretariat participated in the panel discussions, focusing on Energy and Infrastructure Development; Finance and Logistics; Regional Industrial Value Chains, Mining and Health. To SADC, this Forum provided an opportunity for networking amongst stakeholders from the Russian business community and SADC region. Our SADC Ambassadors in Moscow will continue to follow up and keep the discussions moving because there are a number of opportunities for investment and partnership. To us, this is a good start and SADC Secretariat remains committed to supporting SADC Member States to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Russian Federation.

**Members of the Press:** The SADC Secretariat also signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Basic Principles of Relations and Cooperation between SADC and the Russian Federation which provides a framework for cooperation between SADC and Russian Federation for the next five years. During the visit, discussions were also held with Mr Dmitry Shugaev, the Director General of the Federal Agency for Military-Technical Cooperation of the Russian Federation. Some of you may recall that on 27 July, 2018, SADC and Russian Federation signed an MoU in the Areas of Military-Technical Cooperation. The discussions centered around operationalization of this MoU and we agreed to finalize the roadmap through joint technical team, comprising officials and experts from SADC and the Russian Federation.

SADC Secretariat also took the opportunity to meet Mr Suren Vardanyan, Vice President of the Moscow Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) and officials representing affiliated Members of the Chamber, including franchising association and women groups, among others. During the meetings, a number of issues, including the need to enhance women and youth participation in business, use of technology in business, innovation in production, logistics and supply chains were discussed. The meeting agreed to strengthen private sector engagement between SADC and Russia through private sector driven exchange programmes and trade and investment forums, where innovations and technologies can be showcased and business partnerships developed.

**Members of the Press:** On special programmes of regional dimension, while the Region has made a number of strides in education and health sectors, equitable access to adequate healthcare services remains a challenge in the region, hence, the SADC region has developed and is implementing a Pharmaceutical Programme in line with the SADC Protocol on Health and the SADC Health Policy.

The SADC Ministers of Health and Ministers Responsible for HIV and AIDS at their meeting in November 2017 made a Decision to proceed with the SADC Pooled Procurement Services (SPPS). An eligibility criteria was set and sent to Member States and after an evaluation, the United Republic of Tanzania, was selected to host the SADC Pooled Procurement Services (SPPS) after meeting the set criteria. Recently, on the 9th of October 2018, the SADC Secretariat and the Medical Services Department (MSD) of the United Republic of Tanzania signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Provision of the SADC Pooled Procurement Services (SPPS) for pharmaceuticals and medical supplies.

This is a significant step in the implementation of the SADC Pooled Procurement Services, which is anticipated to reduce the prices of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies by allowing SADC Member States to share pricing and supplier information to enable them negotiate for better prices for high quality medicines from suppliers.

The implementation of the SADC Pooled Procurement Services will improve “sustainable availability and access to affordable, quality, safe and efficacious essential medicines”.

The rationale is to have quality essential pharmaceutical products available in the market at lower costs. Pooled procurement will lead to savings and more affordable medicines. With a total population of just under 370 million and an anticipated SADC pharmaceutical market in the region of USD4.1 billion, annual price reduction savings in the region of hundreds of millions of USD can be achieved with successful pooled procurement. Member States are encouraged to utilise this facility.

**Members of the Press:** The 38th SADC Summit theme of “*Promoting Infrastructure Development and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development*,” which was endorsed as the 2018/19 Theme, to take forward the SADC industrialization agenda, while focusing on infrastructure development, youth empowerment and sustainable development, has a lot of potential stories for the media to follow up, and communicate on how the different Member States will be implementing the theme. This is important, because the youth account for 70 percent of the population of the SADC region, hence the extent to which they are engaged, or empowered, will impact on the socio-economic development of our region.

In this regard, I encourage the media to participate in producing news content on initiatives aimed at promoting Infrastructure Development and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development. In support of the 2018 SADC theme, the SADC Secretariat is encouraging the use of the hashtag: #SADCYouthtalks and or #EngageSADCYouths.

**Members of the Press:** SADC remains peaceful and stable, and we thank our founding fathers for their vision, the leadership thereafter, and current leadership, and all SADC Citizens for upholding peace and stability. SADC has set 23<sup>rd</sup> March as the date for the commemoration of the Southern Africa Liberation Day to remember freedom fighters who played a pivotal role in the struggle for liberation of Southern African States, and approved the inclusion of Southern African Liberation struggle in SADC Member States curriculum. Member States are encouraged to implement these decisions so as to keep our liberation struggle history alive. The 38<sup>th</sup> SADC Summit also approved to put in place a mechanism to honour Founders of SADC. I implore you to support the promotion of this Day in our respective Member States and encourage you to write or produce stories on SADC Liberation and profile our founding fathers.

On another note, our region, SADC, will in January 2019, assume its six-month peace keeping responsibilities at the continental level roster duties with the African Standby Force (ASF) until 30 June 2019. In this regard, there is need for regional, continental and international peace support operations to be well coordinated, harmonised and integrated to ensure effective cohesion in the execution of different peacekeeping tasks. During our tenure, of the African Standby Force (ASF), the region will experience exchange of ideas and learning between and among the various military, police and civilians from the different Member States.

In preparation, to assume our mandate, SADC conducted a Command Post Exercise (CPX) in the Republic of Malawi from 1-16 October 2018, which was attended by around 610 participants from twelve SADC Member States including Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Participants at Command Post Exercise were exposed to various trainings including modern-day complexities associated with peacekeeping operations.

Peace and stability are key conduit for sustainable development and regional integration, hence there is need for all countries to exhibit the spirit of togetherness, solidarity, partnership and oneness to address and manage any conflicts in SADC and Africa. The type of stories you chose to write, or produce, can either contribute to the spirit of togetherness, solidarity, partnership and oneness, or the opposite.

Before I conclude, let me take the opportunity to commend the winners of the 2018 SADC Media Awards who are:

- Ms. Calviniah Kgautlhe from the Republic of Botswana, first prize in the Print Category;
- Ms. Onalenna Dube from the Republic of Botswana, first prize in the Radio Category
- Mr. Yobe Shonga from the Republic of Botswana, second prize in (Photo Category).

Other winners include:

- Ms. Emma Nakapizye from the Republic of Zambia, first prize in the in Photo Category;
- Mr. Abdel Baulacky from the Republic of Mauritius, first prize in the Television Category
- Ms. Debra Hathway from the Republic of South Africa, second prize in (Print Category);
- Ms. Blanche Goreses from the Republic of Namibia, second prize in (Television Category);
- Mr Mosotho Stone from the Republic of South Africa, second prize in (Radio Category)

Congratulations for contributing to the awareness of the SADC region and its programmes. The 2019 SADC Media Award has been launched this month, and we hope some of you present here, will be amongst the winners.

**Done in Gaborone, Botswana, 31 October, 2018**