



REMARKS

BY

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**THE DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SADC FOR REGIONAL
INTEGRATION**

AT THE SADC-USA SENIOR OFFICIALS DIALOGUE FORUM

13 AUGUST 2025

ANTANANARIVO, REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR

Ms Melanie Higgins, Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs at the US Department of State;

Your Excellency, Ambassador Claire Pierangelo, Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Madagascar

Your Excellency, Mr. Eric Ratsimbazafy, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar and Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Senior Officials;

Ambassador Albert Ranganai Chimbindi, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Republic of Zimbabwe, outgoing Chairperson of the SADC Standing Committee of Senior Officials;

Your Excellencies, Senior Officials, and Representatives from the SADC Member States;

Distinguished Delegates from the United States' Department of State and Government;

SADC Secretariat Staff, and staff from the Government of the Republic of Madagascar;

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Afternoon!

I am delighted to welcome you to this inaugural SADC-USA Dialogue Forum. First, allow me to extend our sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Madagascar for agreeing to host this important Dialogue Forum. We are also grateful to the people of Madagascar for welcoming us with warm hospitality in this beautiful island city of Antananarivo.

The idea of the SADC-USA Dialogue Forum is coming into fruition today, after years of engagement since February 2022. As the SADC Secretariat, we are excited about this opportunity to engage the United States Government, our longstanding partner and supporter in our regional integration efforts. Today's engagement offers a valuable opportunity for the US Government and the SADC region to engage in meaningful dialogue on key issues of shared interest, to strengthen and deepen cooperation towards regional integration, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Our regional integration agenda remains anchored in our SADC Vision 2050 and guided by the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030. These priorities include peace and security, industrialisation, infrastructure development, social and human development and cross-cutting issues. As we engage today, our key focus would be on how we can strengthen and deepen our cooperation across these priorities.

Over the years, cooperation between SADC and the United States Government has been administered through the SADC-USA Regional Development Objective Agreement (RDOAG) that was implemented in

two cycles from 2013-2018 and 2023-2027. Through the RDOAG, the US Government has supported transformative initiatives on economic growth and agriculture, health, democratic governance, youth, environment and energy. As SADC, we remain grateful for this support that has been instrumental in facilitating regional integration.

That said, while we acknowledge the longstanding cooperation between SADC and the United States, we equally recognise that the current geopolitical landscape has evolved significantly. The policy direction and operating model of the present U.S. Administration reflect a distinct shift in priorities. In this context, today's Dialogue Forum presents an invaluable opportunity to recalibrate our partnership, grounding it in mutual trust, shared values, and reciprocal benefit. It is therefore important that through this dialogue, we establish practical ways to adapt to emerging realities and refocus our cooperation towards a more responsive and fruitful partnership that is founded on trust and mutual gain.

Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

To enhance our structured engagement, we have collaborated with the US Embassy in Botswana and developed Draft Terms of Reference for the SADC-USA Dialogue Forum. These ToRs are still being considered

by the Member States and we will revert to the US Department of State with the consolidated final comments.

While today's deliberations may not immediately resolve the challenges we face, they nonetheless lay a valuable foundation for shared understanding, policy clarity, and strategic alignment. These elements are important in shaping the architecture of future engagements and crafting tailored economic partnerships that reflect our common priorities and approaches. The outcomes of this Dialogue will, therefore, be instrumental in informing and guiding our collaboration going forward.

As I conclude, I wish to thank the US Department of State, and by extension, the US Embassy in Botswana, for the excellent collaboration that has yielded this Dialogue today. At some point, the future of this Dialogue platform did not look promising, but we managed to keep the momentum and engaged constructively. The bigger task begins now. As the Secretariat to this Forum, we stand ready to provide consistent support, facilitate dialogue, and nurture this platform into a meaningful mechanism for cooperation.

With these remarks, I once again welcome you all, and wish you a fruitful and engaging discussions.

Thank you!

Merci Beaucoup!

Muito Obrigado!

Asante sana!