KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR OF FOOD AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES AT THE SADC SECRETARIAT

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AT THE OPENING OF THE TFCA CONFERENCE

SADC TFCAS: 25 YEARS OF COOPERATION FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

HARARE, REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE

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Our Local Communities, Private Sector, Research Institutions, Partners, TFCA Practitioners

All Protocol Observed

I wish to thank His Excellency Dr. E.D. Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe and the current SADC Chairperson; the Government and People of Zimbabwe for hosting this Conference, including their financial and technical support and time allocated for very intense preparations.

Thank the SADC Member States, including our TFCAs Secretariats (KAZA Secretariat), through the SADC TFCA Summit Task Force, for their tireless work in preparing technically for this event.

I wish to thank Partners for their financial and technical support, many of you are supporting technically the preparation and the realisation of this event, throughout these 5 days. We have been closely working on all the details for this meeting, since the TFCA Summit was approved until this morning.

Thank you, all the participants, for investing your resources, expertise and time in attending, participate and guiding the discussions and deliberations of this international conference. I urge all of you to consider yourself as part of just ONE SADC TFCA TEAM, where everyone is equally relevant, and plays its specific role on a wider and holistic ONE Mission. Doing that we will not only achieve the Objectives of this Conference but equally re-energize ourselves for a very long walk towards successful TFCAs in our region.

1. **Celebrating 25 years of TFCA Work in SADC**

4.2 Some Successes and Challenges of the SADC TFCA 25 Years Implementation in our Region as part of Regional Integration and Sustainable Development

4.2.1 Establishment and Operationalization of SADC TFCAs

a) We started in 2019 with the 1st SADC TFCA, the **Kgalagadi TFCA** between Botswana and South Africa.

Then followed by:

- **Lubombo** – **2000** (Eswatini, Mozambique and South Africa), including the Ponta de Ouro-Ismangaliso TFCA;
- **Maloti - Drankesberg** – **2001** (Lesotho and South Africa);
- **Chimanimani** – **2001** (Mozambique and Zimbabwe);
- **Great Limpopo** – **2002** (Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe);
- **Ai/Ais-Richtersveld** – **2003** (Namibia and South Africa);
- **Greater Mapungubwe** – **2006** (South Africa and Zimbabwe);
- **KAZA** – **2011** (Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe);
- **Malawi** – **Zambia – 2015** (Malawi and Zambia);
- **Niassa – Selous – 2015** (Mozambique and Tanzania);
- **Iona – Skeleton Coast** – **2018** (Angola and Namibia);
- **Lower Zambezi – Mana Pools – 2023** (Zambia and Zimbabwe);
- **ZIMOZA – 2024** (Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

Currently, as per the new TFCA Programme 2023-2033, we have 13 TFCAs in categories A (formalized through binding legal instruments) and B (proposed by the relevant Member States and in the process of formal establishment), many of which (**54%) were established in the 1st six years**, since the establishment of the 1st TFCA, in 1999**.**

The SADC Member States which are part of various TFCAs are South Africa and Zimbabwe, with 6 each, followed by Mozambique, with 5, and Zambia with 4

b) The area of SADC TFCAs increased from around 35,500 Km2 in 1999 to more than 914,000 Km2 (an increase of around 2,600% or of 26 times) by 2024 (25 years), with KAZA alone spanning for approximately 520,000 km² (around 60% of all TFCAs) across five countries – making it one of the world's largest conservation areas. **This exponential increase may put the SADC region as one of the regions in the continent and eventually in the entire globe with the most active actions in terms of conservation efforts.** This was achieved through the political commitment of the Member States at the highest level, but equally through significant and continued support from our partners, many of which are here.

c) A wide range of Regional Instruments to operationalize and better manage TFCAs have been developed by Member States and being used and/or ready to be used by TFCAs, including:

- **TFCAs**
  - SADC TFCA FF, 2018.
    - Started with 12 million and currently the existing/signed agreements totalize 44 million (Government of Germany) and 10

million (EU), with an aim to reach 100 million Euros by the end of 2026;
    - SADC TFCA Programme 2023-2033, being supported significantly by the Germany government, through GIZ, but also by EU;
    - Toolbox on Community Engagement in SADC TFCAs 2023;

- **Wildlife**
    - SADC Trade in Wildlife Information Exchange (TWIX) 2019, being supported by TRAFFIC. All the SADC Member States, excluding Comoros, are part of this process.
    - SADC CITES Engagement Strategy 2022-2026.
    - LEAP Strategy 2022-2032, supported by a variety of partners, including the Germany Government, through GIZ, USAID.
    - Assessment of the Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement 2023.
    - SADC Wildlife Based Economy Strategy Framework, 2023.

- **Forestry**
    - SADC Forestry Strategy 2020-2030, initially supported by JICA.
    - SADC Standardized Template for Reporting on the State of Forests.

- **Tourism**
    - SADC Tourism Programme 2020-2030, which includes Tourism in TFCAs;
    - SADC Toolbox on Development of Cross-Border Tourism Products, 2023.

- **Environment**
    - SADC Strategy to Implement the Great Green Wall Initiative, 2019;
    - SADC Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030;
    - Multilateral Environmental Agreements Guidelines 2023;
    - SADC Blue Economy Strategy, 2023

In this regard, there is a need for SADC Member States to consider:

(i) using a wide range of regional instruments to strengthen the establishment and operationalization of TFCAs;

(ii) promoting more coastal and marine TFCAs, beyond the 2 existing (Ponta de Ouro-Ismangaliso, and Iona-Skeleton Coast) to adequately promote the SADC Blue Economy Strategy and address the vast marine resources and biodiversity existing in 6 SADC coastal states, and 4 SADC island states. Some of the areas that could be considered are the (a) Mnazi-Quirimbas (between Mozambique and United Republic Tanzania), (b) between Namibia and South Africa, (c) the Northern Mozambique Channel

(Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique and United Republic Tanzania), and (d) Mascarene Plateau between Mauritius and Seychelles;

(iii) Member States to re-energize their momentum in establishing TFCAs to better protect their natural resources and ecosystems, as they did between 1999-2006. This momentum seems to be bouncing back mainly through Zambia and Zimbabwe actions, with the establishment of Lower Zambezi – Mana Pools (2023) and ZIMOZA (2024). Some engagements are currently being pursed between Angola and Zambia, and DRC and Zambia.

4.2.2. Biodiversity Impacts

a) KAZA TFCA alone harbors over 220,000 elephants, that is more than half of Africa's remaining savanna elephants. This population has remained stable for quite a number of years, while in the other areas of the continent, the numbers have decreased significantly.
b) Africa's black rhino rebounded from a low of ~2,400 in 1995 to over 6,400 today (almost 3 times more).
c) The wildlife economy (flora and fauna) in SADC region was valued at over US$31.5 billion (4.6% of SADC GDP) in 2019.

These wildlife resources not only underpin biodiversity but also support community livelihoods and tourism revenues.

On the other hand, this increase in numbers, coupled with increase in the number of human populations, results in increased Human- Wildlife Conflicts.

There is therefore a need to:

(i) ensure that the carrying capacity of our TFCAs is maintained to avoid ecological imbalances. It is important that the region promotes sustainable use of wildlife species populations that have recovered. And for that, it is critical that the capacity of the Region to collectively influence the decision making process at CITES, informed by the SADC Cites Engagement Strategy, is urgently secured, so that the biodiversity gains are not done at the expense of human lives and their livelihoods (tens of people are killed by wildlife every year in several SADC Member States, partly due to biodiversity gains) and ecosystem balance. Otherwise our conservation work and gains will not be sustainable (if we don't adopt human centered conservation approaches, we will not sustain our conservation efforts);

(ii) develop tailor-made, practical and effective approaches to address increased human wildlife conflicts involving all the relevant sectors and not only conservation authorities. This should include infra-structures (water, energy, road), health, education, territorial planning, etc.

4.2.3. Poaching, Illegal Logging and Illegal Trade

Elephant poaching surged to a peak in 2011, when tens of thousands were killed continent-wide, and, although poaching rates have declined since then, levels remain worryingly high in parts of Southern Africa. At least 8,000 African rhinos were poached in the last decade, and one rhino is still being killed nearly every day. For example, in South Africa – which is home to the largest rhino population – 451 rhinos were poached in 2021. These illegal losses directly threaten the region's conservation gains. Meanwhile, a related policy issue is the management of ivory stockpiles accumulated from natural elephant mortality and anti-poaching seizures. SADC Member States, like Zimbabwe, argue that their elephant populations are growing ~5–8% annually (an unsustainable rate for available habitat) and have stockpiled about 130 tonnes of ivory (worth an estimated US$600 million**)**. However, the international ban under CITES on ivory sales remains in place, limiting revenue for conservation and fueling debate on sustainable use. The region should continue to advocate at CITES for decisions that recognize its successful elephant management, using its CITES Engagement Strategy.

Southern Africa has been experiencing one of the highest deforestation rates in Africa. The region loses around 0.6% of its forest cover each year, contributing roughly 31% of Africa's total deforested area annually. Key drivers include rural poverty and population growth (leading to expansion of small-scale agriculture), unsustainable shifting cultivation, high dependence on fuelwood, illegal logging, and infrastructure development. As a result, forest degradation is widespread: between 2010 and 2020, SADC countries collectively accounted for over half of Africa's biomass carbon loss from deforestation. This trend not only threatens biodiversity but also exacerbates climate change and desertification.

There is a need to strengthen and fast track implementation of the SADC LEAP Strategy 2022-2032

4.2.4 Sustainable Financing

The accomplishments achieved so far in TFCAs are increasingly challenged by insecure and unsustainable financing mechanisms. Put simply, our ambitions will not sustainably progress if they are not backed by reliable funding. It is imperative that we prioritize and mainstream sustainable financing strategies across all TFCAs.

a) One of the ways is to adequately mainstream tourism revenues into conservation and human development.

Tourism is recognized as one of SADC's economic cornerstones and a driver of inclusive growth. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, travel and tourism in Southern Africa were on a strong upward trajectory. In 2017, the sector directly contributed 2.8% of SADC's GDP (US$19.4 billion), and about 8% (US$56 billion) of GDP, when including indirect and induced effects. It directly supported ~2.5 million jobs and altogether accounted for over 6.3 million jobs in the region – underpinning livelihoods across hospitality, transport, and attraction services. Many SADC economies, **especially those rich in wildlife and natural beauty, rely heavily on tourism for foreign exchange earnings**. For example, tourism contributes around 17% of GDP in Tanzania and remains the largest forex earner, while Botswana's renowned ecotourism in the Okavango Delta sustains thousands of jobs and community development projects. In addition to international visitors, intra-regional tourism is significant: Africans traveling within Africa comprised 44% of the continent's tourist arrivals in 2019. In Southern Africa, regional travelers (from neighboring SADC countries) form a large portion of tourists – for instance, the majority of arrivals in South Africa are from SADC states, underscoring the importance of easy cross-border travel. In this regard, the current process to expand the KAZA Univisa to all SADC Member States through the SADC Univisa, currently being considered for piloting, is a very urgent matter.

b) The other way for securing sustainable financing is to fast track the operationalization of the SADC Regional Development Fund, which would absorb TFCA Facility and ensure Member States put seed funding to multiply further resources from the Private Sector and other sources. The process of operationalization is currently being addressed by the SADC Ministers of Finances, with support from AfDB, and we hope this very long-standing dream becomes a reality soon.

c) The third option is to think beyond traditional government or donor-based budgets and embracing innovative mechanisms that can channel new resources into conservation and sustainable use efforts.

One avenue is to leverage carbon markets. The voluntary carbon market is booming, and African countries are beginning to benefit by selling high-quality carbon credits from reforestation, REDD+ projects, and renewable energy. Several SADC Member States (including Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Namibia) are now home to major carbon offset projects that not only reduce emissions but also funnel revenue into local communities and conservation. We must develop enabling policies to further tap into this growing market, ensuring integrity and equitable benefit-sharing. Similarly, biodiversity offsets – where development projects compensate for their environmental impact by funding conservation elsewhere – can provide additional funds if guided by robust SADC frameworks that uphold "no net loss" of biodiversity.

Another key mechanism is Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), wherein beneficiaries of ecosystem services (such as clean water from an intact catchment, or pollination for agriculture) pay those who steward those ecosystems. Around the world, hundreds of PES schemes (water funds, carbon sequestration payments, wildlife conservation leases, etc.) are showing promise, and we have the opportunity to establish more such schemes in our region. For example, a watershed protection PES scheme could see downstream water users (like utilities or large farms) compensate upstream communities for conserving forests that regulate water flow. This not only provides income to communities but also incentivizes environmental stewardship.

Crucially, we also need to cultivate innovative public-private partnerships (PPPs) for conservation and climate finance. The private sector – from tourism operators to financial institutions – can be a powerful ally in resource mobilization. We have inspiring models from SADC already: public-private trust funds for parks management, corporate investments in community ecotourism, and outcome-based financing like the recent Rhino Bond in South Africa (a $150 million bond that funds rhino conservation and community development). Such partnerships bring not only funds but also expertise, technology, and efficiency to our sustainable development initiatives.

In summary, by embracing these diverse financing mechanisms – carbon markets, offsets, PES, green bonds, conservation trust funds, and PPPs – we can begin to close the financing gap that hampers our efforts. We must be creative and proactive in this quest. Global commitments (such as the Kunming-Montreal biodiversity framework's targeting to close the $700 billion annual biodiversity finance gap) will only be met if regions, like ours, take the lead in pioneering solutions. Let us therefore use our collective political will to champion sustainable financing at national, regional, and international levels.

I thank you for your attention, Muito Obrigado, Mercy Beaucoup, Asanteni Sana, Maita Bass