OPENING REMARKS

BY

HER EXCELLENCY DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX
SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE SADC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING

DAR ES SALAAM, UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

18 MARCH 2020
• Right Honourable Prof. Majaliwa Kasim Majaliwa, Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania, and Guest of Honour;

• Honourable Prof. Palamagamba John Aidan Mwaluko Kabudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania, and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers;

• Honourable Ministers;

• Permanent Secretaries and Directors General;

• Senior Officials from SADC Member States;

• SADC Secretariat staff;

• Representatives of the Media;

• Invited Guests;

• Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to welcome you to this March 2020 SADC Council of Ministers meeting, being held via video-conference technology for the first time. This has been necessitated by the rapid spread of COVID-19, which has had significant impacts globally.

May I extend our gratitude to the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, for taking urgent measures that have enabled us to have this video-conference for this important regional meeting. The SADC Secretariat is very grateful to all Member States for the support provided during the preparations for this meeting, and ensure business continuity.

Swift response by Member States to this video-conference is commendable, and is demonstration of SADC readiness to manage emergencies and disasters. Our Ministers of Health met on 9 March 2020 to map a regional response to COVID-19. The meeting shared information and measures taken at national level, and deliberated on how to cooperate at regional level. Among others, Member States agreed to re-activate the Technical Committee for Coordinating and Monitoring the Implementation of the SADC Protocol on Health, and to expand its terms of reference, to include assessing and advising on health, social, economic and immigration matters. We urge the Technical Committee to expeditiously and continuously provide the needed advice on this very urgent matter.
May I also commend SADC Member States for the rigorous measures taken in response to this global pandemic. We call upon all citizens of the region to abide by the measures pronounced by our respective leaders, and play our part. Our efforts to combat COVID-19 will only succeed if everyone plays their part.

**Right Honourable Prime Minister and Guest of Honour,**

Consolidation of democracy remains a priority among SADC Member States. Since the last meeting of the Council of Ministers held here in Dar es Salaam in August 2019, four General Elections were held in the Republics of Botswana, Mauritius, Mozambique and Namibia. May I congratulate the new Governments that have been established following these elections, and the new Ministers and members of the SADC Council of Ministers, and welcome them to this very important organ of our institution. May I also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to SADC Member States who participated in the SADC Electoral Observation Missions (SEOMs) and for the support rendered.

Climate change continues to present significant socio-economic challenges to the region. Over the past three years, the SADC region has experienced increased incidences of cyclones, torrential rains and floods, which have resulted in loss of lives, destruction of livelihoods, and damage to infrastructure. The socio-economic impacts of these disasters have been immense. Member States who have been affected include Angola, Botswana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. We convey our sympathies and remain in solidarity with them.

SADC remains seized with climate change and disaster issues. In this regard, SADC Ministers responsible for Disaster Risk Management met on 22 February 2020 in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, and a full report will be presented to Council in August 2020.

**Right Honourable Prime Minister,**

The main objective of this meeting is to assess progress made during the 2019/2020 financial year, and deliberate on the outlook for 2020/2021. To this effect, the meeting will receive a report on the implementation of the 2019/2020 SADC Annual Corporate Plan, as well as on the SADC Council and Summit Decisions. In terms of implementation of the 2019/2020 Annual Corporate Plan, notable performance was registered during the course of the year. Out of a total of 182 outputs that were planned to be implemented during April-December 2019, 153 were successfully implemented, representing 84 per cent implementation rate. The implementation of the remaining 29 continued during January to March 2020.
Comparing the performance of the same period, I am pleased to inform you that significant improvement was registered as the completion rate increased from 74 per cent in 2018/2019 to 84 per cent in 2019/2020. This improved performance is largely attributed to measures put in place to strengthen Results-Based Planning and Budgeting Processes, and the introduction of periodic performance management.

Implementation of Summit and Council Decisions is another key factor in achieving the regional integration agenda. I am pleased to report that out of the 50 Council Decisions from the March 2019 Council Meeting, 47 Decisions were successfully and fully implemented during the period under review, representing 94 per cent completion rate. In addition, out of the 122 Decisions from the August 2019 Council Meeting, 106 were fully implemented, representing 87 per cent completion rate. In terms of August 2019 Summit Decisions, a total of 34 Decisions were fully implemented, out of the 44 decisions, representing 77 per cent completion rate. Implementation of the remaining decisions, at Council and Summit levels, is ongoing.

Right Honourable Prime Minister,

During the period under review, the following were some of the key milestones that were achieved. The Secretariat continued to work with the three remaining Member States to be part of the SADC Free Trade Area (FTA), as we align the SADC FTA to the Tripartite and continental initiatives. With regards to the Tripartite FTA, a total of 22 countries have so far signed the Agreement, and 8 countries have ratified, of which 3 are SADC Member States. At the continental level, SADC now has 5 Member States that have ratified and/or acceded to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement. With the progress made, ratification of the TFTA remains slow. May I call upon SADC Member States to expeditiously ratify these important instruments that will facilitate the acceleration of regional and continental integration. While we proceed with the Continental Free Trade Area, we should not lose sight of the Tripartite Free Trade Area. The Tripartite Free Trade Area is crucial to the realisation of the Continental Free Trade Area. It is of great concern that it has been over 10 years since a decision to have a Tripartite arrangement was agreed upon in Munyonyo, Uganda, and we are yet to operationalise the TFTA. Time is running out.

Notable achievements were also recorded in the implementation of the SADC Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan. In particular, in the energy sector, these achievements include the Malawi-Mozambique Transmission Interconnector Project that reached financial closure in September 2019, with
financing from the World Bank, KfW and the Government of Norway. The construction phase of the project is planned to commence in April 2020, and is expected to be commissioned by 2022. Upon commissioning, Malawi will be able to access the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) grid, and trade electricity with other SADC Member States.

In addition, Feasibility Study for Kolwezi-Solwezi Interconnector (Zambia) and associated substations funded by the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (IPPF), together with contributions by the DRC and Zambia national utilities, was completed in November 2019. Furthermore, the Government of the DRC signed a Treaty with the Government of South Africa to supply 5,000 megawatts (MW), which will also include Botswana, DRC, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, once the Intergovernmental Memorandum is signed.

Construction of the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Dam along the Rufiji River in the United Republic of Tanzania also commenced in June 2019, while commissioning is expected in 2022. Upon completion, the Project will have capacity to produce 2,115 megawatts of electricity that will feed into the electricity grids of Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, and Uganda.

With regards to the Transport Sector, the Multilateral Cross Border Road Transport Agreement (MCBRTA) and the Tripartite Vehicle Load Management Agreement were approved by the Tripartite Sectoral Committee of Ministers of Infrastructure (TSCMI) in October 2019, to be considered by the Tripartite Summit of Heads of State and Government later this year.

In the Water Sector, among others, as part of the Kunene Transboundary Water Supply Project, Lot 2 activities for Santa Clara Water Supply infrastructure in Angola were successfully completed in October 2019. The treatment plant and water distribution network will increase access to potable water supply to communities in Santa Clara, Angola, and will also potentially benefit the Namibian border town of Santa Clara. In addition, the Financing Agreement for the Feasibility Study for Calueque-Oshakati Pipeline connecting Angola and Namibia was signed in 2019.

**Right Honourable Prime Minister,**

Industrialisation remains a key priority for our region. While the region has recorded some milestones, progress remains slow. In recognition of the slow progress, and as directed by the 39th Summit, the Secretariat is finalising an assessment on the status of industrialisation and SADC intra-regional trade. The study is expected to assess progress made and emerging issues, so as to enable
the region to take the needed measures and realise its industrialisation aspirations. The Assessment Report will be presented to the Ministerial Task Force on Regional Integration, and subsequently to Council and Summit in August 2020.

**Right Honourable Prime Minister,**

The financial year 2019/2020 marks the fifth and last year of the implementation of the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2015-2020. In this regard, work on developing the SADC Vision 2050 and blueprints to succeed the RISDP is ongoing. These strategic documents will guide the regional direction post-2020. This meeting will consider a report on progress in the formulation of the SADC Vision 2050 and the RISDP (2020-2030). I am confident that Member States will attach the needed importance to this critical exercise and provide the needed inputs, as we proceed with the formulation. Notwithstanding the challenges posed by COVID-19 to the consultative process, the Secretariat remains committed to ensuring that the process of developing these blueprints remains on the right path towards achieving “The SADC We Want”.

**Right Honourable Prime Minister,**

Recognising that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was established as a successor to the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), which was established on 1 April 1980, SADC will turn 40 years of existence on 1 April 2020. SADCC was established with a core objective to reduce economic dependence on then apartheid South Africa, while not abandoning its political liberation objective as Namibia and South Africa were still to be liberated from colonialism. We owe a great deal to our founders who had the foresight of a better region. We might have lost the majority of them, may their souls rest in peace, but their legacy lives on. It is, therefore, befitting that while the major commemorations will be during the August 2020 Summit, Member States should explore ways of recognising and celebrating the ‘ruby’ anniversary of our SADCC on 1 April 2020.

**Right Honourable Prime Minister,**

As I conclude, allow me to express our gratitude to Prof. Palamagamba John Aidan Mwaluko Kabudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania, and Chairperson of SADC Council of Ministers, for his continued guidance and attention to SADC integration agenda; and to SADC Member States for their unwavering commitment to the SADC
Regional Integration agenda. I would also like to thank the SADC Standing Committee of Senior Officials, under the leadership of its Chairperson, Col. Amb. Wilbert Augustine Ibuge, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania, for the excellent work in preparing for this meeting, notwithstanding the challenging circumstances.

Allow me to thank the technical team that worked so hard to ensure that our videoconference meeting was successful. In a special way, may I thank Mr. Michael Moshiro from the United Republic of Tanzania and Mr. Michael Ernest from the SADC Secretariat, and their respective teams, for working so hard, at times working day and night without break, in preparation for this videoconference meeting. We also thank ICT Experts from SADC Member States who participated in and supported this process. We commend you wholeheartedly. In the same vein, I also wish to thank my two Deputy Executive Secretaries, Dr. Thembinkosi Mhlongo and Ambassador Joseph Nourrice, for overseeing preparations for this videoconference meeting, and all SADC Secretariat staff for the unwavering dedication to work which has seen the Secretariat making progress.

Allow me to close with a quote from Sir Seretse Khama, founding President of the Republic of Botswana and inaugural Chairperson of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), when he said: “We move forward in unity, or we perish. With mutual trust and the common vision of a brighter future … we shall not fail”. We shall not fail in our fight against COVID-19, and in our quest to achieve the “SADC We Want”!

With these remarks, I look forward to a successful and fruitful meeting.

I thank you very much.
Asante sana!
Merci beaucoup!
Muito obrigada!