



OPENING REMARKS BY

**HON. DR. NALEDI PANDOR, CHAIRPERSON OF THE
MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE OF THE ORGAN ON POLITICS,**

DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION,

AT THE

**24TH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE OF THE ORGAN
(MCO) ON POLITICS, DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION**

19 JULY 2022

Honourable NF Kapofi, Minister of Defence and Military Veterans of the Republic of Namibia, and Incoming Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ

Honourable Dr Lemogang Kwape, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Botswana and Outgoing Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers

Your Excellency Mr Elias Mpedi Magosi, the SADC Executive Secretary

Senior Officials, SADC Secretariat

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

I am once again delighted to welcome you back to South Africa as we convene for the 24th Meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ (MCO) on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation. Indeed, this meeting provides an opportunity for us to collectively and objectively assess the status of implementation of our decisions, as well as map a way forward in our concerted efforts to bolster peace, security, stability, integration, and development in the SADC region.

At the onset, please allow me to convey heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of the Republic of Angola on the passing of His Excellency José Eduardo Dos Santos, former president of the Republic of Angola. We fondly recall his invaluable contribution to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa which culminated in majority rule and democracy, and his overall contribution to the liberation struggle, as one of the leaders of the Frontline States.

Above all, President Dos Santos was one of the leaders of SADC and served as its Chairperson, in 2002-2003 and 2011-2012 respectively. Throughout his tenure as Chair, he was unwavering in his support for peace and stability, and socio-economic development and integration in our region.

In honour and remembrance of the late President José Eduardo Dos Santos, may I invite you, Honourable Ministers, and distinguished delegates, to rise for a moment of silence.

Dear colleagues

The Agenda before us is extensive, which is a reflection of the wide scope of work that is covered by the Organ. This MCO is the culmination of the work of the Committees that anchor the work of the Organ namely, the Inter-State Politics and Diplomacy Committee, and the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee.

As we reflect on the progress of the implementation of decisions of the 23rd Ministerial Council, it is pleasing to note that 81% of the MCO decisions were implemented by the Secretariat and Member States. This without doubt contributes to strengthening the overall efforts in consolidating our goal to achieve peace and stability in the region. Dear colleagues.

In the quest for the maintenance of peace and stability in the region, SADC is mindful of the need to continuously extend the frontiers of democratic principles in the region for the betterment of the citizenry and prevention of conflicts. The liberation struggle was waged in the SADC region and across Africa with the overarching agenda of gaining independence from the colonial masters as well as entrenching and sustaining democracy in our societies.

It is therefore gratifying to note that SADC as a region continues to conduct democratic, transparent, fair, peaceful, and credible elections within the dictates of Member States' legislation and the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

The Republic of Angola and the Kingdom of Lesotho will hold national elections in August 2022 and October 2022, respectively. We wish our fellow members peaceful election in this regard. The SADC Electoral Observer Missions, as is practice will be deployed in conformity with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

As we consolidate our work in line with VISION 2050 of SADC, we recognize the importance of dialogue and mediation in conflict resolution. Our Panel of Elders and the Mediation Reference Group play a key role in this regard. We are therefore pleased with the stature of the Panel of Elders and the Mediation Reference Group that are supporting the Region. This Meeting will consider nominations to complete the configuration of both categories.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The SADC region also attaches great importance to the role of Women in Peace and Security. Our sister country, Namibia spearheaded the landmark UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women on 31 October 2000. The SADC also took it upon itself to track the implementation of this Resolution in the Region and note the progress in the development of National Action Plans by the SADC Member States. We also welcome the launch of the Women Peace and Security International Centre by the Republic of Namibia, and the generous invitation to SADC Members to make use of the Centre.

Dear colleagues,

As we reflect on the SADC's defence and security agenda, we recognize the importance of ensuring security in the land, air, and maritime domains. We will therefore discuss the SADC Integrated Maritime Security Strategy (IMSS) Action Plan, noting the importance of maritime trade in the region.

The Region has continued the fight against the political and security threats; as well as social and economic threats faced by Member States. To mitigate these threats, SADC has put in place measures, including the development and revision of national counter-terrorism strategies and plans of action; constitutional reforms; crafting and implementation of socio-economic transformation policies; strengthening of legislation and national strategies dealing with transnational organised crime, amongst others.

In the same vein, I am pleased to highlight that regional engagement and mediation efforts in the Kingdoms of Lesotho and Eswatini are progressive and constructive. It is heartening to note that the political and security situation in the Kingdom of Lesotho is generally calm and stable. Similarly, SADC is seized with finding a lasting solution to the challenges facing the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Regarding the security situation in the Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique, I am pleased to highlight that the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) has made great strides in restoring peace and security in Gabo Delgado. In this respect, may I urge Member States to continue supporting our concerted efforts to fight terrorism not only in Mozambique but the region as a whole. Let me also commend Member States for their continual and unconditional support of regional efforts to fight acts of terrorism in Mozambique. In addition to the deployment of SAMIM, SADC is currently undertaking capacity-building programmes for the police, correctional services, women and youth as well as dialogue programmes for civic leaders under the banner of SAMIM and through the African Union Early Response Mechanism (ERM). These are efforts aimed at contributing to the reconstructing efforts underway in Cabo Delgado within the framework of the Cabo Delgado Construction Plan.

To sustain our capacity to address conflict, we need highly skilled personnel in a few inter-related disciplines. The SADC Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre (RPTC) has therefore a critical mandate to build the capacity of the region in preparation for deployment to peacekeeping missions in line with SADC, African Union, and United Nations standards.

Dear colleagues

It is also pleasing to note that the region is making concerted efforts to prevent, and combat terrorism as evidenced by the official launch of the SADC Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre (RCTC) on 28 February 2021, in the United Republic of Tanzania.

In addition, regional efforts to prevent and combat the proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons need to be heightened and emboldened. In this regard, Member States should strengthen and prioritize the implementation of the SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials.

In the same breath, the implementation of the African Union Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa (2021-2030), as well as observation of the Africa Amnesty Month, in September each year, needs

to be intensified to enable surrender and collection of illegally acquired weapons and arms.

May I also take this opportunity to urge Member States to expeditiously sign the Agreement Amending the SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials. Since its adoption by the Summit in August 2020, only four Member States have signed the Agreement; it needs seven more Member States to sign for it to come into force.

Dear colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen

As I declare this Ministerial Committee Meeting Open, I look forward to your engagement on the rich agenda before us.

I Thank you,
Merci beaucoup
Muito obrigado,
Asante sana!