



REMARKS

DELIVERED BY

**HER EXCELLENCY, DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX
SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE JOINT MEETING OF SADC
MINISTERS OF HEALTH AND HIV AND AIDS**

07 NOVEMBER 2019

**DAR ES SALAAM,
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA**

Your Excellency, *Mama Samia Suluhu Hassan*, Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania;

Honourable 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;

Honourable Ummy Mwalimu, Minister of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children of the United Republic of Tanzania, and Chairperson of the SADC Sectoral Committee of Ministers Responsible for Health and for HIV and AIDS;

Honourable Ministers responsible for Health and for HIV and AIDS;

Dr Zainab Chaula, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children of the United Republic of Tanzania, and Chairperson of Senior Officials of the SADC Sectoral Committee of Ministers Responsible for Health and for HIV and AIDS;

Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, Regional Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa;

Senior Government Officials;

Development Partners and Invited Guests;

Our partners from the media;

Distinguished delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my singular and great honour to deliver some remarks before you today. Allow me to begin by extending our gratitude to the Government and people of the United Republic of Tanzania for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to all of us since our arrival in Dar es Salaam, and for the excellent facilities put at our disposal for the smooth conduct of our meetings.

On behalf of the SADC Secretariat, may I specifically thank Your Excellency, *Mama Samia Suluhu Hassan*, Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania,

for finding time in your busy schedule to grace this important meeting. Thank you, Your Excellency!

Let me also thank you, Honourable Ministers, for taking time to attend this meeting, which is a testimony of your personal and our collective commitment towards promoting health and improving the quality of life of our people in the SADC region. This meeting today presents another opportunity to take stock of our regional efforts in the areas of health, and in doing so consolidate gains, identify challenges, and propose solutions to address such challenges.

**Your Excellency;
Honourable Ministers;**

Our organisation strives to attain a common future where economic well-being, improvement of standards of living, and quality of life, among others, are guaranteed. We cannot, of course, attain this common future without a healthy population. It is encouraging that the SADC Region continues to make steady progress towards the attainment of health and well-being of the peoples of Southern Africa. Among others, the region has realised significant successes in building and strengthening National Health Systems and in addressing major diseases of public health concern. As a result, SADC has consistently observed a slow but steady decline in the incidence and mortality from diseases such as AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

Additionally, SADC has noted a significant scaling-up of malaria interventions by Member States towards universal coverage. This has resulted in a substantial reduction of mortality attributed to the infectious disease. However, of great concern is that progress seems to have stalled over the past three years, which has left the majority of people in the region at risk of contracting malaria. Let us strive to do all it takes to sustain and consolidate the gains we have so far realised. We encourage our Partners to continue supporting these areas and consider them 'the priorities among priorities'. We are addressing other health issues, but let us not lose focus on control and elimination of Tuberculosis, Malaria, and HIV and AIDS.

I had the honour of meeting Hon. Chitalu Chilufya, Minister of Health of the Republic of Zambia, who was accompanied by Hon. Juliet Kavetuna, Deputy

Minister of Health and Social Services of the Republic of Namibia, and the Elimination Eight (E8) delegation in Gaborone last week and we agreed to vigorously work together to control and address malaria. During the meeting, I was appraised on the progress made by the E8 in reducing malaria-induced mortality rate. May I commend the E8 for the continued foresight and progress made. During the meeting, we agreed on the need to revitalise the E8, in line with your decision of 2009 establishing a Sub-Committee on Malaria Elimination to oversee both malaria elimination and control in the SADC region. It is, therefore, important that these efforts are cascaded to cover the entire SADC region, in the spirit of the Windhoek Declaration on Eliminating Malaria in the SADC Region as adopted by the SADC Summit in August 2018 in Namibia.

While malaria remains a priority in our region, resources to address this infectious disease have been dwindling. It is important, therefore, to come up with innovative ways of funding the fight and elimination of malaria. Allow me to congratulate His Majesty King Mswati III of Eswatini and His Excellency Edgar Chagwa Lungu of Zambia on the establishment of their national End Malaria Funds in May and June 2019 respectively to mobilise domestic resources to fight malaria, by bringing on board numerous stakeholders including the public at large, private sector and cooperating partners. Let us all support such innovative efforts.

It is also encouraging to note that the Kingdom of Eswatini, and the Republics of Mozambique and Zambia, are among a few countries on the continent that have established End Malaria Councils to guide their respective national malaria interventions. It is, therefore, important that all of us, States and individuals alike, maintain the momentum to eliminate malaria in line with the motto “**Zero malaria starts with me**”, as well as to reduce the burden from other diseases and achieve universal health coverage. This will be in line with SADC strategic blueprints, especially the Revised SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2015-2020), which highlights the importance of health towards achieving the SADC vision. The health and well-being of our people are paramount for the region to attain economic growth and prosperity.

Your Excellency;

Honourable Ministers;

The 2003 Maseru Declaration on the Fight against HIV and AIDS remains our guiding framework for regional HIV and AIDS response. It is also important to highlight that many SADC Member States have set clear targets to end malaria, and almost all have committed to end Tuberculosis and HIV and AIDS by the year 2030. To achieve these targets, we must accelerate the development and implementation of national and regional action plans, and these need to be backed by commitments, and sustainable health financing plans.

We cannot attain sustainable financing for the health sector, if we continue to over-rely on donor funding. In the face of ever-decreasing donor enthusiasm and dwindling funding, I therefore, wish to call upon all Member States, to continue exploring innovative domestic funding streams to fund health interventions.

**Your Excellency;
Honourable Ministers;**

Although notable progress is being recorded, the region continues to have a large proportion of children suffering from malnutrition. This includes a triple burden of malnutrition, that is over- and under-nutrition, as well as micronutrient deficiencies. If not urgently addressed, this has the potential to undermine our collective efforts to meet the strategic objectives outlined in the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and the SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (2015-2025). Malnutrition, if not addressed decisively, will slow economic transformation efforts in the region, with resources originally earmarked for economic development, being diverted to address the effects of malnutrition.

**Your Excellency;
Honourable Ministers;**

Before I conclude, allow me to applaud our Heads of State and Governments for adopting the global Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage during the recent UN High-Level meeting on Universal Health Coverage held on 23 September 2019, on the margins of the 74th Session of the UN General

Assembly. The political declaration has been described, by UN Secretary General António Guterres, as “the most comprehensive agreement ever reached on global health”. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to make sure that the Declaration is implemented for the benefit of the SADC people.

One of the most important aspects in realising universal health coverage is the need for SADC Member States to ensure that, while providing quality health services, the burden of high spending on health care is also minimised. Without this crucial consideration, there is a risk that the high costs to access health care could potentially drive an increasing number of our people into poverty due to exorbitant out-of-pocket health care costs, which will further hamper the attainment of the SADC We Want, where economic well-being, improved standards of living, and quality of life, among others, are guaranteed.

**Your Excellency;
Honourable Ministers;**

As I conclude, allow me to extend our appreciation to the Senior Officials of your Sectoral Committee for their hard work in preparing for your meeting, under the able leadership of its Chairperson Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children of the United, Dr. Zainab Chaula, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Republic of Tanzania. I am confident that the excellent preparations will facilitate the smooth conduct of your meeting. May I also take this opportunity to thank our partners for their continued support, and for making time to be with us today.

With these brief remarks, may I wish your Sectoral Committee fruitful deliberations.

**Thank you very much!
Merci beaucoup!
Muito obrigada!
Asante sana!**