



**REMARKS ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING OF THE SADC
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

BY

**H.E. DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX,
THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SADC**

**GABORONE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE
GABORONE, BOTSWANA**

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Honourable Dr. Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers,

Honourable Mr Kenneth Matambo, Minister of Finance and Development Planning of the Republic of Botswana and Incoming Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers;

Honourable Ministers from the SADC Region;

Your Excellencies, Heads and representatives of International and Regional Organisations;

Dr. Thembinkosi Mhlongo and Ms. Emilie Ayaza Mushobekwa, Deputy Executive Secretaries;

Senior Officials from the SADC Member States;

Officials from the SADC Secretariat;

Members from the Media here present;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Allow me, from the onset, to thank the Government and people of the Republic of Botswana for the excellent preparations, generous hospitality and facilities put at our disposal for these important meetings. It is my humble honour and pleasure to welcome you, Honourable Ministers, to this session of the Council of Ministers.

May I also use this opportunity to, most sincerely, thank **Hon. Rd. Simbarashe Mumbengegwi**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zimbabwe and his entire Team for the excellent stewardship during the year. The SADC Secretariat benefitted and enjoyed working under your guidance and stewardship. I would also wish to thank the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the dedication and steadfast leadership during her tenure as Chairperson of SADC. It was an enormous undertaking, all meetings at various levels, the Summit, Extraordinary Summit, Council, Extraordinary Council, Ministerial Committees and more others were conducted timely and effectively. These undertakings needed high level of commitment, substantial

amount of resources both human and financial. We say once again, thank you so much for your dedication to SADC agenda. It is also commendable that during your tenure a number of significant strides were recorded.

Honourable Ministers,

This meeting provides an opportunity and platform to take stock of the implementation of Council Decisions and progress made in pursuit of SADC regional integration agenda. I am happy to report that the Decisions taken by this Council in August 2013 and in April this year have been largely accomplished.

The political and security situation in the region has remained stable. SADC observed elections in six Member States in accordance with the 'SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections'. Credible elections were held in the Republics of Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia, the Kingdom of Lesotho, and the presidential by-election in Zambia. I wish to congratulate the governments and peoples of these Member States for holding peaceful and credible elections, through which the will of the people was democratically expressed. In this regard, I wish to express our gratitude to the Republic of South Africa, and in particular, Honourable Madam Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, and Chairperson of the MCO and her entire team, for her exemplary leadership which enabled SADC to successful conduct of SADC Observation Missions, and to record a number of strides during the year, including the time spent in the Kingdom of Lesotho facilitation.

Honourable Chairperson,

During the past twelve months, SADC has made enormous strides in many areas. Major achievements include the formulation of the Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap 2015-2063, and finalization of the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2015-2020. These milestones are crucial in setting the region's long term socio-economic landscape. I thank all the Member States and all stakeholders who participated in the preparations of these two important strategic policy documents for SADC.

While appreciating the completion of the Revised RISDP and the Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap, it would be naive of us to expect tangible results thereof, unless we commit ourselves to ensure that the milestones set therein are implemented and progress is monitored effectively and continuously. I therefore call upon all stakeholders to work diligently to ensure that the targets we have set for ourselves in these important documents are realised for the better future of our Region, in particular, the betterment of SADC citizens.

Honourable Chairperson

The Region also witnessed the launching of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) involving SADC, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC). For the TFTA to be operationalized, we need to expeditiously finalize the pending outstanding issues, that relate to elimination of import duties, Trade Remedies, and Rules of Origin, as well as finalisation of offers, so as to ensure that the TFTA is smoothly up and running. Other major achievements during the year include:

a) The operationalisation of the Project Preparation Development Fund (PPDF), with two projects being approved for grant. Seven (7) more projects were accepted into the next indicative pipeline, and are being appraised. The significance of this development is that SADC now has its own project preparatory facility mechanism. The enhanced capacity will accelerate project preparation and should facilitate faster implementation of the RIDMP through an increased preparation of bankable projects;

b) In the area of information, communication and technology, commendable progress has been made with the roll out of programmes to meet the 17 June 2015 International Telecommunications Union deadline to migrate to Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) broadcasting and ensure there is no leakage of analogue signals across borders. Five countries – Mauritius, Malawi, Namibia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia – are already operating digital networks;

c) The integration of the national payment and settlement systems into the regional system through SADC integrated Regional

Electronic Settlement System (SIRESS). This is an electronic payment system for goods and services, which has reduced transactions from three days or more, to within 24 hours;

- e) The commissioning of new power generation projects adding some two thousand mega-watts to the Southern African Power Pool grid;
- f) The finalisation of the regional Agricultural policy (RAP), which is set to transform the Regional's agricultural sector; and
- g) The finalisation of the Hashim Mbita publication, now ready to be distributed to their Excellencies, Heads of State and Governments during the Summit, and to SADC Member States and beyond.

These are just few achievements, a complete report is contained in your documents. Achievements made during the year, compliment achievements and strides made so far by the Region. These achievements contribute to the deepening of regional integration, while enhancing opportunities, and thus enabling SADC citizens to benefit more from SADC regional integration through enhanced trade; increased investment, employment and wealth creation opportunities, ultimately contributing to poverty reduction and socio-economic development.

Honourable Chairperson

In your March and April meeting, you made a number of decisions, and you will receive progress during this meeting, including on the alternative sources of financing regional integration. The Secretariat prepared a proposal which was presented and discussed by the Ministers of Finance. The Ministers have provided guidance. This is an important assignment that requires utmost attention. It is only with our own reliable sources of funds, that we will be able to finance and accelerate our regional integration agenda at the needed pace.

Honourable Chairperson,

As I conclude my statement, I wish to commend the Senior Officials and Secretariat Staff for the job well done in preparing the working documents to be used by the Ministers at this meeting.

The 35th Summit theme as selected by the Incoming chair, The Republic of Botswana is *“Accelerating Industrialisation of SADC Economies through Transformation of Natural Endowment and Improved Human Capital”*. The theme clearly takes forward the SADC Industrialization Agenda.

I wish, once again, to reiterate the need for concerted efforts by all stakeholders in implementing decisions taken by Council and Summit aimed at acceleration regional integration and development. As one of the founders of the Frontline States, the late President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere once said: ***“Everybody wants development; but not everybody understands and accepts the basic requirements for development. The biggest requirement is hard work”***.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to once again thank you and all the Member States for supporting the work of the Secretariat, and most importantly for supporting our common resolve for regional integration. I also thank all the Member States for timely disbursement of their annual Membership contributions. This has enabled the Secretariat to implement the SADC programs. I would also wish to thank our International Cooperating Partners for continued support.

I wish these meeting very fruitful deliberations.

Thank you!!!

Obrigada!!!

Merci Beaucoup!!!

Ke a leboga!!!

Asanteni sana kwa kunisikiliza!!!