

**SADC Regional Development Objective Agreement (RDOAG)**

**Signing Ceremony**

**U.S. Ambassador Howard Van Vranken**

**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery**

Good morning. Thank you, Executive Secretary Magosi. I'm thrilled to be here at the SADC Secretariat today.

As the U.S. representative to the Secretariat of the Southern African Development Community, it is such a pleasure to join you all here as we formally renew our partnership to achieve sustained and inclusive prosperity, peace, and stability throughout the Southern Africa region.

The U.S. government works to transform families, communities, and countries, so they can thrive and prosper. Whether by preventing the next global epidemic, helping a farmer access tools to grow her business, or supporting governments to respond to climate change, our efforts aim to achieve a future in which we all can live healthier,

happier, and more prosperous lives.

The relationship between the United States and the SADC region has always been one of partnership and cooperation. We have long recognized the potential that lies within the diverse nations of Southern Africa. Our commitment to fostering stability, economic growth, and sustainable development in this region remains steadfast.

Many of the SADC countries benefit from robust bilateral U.S. government programs but this regional development objective agreement between SADC and the U.S. government renews our shared commitment to work together in the years ahead. The U.S. government is committed to the principle that SADC and SADC member states must lead their own development journeys to sustain the impact and results of their collective activities.

We firmly believe that progress is not possible without inclusion, and that is why our partnership with SADC focuses on building capacity, strengthening institutions, and promoting a resilient Southern Africa. Specifically, I am pleased that activities under this agreement will seek to achieve gender equality and women empowerment.

As you know, women are one-half of the world's population but only contribute to 37 percent of the global GDP. We cannot achieve economic development with these troubling statistics. USAID is accelerating its funding commitment by putting women and girls at the center of our global development and humanitarian work. Women's economic empowerment benefits entire communities and countries.

Today, I stand before you with a sense of pride in the milestones we have achieved together and excitement for the further collaboration that this new agreement will facilitate. Over the years, we have worked hand in hand to address a multitude of challenges facing the region,

from mitigating the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, to tackling food insecurity and water scarcity, to building strong judicial systems.

Our partnership has brought tangible improvements to the lives of countless individuals across the region. Through the USAID Resilient Waters Program we helped to improve health and livelihoods in Southern Africa by increasing access to clean water and sanitation. The program has helped to empower marginalized groups, through social inclusion - including here in Botswana - and has strengthened local resource management capabilities via capacity development support. We have witnessed the spirit of resilience that defines the people of Southern Africa.

In the face of new challenges, such as the impacts of climate change and demanding macroeconomic pressures, our partnership is more critical than ever. As we navigate these challenges and future

challenges, we must stay true to our shared vision of a prosperous and resilient Southern Africa.

The United States government remains committed to walking alongside SADC on this journey and to respecting the rich cultural diversity that makes Southern Africa strong and a trusted partner.

Thank you again for your collaboration and dedication.