



DRAFT OPENING REMARKS

**BY THE SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
H.E. MR. ELIAS M. MAGOSI**

TO THE

**MEETING OF THE SADC SENIOR OFFICIALS AND KEY
EXPERTS TO REVIEW THE RISDP 2020-2030**

**HARARE, ZIMBABWE
04 MARCH 2025**

Ambassador Albert Ranganai Chimbindi, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of the SADC Standing Committee of Senior Officials;

Senior Officials from all SADC Member States present;

The Deputy Executive Secretaries;

Staff from the SADC Secretariat and from the Government of Zimbabwe;

Ladies and gentlemen.

A very good morning to you all.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this important meeting of the Secretariat and Member States on the review of the RISDP (2020 – 2030).

I would first like to thank the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and in particular, our host, Ambassador Albert Chimbindi and his colleagues from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the rest of the Government, for the continued support during our preparations for this meeting, and the subsequent ones. In Zimbabwe, we couldn't have asked for a true partner of the Secretariat to advance the agenda of our region. The country has hosted multiple meetings with perfection and unquestionable commitment since assuming the Chairship of SADC.

In August 2024, we concluded the meetings of Council and Summit here in Harare, where the Secretariat had the honour of presenting the Report of the Executive Secretary, which was a synopsis of the performance of the SADC region for the period 2023/24. The report stimulated the much-needed discussions on the issues surrounding the implementation of our integration agenda driven by the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030. In particular, it facilitated a reflection on the results and dialogue on the pace at which the region is meeting the objectives of the RISDP.

This meeting, therefore, follows a directive from Council for the Senior Officials and technical experts to deliberate on the RISDP, appreciate the real challenges and identify practical and impactful solutions that will move our region forward. It was a directive borne out of your reflection on the regional report, that there was need for a dedicated time and focused discussion on this matter. There was need to start a deeper technical dialogue on the pillars of the RISDP and report back to Council, proposing salient but tangible solutions to guide the next and final five years of the current RISDP, since the implementation of the RISDP has now reached the halfway mark. These new or improved interventions should make a real change in the lives of the SADC citizens in the next five years.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Secretariat has conducted a preliminary review on the implementation of the RISDP to assess progress towards achieving the set strategic objectives and targets, identify sector specific implementation challenges, and propose interventions. The review covers the period from January 2020 to January 2025, measuring midterm milestones, documenting successes, evaluating impact, and identifying implementation challenges across all strategic areas of the RISDP.

This preliminary assessment is just the beginning of a more comprehensive Mid-Term Review of the RISDP which is supposed to be undertaken this year. The assessment relied entirely on secondary data and information collected from within the Secretariat. No primary data collection methods such as interviews or direct consultations with Member States and other key stakeholders were done. Hence, there is still a need for further engagement with key stakeholders, particularly Member States to take on board their perspectives on the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the various RISDP interventions geared towards realizing SADC's Vision 2050.

Distinguished Delegates,

The review reveals satisfactory progress in some of the sectors. For example, on peace and security, the region remains relatively peaceful and stable, with Member States showing solidarity and commitment to peace and stability as attested by the SADC peace missions in Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In our quest to consolidate democracy,

elections have become a norm in the region, augmented by robust and progressive election observation missions. We have established institutions to fight terrorism, cross-border crime and ensure security at sea. Financial inclusion has improved tremendously while mobile network coverage is considerably high. Sixty-three percent of the SADC population has safely managed water supplies, and a number of one-stop-border posts are operational. We are making good progress on HIV and AIDS response, with a 65% reduction on AIDS-related deaths as well as a 91% success rate in preventing mother-to-child transmission.

However, there are macroeconomic, institutional, sectoral and structural challenges across the RISDP Pillars, which call for a recalibration of the interventions going forward. The region is yet to unlock the bottlenecks that slow down industrialisation and infrastructure development, stifling regional economic growth. There is need to make further progress towards increasing intra-regional trade and improving access to markets in the region and beyond. We are yet to address effectively food insecurity, reduce poverty and malnutrition, improve the quality of our road networks to stimulate trade, expand the number of one-stop border posts and connect all SADC countries to the power grid, among others. The region has to find ways in which to address the multiple disasters and climate vulnerabilities such as droughts, tropical cyclones, floods, wildfires and sea-level rise. We ought to have conversations around how we can contribute to positive results, considering the impact and aftermath of, *inter alia*, the climate change-related shocks, the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the priorities of the new administration in the USA.

Just a couple of weeks ago, we had severe El Nino induced flash floods in the region, causing extreme damage to infrastructure and livelihoods. This, and other persistent challenges should not be happening to a region that has experienced these natural disasters before. By now, we should be having robust systems to not only mitigate the impact but also explore ways of harvesting and storing these massive amounts of water that keep passing year on year. How do we respond to droughts better, drawing from past experiences! How do we respond to locusts; cholera, Ebola and malaria outbreaks, etc. There must be a semblance of learning and growth by Member States and the region as a whole. These are issues we ought to deal with, look for practical solutions, and truly become relevant to our citizens in the region. This is just a snapshot of the many issues covered in the report.

Distinguished Delegates,

In closing, we certainly have a mammoth task ahead of us as Member States and the Secretariat. We have a great opportunity here and now to find solutions and change the region for the better. I, therefore, urge all of us to:

1. dissect the RISDP 2020-2030 Pillar by Pillar, looking critically at what is working and not working; and
2. identify key interventions for the period leading to 2030, appreciating the synergies and interlinkages between the sectors and between member states, for maximum impact in the region.

In Nelson Mandela's words, '***it always seems impossible until it's done***'. What is most important now is for us to start and then continue to sharpen the axe. As experts in the various fields, we are more enlightened and need to make this happen. I invite all of us to go ahead, remove fear and complacency, and start. Charles Bukowski says, "The problem with the world is that the intelligent people are full of doubts, while to stupid ones are full of confidence".

I wish us all fruitful discussions.

Thank you! Merci Beaucoup! Muito Obrigado! Asante Sana! Tatenda! Siyabonga!