



**OPENING REMARKS**

**BY**

**MS ANGELE MAKOMBO N'TUMBA**

**SADC DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY -  
REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

**AT THE OPENING OF THE  
34<sup>TH</sup> SADC STATISTICS COMMITTEE MEETING**

**CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

**26 MAY 2026**

**Mr Risenga Maluleke, Statistician General for Statistics South Africa and Chairperson for the SADC Statistics Committee;**

**Head and Representatives of National Statistical Offices in the SADC Member States;**

**Senior Government Officials;**

**Representatives of International Organisations and Partner Institutions;**

**SADC Secretariat Staff;**

**Members of the Media;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Good morning to you all. On behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat and on my own behalf, I wish to extend a warm welcome to all delegates attending this 34<sup>th</sup> SADC Statistics Committee Meeting being held here in Cape Town, South Africa. From the outset, allow me to express our sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of South

Africa for graciously hosting this important regional Meeting and for the excellent hospitality and support extended to all delegates.

I am very confident that the dedication and cooperation demonstrated by the team here in South Africa will ensure the success of this meeting.

Allow me to convey our gratitude to Mr Risenga Maluleke, the Statistician General for Statistics South Africa for according this important meeting the attention and support it deserves.

May I also take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the distinguished Heads of National Statistics Offices for the invaluable strategic support you have provided over the past year to the regional statistical programme. We are also equally grateful to our partners, particularly the World Bank, African Development Bank, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN Women for your presence in this Meeting, despite your demanding schedules. We thank you for the partnership, collaboration and support.

## **Distinguished Delegates;**

This Committee Meeting takes place at a critical time when the demand for credible, timely, and harmonised statistics continues to grow in support of evidence-based policymaking. Across the world and in our region, changes are happening fast through industrialisation, rapid urbanisation, climate change, disasters, migration, dynamic labour markets and many others that are reshaping the way policies need to be formulated for the benefit of our society. These changes have led to unprecedented demand for statistics over the past decade that our statistical systems must adapt in terms of relevance and responsiveness despite the limited resources available.

As Member States continue to navigate these evolving and intensifying global, regional and national challenges in pursuit of building regional and national resilience and development, the role of official statistics remains central in informing policy decisions, monitoring socio-economic trends, and strengthening accountability in public policy implementation.

In this regard, the SADC Statistics Committee continues to serve as an important policy and technical platform for promoting cooperation among Member States, strengthening national statistical systems, advancing statistical harmonisation, and enhancing the availability and comparability of quality statistics across the region. Your role as the Statistics Committee in providing oversight is paramount in this regard.

### **Distinguished Delegates;**

It is, therefore, a necessity that the region's statistical system embraces new technologies and innovative data sources complementing existing traditional methods in its function. To this end, surging towards increased use of administrative data, big data, artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques shall unlock the potential benefits for statistical systems to meet the increasing data demands.

As a Regional Community guided by the SADC Vision 2050 and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020–2030, our aspirations must progressively translate into operational realities that advance regional integration and sustainable

development. However, our collective commitment to inclusion, equity, and leaving no one behind cannot be realised without reliable, timely, harmonised, and disaggregated statistics.

### **Distinguished Delegates;**

This brings me to some of the key issues that this Meeting will consider.

Firstly, the signing and ratification of the SADC Protocol on Statistics, to enable its entry into force, remains a matter of high priority. The Protocol represents a strategic commitment at the highest policy level and offers significant benefits to the regional statistical community, particularly in strengthening trust, professionalism, coordination, and credibility in Official Statistics.

In this regard, your leadership and continued engagement with relevant national stakeholders and institutions remain critical in advancing the signing and ratification process within Member States.

The Committee will also receive updates on ongoing statistical capacity-building initiatives undertaken across

the region. Of particular significance is the Secretariat's progress in promoting the use of mobile phone data as an innovative Big Data source through pilot projects implemented at national level.

This initiative marks an important milestone in supporting national statistical systems to harness emerging and alternative data sources for official statistical production.

In the same vein, I wish to assure the Committee that the Secretariat remains committed to strengthening statistical modernisation efforts and will soon roll out capacity-building initiatives in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning for Official Statistics.

### **Distinguished Delegates;**

The Secretariat has also made notable progress in modernising regional statistical data transmission, management, and dissemination systems through the operationalisation of the SADC Open Data Portal, the Trade Statistics Processing System, and the Labour Market Information System. The sustainability and effectiveness of these specialised systems will require continued support and commitment from Member States

to ensure that users of regional statistics have access to accurate, timely, and up-to-date information for monitoring regional integration and development policies.

The Committee's expert guidance and policy direction in these areas will be invaluable in strengthening the relevance, responsiveness, and effectiveness of our regional statistical interventions.

### **Distinguished Delegates;**

As I conclude, allow me firstly to acknowledge the strong collaboration between the Secretariat and our technical and cooperating partners in supporting the regional statistical agenda. Such collaboration remains essential in avoiding duplication of efforts and ensuring the efficient utilisation of limited financial and technical resources.

In particular, the collaboration with the World Bank Group through the Regional Statistics Project has played an instrumental role in strengthening the institutional capacity of the regional statistical system and delivering impactful results across Member States.

## **Distinguished Delegates;**

Trust in Official Statistics must always be safeguarded, given its critical role as a public good and as a foundation for evidence-based policy formulation, planning, monitoring, and decision-making. Investment in regular censuses and surveys is therefore not optional, but imperative, particularly as the region prepares for the 2030 Round of Population, Housing, and Agricultural Censuses.

I remain confident that the deliberations of this 34th Statistics Committee Meeting will provide strategic direction on how the regional statistical system can continue adapting to the evolving economic and social environment, while maintaining its role as the leading provider of credible information for measuring development progress and informing future policy and strategy formulation.

In conclusion, I wish to express appreciation to the Government of the Republic of South Africa, as well as the Statistics South Africa team, for their leadership, commitment, and outstanding support towards the successful organisation and hosting of this Meeting.

Furthermore, I extend my sincere gratitude to all Committee Members for your leadership, continued cooperation, and tireless efforts in guiding the work of this important sector. Your dedication remains critical in strengthening the regional statistical system and advancing our shared regional development aspirations.

Finally, I wish us all productive deliberations and a pleasant stay here in Cape Town.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

**THANK YOU!**

**MERCI BEAUCOUP!**

**MUITO OBRIGADA!**

**ASANTE SANA!**