



DRAFT REMARKS

BY THE

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

AT THE SADC STRATEGIC MINISTERIAL RETREAT

12TH MARCH 2017

**ROYAL SWAZI SUN
EZULWINI, KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND**

H.E. Paul S. Dlamini, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland,

Your Royal Highness Prince Hlangusemphi, Minister of Economic Planning and Development of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers,

Honourable Ministers,

Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Senior Officials, and Senior Officials,

Deputy Executive Secretaries of SADC and SADC Staff,

Resource Persons,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my humble honour and privilege to make my brief remarks as you begin your deliberations at this unique SADC Strategic Ministerial Retreat on "The SADC We Want" here in the magnificent Kingdom of Swaziland. The Retreat provides a unique opportunity for the region to tackle issues that have been raised with regard to SADC Regional Integration Agenda. At the onset, allow me to sincerely thank His Majesty King Mswati III, the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the warm welcome and for availing these excellent facilities for the retreat.

In March, 2016, the SADC Council of Ministers noted that SADC needed to have a special Strategic Session, to examine the current state of affairs on the SADC Regional Integration Agenda. This idea came out of the debate on the implementation of SADC programmes and projects, and Member States clearly expressed dissatisfaction with the pace

and and progress of the regional integration agenda. In this regard, the decision to convene a special Strategic Ministerial Retreat was made.

Honourable Ministers,

Following the decision of Council to convene the Retreat, the Secretariat developed a Concept Note that was circulated to Member States, outlining the objectives, expected outcomes and the proposed approaches. Member States provided comments, and these were incorporated in the Concept Note. On the basis of the three broad topics, which Member States approved, the Secretariat commissioned research studies on the topics as a way of providing the basis for discussions during the Retreat. The broad topics are:

- a) “SADC Vision, Progress, Challenges and Prospects”;
- b) “SADC Institutional Capacity to Deliver on its Mandate”;
- and
- c) “Sustainable Financing for Regional Integration”.

The Secretariat further organised a meeting of the Senior Officials that was held from 20th to 21st February, 2017, in order to provide inputs into the research papers. Indeed, the meeting proved to be very useful and it provided an opportunity for further refinement of the research papers. This Retreat is therefore expected to review the status of implementation of the SADC integration agenda, and reflect on whether SADC is realizing its objectives. In doing so, the retreat is expected to determine what needs to be done to create “THE SADC WE WANT “. Progress made towards attaining the vision of SADC since the regional organisation was established, the challenges encountered, and the prospects for the future will be examined. The Retreat will also interrogate the adequacy of the existing institutional arrangements to drive regional integration at both regional and national levels. This will include an assessment of the relevant capacities, and elaborate the best options and

opportunities for promoting regional integration and development in Southern Africa, that will augment impact and enhance SADC visibility. In addition, retreat will also provide an opportunity to discuss alternative options for financing SADC integration sustainably.

Honourable Ministers,

The Retreat is exciting but, at the same time, challenging as the reflection is taking place almost 15 years after the review of the SADC institutions. This Retreat is also taking place when the African Union is undergoing the same introspection to ensure that the continental body better delivers on its mandate. All these regional and continental processes fit very well in the global development initiatives, whereby institutions are called upon to raise the stakes in dealing with issues that affect the common person on the street.

It is our expectation, that from Ezulwini, the road towards better service delivery, and deeper regional integration, and in doing so, creating the “SADC WE WANT” will be clearly defined with appropriate follow-up actions. This must address the identified challenges, and put in place the required institutional arrangements to drive regional integration agenda at both regional and national levels, and identify alternative sustainable sources of funding for SADC integration and development, and thus accelerate regional integration for the benefit of SADC citizens.

Honourable Ministers,

As I conclude my remarks, allow me to sincerely thank SADC Member States for supporting the preparatory processes towards the organisation of this retreat, and for their enthusiasm to foster deeper regional integration. Let me also express my profound gratitude to the African Development Bank and the Southern Africa Trust for supporting this retreat financially and technically. May I also thank the South African

Institute for International Affairs, the European Centre for Development Policy Management, and the FinMark Trust for the various roles played in generating the draft research papers. I equally thank my team at the Secretariat for the diligence and professionalism demonstrated in preparing for the retreat.

I wish you very constructive deliberations, and I am very optimistic that your inputs and contributions will reshape the thinking about “The SADC We Want”, with a clear Roadmap for implementation.

I thank you for your attention.

