



## **REMARKS**

**BY**

**BARBARA LOPI**

**HEAD OF COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**SADC SECRETARIAT**

**AT**

**28TH SADC REGIONAL ADJUDICATION COMMITTEE**

**VIRTUAL MEETING FOR THE 2023 SADC MEDIA AWARDS**

**CHAired BY THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

**20<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023**

**Honourable Patrick Muyaya, Minister of Communication and Media of the Democratic Republic of Congo**

**Mr Andre Joseph Nkoy Djate, Director of Communication and the SADC National Media Coordinator for the Democratic Republic of Congo and Chairperson of the 28<sup>th</sup> Regional Adjudication Committee meeting;**

**SADC National Media Coordinators, and Members of the SADC Regional Adjudication Committee from the SADC Member States**

**Members of the National Adjudication Committee (NAC)**

**Secretariat Staff**

**Representatives of the Media**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**A very Good Morning to you all.**

It is a great honour for me to deliver remarks at this 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Regional Adjudication Committee on the 2023 SADC Media Awards, on behalf of the Secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Let me begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Chair of SADC, for the support, guidance, and cooperation in organizing the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Regional Adjudication Committee on the 2023 SADC Media Awards. Since assuming the Chairship of SADC in August 2022, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has demonstrated her commitment to the SADC Regional Integration and Development Agenda. The Secretariat has received cooperation and necessary support on matters related to communication and visibility of SADC during the statutory meetings that have been hosted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including support in the hosting of this 28<sup>th</sup> RAC meeting.

**Honourable Minister, Chairperson and Distinguished delegates,**

The SADC Media Awards is one of the programmes that has been put in place to encourage journalists to play a role in communicating stories on SADC regional integration, cooperation, and development. The SADC Media Awards were established in 1996 following the approval of the SADC Council of Ministers in 1995, to recognise best media work in disseminating information on SADC to support the process of regional cooperation and integration in the Region.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you all, for reserving time out of your busy schedules to participate in this important exercise. Your presence not only give value to this meeting, but it is evidence of the commitment you have to the SADC region agenda and programmes. I noted from the confirmations that we have new RAC members, please do feel welcome to this great team.

**Honourable Minister, Chairperson and Distinguished delegates,**

This Committee will be adjudicating on a total of **24 entries comprising** (7 for Print, 3 for Photo, 6 for Radio and 8 for Television) categories that we received from 10 (ten) SADC Member States, namely, Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The winners of this year's SADC Media Awards will be officially announced during the 43<sup>rd</sup> SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government to be held in Luanda, Republic of Angola in August 2023. The winners will receive certificates signed by the Chairperson of SADC, and the prize money of US\$2500 and US\$1000 for each of the first winners and runners-up respectively.

I urge the SADC National Media Coordinators and delegates present here to enhance the promotion of the SADC Media Awards at the national levels, so that we increase the number of entries and Member States participating in the awards.

**Honourable Minister, Chairperson and Distinguished delegates,**

Last year we informed you that we were revamping the SADC website, [www.sadc.int](http://www.sadc.int), and I'm excited to inform you that the revamped SADC website which is more interactive with features that are in line with the international best practices in digital technology is now operational.

I encourage you to use the website as a quick reference and useful resource for information about SADC the organisation, as well as the SADC Secretariat, which is one of the institutional arms of our regional economic Community. I invite you to join the SADC Secretariat in promoting the website to the media in your SADC Member States as a useful resource for background information and a good source for story ideas when writing stories on SADC regional integration.

In addition to the website, I encourage you all to make use of the information on other SADC platforms, namely the Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube so that together, we reach as many audiences as possible, and in the process enhance awareness on SADC programmes and impact.

SADC has made several milestones over the years, and continues to do so, but not all our stakeholders and the public have full understanding of what SADC is doing and the impact that the regional community has been making.

The limited or low awareness and understanding of SADC, its impact, and its value addition, contributes to a mismatch between public expectations and the actual SADC programmes and their implementation on the ground.

Hence, we have a role as SADC National Media coordinators to facilitate dissemination of information and human-interest stories on how the programmes and initiatives of SADC are impact on the lives of the citizens of the region.

For example, recently an announcement was made that four countries, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana have agreed to scrap mobile roaming charges. And to most people out there, this is just story on the goodwill of the operators. But no. This is part of the SADC “roam like at home” initiative, which was signed in 2007 by SADC Ministers of Communication, and since then, SADC has been engaging with operators to allow consumers to pay charges as close as they would have paid in their home countries. So, there a lot of such stories, that needs to be communicated, and we count on the SADC National Media coordinators and the journalist to bring out such stories to light.

**Honourable Minister, Chairperson and Distinguished delegates,**

As I conclude, let me through you, thank the journalists who managed to submit their works for adjudication, and all Journalists who continue to play a role in disseminating stories about regional integration and in the process nurture an informed SADC citizenry.

Lastly, I extend the SADC Secretariat’s gratitude to all the Member States for allowing the SADC Regional Adjudicators to participate in this noble exercise of reviewing and adjudicating the media award entries. I wish you all a successful meeting as we all work together in the next three days to recognise and award the best work that promote regional integration and development.

Thank you all for your attention.

Asante Sana

Merci Beaucoup

Muito Obrigado.