



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**H.E. DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX**

**ON THE OCCASION**

**OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING**

**OF THE MEETING OF SADC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR GENDER/  
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS**

**23RD JUNE 2016**

**GABORONE**

**REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**Deputy Prime Minister, Kingdom of Swaziland, Honourable Paul S. Dlamini;**  
**Chairperson of SADC Gender Sector and Minister of Labour and Home**  
**Affairs, Republic of Botswana, Honourable Edwin J. Batshu;**  
**Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Botswana, Madam**  
**Gladys Kokorwe;**  
**SADC Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs;**  
**Heads of Diplomatic Missions;**  
**Heads and Representatives of Regional and International Communities;**  
**Heads and Representatives of Private Sector and Non-State Actors;**  
**Senior Officials from SADC Member States and the Secretariat;**  
**Partners from the Media;**  
**Distinguished Delegates**

It is a great honour and privilege to welcome you all to this very important meeting of Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs. Allow me from the outset, to convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Botswana for the hospitality extended to all of us, and for the provision of the immaculate and excellent facilities to make this meeting a success.

I would also like to thank the SADC Member States and the leadership of the Government of Botswana, the current Chair, for the unwavering commitment and dedication to the SADC regional integration and development agenda in general, and the gender agenda in particular. This dedication is evidenced by your participation in this meeting, and the steadfast leadership in spearheading SADC programmes and activities, and achievements realised, including:

- (i) the successful development of the SADC sponsored UN Resolution on Women, the Girl Child and HIV and AIDS (Resolution 60/2) that was passed by consensus at the Commission on the Status of Women, on the 24th March, 2006 in New York;

- (ii) the on-going review and alignment of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development with the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and targets, African Union Agenda 2063 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Our commitment to ensuring that “no one is left behind” in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is clearly exhibited in the SADC overarching documents, namely: the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) and Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap, which highlight the urgent need to mainstream gender and contribute to gender equality and equity.

**Honourable Chairperson,**

I would like to emphasise that our norm of gathering every year to acknowledge and assess the efforts made by our Member States to mainstream gender in critical structures in accordance with our Protocol on Gender and Development and the Gender Policy should be underpinned by a conscious effort of building momentum for the effective implementation of gender equality principles and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

While everyone acknowledges SADC’s formulation of a comprehensive protocol on gender and development as a significant move for our sub-region, it nevertheless, remains that the potential of our men and women can be greatly nurtured through the effective implementation of the protocol.

There is consensus that for our protocol to be beneficial to the region, an enabling institutional environment is required to eliminate the challenges that hinder the achievement of gender equality and equity.

We will all acknowledge that despite the commendable efforts initiated by our Member States in mainstreaming gender, the transformation of critical structures along a gender sensitive perspective remains a challenge. In order to take some

actions that are necessary for the protocol to succeed and strengthen regional integration efforts, a comprehensive revised protocol on gender and development, with its associated monitoring, evaluation and reporting matrix and data collection tools have been drafted. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework will be developed and circulated to Member States for inputs in line with the decisions you took at our meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe, in May 2015. Indeed without these, it will remain a challenge to monitor, evaluate and report on our activities towards the advancement of women's empowerment and gender equality in the region.

**Honourable Chairperson,**

Given that our Member States seek to establish a common future, we all have a responsibility to make our Revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development contribute to this future. The adoption and subsequent signing of the Revised Protocol will ascertain that all the Member States are committed towards this envisaged common future.

Our leaders have constantly voiced their support and commitment to promoting women's empowerment and gender equality and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. At the African Union level, the African Union Agenda 2063 also places a central focus on achieving gender parity and a Gender Scorecard has been developed to track progress made in achieving gender equality.

I am pleased to state that the focus of the proposed Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework, while customised and contextualised to our region, will be in sync with global efforts to accelerate and attain gender equality and equity.

As a region, we recognize that women's and girls' economic empowerment sets a direct path towards achieving gender equality and is a critical element of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Achieving this will require all actors, whether governments, international institutions, civil society organizations or the

private sector, to move beyond 'business as usual' and employ new ways of thinking and acting.

**Honourable Chairperson,**

I am pleased to inform you that, as your Secretariat, we have taken this on board as we are at the initial stage of developing the Regional multi-dimensional Women's Economic Empowerment Programme with a view to fulfil this priority. However, for us to successfully achieve women's economic empowerment in our Member States, this entails close cooperation between ministries responsible for gender and those responsible for, among others, finance, agriculture, trade, and science and technology and strategic stakeholders.

Gender inequality remains one of the biggest challenges in our region. Access to and ownership of resources, the high prevalence of gender-based violence, including trafficking in persons especially of women and children, inadequate investment in social protection, and the limited financing for women's empowerment and gender equality are some of the key challenges.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my usual assurance that I am committed to ensuring that the Secretariat fully facilitates the development and implementation of programmes, policies, frameworks, guidelines, and other regional instruments and initiatives that will enable women's economic empowerment and gender equality in the region.

With these few remarks, I thank you, and look forward to fruitful deliberations.

I THANK YOU!

OBRIGADA!

MERCI!