



## **OPENING REMARKS**

**BY**

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
ZIMBABWE AND CHAIRPERSON OF SADC,  
HIS EXCELLENCY DR. E. D. MNANGAGWA**

**AT**

**THE SADC TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION  
AREAS SUMMIT**

**HARARE**

**23 MAY 2025**

Your Excellency Andry Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar and Incoming Chairperson of SADC;

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

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues; Heads of State and Government;

Your Excellency, Mr. Elias Mpedi Magosi, SADC Executive Secretary;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my distinct honour and privilege to warmly welcome you, Your Excellencies, distinguished guests and partners, to this historic inaugural SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas Summit. Your presence here underscores our shared commitment to regional cooperation and integration, as well as environmental stewardship, and sustainable development.

Each and every one of us brings unique wisdom and experience that will enrich our deliberations. To our international guests, we hope you will find time to experience Zimbabwe's renowned natural wonders, heritage and vibrant culture during your stay.

Today is indeed a jubilant occasion which marks two significant milestones. The first is the commemoration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas Programme. Secondly, we are celebrating the remarkable progress achieved since the official opening of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. This was the first Transfrontier Conservation Area in Southern Africa, between Botswana and South Africa, that was launched in 2000.

The SADC region now boasts of **13 functional Transfrontier Conservation Areas and 5 at conceptual stage**, spanning both terrestrial and marine environments, covering **7% of SADC's surface area**, with each at varying stages of development. Our region

has come a long way in sustainable environmental management. **Congratulations.**

As we look to the next 25 years and beyond, our dedication to fostering socio-ecological and economic connectivity should be redoubled as we integrate our conservation efforts across borders. At the centre of these efforts must be the need to enhance the lives and livelihoods of our communities, striking a harmonious balance between nature and development.

To date, the Transfrontier Conservation Areas, we have created are safe habitats for our wildlife to roam away from human settlements. These have, also helped to reduce human-wildlife conflict, while safeguarding our fauna and flora. Once again congratulations.

Together, we have demonstrated that conservation transcends borders. Through shared knowledge, innovative strategies, and unified action, we can address

the pressing challenges of biodiversity loss, habitat degradation, and climate change.

In this regard, the SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas Programme (2023-2033) provides our guiding framework. I urge us to leverage this Summit to reflect on our achievements, on one hand but most importantly charting a sustainable path forward, informed by experience and the lessons we have learnt along the way.

Key in this respect is that conservation must be inclusive, engaging governments, local communities, researchers and the private sector. Undoubtedly, the Transfrontier Conservation Areas Model has proven that environmental protection and socio-economic development are mutually reinforcing and complementary.

By empowering rural communities, enhancing tourism infrastructure and promoting cross-border law

enforcement operations, we have laid a strong foundation for lasting impact.

Going into the future, I urge all of us to embrace innovation, science-based solutions, and community-driven approaches to conservation. The youth of our countries, along with women, should play a greater role in our efforts, riding on the ingenuity and hard work ethic of this demographic.

By the same token, robust and responsive social economic models must be developed so that the financial benefits of this sector accrue to broader aspects of grassroots development, while at the same time building resilience and empowering communities within our countries.

**Your Excellencies;**

Climate change is laying bare the vulnerabilities of all communities along with livestock and wildlife. The need to bolster food security can, therefore, not be

overemphasised. The importance of adequate water provision to cater for animals in their habitats will also go a long way in preventing encroachment into our communities. We must make concerted efforts in these and other areas. Let this Summit reaffirm our commitment to leaving no one and no place behind.

In our relentless fight against climate change and biodiversity loss, Zimbabwe developed new carbon market regulations, and the world's first blockchain-based National Carbon Registry. This was a bold decision towards a more sustainable future.

This demonstrates our determination to contribute towards new global standards for transparency, accountability, and sustainability in the carbon market, and that the Region, and indeed the Continent can lead by example. We stand ready to share Zimbabwe's experiences in this respect.

Finally, on behalf of the Government and people of Zimbabwe, I extend my gratitude to you all, for your participation and unwavering dedication to the SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas Programme. Together, let us seize this moment to strengthen our collaboration and advance a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future for Southern Africa. The benefits of which must accrue to the peoples, fauna and flora of our great region.

With these remarks, it is now my distinct privilege and honour to declare the 2025 SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas Summit officially open. I wish us fruitful deliberations.

**God bless you all.**

**I thank you.**

**Muito Obrigado.**

**Asante Sana.**

**Merci Beaucoup.**