



**Keynote Address by His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço,  
President of the Republic of Angola and Chairperson of SADC, at the Opening  
Ceremony of the 44th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the  
Southern African Development Community**

***Harare, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2024***

- Your Excellency Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, incoming Chairperson of SADC and the Host of the 44th SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government;
- Your Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation;
- Your Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania and incoming Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation;
- Your Excellency Felix Antione Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Outgoing Chairperson of SADC;
- Your Excellency Nangolo Mbumba, President of the Republic of Namibia and Outgoing Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation;
- Your Excellencies SADC Heads of State and Government and Representatives;
- Your Excellency Mr. Claver Gatete, the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
- Your Excellency Akinwumi A. Adesina, President of the African Development Bank;
- Your Excellency Frederick Shava, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers;
- Your Excellency Mr. Elias M. Magosi, the Executive Secretary of SADC;
- Honourable Members of the Diplomatic Corps
  
- Your Excellencies;
  
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is with great pleasure that in my capacity as the Chairperson of the SADC I take the floor to address you on this 44<sup>th</sup> occasion when the highest dignitaries from SADC Member States gather to reflect on the objectives and goals set by the Community, the achievements we have made in the past year, the opportunities before us and the pressing challenges that we must overcome collectively.

Let me begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency President Emmerson Mnangagwa and to the People of the Republic of Zimbabwe for agreeing to host this important Summit of the Organisation and for the warm welcome, and the exceptional hospitality accorded to all delegations since our arrival in this beautiful and welcoming country.

Let me also take this opportunity to officially welcome His Excellency Nangolo Mbumba, who is attending this first SADC Summit as President of the Republic of Namibia.

On behalf of all the SADC Heads of State, allow me to extend once again our sincere congratulations to you, Your Excellency and the People of the Republic of Namibia for the orderly and peaceful transfer of power following the sad event that took away our late friend and comrade Hage G. Geingob.

We will continue to work together in the same spirit as always, to address the current and future challenges of our organisation, as we seek to collectively build a brighter and more prosperous future for all SADC citizens.

Let me also point out that the last year has been characterised by many misfortunes, of which I have already mentioned the death of the former President of Namibia, as well as other notable people who have made significant contributions towards the attainment of our regional objectives. These included Mr Saulos Klaus Chilima, Vice-President of the Republic of Malawi and His Excellency Ali Hassan Mwinyi, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

I would also like to single out the brave soldiers who lost their lives in the line of duty under our Peace Support Missions, namely the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) and SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC).

Allow me to propose that we pay tribute to these brave sons of our region, whose memories we should seek to honour by upholding the values they believed in, and striving tenaciously for a better future for our region.

At this juncture, may I invite you, Your Excellencies and all distinguished ladies and gentlemen, to rise for a Moment of Silence in memory and honour of the leaders and the brave soldiers who have departed from us.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Exactly one year ago, the Republic of Angola took over the Chairship of SADC with a firm commitment to drive forward the industrialisation agenda, which began at the 34<sup>th</sup> SADC Summit held here in Zimbabwe, when the organisation took a bold decision to

place industrialisation at the centre stage of its regional integration agenda, with the development of the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap 2015-2063.

In driving this industrialisation agenda, the 43<sup>rd</sup> SADC Summit adopted the theme: *“Human and Financial Capital: The Key Drivers for Sustainable Industrialisation in the SADC Region”*, since one of our main objectives has to do with obtaining skills that facilitate access to employment and ensure that our region is well prepared to face the challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution and the digitalisation of our economies.

As part of the implementation of this theme, we work in coordination with the Secretariat to support Member States in promoting and developing key value chains for production and processing of agricultural products, pharmaceuticals, minerals, consumer goods and services, to strengthen and leverage regional benefits.

Therefore, I am delighted that under the incoming leadership of the Republic of Zimbabwe, we will continue to be able to count on the dynamism of this country to pursue the operationalisation of industrialisation, so that we can extend and consolidate the gains that the region has made so far with the adoption of the Theme: *“Promoting Innovation to Unlock Opportunities for Sustained Economic Growth and Development towards an Industrialised SADC”*.

Through this theme, I am fully confident that our region will collectively harness science, technology and innovation to boost industrialisation as a fundamental and decisive driver for the socio-economic transformation that will take place in this southern area of the continent.

Recognising that human resources are essential for the development of these value chains and for sustainable industrialisation, our region has taken important steps in the last year to operationalise the SADC University of Transformation with a view to create and sustain human capital with requisite skills to meet the demands of the technical and technological development to support our industrialisation efforts.

On the other hand, I must say that our region currently faces an annual infrastructure financing gap of between 30-40 billion United States Dollars. It is therefore important that we collectively move as quickly as possible towards the operationalisation of the Regional Development Fund (RDF), one of the major objectives of the chairship that ends today, aimed at supporting industrial, social, human and infrastructure development, with a view to stimulating sustainable growth in our region.

Let me therefore take this opportunity to call upon the private sector, development financing institutions and international cooperating partners to partner with us and support us with resources to implement some of our prioritised regional projects covering strategic areas in the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plans (RISDP) 2020-2030.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the area of infrastructure development in support of regional integration, during the presidency that ends today, our region has made tremendous progress in Energy, Transport, Shared Water Resources, ICT and Meteorology sectors.

In light of what I have just said, I think it is important to point out that the SADC region currently has 86% mobile network coverage, which is already very close to achieving the 95% target for 2030.

Internet penetration in our area is estimated at 54%, which entails that more than half of the SADC population is online.

All this is due to the dynamic collaboration by Member States, who have organised themselves firmly to invest in digital infrastructures, reduce the cost of digital services and promote digital literacy.

With regard to energy resources, I believe it is essential that we guarantee access to reliable and affordable energy in our region, so that we can boost industrialisation, increase productivity and create job opportunities in the SADC region.

It should be noted that the population with access to electricity between 2019 and 2023 has generally remained well below the projected levels, which will certainly jeopardise the 85% target set for 2030.

Some Member States have managed to reach 100% access, while others have fallen woefully short of 20%.

It should be emphasised that energy production capacity in most of our region's Member States has not been able to meet the demand since 2008, with the exception of the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania, where in April 2024 it was noted that there were surpluses in energy production compared to current domestic consumption in these countries.

It is important to stress that access to the surplus capacity of the Member States mentioned has not been possible due to the insufficient expansion of the transport and transmission networks from the production plants to the consumption centres and missing interconnectors linking all the Member States in the region.

In view of limited access to energy, our Region must continue investing in energy infrastructure to increase power generation, transport and distribution of electricity, diversifying energy sources and adopting sustainable energy practices which are crucial to ensuring a reliable power supply and promoting regional development, economic growth, and building a more prosperous SADC region.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We cannot talk of a truly integrated and prosperous region without ensuring freedom of movement for people across the SADC region.

By facilitating the movement of individuals across our borders, we can foster economic growth, social development and cultural exchange among our Member States.

It is with this in mind that I am pleased to note that in the past year we have continued to make important efforts to extend the facilities for the movement of people, goods and services across the region. Some member states have instituted VISA exemptions

amongst themselves, while others have completely abolished the VISA requirement for all SADC member states.

It is encouraging to note that we are all taking very concrete steps towards eliminating barriers and restrictions in the movement of people and goods in our region. I would like to highlight the collaboration among all SADC Member States on establishing One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) with the view to streamline and facilitate trade and movement among us.

Several such Posts have been established in locations on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe, between Botswana and Zambia, between Malawi and Zambia and between the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, which together help to create the conditions for easier movement of people, intra-regional trade and other important factors for development, of which I would highlight the cost of transport in our region.

Also part of this effort is the Lobito Corridor, an important Angolan infrastructure that will connect the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Zambia to the Atlantic Ocean, through which raw materials, goods and services will flow under more favourable and competitive economic conditions.

We must emphasise that this facility will create dynamics that will help stimulate economic growth, not only in the three Member States directly linked to it, but also in the other countries that make up SADC.

I would like to add to the development factors I have mentioned by emphasising the issue of tourism, which experienced a fairly significant slowdown during the COVID-19 period, but has since seen a significant increase, having regained its place as one of the most important sectors contributing to our region's GDP and economic growth.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our region has been confronted with difficult and highly complex problems, which make it necessary for all of us to make a special effort and pay special attention in order to confront and overcome the diseases and natural disasters that are plaguing Southern Africa.

I am proud to highlight the efforts that SADC member states have been making to create mechanisms that contribute to an increasingly effective reduction in HIV cases, in which actions have been developed with very significant and encouraging results in terms of reducing HIV deaths and new infections between 2010 and 2022.

While we applaud this progress, we must continue to raise awareness among young people so that they adopt preventive and safe behaviours, in order to avoid the spread of the disease among this section of our population.

In February this year, I had the honour of hosting an extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Cholera situation in the region, where we took collective measures to contain its spread, and ultimately, ensure the health and well-being of our people.

As a result of the decisions taken at the time, it became possible to contain the spread of cholera and provide the necessary support to the people and communities affected.

It should be noted that His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, has led the fight against cholera in the SADC region with considerable success, as Regional Champion against Cholera. Thank you very much for your efforts.

In terms of health, I would also like to point out that we have also achieved notable success in the fight against malaria, with a significant reduction in the incidence rate.

During the year that I have been at the helm of our organisation, we have had to deal with other situations that have forced us to react promptly in a collective way, in order to deal with the issue of natural disasters that have caused loss of human life, damage to infrastructure and property, as well as a worrying increase in food insecurity and its impact on the worsening vulnerabilities of people in our region, within the framework of the Virtual Summit held in May.

At this Summit, which focused on the Droughts and Floods induced by El Niño, we launched a SADC Regional Humanitarian Appeal, in the context of which we addressed the need to mobilise at least 5.5 billion US dollars to supplement domestic resources of the affected Member States.

I have to say with some concern that the figures mobilised so far are well below the estimate set at the Summit I mentioned a moment ago, so I would like to reiterate the same appeal to national, regional and international partners, the private sector and the Member States, to make an extra effort to get us closer to the figures we need to provide assistance to the people affected in our region by the El Niño phenomenon.

We have received information from experts in our region about new events that could occur in the coming years, such as droughts, tropical cyclones, floods, landslides, wildfires, and rising sea levels as a result of climate change and other factors.

In order to cope with these situations, I would like to announce here that the SADC Humanitarian and Emergency Operations Centre came into operation last year. It will have the important function of helping to coordinate disaster preparedness, response and rapid recovery at regional level, as part of the support to be provided to Member States affected by natural disasters.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Peace and security issues in our region continue to be at the centre of our attention and are among the top priorities on the SADC agenda, within which we are making a collective effort to maintain the peaceful atmosphere that generally prevails in Southern Africa, although the conflict in eastern DRC is still a challenge that we have been tackling with encouraging prospects.

In view of the understandings reached on the ceasefire in that region between the Republic of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has been in force

since 4 August, we will work to take concrete steps towards the negotiation and signing of a definitive peace agreement.

The Republic of Angola, in its role as mediator, has submitted a draft peace agreement to Rwanda and the DRC, which is being considered by both and will begin to be discussed and negotiated between ministerial delegations from the DRC and Rwanda on 20<sup>th</sup> August in Luanda.

We would like to highlight the role played by the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation in setting up the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC), with the aim of contributing positively to the creation of an environment that favours the mitigation of conflict factors.

The security situation in the province of Cabo Delgado also deserves a special mention, as the SADC Mission in Mozambique, SAMIM, came to an end on 4 July this year. This mission has successfully helped the Republic of Mozambique to tackle terrorism and violent extremism, as it was possible to halt the spread of this dangerous and harmful phenomenon.

It should be noted that the end of SAMIM's mission in Mozambique does not suspend our commitment to continue supporting the efforts that this sister country continues to make to guarantee a solid, lasting peace that is necessary for the progress and development of the Mozambican nation.

In this globalised world, SADC is attentive to issues of global peace and security, without which all efforts to guarantee food and energy security and the aforementioned industrialisation of our region and our African continent will be seriously delayed and compromised.

There is an urgent need to end the war in Sudan, due to the serious consequences for the lives of the people who are facing one of the greatest humanitarian disasters of our time, the major destruction of the country's economic and social infrastructure and the threat that its location and territorial extension poses to the Great Lakes region, Central Africa, North Africa and East Africa.

Peace must be achieved through negotiations with all the parties involved in the conflict in order to put an end to the current situation and give the country the opportunity to rebuild itself, guarantee the safe return of the displaced and refugee populations and develop its economy.

We also call for an end to the war against Ukraine, through negotiations that respect the principles of State Independence and Sovereignty, in line with international law and the United Nations Charter.

Having condemned the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 attacks on Israeli citizens in a timely and forceful manner, we also condemn the genocide that the world is witnessing in the Gaza Strip against the Palestinian people, whose main victims are babies, children, hospital patients, women and the elderly.

We advocate the need to negotiate peace in order to put an end to the war, free the Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, liberate the occupied territories and

establish the State of Palestine, as advocated by the United Nations as the only definitive solution to this conflict, which has dragged on for decades since the 1950s.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate the importance that SADC has acquired as an organisation that has managed to assume its role in building the foundations on which regional integration is based and all the efforts made to promote the socio-economic development of all its 16 Member States with appreciable success.

Having been given the honour of chairing SADC over the last 12 months, I have been able to observe at close quarters the common efforts we have made to achieve the important victories we have made in different areas, not only in the collective life of the organisation, but also in that of each of its members.

I would like to emphasise that all the accomplishments achieved are based on the selfless commitment of the Executive Secretary of SADC, His Excellency Elias Magosi and his competent team at the Secretariat, who have spared no effort at any time to tirelessly support my mandate from August 2023 to the present day.

I come to the end of this great task with the certainty that the decisions that will be adopted at this 44<sup>th</sup> SADC Summit will strengthen our collective action to overcome obstacles and meet the challenges that lie ahead, in terms of building a promising future for our region, which we aim to become a peaceful, inclusive, competitive and middle-to-high-income industrialised region, where all citizens enjoy economic well-being, justice and freedom, as envisioned in the SADC Vision 2050.

It is now my honour and privilege that I hand over the Chairship of SADC to my brother Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, who will certainly put all his knowledge, commitment and determination into promoting and carrying out initiatives that will help to further accelerate our efforts to deepen regional integration, sustainable development, peace and security.

Allow me, Your Excellencies, to invite His Excellency Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, the incoming Chairperson of SADC, to come forward for the official handover.

Thank you all.