

**VISIT BY THE SADC CHAIRMAN, HIS EXCELLENCY COMRADE  
ROBERT MUGABE,  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE**

**TREE PLANTING CITATION**

Your Excellency, your visit to the SADC Secretariat is a great honour to us. Trees symbolise life and vitality, and therefore your planting of this tree today signifies these virtues for SADC. Our tree planting theme for this occasion is “TREES FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION”.

Your Excellency, the tree you are planting is scientifically called “Rhus Lancea”, and locally known as “moshabela, or mosilabele”. It is indigenous to the SADC region. In Botswana, it is found in the North, South East and South West areas of the country, and also around Gaborone.

This tree is evergreen, and grows to a height of 5-8 metres. It is a good shade tree, and attracts birds. The fruit is edible and can be used to make local beverages. The wood is hard and durable, which can be used for construction materials such as poles. It is also used for tanning leather products.

Your Excellency, the SADC region is endowed with abundant forest resources with 394 million hectares of natural forests (40% of total SADC land area) and, two and half million hectares of commercial plantations. Forest resources have multiple functions, including prevention of soil erosion and land degradation that support food security. The growing eco-tourism industry is based on forest resources which are also the habitat for wildlife. Trees also protect water catchment areas for overall development and in particular, power generation. In addition, trees in semi-arid areas of SADC provide fodder to domestic animals and support ranching for the beef exporting industry.

Trees are also a carbon sink. They release oxygen into the atmosphere which we breathe and, at the same time, absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere which contributes to global warming and climate change. As a result, the nations of the world are negotiating a multilateral agreement to reduce carbon emissions from the atmosphere and control global warming through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) with the next

Conference of Parties (COP) 21 scheduled for December 2015 in Paris, France.

Your Excellency, the tree that you are planting today is a living gift to SADC. With its multiple characteristics, it symbolises the economic benefits which can accrue to SADC through regional integration.

It is now my singular honour to invite Your Excellency to plant the tree.

I THANK YOU!!