

**OFFICIAL OPENING REMARKS**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY, SENATOR PAUL DLAMINI,  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM  
OF SWAZILAND**

**AT THE SADC STRATEGIC MINISTERIAL RETREAT  
“THE SADC WE WANT”**

**12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2017**

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

**Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers**

**Honourable Ministers,**

**Your Excellency, SADC Executive Secretary, Dr Tax**

**Deputy Executive Secretaries**

**Senior Officials from SADC Member States**

**The Facilitator,**

**The Resource Persons,**

**SADC Secretariat**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of His Majesty's Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland, I welcome you all to Swaziland and to this very important Strategic Session of the Ministerial Retreat. It is an honour for the Kingdom of Swaziland to once again host you Ministers and officials from all the 15 countries of SADC. For those of you who are visiting this country for the first time, Ezulwini is a 'place of paradise', full of history. I trust you will, as always, find your stay not only comfortable but memorable as well.

We all note that the SADC region is faced with unpredictable weather events. For the past two years we were hit hard by drought, followed by storms and we are now experiencing cyclones Dineo and Enawo. May I express our condolences to SADC Member States namely Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Madagascar who have been hit hard by these cyclones to an extent that it has claimed lives of people and damages in infrastructure. Not forgetting other Member States in the likes of Namibia, Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Swaziland whose crops have been damaged because of the outbreak of Army worm.

**Honourable Ministers,**

We are gathered here for the next two days, to take time to reflect on our SADC and to redefine **“The SADC We Want”**. We hope to go through the memory lane to understand the vision of the Founding Fathers about the regional organisation they created in April 1980 in Lusaka, Zambia. The Lusaka Declaration was very clear in its focus: **“Towards Economic Liberation”, and today we are singing about “Towards a Common Future”**.

Between April 1980 to date, SADC has undergone transformation, restructuring and reviews, and it still feels that something is not being achieved in accordance with the vision of the region. We are, therefore, gathered so that we can freely discuss these issues, the achievements that SADC has made since its establishment and recall

when the SADC Treaty was signed in Namibia in 1992, review the challenges that SADC is facing, and come out with strategies that can be used to make the “SADC WE WANT” move the region forward.

**Honourable Ministers,**

I want us to remind ourselves that the SADC Vision is one of **“a common future, a future in a regional community that will ensure economic wellbeing, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice and peace and security for the peoples of Southern Africa”**. From this Vision we have a very clear SADC Mission and Objectives. We have developed various SADC Protocols, SADC Memoranda of Understanding and other SADC legal instruments to ensure that we work together and cooperate in all that we do in progressing in the achievements. The Member States aspire to achieve sustainable development and economic growth, alleviate poverty, and enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa. However, it seems that, somehow, we are chasing a shadow.

SADC has come a long, now 37 years old, and it ought to have started showing tangible benefits of belonging to the regional economic community. SADC belongs to the people and the peoples of this region should be associated with their own regional organisation. That is the reason why our people are concerned that, with 37 years gone by, it is apparent that the battle against emancipation, poverty,

under-development and unemployment in the region is far from being won. We also need to ask ourselves why there is a disconnect between SADC and the people of the region and why is it that instead of becoming one and integrated we have become more isolated as a Community.

While the region has recorded some level of progress in the areas of peace and security as well as trade and infrastructure development, it is clear that our pace of development is not in tandem with the pace of globalisation. Generally, poverty levels are rising and the Human Development Indices are not encouraging among most SADC Member States. So, there are questions about whether SADC is meeting its objectives in addressing the various interests of the peoples of the region, in line with the regional development aspirations, as articulated in the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP).

**Honourable Ministers,**

There is need to ask ourselves if the peoples of the region can clearly relate with the SADC's achievements, benefits, and impact in improving the quality and standard of life, including job creation among youth and the socially disadvantaged and empowerment of women.

I personally think we have taken a right decision to have this Retreat, especially coming at the time that the global village has undergone

major transformation. From the global economic crisis, to the formation of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), the development in the longest and regional integration model, the European Union with the Brexit situation, the development in the World Trade Organisation, the formation of both the SADC/COMESA/EAC Tripartite Free Trade Area and the Continental Free Trade Area, to the proposed transformation of the African Union, this is the right time to do introspection.

**Honourable Ministers,**

Let us not lose this opportunity to brainstorm and discuss freely as SADC Ministers for the good of the region and to kick-start the process of providing guidance and solid recommendations which will form the basis for decisions by Summit. Please bring out all issues to the table for discussion to address issues of programme and project implementation, visibility of SADC, the pace and acceleration of Regional Integration, effective regional and national structures, and sustainable financing of our programmes for the posterity of the region.

**Honourable Ministers,**

In conclusion may I sincerely thank all those who have prepared the work before us especially the Senior Officials who diligently put together some of the issues for further interrogation at their meeting

on 23 – 24 February, 2017. Not forgetting the Consultants from Research institutions who have prepared papers for discussions. I also thank the SADC Secretariat for working very hard in putting together all the issues and documents for our discussion.

**THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS!!!!**

