



**REMARKS BY**

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DEVELOPMENT**

**ON BEHALF OF MS. ANGELE NTUMBA MAKOMBO  
SADC DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR REGIONAL  
INTEGRATION**

**OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE  
SADC EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR SECTOR SENIOR OFFICIALS  
MEETING**

**24 MARCH 2026**

**ROODEPOORT, SOUTH AFRICA**

- **Honourable Ms. Nomakhosazana Meth, Minister of Employment and Labour of the Republic of South Africa;**
- **Honourable Ms. Judith Nemadzinga-Tshabalala, Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour;**
- **Honourable Mr. Ntuthuko M. Sibiyi, Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour;**
- **Ms. Aggy Moiloa, Deputy Director-General of Inspection and Enforcement Service and Chairperson of the Meeting of Senior Officials;**
- **Senior Government Officials here-present;**
- **Ms. Nester Mukwehwa, representing the SADC Private Sector Forum, Ms. Tumi Mbaakanyi;**
- **Representative of the Southern Africa Trade Union Coordination Council;**
- **Mr. Alexio Musindo, Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Decent Work Team for East and Southern Africa;**
- **Mr. Yitna Getachew, Director of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa;**
- **Distinguished Delegates;**
- **SADC Secretariat Staff;**
- **Members of the Media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this SADC Employment and Labour Sector Meeting of Senior Officials. We gather once again to confront the labour market challenges that continue to demand our collective attention at regional level.

At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the SADC Secretariat, to express our sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of South Africa for graciously hosting this Meeting of Senior Officials. We are grateful for the warm hospitality and the conducive environment that has facilitated the successful convening of this important meeting. Your support and commitment to this pivotal Sector of regional integration is deeply valued.

I also wish to convey the warm regards from Ms. Angèle Makombo N'tumba, SADC Deputy Executive Secretary – Regional Integration on whose behalf I am delivering these remarks. She had intended to be here with us, however due to pressing official commitments, she is attending other equally important engagements. She will join us at a later date. It is my honour to share her message with you today.

This meeting takes place at a time of significant changes in the global development landscape. Over the past year, the Employment and Labour Sector, like many others,

has had to navigate the effects of profound shifts in development cooperation. This includes the withdrawal or scaling down of support by several traditional partners. These changes have undoubtedly placed huge pressure on our programmes and ways of working, highlighting the excessive extent to which we had become reliant on external financing.

Nevertheless, I wish to commend your resilience. Despite the initial shocks and uncertainties, the Sector has remained focused on its mandate, continuing to deliver results both within and beyond the SADC region. In fact, as many have noted, these developments have revealed – quite clearly – the importance of strong regional institutions within which Member States can effectively pursue common objectives, values and aspirations.

As we move forward, it is therefore important that we continue to position SADC as a credible and influential actor in the governance of global affairs, including in the world of work. This will require not only strong policy coordination, but also greater ownership and resourcing of our regional programmes, including sustained support to the Secretariat by Member States.

On this note, allow me to commend SADC Member States for their active participation at the Sixth Global Conference on Child Labour, which was recently held in Morocco (11-13 February 2026). In this context, I wish to express particular appreciation to the Republic of South Africa, in its capacity as Chair of SADC, for the exemplary role it played in representing the region at the Global Conference.

The Secretariat remains fully committed to supporting Member States in fulfilling their global commitments on child labour, through coordinated follow-up actions guided by the outcomes of the Conference and, of course, our Revised SADC Code of Conduct on Child Labour. Our immediate focus should place emphasis on the active implementation of a new generation of National Action Plans that are integrated within national employment policies and social protection frameworks; and which are supported by improved child labour data production and analysis.

### **Honourable Ministers and Distinguished Delegates**

This meeting also takes place as we enter the second half of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030. Initial mid-term assessments point to uneven performance across sectors, but with some encouraging progress in your Sector, with approximately half of the targeted outputs delivered at mid-term. This is

a positive signal and a testament to the collective efforts of the Governments, Social Partners, the Secretariat and its partners.

At the same time, the assessments are clear that employment outcomes across the region remain under pressure. Unemployment and underemployment remain too high, particularly for young people. The underlying constraints are well known to us, such as slow economic transformation, widespread informality, skills mismatches and continued reliance on primary commodities with limited value addition. These challenges are being compounded by repeated external and climate-related shocks. As Member States address these challenges, the Secretariat will intensify regional programming to support the required transformation, strengthen policy coordination and deepen cooperation to promote job creation and employment-intensive growth.

One issue that warrants urgent attention by this Sector is the impact of technological change on labour markets. This is no longer a distant or future concern; it is already reshaping the world of work across our region. We are seeing its impact most clearly in areas such as retail, finance and logistics, where digital tools, including Artificial Intelligence, are reshaping work and directly affecting workers.

Our task is to ensure that we invest in the policies so that our region benefits from the technological transitions. The Secretariat looks forward to working more closely with its partners to help Member States prepare for changing skills needs and to create better employment pathways for young people, especially in areas such as digital services, renewable energy, and innovative and technology driven SMEs. I urge our technical committees to remain fully abreast of these developments and to actively integrate them into their work programmes.

### **Honourable Ministers and Distinguished Delegates**

A notable highlight on our agenda is the continued progress on the SADC Protocol on Employment and Labour. As you are aware, this Protocol features prominently in our deliberations, and for good reason. Since its adoption by Summit in 2023, there has been encouraging and commendable momentum, with the majority of Member States signing the instrument within a relatively short period. In this regard, I wish to commend the Republics of Namibia, Madagascar and Lesotho for signing the Protocol in 2025. This now takes the number of signatures to ten (10) within a period of three years, demonstrating clear and increasing political will to see this important instrument ratified and entering into force. It is noted that only one Member State, Angola, has completed ratification thus far, pointing to the need to maintain momentum and accelerate ratification processes.

On migration matters, I would like to commend the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for successfully convening the Ministerial Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) in Victoria Falls in October 2025. MIDSA remains a vital framework for cooperation within SADC, bringing together diverse actors to co-create solutions aimed at managing migration for development. The Secretariat remains committed to jointly supporting the implementation of the outcomes.

Related to this, we are eager to follow up on MIDSA recommendations to strengthen the development and implementation of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) within the framework of the SADC Protocol on Trade in Services. MRAs are critical for facilitating skills mobility in priority sectors, including transport, a sector that underpins intra-SADC trade and regional connectivity. The Secretariat stands ready to mobilise the participation of key actors from Member States, notably from Immigration, Labour, Education and Trade, to move this agenda forward in a coordinated manner.

**Distinguished Delegates, the Senior Officials,**

Your deliberations over the next few days provide an important opportunity to advance the implementation of our Common Agenda. They allow us to reflect, to reset where necessary, and to identify practical ways to accelerate progress towards our shared objectives. The Secretariat looks forward to your usual robust engagements and constructive decision-making.

As I close, I wish to once again convey our deep appreciation to the Government of the Republic of South Africa for its leadership. We value the constructive partnership and guidance provided throughout this process. The Secretariat stands ready to work with you to co-organise the next Meeting of Ministers and Social Partners, building on the outcomes of this Senior Officials Meeting.

I wish the Senior Officials very fruitful deliberations.

**Siyabonga! Thank you! Merci beaucoup! Muito obrigada! Asante sana!**