



STATEMENT

BY

**HON. SIMBARASHE S. MUMBENGEWI (MP),
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE**

**REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE AND CHAIRPERSON
OF THE SADC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS,**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE MEETING OF THE
SADC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS,**

**THE GABORONE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
CENTRE (GICC), GABORONE, BOTSWANA,
14 AUGUST, 2015**

Hon. Kenneth Matambo, Minister of Finance and Economic Development Planning of the Republic of Botswana and Incoming Chair of the SADC Council of Ministers;

Honourable Ministers here present;

Dr. T. Nyamadzabo, Secretary for Finance and Economic Development Planning of the Republic of Botswana and Chair of the Standing Committee of Senior Officials;

Ambassador J. M. Bimha, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Outgoing Chair of the Standing Committee of Senior Officials;

Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, SADC Executive Secretary;

Senior Officials;

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners here present;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Comrades and Friends.

Allow me, to express our great appreciation to Honourable Kenneth Matambo, the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning of the Republic of Botswana and through him, to the Government and People of the Republic of Botswana, for the warm welcome and hospitality that has been accorded to us since our arrival in this bustling city of Gaborone. I also take this opportunity to thank our host for the meticulous manner in which they have prepared for our meeting as well as for the excellent facilities that have been placed at our disposal.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates,

Exactly one year ago, I assumed the Chairmanship of this esteemed body, the

SADC Council of Ministers. Time has now come for me to handover the baton to my brother and dear colleague, Honourable Kenneth Matambo, the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning of the Republic of Botswana.

It was indeed, a great honour for me and the People and Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe to be entrusted with steering the activities of Council since August, 2014. I wish to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to you, Honourable Ministers, for your support and cooperation during Zimbabwe's tenure as Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers.

I also wish to thank and commend our hardworking foot soldiers, the Senior Officials, for their dedication and

thoroughness in preparing for the Council of Ministers meetings held under my tenure. This indeed made our work easier and more productive, thereby enabling this august Council to efficiently execute its mandate.

In the same vein, let me extend my sincere gratitude to the Executive Secretary, Dr. Stergomina Lawrence Tax, her deputies, her Directors and the entire Secretariat staff for having worked diligently during my tenure as Chairperson.

Honourable Ministers,

You will agree with me that the past year was indeed a very busy one for our Council. We met on several occasions, since August, 2014, pursuant to the directives from our Principals. I am happy to note that, the

hectic program notwithstanding, we acquitted ourselves very well in all the tasks that were entrusted to us.

Honourable Ministers,

Council must be proud to have worked assiduously to put in place a Regional Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap which was approved by the SADC Summit in Harare, Zimbabwe on 29th April, 2015. In celebrating this collective achievement of our organization, we are not oblivious to the fact that much more remains to be done in this area, the most urgent and important task being the speedy operationalization of the Strategy. I have no doubt that we will continue to work together, under the wise stewardship of Botswana, with a view to accelerating industrialization, value addition

and beneficiation for the betterment of our people and region.

Distinguished Colleagues,

We have also worked tirelessly, during the period under review, to finalize the Revised SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2015-2020, which has also mainstreamed the industrialization agenda of the region, in line with the 34th Summit decision. RISDP outlines the region's priorities for member states and gives the prerequisite strategic direction to our Secretariat for the coming years. We look forward to the conclusion of the costing exercise as well as the restructuring of the Secretariat so that it can better deliver on the mandate entrusted to it.

Honourable Ministers,

The period under review also witnessed the launch of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Trade Area (TFTA) on 10 June, 2015, in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt during the 3rd Tripartite Summit while the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations were also launched in June, 2015, during the African Union Summit held in Pretoria, South Africa. These are no doubt important milestones on the road towards regional and continental integration. We trust that, working together with the support of the Secretariat, we will be able to expedite the outstanding and critical processes in line with the timelines set by our Principals.

As we move forward in these new arrangements, it is imperative that SADC remains united in advancing its interests so as to ensure an inclusive, prosperous and integrated Continent as envisaged in the African Union blueprint Agenda 2063.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates,

SADC has come a long way and we are extremely proud of its achievements during its 35 year history. We are happy to note that the values of freedom, unity, independence and solidarity engendered by our founding fathers remain at the core of our organization and continue to guide our programs and activities.

While we celebrate these achievements, we remain deeply conscious of the fact that for as long as we are unable to fund our own organization, the future of our programs and activities will remain uncertain and SADC will not be wholly ours. While we deeply appreciate the support that SADC receives from its Cooperating Partners, our continued dependency on their generosity and benevolence constitutes one of the most profound weaknesses of our organization. This state of affairs compromises ownership and control as well as the sustainability of our programs, particularly those in the strategic areas that are at the core of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan as well as the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ.

Honourable Ministers,

Every year, our organization is confronted with the twin realities of an ever expanding list of responsibilities against a background of dwindling resources. We should, Honourable Ministers ask ourselves why we should continue to crowd our organization with institutions and programmes that we member states have no capacity to fund. We should concentrate on those programmes that have a direct bearing on regional integration and peace and security. We should not heap on SADC those programmes that Member States can implement on their own.

Recent events have shown that as our cooperating partners are beset with their own challenges, their ability to fund programmes

elsewhere is decreasing. We therefore cannot continue to postpone indefinitely the debate on alternative sources of funding for our organization, neither can we afford to continue procrastinating on the operationalization of sustainable financing mechanisms such as the SADC Regional Development Fund. I look forward to a frank, open and constructive discussion on the report submitted by the Secretariat to this Council on this important matter.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates,

In conclusion, let me once again thank all of you for the support, solidarity and friendship extended to me and my country as Chair of our organization for the past year. In the same vain, I pledge my support and that of

my country to the incoming Chair of this august Council, Botswana.

As I declare this meeting officially open, it is my pleasure and honour to hand over the baton to the Incoming Chair of the Council of Ministers, Hon. Kenneth Matambo, Minister of Finance and Economic Development Planning of the Republic of Botswana. I wish you well, Honourable Minister.

I THANK YOU.