



**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF ZIMBABWE, HON. GEN (RETD) DR C. D. G. N CHIWENGA**

**ON THE OCCASION**

**OF THE**

**ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS  
RESPONSIBLE FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT**

**27 NOVEMBER 2024**

## **SALUTATION**

- The President of Zanzibar and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, **His Excellency Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein**;
- Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, **Hon. Richard Moyo**;
- Chairman of the Committee of Ministers responsible for Disaster Risk Management and Minister of Local Government and Public Works, **Hon. Daniel Garwe**;
- SADC Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration, **Ms. Angèle Makombo N'tumba**;
- Honourable Ministers here present;
- Senior Officials from SADC Member States;
- SADC Humanitarian Emergency Operation Centre represented by **Mr. Anderson Banda**;
- SADC Disaster Risk Reduction Unit;
- SADC Secretariat Staff;
- International Cooperating Partners here present;
- African Risk Capacity;
- The Regional Anticipatory Action Working Group;
- African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development;

- Partners from the Media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

## **Good morning to you all!**

It is my singular honour and privilege to officiate at this occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the SADC Committee of Ministers Responsible for Disaster Risk Management.

May I take this opportunity, to express my gratitude to the organisers of this event and commend you Honourable Ministers for responding positively to this face-to-face meeting. I am reliably informed that this meeting has been convened to review progress on the implementation of SADC programmes and activities aimed at strengthening the region's preparedness to disaster risks as well as mitigating the impacts of disasters. This is in view of the escalating disaster events which the region is experiencing as a result of climate change. Collaboration among Member States, is therefore, critical to enhance Disaster Risk Reduction in the region.

## **Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers;**

This high-level meeting comes at the backdrop of the 2023/2024 El Nino-induced drought which has affected most countries in our region, Zimbabwe included. As you may be aware, the SADC region is in a declared state of disaster and currently implementing the **SADC Regional Humanitarian Appeal in Response to the El Nino-Induced Drought and Floods**, launched on 20 May 2024.

The El Nino induced drought affected numerous sectors of our economies namely Agriculture; Food and Nutrition Security; Health; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH); Education; Energy and Social Protection among others.

With regards to food security in the region, the **SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme Synthesis Report for the 2023/24 season** revealed that an estimated 57 million people are currently food insecure in at least 12 Member States. On the other hand, floods that were triggered by Tropical Cyclones Gamane and Filipo in Madagascar and Cyclone Belal which passed through Mauritius in January 2024, brought heavy rainfall and strong winds that resulted in loss of lives, displacement of people and damage to infrastructure and property.

## **Honourable Ministers and Distinguished Guests;**

Through the Regional Humanitarian Appeal for Assistance, all these disasters that I have alluded to above, requires resources to the tune of **Five comma Five Billion United States Dollars**. I am confident that Member States have achieved a feat in terms of mobilising resources and responding to the drought, particularly those that have been declared State of Disasters. Resources will ensure that affected communities survive the threats and impacts posed by the drought as well as enable these communities rebuild their lives. Furthermore, we need to ensure that **No One in the Region dies of hunger**.

As for Zimbabwe, notable interventions have been made, including blitz food distribution programmes by the Government and partners, drilling of boreholes and establishment of Village Business Units to build resilience of affected communities, and urban cash transfers, among a host of other programmes and initiatives. The Drought Insurance Schemes with African Risk Capacity, have also proved useful in availing the much needed resources to address the effects of the drought. I am pleased to inform you that, the international community has indeed expressed solidarity with us during this trying time by donating in cash and kind. These interventions have gone a long way in responding to the needs of affected communities as we

endeavour to **Leave No One and No Place Behind** in our response efforts.

In relation to the 2024-2025 rainfall season, we were advised by climate experts that the season has a tendency of normal to above-normal rainfall. We are delighted that the forecast points to a good summer cropping season and prospects of a good harvest. However, from experience, these La Nina climate events are associated with hazards such as floods, cyclones, hailstorms and lightning, among others. In Zimbabwe, the current rainfall season has started on a bad note as we are already experiencing unprecedented destruction of critical infrastructure such as schools and houses as a result of strong winds and hailstorms. I would like to believe that some Member States here present, have also started experiencing the same situation.

### **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

As part of preparedness to all hazards associated with the current season, I am advised that SADC recently developed a **Regional Multi-Hazard Contingency Plan for the 2024/2025** season highlighting the region's state of preparedness; gaps and challenges in the implementation of coordinated and effective disaster preparedness, mitigation and response. This is, indeed, a step in the right direction to foster

regional cohesion in Disaster Risk Management. You may be aware that most disasters that we experience are transboundary in nature, and therefore, we need to plan together as a region. The cases in point are **Tropical Cyclones Idai and Freddy** which affected our region and the problem of **Fall Army Worm**, among a host of other hazards.

Consistent with the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres' call and the Maputo Declaration for ensuring that every citizen has access to Early Warning Information, I urge Member States to strengthen their Early Warning Systems, with a view to empowering communities to make informed decisions to minimize disaster impacts. The recurrence of natural disasters in the Region, at accelerated frequency requires vigilance and proactiveness, instead of only reacting when disasters occur. Ladies and Gentlemen, disaster preparedness is the function of robust early warning systems, proper coordination and capacitation of structures for effective disaster risk management. In the same stride, other components which constitute the disaster management gamut such as response, recovery, reconstruction and resilience-building, should not be overlooked.

### **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

In terms of regional disaster coordination, I commend the SADC Humanitarian and Emergency Operations Centre (SHOC) domiciled in the Republic of Mozambique which coordinates regional disaster risk preparedness, as well as, response and early recovery, to support Member States affected by disasters. Let us ensure that, we effectively collaborate with the Centre which is, indeed, the brainchild of the SADC Bloc.

In the same vein, I encourage Member States to fast-track the implementation of Disaster Risk Management interventions by implementing the provisions of the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR 2015-2030)**, which aims to avert the generation of new risks, reduce current risks and reinforce resilience building. Consistent with the same framework, Member States ought to ensure timely reporting on the impacts of disasters in order to facilitate early action and response.

### **Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers;**

It is disheartening to note that, these disasters claim precious and innocent lives as well as reverse development gains of the region. Overall, the combined impacts of the disasters over the past few years amount to billions of dollars in damages and

losses. The residual effects of the disasters also make it difficult for Member States to respond to new and emerging issues. This state of affairs, calls for robust disaster preparedness, mitigation and innovative financing mechanisms, which are, indeed, critical areas that need proper attention.

With these few remarks, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, it is now my singular honour and privilege to declare the Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Disaster Risk Management, officially opened.

**I thank you.**

**Merci.**

**Obrigado.**