



ZIMBABWE

**KEY NOTE SPEECH BY HON. DR. F. M. SHAVA
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ZIMBABWE**

**EVENT: SADC HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL OPENING CEREMONY ON
EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY AND
INNOVATION**

20 JUNE 2025 | HARARE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE

Salutations:

- Your Excellencies, Distinguished SADC Ministers,
- Mrs. Angele Makombo N'tumba, SADC Deputy Executive Secretary,
- Senior Officials,
- Development Partners,
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. It is an honour for me to welcome you all at this joint meeting of the SADC Ministers of Education and Training, Science, Technology and Innovation.

2. Let me take this opportunity to warmly welcome you all to Zimbabwe. Mauya, Karibuni, Bienvenue, Benvindo to all gentlemen and Ben-vinda to all the ladies here present.

3. We gather here to advance our collective vision for a *transformed, competitive and industrialised SADC region*, anchored on education, innovation, science and technology development. Today, we stand at the crossroads of opportunity—where the *SADC Industrialisation Strategy*, the *Protocol on Education and Training*, and the *Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) Agenda* should converge to shape our future.

4. A country's development is determined by its education system. Therefore as we gather, we must pay attention to how we can a) enhance **access to Quality Education** for all, with a focus on STEM education and digital literacy is critical. b) foster a culture of **innovation and entrepreneurship** to drive economic growth and job creation. c) Leverage **science, technology, and**

innovation to address regional challenges, such as climate change, healthcare, and food security and d) strengthen **collaboration and partnerships** among member states, regional organizations, and international partners to drive progress.

5. Special thanks go to SADC Secretariat, here represented by Deputy Executive Secretary (*Mrs. Angele Makombo N'tumba*); Directors and other staff for the work they do to make sure these Minister's meetings are a success. I also thank the senior officials and cooperating partners who have worked tirelessly in the last two days to prepare for the Ministers' meeting.

6. As we gather here, we are reminded of our collective responsibility to chart a strategic course for higher education, science, and technology in the Southern African Development Community for the sustainable economic growth and industrialization of our region, as espoused in our theme **"Promoting Innovation To**

Unlock Opportunities For Sustainable Economic Development and Development Towards and Industrialized SADC". Through our joint efforts we can unlock the immense potential of our youths, harness the rapid advances in science and technology, and achieve sustainable development for our nations.

7. The Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency Cde Dr E.D Mnangagwa, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe has reminded us many times here in Zimbabwe that Education and Science and Technology are the anchor upon which we can build a prosperous future, *No nation can ever rise above the level of its education system. Education remains the bedrock for innovation, industrialization and modernization".*

8. Zimbabwe has adopted Heritage-based Education 5.0 as a vehicle for the industrialization and modernization of

the country. Through Education 5.0 we seek to produce graduates who have competence to support our national development.

9. In this regard Zimbabwe supports the establishment of the **SADC University of Transformation** which has potential to bridge the academia and industry gap by producing graduates with skills needed in industry and who can be job creators as opposed to job seekers for the attainment of SADC's industrialization roadmap.

10. Today's meeting underscores the vital importance of collaboration in addressing common challenges and leveraging opportunities across the SADC region. Our commitment to transforming higher education and innovation systems aligns with the goals of regional integration, economic growth, social development, and good governance. We are tasked with ensuring that our

higher education frameworks are future-oriented, inclusive, and capable of responding to the evolving demands of the 21st century.

11. In our region, we are privileged to have diverse universities and research institutions that are hubs of innovation. Yet, we also face significant challenges that include limited funding, disparities in access, outdated curricula, brain drain, and infrastructural deficits. Addressing these issues requires deliberate policy reforms, increased investment, and strategic regional cooperation.

12. The time is now for SADC to transform its education to become the engine to drive economic prosperity for the region. *Julius Mwalimu Nyerere once said, “ the tragedy of Africa is that it continues to consume what it does not produce, and produce what it does not consume”*. We need to collectively focus on

developing and unlocking value out of our value chains like agro-processing, mineral beneficiation and local manufacturing of Pharmaceuticals to achieve the SADC we want.

13. To build the SADC we want, we must equally prioritize basic education, TVET, and higher education. Foundational literacy and numeracy are critical—they create a strong base for heritage-based learning, skills development, and advanced innovation. Let's invest in all levels of education to secure a prosperous future.

14. Faced with the challenges of climate change, food insecurity, our science technology and innovation (STI) must provide solutions that are adaptable to this changing world. We need to bring more women into STEM education for sustainable development. In Zimbabwe, women participation in STEM is still very low. I am proud

that at this meeting, Zimbabwe will be signing the women in science charter. We are not just signing the charter but have taken a deliberate position to support women in science and to provide scholarships to support the girl child in the sciences.

15. We are grateful to our partners whose contributions to education, training, science and technology in our countries is worth mentioning: To *ILO*—your support for RPL has been invaluable. To *OBREAL*—your expertise in qualification harmonisation is transformative. To the *Gates Foundation*—your investment in literacy is shaping generations. And to *UNESCO*—your SDG4 alignment ensures no one is left behind. UNICEF has also been a great supporter of education.

16. *The time for Action is now.* Together, let us build a SADC where no skill is wasted, no innovation is siloed, and no learner is left behind.

17. In conclusion, I welcome you all Excellencies and Hon Ministers. It is my hope that our deliberations will shape the future of our region.

18. As the African proverb reminds us: *"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."* Today, we choose to go far—**together**.

I now declare this Minister's meeting of Education and Training, Science, Technology and Innovation officially open.

I thank you.