



REMARKS

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. ELIAS M. MAGOSI
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN
DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)**

**ON THE OCCASION OF SIGNING A MEMORANDUM OF
UNDERSTANDING WITH THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME**

28 APRIL 2026

Your Excellency, Mr. Eric Perdison, Regional Director of the World Food Programme, and Members of Your Delegation,

SADC Secretariat Staff,

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon, and welcome to the SADC Secretariat on occasion of this important event marking the signing of the renewed Memorandum of Understanding between SADC and the World Food Programme, following the expiry of the previous one in 2024. Our meeting today is a clear reaffirmation of our two Institutions' commitment to a partnership that has grown stronger over the years and remaining relevant to our peoples today.

The SADC region continues to face recurring food insecurity, driven by climatic shocks such as prolonged droughts and flooding, and to some extent intermittent conflicts. We are still recovering from the severe drought of 2024, which necessitated a regional appeal for humanitarian assistance valued at US\$6.4 billion. We are pleased that against this backdrop; this renewed MoU provides a framework for relief and cooperation in four key areas:

- Food security;
- Nutrition and resilience;
- Social protection and school-based programmes;
- Disaster risk management; and
- Gender and youth empowerment.

I wish to underscore the significance of youth empowerment, which is not only a priority in this MoU, but also a critical pillar for the future resilience of our region. With 76 million young people, representing nearly 60% of the SADC population, the region has a real advantage if we are to invest meaningfully in their energy, innovation, and entrepreneurial spirit. Through this MoU, we look forward to collaborating with the World Food Programme (WFP) to enhance youth participation in agricultural value chains, promote skills development and innovation in food systems, strengthen youth-focused initiatives in climate adaptation, and expand opportunities for youth engagement in data, early warning systems, and emergency response. Empowering youth is not only an act of inclusion; it is an investment in sustainable development and long-term stability.

Equally important is gender empowerment, which lies at the heart of inclusive development. Women across the SADC region play a central role in food production, household nutrition, and community resilience, yet they often face systemic barriers to resources, markets, and decision-making. This MoU provides an opportunity to strengthen gender-responsive programmes that promote women's leadership in agriculture, enhance access to technology, and ensure that disaster preparedness and social protection initiatives are sensitive to the needs of women and girls. By empowering women alongside youth, we unlock the full potential of our societies and build stronger, more equitable communities.

This MoU also provides a basis for strengthening coordination and implementation of vulnerability assessments that guide national and regional responses. Collaboration in local and regional food procurement, supported by harmonised food safety and quality standards, will stimulate intra-SADC trade and strengthen food systems. We value WFP's global expertise in supporting Member States to implement school feeding, nutrition initiatives, and social protection programmes. Strong, well-nourished learners are the foundation of a prosperous region, and these programmes also create entry points for youth employment and entrepreneurship.

The region continues to experience multiple disasters arising from climate shocks and disease outbreaks. We therefore welcome this deeper cooperation with WFP on disaster risk management, early warning, anticipatory action, and urban preparedness. For our part, we have established the SADC Humanitarian and Emergency Operations Centre (SHOC) as a dedicated regional hub for disaster risk preparedness, response, and early recovery. As a relatively new institution, SHOC requires strong support in supply chain management, innovative emergency response models, and resource mobilisation. We appeal to WFP to consider strengthening this centre, while also creating opportunities for youth training and professional development in humanitarian logistics and emergency coordination.

As we sign this MoU today, our collective aim is to ensure that it becomes a practical instrument for transforming lives across the region. We therefore pledge our strategic oversight in the implementation of this MoU and commit to a pragmatic partnership with tangible and impactful results.

Your Excellency, once again, thank you for this enduring partnership and collaboration between our two Institutions. We look forward to working together to advance the well-being and resilience of the SADC region.

I thank you very much.