

**THE THIRTY-FIRST SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK FORUM  
(SARCOF-31)**

**THEME: “CLOSING THE EARLY WARNING GAP TOGETHER WITHIN THE SADC REGION**

**OPENING SESSION**

Speech by Mr Catalin Gherman, Head of cooperation of the EU Delegation to Botswana and SADC

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Delegates, Honoured Guests, and Respected Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I am here today at the opening session of the Thirty-first Southern African Regional Climate Outlook Forum and the Validation of the SADC Multi-Hazard Early Warning in Lusaka, Zambia.

Over the coming days, you will gather under the pivotal theme—“Closing the Early Warning Gap Together within the SADC Region.” This theme not only reflects the urgency of the challenges we face but also highlights our unwavering commitment to collective resilience against the impacts of climate change.

In the SADC region, climate change has led to prolonged and complex challenges that demand immediate and collaborative action. Unpredictable weather events, recurring droughts, and sweeping floods underscore the critical need for effective early warning systems. It is here that our work assumes significant importance. Collaborative actions that close early warning gaps can translate to saved lives, safeguarded livelihoods, and resilient communities.

Climate services play a fundamental role in addressing climate change and contributing to early warning systems. In fact, the development and incorporation of effective science-based climate information and predictions into planning, policy and practical decision-making is essential for climate-smart decisions that will, for example, mitigate the impacts of climate-related disasters, improve food security and health outcomes, enhance water resources management, and bring better outcomes in disaster risk reduction, ultimately delivering not only environmental but socio-economic benefits too, by making our economies and societies more resilient.

Investing in multi-hazard early warning and action systems is one of the most cost-effective strategies to protect lives, livelihoods and ecosystems in southern

Africa while supporting regional resilience and sustainable development; it reduces disaster losses through faster response and coordinated actions; it supports cross-border cooperation within SADC and it strengthens community resilience by enabling localised actions.

The European Union under its **Intra-ACP Climate Services programme**, of a global amount of 85 m EUR, has committed 8 M EUR to assist SADC Member States and especially the SADC Climate center (CSC) to bolster its capacities to adapt to climate change and climate variability enhancing its ability to deliver precise and timely climate forecasts into national and regional planning processes.

This programme is reaching its end this year. It is important to think about a proper exit strategy and to identify what actions need to continue to be supported. SADC Member States should prioritize the climate services value chains in their countries as a way to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change in the coming years. This will contribute to enhance risk-informed decision-making in the countries and improved provisions of early warnings.

In conclusion, let us embrace the spirit of collaboration, exploit the power of partnership, and drive forward the mission to establish a robust, inclusive, and comprehensive early warning framework within the SADC region. May our efforts today lay strong foundations for an environmentally secure tomorrow.

Thank you