



REMARKS

BY

**HER EXCELLENCY DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX,
SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

**THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 38TH ORDINARY SUMMIT OF
SADC HEADS OF STATES AND GOVERNMENT**

ON

17 AUGUST 2018

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

Your Excellency, Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, and Chairperson of SADC;

Your Excellency, Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, Incoming Chairperson of SADC, and Host of the 38th Ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government;

Your Excellency, Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda and Chairperson of the African Union;

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;

Your Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission;

Your Excellency, Dr Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina, President of the African Development Bank;

Your Excellency, Dr. Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA);

Your Excellency, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of Namibia, and Chairperson of SADC Council of Ministers;

Honourable Ministers from SADC Member States;

Your Excellencies, Heads of Regional and International Organisations;

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Representatives of International Cooperating Partners;

Officials from SADC Member States and SADC Secretariat staff;

Representatives of the Media;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I feel greatly honoured to make introductory remarks at this Official Opening Ceremony of the 38th Ordinary Summit of the SADC Heads of State and Government. May I take this opportunity to welcome you, Your Excellencies and Invited Dignitaries, to this Summit being held here in Windhoek, the Republic of Namibia, where the historic SADC Treaty to transform the Southern African Development Coordination Conference into the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was adopted on 17th August 1992. Today, 17th August 2018, we celebrate the 26th Anniversally since this historic decision.

Allow me, to express our profound gratitude to His Excellency, Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, the Government and people of the Republic of Namibia, for the hospitality and warm welcome that has been extended to us since our arrival. May I also thank Your Excellencies, the Heads of States for your commitment to the SADC Regional Development and Integration agenda, and for making time out of your busy schedules to attend the 38th SADC Summit.

Your Excellencies,

The year 2017/18 marked the third year of implementation of the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2015-2020. In order to contribute towards the objectives of this plan, and other SADC Policies and Strategies, the SADC continued to prioritize peace and security, industrialization, and infra-structure development, and significant progress was made in the year in various areas as will be reported in the course of this Summit.

Since last August, the political and security situation in the region has remained stable, calm and peaceful, and a number of encouraging developments have taken place, including on the consolidation of democracy, and on the social economic front. The region witnessed smooth transitions of power, and successful and peaceful elections. In this regard, may I take this opportunity to congratulate the people of Angola, Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe. May I wish the Governments and people of these Member states continued peace and economic prosperity.

On the economic front, the region has continued to pursue policies and programmes towards enhancing the economic performance. This notwithstanding, the region has experienced dampened economic growth, that has affected some sectors, including the financial sector as indicated by the rising of non-performing loans. While inflation has slowed down, it

remains high with some Member States still in the double digit levels. Depreciating currencies, continued to influence price movements in some of the Member States. In the fiscal sector, public revenues have remained low, in the face of increasing public expenditures. It is therefore important for Member States to remain vigilant in implementing policies aimed at diversifying their economies to ensure resilience.

On food security, preliminary assessments for the 2018/19 crop season across the region suggests lower availability of food, particularly cereals, compared to the previous season. Whereas the high carryover stocks from the 2016/2017 bumper agricultural season will mitigate the possible negative impacts of the reduced production, it is critical for Member States to optimally utilise the available food stocks across the region, and put in place measures to take advantage of the available Regional instruments to catalyse agriculture production and productivity, while ensuring sustainable food sufficiency and security in the region.

Your Excellences,

Following the August 2014 Extra-ordinary Summit in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, during which SADC made a bold decision that the region will have to frontload industrialization for technological and economic transformation, the region has remained on course with the implementation of the SADC Industrialization agenda. During the year, in line with the 37th SADC Theme “*Partnering with Private Sector in developing Value Chains*”, progress was recorded in developing value chains in agro-processing, mineral beneficiation, and pharmaceuticals sub-sectors; as well as, in developing a mechanism for the involvement of the private sector in the SADC integration agenda. The Private Sector is encouraged to use the SADC private sector engagement mechanism platform to forge smart partnerships with the public sector. As directed during the 37th Summit last year, progress was also made in establishment of the Regional Gas mechanism, which is to promote the inclusion of gas in the regional energy mix, with a view to facilitate universal access to energy and promote industrial development.

Industrialisation is step by step undertaking requiring sustained efforts and persistence. While the region has covered some ground, more is required for the region to reach the intended destination, which is transformation of SADC economies for the prosperity of its citizens. This can only be achieved through concerted and collaborative efforts by both the public and private sector. As the late Mwalimu_Julius Nyerere said and I quote “*If*

a door is shut, attempts should be made to open it; if it is ajar, it should be pushed until it is wide open".

Your Excellencies,

The 38th SADC Summit hosted under the theme “***Promoting Infrastructure and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development***” takes forward the SADC Industrialization, and economic transformation agenda. The theme is anchored on three main elements namely, infrastructure development, youth empowerment, and sustainable development, which are catalysts and in tandem with the SADC Industrialization agenda. The theme calls on SADC stakeholders and partners to catalyse infrastructure development so as to leverage industrialization, while taking advantage of the demographic dividend offered by the youth that constitute more than 75% of the region’s population. The youth holds potential as an engine for growth for the region, and are key to achieving the region’s overall objectives, with prospects to bring innovative ideas and solutions. Current estimates project the SADC combined population at close to 342.3 million, 60 percent of whom, are under the age of 35. With such a large and increasing youth population, the region is sitting on a gold mine, which needs to be tapped. The numbers not only offer substantial labour and market for goods and services, but also offer a demographic dividend that will ensure prolonged sustainable socio-economic growth and development of the region. May, I therefore, call upon Member States (public and private sectors) to take advantage of this year’s theme, and harness the demographic dividend that the youth offers.

Your Excellences,

The global industrial landscape is fast changing with the deployment of new technologies, collectively known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution; these technologies include Artificial Intelligence, robotics, advanced material science, additive manufacturing (3D printing), block chain technology and the use of drones and other unmanned autonomous vehicles. These new developments cannot be ignored as we implement our strategies, especially the Industrialisation Strategy.

SADC needs to catch up with the rest of the world concerning the disruptive reality of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Our schools, training institutions, workplaces and factories will need to urgently transform in order to adapt to this new phenomenon. Whilst there has been initiatives at sectoral level, the region needs to have an integrated strategy and do

more. On behalf of SADC, may I call upon Member States, working with the Secretariat, to double our efforts in order for the region to be a competent participant in the digital economy. Going forward the Secretariat will endeavour to mainstream elements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the relevant programmes.

Your Excellencies,

While congratulating His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, and the people of the Republic of South Africa for assuming the Chairmanship of the BRICS, may I express SADC's gratitude for the invitation extended to SADC Member States to the BRICS Outreach Dialogue held on 27th July 2018, during the BRICS Summit that was held under the Theme ***“BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution”***. This enabled SADC to interact with the BRICS, while appreciating the importance of catching up with the Fourth Industrial revolution. The engagement also provided a window for SADC Member States to engage with the BRICS New Development Bank, which is aimed at financing infrastructure and development projects in emerging economies, and developing countries. May I encourage SADC Member States to take advantage of these opportunities to leverage industrialisation and infrastructure development.

Your Excellencies,

As I conclude, May I thank the Outgoing Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, supported by the Chair of the SADC Council of Ministers, Honourable Lindiwe Sisulu, for the exceptional leadership and support during the year, that facilitated the realization of the milestones set by the Region for the year. May I also express a gratitude to His Excellency Joao Lourenco President of the Republic of Angola and Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, who, supported by the Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ, Honourable Manuel Domingos Augusto, steered the region outstandingly on political, peace and security issues during the year.

Your Excellencies,

The Kingdom of Eswatini, has concluded her tenure as a Member of SADC Troika, allow me to extend our gratitude to the Kingdom, under the leadership of His Majesty King Mswati III, the SADC Outgoing Chairperson, for the contributions made towards regional integration agenda during her tenure as a member of the SADC Troika.

My great appreciation also goes to staff of the SADC Secretariat who have continued to support me, and to perform their duties diligently in a professional manner. At this juncture, allow me also extend my special thanks to the Deputy Executive Secretary-Corporate Affairs, Ms Emilie Mushobekwa for her dedication and contribution to the SADC integration agenda. Her tenure of office will come to an end soon, after eight years of service to Secretariat. Through her support and commitment, the Secretariat was able to deliver on a number of assignments. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours, and may God bless you.

The SADC Secretariat welcomes and looks forward to working with the Incoming Chairperson of SADC His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia. May I assure Your Excellency of the Secretariat's, and my personal commitment, and unwavering support to Your Excellency, and the entire team. We are confident that under your leadership, we are set for yet another successful and impressive year.

I thank you for your attention.