



INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

BY

H.E. MR. ELIAS MPEDI MAGOSI

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SADC

AT THE

SADC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING

12 AUGUST 2025

ANTANANARIVO, REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR

Honourable Professor Amon Murwira, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers.

Honourable Dr. RAFARAVAVITAFIKA Rasata, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar, and Incoming Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers.

Honourable Victor Hugo Guilherme, Minister of Planning of the Republic of Angola, representing His Excellency Ambassador Tété António, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Angola, and Outgoing Chairperson of SADC Council of Ministers.

Honourable Ministers and Members of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Eric RATSIMBAZAFY, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar, and Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Senior Officials.

Distinguished Senior Officials from all SADC Member States.

Deputy Executive Secretaries of SADC.

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners.

Distinguished Invited Guests.

SADC Secretariat staff and staff from the Government of Madagascar

Members of the Media

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

Honourable Ministers, it is my distinct honour and privilege to welcome you to the meeting of the SADC Council of Ministers, here in the beautiful city of Antananarivo, in the Republic of Madagascar. Allow me to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Government and people of Madagascar for the warm welcome and exceptional hospitality extended to all delegations since our arrival.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Honourable Ministers for making time to participate in this Ordinary Council of Ministers Meeting. Your presence and contributions are invaluable as we deliberate on key issues of regional interest in preparation for the upcoming 45th SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government.

Before I proceed, it is my great pleasure to recognise and extend a warm welcome to the Honourable Ministers who are joining this Ordinary Council meeting for the first time, from the Republics of Botswana, Mauritius, Mozambique, and Namibia. We are pleased to have you with us, and look forward to your experience and wisdom, which we have no doubt will enrich the Council's deliberations and decisions.

Honourable Ministers, since your last meeting, the region has lost some of its leaders and liberation icons. We pay tribute to the late Dr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, Sixth President of the Republic of Zambia; His Excellency Mr. David Mabuza, former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa; and His Royal Highness Prince Mabandla Dlamini, former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini. Their visionary leadership, selfless service, and unwavering dedication to political stability, peace, security and regional development and integration has left a lasting legacy for us and the generations to come.

We also pay solemn tribute to the brave men and women who lost their lives while serving under the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC). Their selfless courage and commitment to protecting vulnerable communities and supporting the DRC in safeguarding its sovereignty and peace embody the core ideals of SADC, solidarity, unity, and peace, as espoused in the SADC Mutual Defence Pact. To their governments, families, and nations, we extend our deepest condolences and that you may be comforted in knowing that their sacrifice helped protect our region. May their legacies inspire renewed dedication to our shared vision of a peaceful, secure, and united Southern Africa. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

Further, we remember with deep sorrow two of our colleagues at the SADC Secretariat, namely Ms. Antoinette Manana, Programme Officer for Gender Mainstreaming, who hails from the Kingdom of Eswatini, and Ms. Nthabiseng Liphapang, Head of the Legal Affairs Unit from the Kingdom of Lesotho, who passed away on 16 June and 14 July 2025, respectively. We will always remember their passion, professionalism, and dedication to their respective jobs and professions, to the Secretariat and the region at large. May their memories continue to inspire us as we work together towards the realisation of our regional goals. May their souls also rest in eternal peace.

Honourable Ministers, at the heart of SADC's vision for regional integration and development lies our enduring commitment to industrialise, to deepen regional integration, to expand our shared market, and to build a reliant and enduring Community. In line with this vision, we are meeting this week to take stock of the last twelve month's performance in implementing key regional initiatives, the associated successes, shortfalls, challenges, and solutions to ensure that we continue in our shared path to regional prosperity. It is also an opportunity for us as a region to reaffirm our collective resolve to build a region that is peaceful, inclusive, competitive, and industrialised, characterised by sustainable economic well-being, justice, and freedom for all our citizens. Honourable Ministers, this reaffirmation is extremely important given all the economic and existential challenges thrown at Member States and at the Secretariat, with some of us beginning to embrace doubt within ourselves about the continued value of solidarity and regionalism. It is a critical time for us to remain strong and focused on why we were established in the first place, to ensure peace and security, and to integrate.

We are convening at a time of great uncertainty, a period marked by unprecedented geopolitical developments, rising tariffs, and a sharp decline in foreign aid. These dynamics continue to disrupt trade and investment flows across our region and affect our traditional trading and funding partners alike. However, while the reduction in foreign aid presents undeniable challenges, it also offers a unique opportunity for the SADC region to reflect and reduce its overdependence on external support. It is becoming increasingly clear to all of us that, we stand a better chance when we depend more on our own than on external support, which we have absolutely no control over.

While this phenomenon may be viewed as a setback, it should be a catalyst for growth and self-sufficiency. To achieve this, we must enhance intra-regional trade; we must eliminate trade barriers; invest in and focus on critical infrastructure that facilitates and quickens regional integration, and we must use domestic resources much more than ever before. It is in this context that the 24th Meeting of the SADC Committee of Ministers of Trade, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in June this year, reaffirmed our commitment to strengthening resilience against external trade shocks. The Ministers underscored the importance of enhancing self-reliance through increased intra-SADC trade in goods and services. They also committed to collaborating on industrialisation policies that promote value addition and beneficiation of critical raw materials produced by the region.

To attain true self-reliance, we must take deliberate and strategic action to reduce our dependence on the export of raw and unprocessed commodities. For too long, our economies have been driven by the export of low-value goods, limiting our capacity to foster sustainable growth, create meaningful employment, and fully harness the value of our abundant natural resources.

If we continue on this path, we risk missing critical opportunities to expand and modernise our manufacturing sector, which currently contributes only 11% to the SADC GDP, far below our target of 30% by 2030. To reverse this trend, we must prioritise investment in the development of vibrant regional value chains, with a particular focus on key sectors we have already identified, agro-processing, mineral beneficiation, and pharmaceuticals.

Honourable Ministers, the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2015–2063, adopted a decade ago, places strong emphasis on strengthening the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) sector, a space where many of our women and youth are actively engaged. The Strategy acknowledges the many challenges faced by SMEs, including limited managerial and entrepreneurial skills, lack of access to bankable collateral, poor product and service quality, and inadequate access to trade and industry-related information. In recognition of these challenges, and the need to enhance the contribution of SMEs to industrial development, the July 2022 Ministerial Task Force on Regional Economic Integration in Malawi, directed the Secretariat to develop the SADC SMEs Competitiveness Strategy. I wish to report that this Strategy has been successfully developed and is presented to this Council for consideration. It is designed to position SMEs to participate effectively in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), enabling them to access new markets, improve their competitiveness, and benefit from economies of scale.

In our continued efforts to improve the business environment and attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the region, the 24th Ministerial Task Force on Regional Economic Integration, held in June this year in Harare, adopted the SADC Investment Climate Scorecard developed by the SADC Secretariat in collaboration with the European Union, World Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), this tool benchmarks reform progress, monitors trends, and facilitates dialogue across Member States, contributing meaningfully to the acceleration of our industrialisation and integration goals.

Honourable Ministers, in the energy sector, our priority is to connect the three mainland Member States not yet integrated into the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) regional grid, namely Angola, Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania. In this endeavour, there is a notable progress to connect Malawi to the regional grid through Malawi – Mozambique Interconnector project, where most construction activities are nearing completion, and commissioning due by end of 2025. In the case of connecting United Republic of Tanzania, through the Tanzania-Zambia (TAZA) Interconnector project, funding has been secured for the Zambia component from the World Bank through the Programme on Regional Energy Transmission, Trade, and Decarbonization-Southern Africa-Multiphase Programmatic Approach (RETRADE-SA MPA), with construction

expected to be completed in 2026. Meanwhile, the completion of the Final Feasibility and Environmental Social Impact Assessment Study Reports for the Angola–Namibia (ANNA) Interconnector marks a significant milestone towards connecting Angola to the regional grid by 2028.

These developments reflect our commitment to strengthening regional energy infrastructure, ensuring reliable electricity supply, and enabling Member States to share surplus power. I commend the Republic of Madagascar for signing the Intergovernmental Memorandum of Agreement (IGMOA) on establishment and operationalisation of the SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREEE). This is a clear demonstration of the country's commitment to clean energy, promote energy efficiency, and expand access to energy for the Malagasy people.

Honourable Ministers, the SADC Pooled Procurement Services (SPPS) for pharmaceuticals and medical supplies is a vital initiative aimed at improving access to essential medicines and health commodities across the region. You will recall that in March 2025, in Harare, Council considered the recommendations of the Ministers of Health and Ministers responsible for HIV and AIDS and approved the establishment of the SPPS as an organisation of subsidiarity, through a Charter. I wish to inform this Council that the Draft Charter is currently under development. It is planned to be presented to the Joint Committee of Ministers of Health and HIV and AIDS, tentatively scheduled for November 2025, before undergoing legal clearance by the Committee of Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General, and subsequently for final consideration and approval by Council at the next Ordinary Meeting in March 2026. The SPPS initiative underscores the importance of collaborative procurement in addressing our region's health needs and crisis in some Member States. I urge Member States to utilise this facility to leverage the benefits of pooled procurement, including improved access to affordable medicines and medical supplies.

As we continue to advance the SADC regional integration and cooperation agenda, it is imperative that we prioritise the signing and ratification of SADC protocols and legal instruments. The slow pace at which Member States are signing and ratifying these instruments undermines the very objectives for which they were developed. I therefore urge Member States to expedite these processes to ensure their timely entry into force. By doing so, we will unlock the full potential of our regional frameworks and accelerate our journey towards sustainable development and inclusive economic growth. The Secretariat remains at your full disposal to provide any necessary support in this regard.

Recognising that accelerating regional integration requires substantial resources from SADC Member States, and in line with Council directives, your Secretariat has successfully mobilised US\$194,535,438 during 2024/2025 Financial Year, with an additional US\$12,284,125 in the first four months of the 2025/2026 Financial, from our International Cooperating Partners. To implement the priority projects outlined in our Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, we require an estimated US\$624.5 billion, of which about US\$89 million is expected from Member States, leaving a significant funding gap of US\$624.4 billion to be supported by our partners. To unlock these funding opportunities, we must demonstrate tangible results and showcase the impact of our collective efforts.

Honourable Ministers, allow me to extend our deepest gratitude to Honourable Professor Amon Murwira, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers, for his exemplary leadership and guidance during Zimbabwe's tenure as Chair of Council and for being instrumental in strengthening our unity, solidarity, and cooperation. Under his stewardship, the Council has made significant strides in advancing our regional agenda and providing valuable, well-informed advice to our Heads of State and Government. It has also put in sharp focus our very own commitment to the regional agenda and constantly reminding us why we became a Community.

To the incoming Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers, Honourable Dr. RAFARAVAVITAFIKA Rasata, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar, we pledge our full support and cooperation as you assume this important leadership role to lead us this coming year. We are confident that you will steer this institution with distinction, ensuring the effective implementation of our policies and the continued development of our organisation.

In conclusion, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Eric RATSIMBAZAFY, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar and Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Senior Officials, for his leadership in guiding the Committee to prepare the groundwork for your meeting. I also extend heartfelt thanks to Ambassador Albert Ranganai Chimbindi, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe, outgoing Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Senior Officials, for his leadership and commitment in guiding the Committee over the past year.

My gratitude goes to my two deputies, Angele Makombo N'tumba, Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration, and Judith Kateera, Deputy Executive Secretary for Corporate Affairs, for their dedication and hard work throughout the year. To all Secretariat staff, I thank you for your tireless efforts in serving our region very well despite the many challenges facing the Secretariat and our region.

With these remarks, Honourable Ministers, let me wish you all fruitful deliberations as we lay a strong foundation for a successful 45th SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government here in Madagascar.

I thank you for your attention! Merci Beaucoup! Muito Obrigado!
Asante Sana! Misaotra Betsaka!