



OPENING STATEMENT
BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR HAGE G. GEINGOB, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
NAMIBIA
AND
CHAIRPERSON OF THE SADC ORGAN ON POLITICS, DEFENCE AND
SECURITY COOPERATION,
DURING THE
OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SADC EXTRA-ORDINARY ORGAN
TROIKA SUMMIT

WINDHOEK, REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

31 JANUARY 2023

- Your Excellency, Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, and Outgoing Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation,
- Your Excellency, Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia and Incoming Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation,
- Your Excellency, Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia,
- The Right Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia,

- Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, and Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ,
- The Right Hon. Sam Matekane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho,
- Your Excellency Cleopas Siphon Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini,
- Your Excellency, Mr. Elias Magosi, Executive Secretary of SADC,
- Your Excellency, Mr. Didier Mazenga Mukanzu, Minister of Regional Integration and Francophonie, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo,
- Your Excellency, Hon. Mr. Cristovao Artur Chume, Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Mozambique,
- Hon. Ministers,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct privilege and honor this morning to welcome you to our capital city of Windhoek and to Namibia, the Land of the Brave, for the Extraordinary Summit of the SADC Troika of the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation.

Your Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

We are pleased to host you in a green and rainy Windhoek. As you know, this is not the usual way. The green landscape that you have seen since your arrival is seasonal and only for a very short period. Therefore, I hope that all our countries in the region and beyond have received good rains.

Your Excellencies,

Even though, this is the first meeting that I am chairing in Namibia as the Chairperson of the SADC Troika, I have been receiving excellent support and cooperation from all of you to discharge my responsibilities of steering this important structure of SADC. In this context, we are addressing the challenges we are facing in the Region in our quest for a peaceful, stable, harmonious and prosperous Region.

I thank the outgoing Chairperson, President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa for his unwavering support and cooperation. He has always been available to take my calls and provide support, and I believe that we will continue in this spirit.

Equally, I also thank the incoming Chairperson, President Hakainde Hichilema of Zambia, who I also communicate with via phone call or text messages and whose excellent inauguration I had the privilege to witness, as well as having briefly hosted him here. Thank you for your support. Having established a good practice of communication, we will continue to work together to further the SADC regional agenda of peace and stability.

I also had excellent collaboration from the Kingdom of Eswatini, where I paid a courtesy call on His Majesty, King Mswati III, to introduce and apprise myself as the new Chairperson of the SADC Troika, with the political and security situation there. I was very well received, and would like to use this occasion to once more thank King Mswati III, through His Excellency Prime Minister, Cleopas Siphon Dlamini, present here with us.

We are also honored with the presence of the Prime Minister of Lesotho, the Right Honorable Sam Matekane, who is attending the Troika Summit for the first time. I thank you for having already paid a courtesy call to me here in Windhoek.

We had fruitful discussions regarding Lesotho's political and security situation. In a short time, Lesotho registered progress in some areas, and when I received him that day, I said that we will cooperate with President Ramaphosa to iron out the remaining issues. Moving forward, it is our hope that the Kingdom of Lesotho will eventually be removed from the agenda of the Organ.

I also welcome our brothers, the honorable Ministers from the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Mozambique to this meeting. On the issue of DRC, I had a telephonic conversation with my brother, President Tshisekedi, who initially requested for a postponement of this meeting due to pressing national matters. Subsequently, he agreed to send his Minister, to represent him here today, for which I am profoundly grateful.

Finally, I also take this opportunity to welcome the Executive Secretary, the Ministerial Committee, Senior Officials, and the SADC Secretariat. Feel at home. Namibia is part of SADC and SADC is your home.

Your Excellencies,

Today we are meeting to consider, share views and take decisions on specific political and security issues in the SADC Region. For example, we will receive and consider a progress report on the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) and recommendations therefrom. The Organ Troika Summit will also receive and consider reports on the political and security situations in the Kingdoms of Eswatini, Lesotho, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Following reports of civil unrest and violent disturbances in the Kingdom of Eswatini, the then Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation, His Excellency Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana, deployed an Organ Troika fact-finding mission to the country on July 3-4, 2021. Follow-up engagements were conducted by my immediate predecessor, His Excellency Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, who amongst other initiatives, undertook a working visit to the Kingdom of Eswatini in November 2021. Subsequently, in November 2022, I paid a courtesy call on His Majesty King Mswati III after I assumed the chair of the Organ.

Our regional commitment has always been to address inter and intra-state conflicts by peaceful means. In this spirit, these initiatives were aimed at obtaining a clearer understanding of the causes and impact of the civil unrest, and to consult key stakeholders on possible solutions to the prevailing challenges.

Regrettably, and whilst the Region is focused on assisting our sister country to find and implement peaceful solutions to these challenges, there have been on-going and sporadic acts of violence in the Kingdom of Eswatini that point to an escalation of the tensions.

On that note, several days ago we received the sad news that the people of Eswatini lost a prominent opposition political activist of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, by the name of Thulani Rudolf Maseko, who was assassinated. In my capacity as Chairperson of the Organ, I issued a statement calling for a swift, transparent and comprehensive investigation so that the culprits can be brought to book. I have said that when diplomacy fails and people stop talking to each other, conflict begins. Therefore dialogue is important as it will give the peace process an opportunity to become successful.

Your Excellencies,

As we are entering 2023, the year which I have christened, in Namibia, as the year of Revival which is about reigniting the strength of a resurgent nation, a nation that looks into the future with renewed hope and optimism, I hope that this is also the year of our Region's revival. Revival in the SADC context is about our Region's economic, political and security renaissance, regeneration, revitalization, and restoration.

As leaders of SADC seized with the well-being and welfare of close to 400 million citizens, we are called upon to reinvent new approaches to find solutions to old problems that have been troubling our Region for so long. I stated on a previous occasion, without peace, development cannot take place. And without development we cannot achieve shared prosperity for our citizens. For that reason, it is incumbent upon us, the leaders of SADC, and in particular of the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation, to take decisive action in addressing issues of insecurity in our Region.

Your Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my fellow Heads of State and Government for the cooperation, support and encouragement I have received since becoming Chairperson of the Organ. I will continue to count on your support as we collectively address the emerging challenges that our region faces so that the region continues to be a beacon of stability, peace, and prosperity.

It will be remiss of me if I do not recognize the important role played by our Council of Ministers, Ministerial Committee of the Organ, our Senior Officials and all our defence and security experts for comprehensively deliberating on the situations affecting our sister countries in the Region. Thank you for your hard work.

In a special way, let me thank the Executive Secretary of SADC and the SADC Secretariat team for the preparatory work and the commitment and dedication to support and facilitate the convening of this meeting.

The time has come for us to dare, to reinvent innovative strategies and pursue novel ways and means, to find lasting solutions to our political and security challenges. In the same vein, we are also called upon to prepare and empower our people for the journey to the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Thus, the steps for revitalization and innovation in the political, economic, scientific and many other spheres in all the SADC countries should be undertaken. By so doing, we will shape the future of our Region as a cutting-edge Region of peace, stability, development and progress, as per the goals of our Vision 2050 and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020-2030. Therefore, we will become the makers and masters of our destiny in SADC.

We can, and we shall achieve the high goals of becoming a peaceful, inclusive, and middle to high income industrialized region where all citizens enjoy economic prosperity, justice and liberty. Let us therefore, while mindful of our cultural, linguistic and geographic differences, continue to hold hands as brothers and sisters of the SADC region, and through deliberate and resolute strategies and actions bring about extraordinary renaissance of our Region.

I now declare this Extraordinary Troika Summit as officially opened.

I thank you.