Launch of "SADC Success Stories"

"SADC largely fails to be an effective body of regional cooperation and integration."

"The new institution triggered a series of policy papers, treaties and agreements that increasingly became a parallel universe to the realities of peace and security, trade, investment and economic endeavours in the region."

"The achievements in SADC's key sectors...are scarce and fragile."

"For the populations of the 15 SADC countries, SADC remains an alien body."

Harsh criticism, you will say. Those are some of the "key findings" of a study presented by the SADC Council of NGOs in Gaborone in Nov. 2013. They were not based on a scientifically implemented poll among a representative portion of the population. Nevertheless, they probably reflect a widespread perception across SADC Member States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

SADC may not be perfect, and nobody will ignore that a number of challenges remain 23 years after SADC was established. However, SADC has performed much better than an isolated look at those "key findings" might suggest (which does not mean they were taken out of the blue).

SADC as an international organization has never been an aim in itself, but a vehicle to better achieve something. According to the SADC Treaty of 1992, the first of a number of "objectives" is
to "promote sustainable and equitable growth and socio-economic development that will ensure poverty alleviation with the ultimate aim of its eradication, enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa, and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration".

Thus the first and foremost objective of SADC is not some distant and abstract concept of international relations, but rather to bring about tangible achievements for the benefit of the people in the region. It is, therefore, not unfair to measure SADC and its Member States against this ambition. It is certainly true, that sometimes these basic objectives may get out of sight in the daily business of meetings and strategizing. But they do not get lost!

The collection of SADC "Success Stories" presented today is testimony to the fact that the work of SADC matters, that it matters to the people by achieving significant benchmarks towards the basic objective of improving life for the people in Member States.

Establishing a one-stop border post at Chirundu has drastically reduced the time for trucks to cross the border. This is not just a relief for truck drivers. It saves the trucking companies a lot of time and money which leads to lower prices to the consumer of those goods transported on the trucks, and it will encourage additional cross border trade for the benefit of jobs on both sides of the border. It is good news that more such one stop border posts are in the pipeline; SADC will eventually need hundreds of them. Without SADC, the SADC Trade Protocol and further agreements this would not happen.

Fast and efficient cross border banking services may not, at first glance, seem to be of relevance to the poor villagers in remote areas still dealing with a cash economy. However, cross border trade is going to benefit from better financial services.
Making it easier will immediately help those parts of the population participating in cross border activities (business, tourism or just visits), and it will support bringing people in the remote areas, over time, closer to the banking system for their own benefit.

The establishment of Transfrontier Conservation Areas across the SADC region has not only helped, and will help in the coming years, to protect the peculiar biodiversity in the region. It has also contributed to significantly increase tourism to those areas and, as a consequence, to create jobs in those usually remote areas which would otherwise not have been created. The TFCAs lead to a win-win situation for the local population, the countries concerned and for the international community in terms of global goods such as the protection of biodiversity and the fight against climate change.

SADC cooperation on transboundary management of water resources has led to considerable successes. Efficient and results oriented cooperation among SADC countries participating in joint river commissions is becoming the norm. Sharing and intelligently managing often scarce water resources supports a huge number of people in the region, be it through better access to potable water in households, for agriculture or public institutions. The structures that have been established in previous years will really be a gamechanger in the coming years in an area obviously so important in Southern Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Germany has been supporting SADC in these endeavours for 20 years because Germany believes in SADC ! We believe in regional cooperation in Europe and elsewhere. Germany's foreign policy has become multilateral in nature. We try to encourage regional integration, including in Africa, in order to
– promote peace and security by establishing a regional security architecture and enable states in the region to assume responsibility for security in their region,
– promote regional economic integration through development of internal and regional markets and infrastructure, and
– promote human rights and good governance and other "global goods" through cooperation, regional benchmarking and peer review.

Of course, regional integration is a long term agenda, if not a never ending endeavour. Its success depends on tangible achievements along the way, such as listed and described in the "SADC Success Stories". Looking at the Southern African Region from outside I am convinced that the people in the region still have a long road ahead, but, definitely, they are better off with SADC than they would be without SADC!