



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY JOÃO MANUEL GONÇALVES LOURENÇO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA AND SADC CHAIRPERSON, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA LIBERATION DAY**

23 MARCH 2024

Today, we commemorate the Southern Africa Liberation Day, a day that the Southern African Development Community (SADC), set aside to pay tribute to the men and women in our region who sacrificed their lives to bring the freedom that we enjoy today.

On this day, 36 years ago, one of the fiercest conventional battles at Cuito Cuanavale of Kuando, Kubanho Province of Angola came to an end. This event marked the beginning of a new chapter for the country to and start a new path towards development and sustained peace, ensuring that Angola would now form a key part of SADC development and integration agenda.

As we celebrate this day, let us remember the bravery of the People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA), the Cuban internationalists and the freedom fighters of SWAPO, ZANU-PF, the ANC and the so-called Front Line countries, who triumphed in the struggle against the Apartheid regime and led to the liberation of Namibia, South Africa and the whole of Southern Africa. This was a clear testimony to the strength and importance of unity of action and solidarity among oppressed peoples.

Fellow SADC Citizens,

Several significant milestones mark this year's commemoration as we continue to implement the *Mechanism in honour of the Founders of SADC*. On 18th of February 2024, we witnessed the unveiling of the Statue of H.E. Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the First President of the United Republic of Tanzania, at the Julius Nyerere Peace and Security Building of the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia. This statue is a befitting and powerful symbol that will constantly remind our continent, particularly the young generation of sacrifices made by one of our liberation stalwarts, *Mwalimu* Julius Nyerere to the liberation struggle of our continent.

The history of our liberation is the story of the region's very existence. For this reason, I am pleased to report that the Hashim Mbita publications which have documented the history of the region's liberation struggle in English, French, and Portuguese languages, have been distributed to SADC Member States. The translation of this same publication into Kiswahili is at an advanced stage, and once completed, it will be distributed to the Member States this year. These publications serve not only as an archival collage of SADC's trajectory in its struggle for freedom, but also as a reflection of hope and an aspiration for all to jealously guard and protect the relatively peaceful and stable region we are in today.

As we continue to implement the *Mechanism honouring our Founders*, I must applaud Member States that have led the way by incorporating the history of the liberation of southern Africa in their school curricula. I appeal to all SADC Member States to continue exploring innovative ways to include these Liberation stories in the education curriculum.

Fellow SADC Citizens,

The future of Southern Africa lies in our ability to educate next generations, coupled with our genuine collective resolve to secure sustainable peace. As such, the *Mechanism in honour of the Founders of SADC* includes an annual Essay Competition for the region's University students. This year, our youths will debate the topic "*Describe the roles that the founding fathers might have played in developing the vision for regional integration*". It is – a topic that marries the past, the present and the future of the SADC integration agenda, which is our reason for existence as a Community. The liberation that we have fought hard and so long for, should not wither and disappear over time but rather should serve as the guiding blueprint that inspires future generations of the importance of our collective pursuit of inclusion, that indeed none of our peoples and nations is left behind.

As we commemorate this year's Southern Africa Liberation Day, we must be firm in safeguarding the fundamental freedoms, liberties, peace and the security of our nations, and embrace, harness and nurture our collective potential to triumph over any adversity we may face as we engage with and contribute to the global world, to make it fairer and safer for all.

I wish you all a blessed, peaceful and memorable Southern Africa Liberation Day.

**H.E. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço
President of the Republic of Angola and Chairperson of SADC**

Luanda Angola

23rd March 2024