



**SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE ON THE
OCCASION OF COMMEMORATING THE 2017
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, 8TH MARCH 2017.**

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat joins the rest of the world in commemorating the 2017 International Women's Day under the theme "**Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030.**" **SADC also** recognises and acknowledges the African Union's theme, which has declared the year 2017 as the year for "Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth". In this regard, SADC applauds the African Union Commission for profiling the informal sector at global level as well as African Union's call to invest in the youth for the realisation of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 respectively.

A key objective of SADC is to achieve economic development, peace and security, growth, poverty alleviation, enhancement of standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa, and support socially disadvantaged groups through regional integration. This is in line with the priorities identified in our blueprint documents, namely the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP).

Our strategic documents clearly address issues such as employment creation, poverty reduction, social protection and inclusive development by putting focus on supporting industrialisation and productive sectors with a view to promoting access to growth by developing value chains in the SADC region in sectors with large potential for job creation, such as agriculture, where the majority of women are concentrated.

There is need for us to develop robust strategies for women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work which can yield life-changing results to alleviate poverty. These measures which resonate well with this year's international Women's Day Theme are premised in the Revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in Part 5 on Productive Resources and Employment, which comprehensively covers Articles 15-19 that include Economic Policies and Decision Making; Multiple Roles of Women; Economic Empowerment; Access to Property and Resources; and Equal Access to

Employment and Benefits. All SADC Member States are encouraged to operationalise their commitments as provided for in these articles above by developing gender sensitive women s economic empowerment programmes at the national, local and grassroots levels.

A SADC Youth Employment Promotion Policy Framework aimed at combating youth unemployment, and promoting entrepreneurship and access to decent job was also developed during 2016. These interventions coupled with the envisaged SADC Industrialization Strategy are expected to contribute to the realisation of “Demographic Dividend” through the emergence of a larger, skilled and energetic labour force with a high income potential to accelerate the region’s economic growth and regional integration.

On this International Women’s Day, SADC reaffirms its responsibility to ensure that there is full implementation of all the commitments made by Member States at the international, regional and sub regional levels. The economic empowerment of women and the youth is key to their socio-economic and political development with the ultimate goal of alleviating poverty.

I wish you all an enjoyable International Women’s Day.