



**STATEMENT BY THE SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,  
HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ELIAS M MAGOSI  
ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, 08 MARCH 2025**

**Theme: “*For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.*”**

On this International Women's Day, we celebrate the women and girls in our region, applauding their achievements and efforts towards gender equality and empowerment. Gender equality remains a fundamental human right, and essential for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. However, the world, including the SADC region, is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Agenda targets.

At the regional level, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development underscores integrating gender issues into the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiatives, yet negative social, cultural and religious practices, as well as mindsets that impede women's progression and aggravate gender-based violence, continue to hinder gender equality and equity.

We are commemorating this year's International Women's Day, under the theme “***For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.***”. Let us therefore take swift and decisive steps to achieve gender equality, addressing systemic barriers and biases in all spheres. Robust education and awareness-raising are needed to challenge stereotypes and empower women and girls.

As the region continues to adopt reforms to promote gender equality and empowerment, some Member States have developed special banks or grants for women to start businesses, and others have enacted laws and policies to promote women's participation in decision-making positions and address gender-based violence. However, low implementation of policies and lack of enforcement remain a persistent challenge.

The SADC region identifies the following as some of the effective strategies to accelerate action towards the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls:

- Forging partnerships for resource mobilization.
- Supporting women and girls in leadership roles.
- Developing interventions for gender-based violence prevention.
- Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education for women and girls.
- Empowering women and girls to make informed health decisions.
- Involving women and girls in sustainable agriculture and food security.
- Providing access to quality education and training.
- Facilitating women's participation in peace and security negotiations.

While the SADC region remains committed to gender equality, barriers such as societal roles, legal frameworks, limited access to resources, and discriminatory practices persist. Member States can achieve better results if all of them implement the protocols, legal frameworks, and policies they have adopted as a region.

Let us all take responsibility and actively participate in accelerating action for gender equality - whether through advocacy, education, or supporting initiatives that empower women and girls. Every effort does counts! The potential for the region to create a more equitable and just society is huge and ever present.

***Happy Women's Day.***