



## MEDIA RELEASE



The sixth SADC Executive Secretary, Dr. Stergomena Lawrence TAX, visited the Republic of Seychelles from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013. The main purpose of her official visit to Seychelles was to pay a courtesy call on the President of the Republic of Seychelles, His Excellency James Alix MICHEL, to introduce herself after taking office on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, and to engage with key stakeholders in Seychelles and forge a common vision and understanding in delivering on priority regional integration programmes and projects, and in particular on how to accelerate the implementation of SADC programmes, especially with regards to Seychelles.

During her visit she also met the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Honourable Jean-Paul ADAM; the Minister for Home Affairs and Transport, Honourable Joel MORGAN; the Principal Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Maurice LOUSTEAU-LALANNE; Representative of Seychelles in the SADC Parliamentary Forum Hon. Sylvianne Valmont; and officials of the Seychelles National Assembly and of the Development and Regional Integration Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Government of Seychelles and the SADC Executive Secretary noted with optimism the positive developments in Madagascar and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The SADC Executive Secretary and the Government of Seychelles reaffirmed the strategic importance of every SADC Member State in the regional integration agenda, including Oceanic States. They acknowledged the need to strengthen coordination between the SADC Secretariat and Member States, as this will lead to the fast-tracking of implementation of regional initiatives and development plans. They reaffirmed that infrastructure development, including the development of air and maritime links, and timely implementation of the SADC Martine Corridor/Port Development are vital for sustainable growth in the region. In this regard, it was agreed that, as already directed by the SADC Summit, priority should be accorded to the operationalization of the SADC Development Fund with innovative funding approaches that will expeditiously attract investors from the Private Sector. A secured environment in the region was also agreed upon as necessity for sustainable socio-economic development, including in promoting tourism and deep-rooted regional trade. As such, initiatives regarding combatting of transnational criminal activities, notably piracy, in line with the SADC Piracy Action Plan should be fast-tracked. The importance to finalize the review of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) was also underscored, and as such, the need to harmonise and synergize implementation of the RISDP with the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO).

Dr. Tax congratulated the Republic of Seychelles for being the first SADC Member State to harmonize and align the National Gender Policy and the National Action Plan with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. Being the 1<sup>st</sup> female SADC Executive Secretary, she expressed her gratitude to this noble course, which will contribute to the acceleration of the enhancement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the region, and in Seychelles in particular. Expressing her appreciations she said *"for this noble undertaking, the Government and people of Seychelles serve as an inspiration for many in the SADC region in the continued journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment"*.

It was further agreed that the relationship between the SADC Parliamentary Forum and the SADC Secretariat need to be taken to higher heights. In this regard, it was agreed that the SADC Secretariat and the SADC Parliamentary Forum should expeditiously finalize the Memorandum of Understanding between the two Parties. The MoU will among other things set out cooperation arrangements, and thus, enhance cooperation between the two institutions.

The Republic of Seychelles invited Dr. Tax to attend the first Blue Economy Summit to be held on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. SADC reaffirmed its support to the initiative, and the view that the ocean features as a 'final frontier' for environmental management, economic growth, resource exploration and global health. Dr. Tax confirmed SADC's attendance.

Dr. Tax thanked the Government and people of Seychelles for the warm hospitality accorded to her during her visit to the country.