

Opening Remarks by the GWPSA Interim Executive Secretary: Mr Andrew Takawira

11th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue

29–30 September 2025, Maseru, Lesotho

1. Protocol: Riding on the already observed protocol
2. It is our honour and privilege to once again be part of the SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue – a platform that has provided technical leadership in the region. Allow me at the outset to extend appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho for graciously hosting the meeting in the beautiful city of Maseru, to the SADC Secretariat for its strong leadership, and to our partners in particular the German Government and GIZ for their steadfast support to this initiative over the years.
3. As a region economies are under pressure from climate variability, water scarcity, and growing demands on food and energy systems. At the same time, Southern Africa is advancing bold ambitions for industrialisation, agricultural transformation, and energy transition. The challenge and the opportunity are how to reconcile these pressures and ambitions in a way that secures resilience, prosperity, and inclusion for our people.
4. That is the purpose of this Dialogue.

What – Why We Are Here

5. This Dialogue asks a very central question: how can water security enable the transformation of Southern Africa’s economic development corridors?
6. Our development corridors the North–South, Maputo, Beira, Nacala, Walvis Bay, Lobito, and others are more than transport routes. They are the arteries of our regional integration. They connect countries and markets, they move goods and people, and they stimulate investment. But if they are to deliver their full potential, they must also become lifelines of resilience, food security, and climate-smart growth.
7. And water is the entry point. Water is what makes energy generation possible. Water sustains agriculture and agro processing. Water supports industrial hubs, mining, and manufacturing. Water secures ecosystems that underpin livelihoods. Without reliable and resilient water systems, our corridors cannot perform their role as engines of transformation.

Why – The Challenges We Must Address

8. But we cannot ignore the challenges we face. First, climate variability and water scarcity are already disrupting agriculture, energy supply, and industry. Droughts, floods, and pollution are costing our region billions each year.

9. Second, investments in corridors are advancing rapidly, but too often water is not integrated into the design and planning of those investments. This leaves our infrastructure, industries, and communities vulnerable to risks that we could and must anticipate.
10. Third, our region's development depends on shared transboundary resources. The river basins cross multiple borders. Similarly, our Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) protect shared ecosystems. These institutions, RBOs and TFCAs, are already custodians of cooperation. Yet their potential to secure and enable corridor-led investments is not fully understood, and not yet fully connected to the governance and investment frameworks of our corridors. This Dialogue must help us unpack that relationship.
11. Finally, the social dimension cannot be forgotten. Poverty, inequality, and unemployment remain high along many corridor zones. Communities rely directly on water and ecosystems for their survival. If corridor development is not inclusive, if it does not create jobs for youth, opportunities for women, and resilience for vulnerable communities, then our integration will not be sustainable. These are the realities we must confront together.

How – The Dialogue Will Respond

So, how will this Dialogue help us respond?

Over the next two days, we will focus on three things:

12. Repositioning the WEFE Nexus within corridor planning. This means looking at how water, energy, food, and ecosystems can be integrated into corridor development in a way that maximises synergies and manages trade-offs.
13. Unpacking the role of RBOs and TFCAs. These are the institutions that manage our shared waters and ecosystems. This Dialogue must examine how they can be better linked to corridor planning and governance, so that development corridors are not just economic constructs but also ecological and social systems that are resilient and sustainable.
14. Promoting corridor-led investments that are water-smart and climate-resilient. This means showcasing innovative solutions—from basin–corridor compacts to climate-proofed agro-logistics, from industrial water reuse to smart hydropower scheduling. It also means mobilising financing through blended approaches: public budgets, PPPs, climate funds, and private capital. Here, our region can draw on continental mechanisms such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and Agenda 2063.
15. The expected outcomes are clear: a shared vision of water's role in corridor transformation; a roadmap of institutions and their responsibilities; and concrete

policy and investment proposals that can be taken forward at both national and regional levels.

So What – The Way Forward

16. But let me emphasise: this Dialogue is not just about conversation. It is about action. The “so what” of our work here in Maseru is threefold:
17. First, to ensure that corridor-led investments systematically integrate water security, so that they are resilient to climate risks and able to deliver sustained competitiveness.
18. Second, to strengthen the links between our transboundary institutions—RBOs and TFCAs—and the development corridors. These institutions must be recognised as central actors in corridor planning and implementation. Their expertise and mandates must be connected to the engines of economic growth.
19. Third, to align with both regional and continental mechanisms. At the SADC level, with Vision 2050, the RISDP, and the Industrialisation Strategy. At the Pan-African level, with the Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP), with PIDA, with Agenda 2063, and with the AfCFTA. By aligning corridor investments with these frameworks, we can leverage financing, apply tools like the AIP Scorecard for accountability, and ensure that SADC corridors are part of Africa’s wider transformation.
20. In simple terms: we must leave Maseru with a commitment to turn dialogue into delivery. In concluding:
21. Water is not a backdrop to development. It is the enabler. If we succeed in making water central to corridor-led investments, and if we connect our transboundary institutions to these engines of growth, then we will not only safeguard our future but also accelerate the transformation of Southern Africa and contribute to Africa’s continental integration.

I wish us all fruitful deliberations and a successful Dialogue.

I thank you.