



**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

**BY**

**SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ELIAS MPEDI MAGOSI**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE TFCA SUMMIT OF SADC HEADS OF STATE AND  
GOVERNMENT**

**HARARE, REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE**

**23 MAY 2025**

**Your Excellency, Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of SADC;**

**Your Excellency Dr Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi, and Incoming Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation;**

**Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government;**

**Honourable Professor Amon Murwira, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers;**

**Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers;**

**SADC Deputy Executive Secretary;**

**Senior Government Officials from all SADC Member States;**

**Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners;**

**Representatives of International Cooperating Partners;**

**Staff from the Government of Zimbabwe and the SADC Secretariat;**

**Members of the media;**

**Good morning!**

It is with deep honour and immense gratitude that I address Your Excellencies this morning, on this historic day and occasion of the SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) Summit of Heads of State and Government, convened under the theme: ***“SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas: 25 Years of Cooperation for Regional Integration and Development.”***

Allow me, at the onset, to pay tribute to His Excellency Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of SADC, the Government and the people of the Republic of Zimbabwe for hosting this historic Summit. Your hospitality and warm welcome, and the excellent facilities put to our disposal, have created a conducive environment for our stay in Harare, as well as to celebrate the 25-year milestone of cooperation as a region towards the attainment of regional integration and development.

To support the convening of the TFCAs Summit, the country has just hosted successfully, the SADC TFCAs Conference a couple of days ago, the resolutions of which have largely informed the content and decision of today's Summit. I would like to commend the Republic of Zimbabwe for making this a reality, in partnership with

other Member States, our cooperating partners, the communities from our conservation areas and private sector, among others. The conference has brought together more than 500 delegates, some 30 exhibitors, representatives from SADC Member States, International Cooperating Partners, Non-Governmental Organisations, Academia, Traditional and community leaders, and wildlife conservation experts. The conference has somewhat set the stage and tone for celebrations of our achievements in the last 25 years in our pursuit of effective regional conservation that has predominantly been anchored by the TFCAs.

The conference buttressed the urgent need for innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms to ensure long term sustainability of TFCAs and minimise the risk of dependence on traditional funding sources. It also recognized that, for regional conservation initiatives to be relevant, they must remain people-centred, guarantee social justice, equity, and deliver socio-economic benefits for communities. It is only then that communities will embrace these initiatives and partner with all stakeholders to realise our conservation goals.

**Your Excellencies**, twenty-five years ago, our region embarked on an ambitious journey, committing ourselves to protect and sustainably use our cherished natural resources through the establishment of TFCAs. Starting from a small coverage of 35,500 square kilometres back in 1999, to well over one million square kilometres coverage today, the SADC TFCAs have formed one of the largest conservation areas on the African continent, of which KAZA TFCA alone accounts for 520,000 square kilometres. This extensive network of conservation areas highlights the profound impact of regional collaboration; demonstrates the power of integrated management in preserving shared natural resources; the value of effective collaboration of Member States, as well as a shared aspiration of prosperity. Today, we can look back with pride and celebrate the resilience and commitment of our Member States, who have demonstrated political will, invested financial and human resources, and fostered partnerships across borders to realise this great vision.

The commemoration of 25 years of the TFCAs presents a moment of pride; an opportunity for reflection on the successes and challenges in transboundary natural resource management across the region, and the need for us to revitalise our commitment to our environmental management, conservation and development agenda. I must emphasize the point, Your Excellencies, that TFCAs are not just about conservation, they are about co-existence, development, resilience, and regional identity. They have brought communities together, transcended borders, opened trade and tourism corridors, have enhanced diplomacy and built trust among our communities and nations. They have become an enabling glue that binds us together as communities and countries.

The TFCA Programme is anchored by six interconnected pillars, and these are:

1. **Improving Rural Livelihoods** by supporting the development of local enterprises, benefit sharing, and inclusive governance. Across the SADC

region, communities are increasingly reaping the direct benefits of natural resource conservation.

2. **Facilitating Transboundary Biodiversity Management** through harmonised legal frameworks, coordinated joint patrols, and ecosystem-based planning. Through the transboundary biodiversity management, TFCAs are enabling wildlife to move freely and safely across borders.
3. **Promoting Marine Transboundary Conservation Areas**, a strategic priority area for the blue economy and ocean health, to promote sustainable management of marine and aquatic resources for economic growth and social development. I must underscore that the SADC region has extended the TFCAs model to the seascapes.
4. **Implementation of the SADC Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching Strategy** which enables collaborative law enforcement, data sharing, and anti-poaching efforts among Member States.
5. **Sustainable Financing of TFCAs** involving adequate and innovative financing mechanisms to support the long-term sustainability of TFCAs.
6. **Fostering Sustainable Tourism through the TFCAs** - tourism is the natural economic engine of many TFCAs.

**Your Excellencies**, while we have registered significant successes in the last 25 years, challenges still remain. First, our region loses around 0.6% of its forest cover every year, which is roughly 31% of Africa's total deforested area annually. The primary drivers of this deforestation include rural poverty and population growth, resulting in increased small-scale agriculture, unsustainable shifting cultivation, high dependence on fuelwood, as well as illegal logging for infrastructure development. We must continue to invest in afforestation programmes and enhance awareness and targeted advocacy for the protection of our forests. In this regard, the annual International Day of Forests is increasingly becoming a powerful but simple tool in raising awareness on the importance of forests in sustaining livelihoods, enhancing climate resilience, and promoting sustainable development.

**Your Excellencies**, I express my deepest gratitude to all Member States, our development partners, civil society organizations, the private sector, and the local communities who have made the TFCA programme a regional and international success story. With your continued support and leadership, I am confident that SADC TFCAs will usher in a new era of shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and regional solidarity. Your voice today will be an unequivocal message to the people of our region that, there is political will at the highest level of our community to ensure sustainable use of natural resources, and relentless pursuit of conserving the environment for posterity.

Our partners, notably the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the European Union, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and other International Cooperating Partners, have been pivotal in the sustainable development and operationalisation of the SADC TFCAs. I wish to recognise their collective valuable contribution, including the institutionalisation of the TFCA model, and creating hope for a better and more prosperous region. Together, we are shaping a sustainable

future for the people, as well as the flora and fauna of Southern Africa, ensuring that our natural heritage is preserved for generations to come.

As we look ahead, I encourage all of us to remain committed—embracing innovation, sharing knowledge, and strengthening partnerships—so that our region remains a global leader in conservation and sustainable development. Let us build upon the strong foundation laid today and continue this journey with resolve and determination.

With these remarks, it is now my distinct honour to humbly invite His Excellency, Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of SADC to deliver his remarks and officially open the TFCA Summit.

***Thank you very much! Merci Beaucoup! Muito Obrigado. Asante Sana! Tatenda!***