



INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ELIAS M. MAGOSI, EXECUTIVE
SECRETARY OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNITY (SADC)**

**AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 44TH SADC SUMMIT OF
HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

17TH AUGUST 2024

HARARE, REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE

Your Majesty King Mswati III of the Kingdom of Eswatini;

Your Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, and Chairperson of SADC;

Your Excellency Dr. 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 Félix Antione Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Outgoing Chairperson of SADC;

Your Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation;

Your Excellency Dr 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 Dr. Nangolo Mbumba, President of the Republic of Namibia, and the Outgoing Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation;

Your Excellencies, SADC Heads of State and Government and Representatives;

Your Excellency General (Retired) Dr. Constantine Chiwenga, Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe;

Your Excellency Colonel (Retired) Kembo Mohadi, Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe;

Your Excellency Ambassador Dr. 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. Claver Gatete, the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA);

Ministers and Deputy Ministers here present;

Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Representatives of Regional, Continental, and International Organisation;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning, and a Happy SADC Day to you all.

Your Excellencies, it is an honour and privilege to stand before you today to deliver introductory remarks at this 44th Ordinary SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government. Let me also extend my profound gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe for graciously hosting the 44th SADC Summit, and for the warm hospitality extended to all the delegations. The excellent arrangements for this Summit, and all preceding meetings, is testament to the commitment of the Government of Zimbabwe to SADC ideals and aspirations.

Your Excellencies, this 44th SADC Summit is being held under the theme; ***“Promoting Innovation to Unlock Opportunities for Sustained Economic Growth and Development towards an Industrialised SADC”***. This Theme takes us further on a transformative journey towards industrialisation, which started right here, in Zimbabwe, through the directive of the 34th SADC Summit to place industrialisation at the core of the SADC regional integration agenda.

The theme provides a unique opportunity to shape the future of our region, and the steps we must take to accelerate progress on our industrialisation agenda. To this end, the region ought to continue to harness the power of innovation to accelerate implementation of key regional value chains and promote technological transfer to increase manufacturing of value-added products, and ultimately, realize economic growth and prosperity in the region.

To date, intra-regional trade stands at a low of about 23%, signifying that, as SADC Member States, we are trading more with the rest of the world than we do amongst ourselves. One of the culprits driving these low levels of intra-regional trade is the usual non-tariff barriers. Despite zero import duty on 85% of products traded among SADC Member States, intra-SADC importers and exporters continue to encounter new and long-standing unresolved non-tariff barriers. It is therefore imperative to re-dedicate our collective efforts to implement measures to reduce these

barriers and promote intra-regional cooperation and integration. The benefits of an enlarged regional market to the SADC economy and citizens cannot be overemphasised. Our collective market of 389 million people, and a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$841 billion dollars, provides an enormous potential for trade and investment opportunities, as well as economic growth.

In our quest to facilitate enhanced intra-regional trade within our community, your Secretariat, is compiling information to produce a list of the top 10 exports and imports of SADC Member States, and on what the region trades with the rest of the world. This will be used to develop strategic interventions and actions to improve access to markets within our community and facilitate improved intra-regional trade within the region. I am hopeful that the completion of this exercise will produce declarations on how we will trade going forward. The status quo is not ideal, Your Excellencies, and must be changed without delay.

Your Excellencies, I am pleased to report that as part of the on-going efforts to expand our markets beyond the SADC region, the Agreement Establishing the Tripartite Free Trade Area among the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), and SADC, entered into force on 25 July, 2024, paving the way for the Member and Partner States of the Tripartite to access a larger market of 26 countries, with a population of about 700 million, and a GDP of One trillion United States Dollars. As the Chairperson of the Tripartite Task Force, I have already notified all the Tripartite Member and Partner States about this positive development, which is a key milestone in the promotion of intra-African trade and enhancement of economic integration in the Tripartite area.

On peace and security, **Your Excellencies**, the SADC region continues to stand out as a beacon of peace, security, and stability in the continent, notwithstanding the security challenges in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Our region remains resolute towards finding lasting peace and security in the DRC. Last year, we deployed the SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC) to support the Government of the DRC to restore peace and security, following an increase in conflicts and instability caused by the resurgence of armed groups. This Mission should complement on-going diplomatic processes, namely the Luanda and Nairobi Processes, which aim to bring all concerned parties to the negotiating table to end the conflict.

Regarding the security situation in Mozambique and following the deployment of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), since July 2021, I wish to report that the Mission was successfully concluded on 4

July this year, and that the security situation in Cabo Delgado is better off than it was prior to the deployment of this mission. Through SAMIM operations, we succeeded in facilitating humanitarian assistance, controlling radicalisation and indoctrination, and in protecting public infrastructure, thus restoring essential public services. In collaboration with the Government of Mozambique and other partners, the region has created a secure environment, allowing the return of over 600, 000 of the 1.2 million Internally Displaced Persons to their places of origin.

Allow me to express our sincere gratitude to His Excellency, President Hakainde Hichilema, Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation for his unwavering commitment for sustained peace and security in the region. Under his leadership, our region has taken concrete steps to foster cooperation to consolidate peace, security, and stability. Similarly, I wish to thank the SADC Chairperson, His Excellency, Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola for leading the Luanda Process in his capacity as the African Union Champion on Peace and Reconciliation in Africa. It is our hope Your Excellency, that your diplomatic prowess to finding peaceful and amicable solutions to the conflict in the Eastern DRC will bear fruit.

Your Excellencies, the 2023/24 rainfall season has been a challenging one with most parts of the region experiencing the negative effects of the El Niño phenomenon, characterized by a late onset of rains, extended mid-season dry spells, and extreme high temperatures. As a result of the El Niño, an estimated 67.7 million people in the region, representing more than 17% of the regional population, have been negatively affected. I wish to take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to the Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, for swiftly convening the Extraordinary Summit on 20 May this year, to discuss the humanitarian situation necessitated by the drought and floods. We are equally grateful to the Chairperson for launching the SADC Regional Humanitarian Appeal amounting to at least U\$5.5 billion, to support the humanitarian needs and disaster response recovery of the affected population.

Your Excellencies, with the increased scope of the SADC agenda, our region requires adequate financial resources to implement interventions and programmes outlined in the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030 to enable us to achieve our collective aspirations of a peaceful, inclusive, competitive, middle-to-high income industrialised region, as envisioned in the SADC Vision 2050.

It is evidently clear that, without adequate resources for interconnected, quality, and seamless infrastructure, be it in the form of roads, railways, ports, energy, or ICT, our efforts to industrialise, integrate our economies, and unlock the region's full potential will stall. It is therefore imperative that as we intensify our efforts to mobilise resources, we should be deliberate and expedite the operationalisation of the Regional Development Fund (RDF), which the SADC Founders, in their wisdom, envisioned in the SADC Treaty as a mechanism for financing programmes aimed at accelerating the economic development and growth of the region. However, the Agreement on the Operationalisation of the RDF is yet to enter into force - as of today, only eight Member States have signed the Agreement, with only one ratification by the Republic of Angola. May I call upon Member States to expedite the processes of signing and ratifying this Agreement, and follow the lead of our Chairperson, President Lourenço. We also recognise commitments made by the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Republics of Zambia and Zimbabwe to ratify.

Your Excellencies, as I conclude my remarks, let me highlight the critical importance of paying particular attention to the needs of the youth in the context of promoting innovation, industrialisation, peace, and security. As Your Excellencies may be aware, the SADC region, just like the rest of Africa, has the youngest and fastest-growing population in the world. This provides a demographic dividend capable of embracing new technologies and innovation, and sustaining supply of labour to drive our industrialisation agenda, and spur economic growth and development.

As part of the implementation of the 43rd SADC Summit theme: ***Human and Financial Capital: The Key Drivers for Sustainable Industrialisation in the SADC Region***, which was adopted in August 2023 in Luanda, the region convened a SADC Youth Forum this year, with calls for the region to develop public policies that encourage active youth participation in mainstream economy, as well as the representation of young women in the development processes. I would like to reiterate the need to invest in the youth by providing them with the necessary skills, resources, entrepreneurial and job opportunities, with the view to unlock their potential, thereby creating pathways for them to become agents of change and contributors of regional integration, sustainable peace, security, and inclusive economic growth.

Your Excellencies, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, the President of the Republic of Angola for his exemplary leadership, guidance, and insightful tenure. In the past year, the Chairperson has demonstrated exceptional leadership, vision, and dedication in steering

SADC towards achieving its mandate. I recall the strategic guidance, wisdom, and insights that the Secretariat received during the Chairperson's visit to the SADC Secretariat on 14 June 2024. President Lourenço not only motivated us to redouble our efforts, but also energised us to strive for excellence in promoting regional integration and development.

As we look ahead to the coming year, the Secretariat reaffirms its unwavering commitment to working collaboratively with the Incoming Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe to move the SADC agenda forward.

With these remarks I wish, **Your Excellencies**, fruitful deliberations as we collectively endeavour to shape the future of our region. I am confident that the outcomes of your deliberations will positively impact the lives of the SADC citizens that you lead.

Thank you for your attention!

Merci beaucoup! Muito Obrigado! Asante Sana! Tatenda!