



REMARKS

BY

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

AT THE

**HIGH LEVEL EVENT IN SUPPORT OF THE RESPONSE TO THE
IMPACTS OF THE 2015/16 EL-NIÑO**

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, USA

23 September 2016

Your Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General

Your Excellencies, UN Special Envoys on El Nino and Climate Change, Mrs Mary Robinson and Ambassador Macharia Kamau;

Your Excellency Mr. Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary, IGAD;

Your Excellency Mr. Christos Stylianides, European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management

Honourable Ministers and Governments Representatives

Your Excellencies, Co-Sponsors from EU/DFID and.....

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Government Officials from SADC Member States

Representatives of Regional and International Organizations

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured and privileged to be part of this very important event and gathering, A High Level Event on “**Responding to the impacts of El Niño and mitigating recurring climate risks**”

The SADC region, has been devastated by the effects of the drought resulting from the 2015/2016 El-Nino episode, which followed another El-Nino induced drought during the 2014/15 rainfall season. Consequently, the Region faced widespread crop production failures and loss of thousands of livestock and wildlife. This has led to severe food shortages, specifically affecting the majority of the region’s rural population who depend on their subsistence production for food and livelihood.

The drought has also led to water shortages for both human and animal consumption, resulting in animal deaths due to lack of drinking water and poor sanitation leading to risks of water borne diseases. Hydro-electric power generation has also been negatively affected as a result of the low water levels in most major dams in the region. The power shortages have negatively affected the delivery of health services in hospitals, industrial production and the performance of the region’s economies.

Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the region managed to cope with the drought in the 2014/15 season, the severity of the El-Nino induced drought of 2015/16 has resulted in the year being the driest in more than 35 years and its effects have overwhelmed the disaster preparedness of the region. This led to the Region declaring a Regional Drought Disaster and issuance of a Regional Humanitarian Appeal that was made by the then Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama, the President of the Republic of Botswana, on 26th July 2016. Current estimates indicate that there is a resource gap of US\$2.5 billion covering more than 40 million people requiring humanitarian assistance.

While the Appeal is mostly aimed at addressing the current emergency situation, the Region is also well aware that, in the medium to long-term, there is need to build the Region's resilience to both current and future negative impacts of climate change. In this regard, the Region has developed a number of regional instruments and strategies that directly or indirectly aim to address these challenges while also building resilience and ensuring disaster readiness. These among others include: the SADC Regional Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategy; the SADC Regional Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, and the SADC Regional Agricultural Strategy and Investment Plan. These instruments are aligned to both continental and global agendas such as the African Climate Change Strategy and Agenda 2063 as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Rolling out these strategies will require substantial and sustainable financing. Continued support from our international Cooperating Partners will therefore be critical for the effective implementation of these Strategies.

Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to sincerely thank our international cooperating partners who have continued to assist the region in alleviating the suffering of our people both through contributions to regional efforts as well as through bilateral arrangements with SADC Member States during this emergency. The humanitarian needs are still enormous but with your support, we can prevent loss of lives and rebuild and improve the lives and welfare of our most vulnerable people. I would also like to encourage our Partners to support our resilience building activities so that the impacts of future emergencies can be minimised.

Let me also express our special gratitude to the United Nation's agencies working in the Region, for working hand in hand with the SADC Secretariat in developing and implementing the regional response to the humanitarian situation. They have also been instrumental in supporting individual Member States in addressing the humanitarian crisis, and undertaking a number of other initiatives at the national level.

We are truly grateful for the support and would like to assure you that we stand ready to continue working with you in matters of regional importance and mutual interest.

I thank you for your attention.