



## **OPENING REMARKS**

**By**

**HONOURABLE DAVID DOUGLAS VAN ROOYEN**

**MINISTER OF COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL  
AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**AND**

**SADC DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF  
THE MEETING OF SADC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISASTER  
RISK MANAGEMENT**

**26 NOVEMBER 2016**

**BALACLAVA, INTERCONTINENTAL  
PORT LOUIS, REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS**

**Mr. Alain Wong, Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management, Republic of Mauritius;**

**Distinguished Ministers Responsible for Disaster Risk Management from the SADC Region;**

**Mr Jorge Cardoso, Director of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Affairs, representing the Executive Secretary;**

**Esteemed Representatives from Member States; Senior Officials and Delegates**

**SADC Secretariat;**

**Ladies and gentlemen.**

**Good Morning**

It is my singular honour and pleasure to welcome you this morning, to the Meeting of Ministers responsible for disaster risk management.

On this occasion, let me on behalf of the Chairperson of SADC, His Majesty King Mswati III and the Member States, thank the Government of Mauritius, for agreeing to host this highly important meeting, the just ended 6<sup>th</sup> Session Africa Regional Platform and the 5<sup>th</sup> High Level Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction. I am most humbled by your warm hospitality. I further wish to thank the Government and People of Zambia for representing SADC in the Africa Working Group that organized and prepared the draft outcomes for the African Regional Platform, and for

successfully hosting the last session of the Africa Working Group in October 2016.

I would not have done justice if I do not thank you, fellow Member States, for the unwavering support and commitment you demonstrated throughout the development of the *Draft SADC Regional Preparedness and Response Strategy and Fund* and for attending this meeting.

**My Fellow Ministers, Ladies and gentlemen,**

Let me from the outset remind you that the development of the draft strategy and fund, is as a result of a call from Ministers responsible for Disaster Risk Management and Ministers of Finance, the Ministerial Committee of the Organ as well as the Decision by SADC Council of Ministers at their meetings in June and August 2015.

You will recall that when considering the need for this regional strategy and Fund in Harare at the June 2015 Meeting, Member States agreed that a regional disaster preparedness and response mechanism for SADC was critical to enhance our regional capacity to share expertise and assist each other in a coordinated and comprehensive manner before, during and post disaster situations.

I cannot agree more that the decision by Ministers, demonstrates the collective commitment and leadership to continuously improve the well-

being of the citizens of the SADC Region, by reducing their exposure and vulnerability to disasters.

I will not belabour the point that our region is increasingly experiencing disasters and emergencies, and such require forward-looking and progressive interventions that will improve our regional ability to cushion the impacts of such on our communities. As you are all aware, the region has been severely hit by the *El Niño* induced drought since 2014, which has overwhelmed the disaster preparedness capacity in all affected Member States.

In view of this, in July 2016, the then SADC Chairperson, H.E., Lt. General Khama Ian Khama, President of the Republic of Botswana on behalf of the region, declared a Regional Drought Disaster and launched the SADC Regional Humanitarian Appeal, urging the Regional and International Community to support the affected population, in particular, to close the gap of US\$ 2.5 billion needed to assist the 40 million affected people.

### **Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The time is now for us to invest in actions that will accelerate the achievement of sustainable resilience to disasters by our communities. I am compelled to believe that the Strategy and Fund which we about to consider will go a long way in addressing the current drought challenges, and more broadly in attaining a cohesive, people-centered sustainable development in the SADC Region.



I am informed that our experts have met several times since 2015, including here in Mauritius, in preparation for our meeting. It is therefore my considered opinion that the Draft Strategy has gone through a comprehensive process of consultation and that we take ownership of its outcome. However, I am also informed that aspects related to the modelling and capitalisation of the Fund is due to be finalised in the first quarter of 2017.

In conclusion, let me implore that we consider the Draft strategy, which is before us today, as an opportunity to demonstrate our genuine and collective commitment to ensuring the strategic reduction of the impacts of disasters on the SADC region and proactively building the resilience of our people.

With these few remarks, I declare the Meeting of the SADC Ministers responsible for Disaster Risk Management officially opened. I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you!

Obrigado!

Merci Beaucoup!