



Keynote Address by

Hon. Peter Mukhito

The Minister of Homeland Security

**Official Opening of the SADC Heads of
Corrections/Prisons/Penitentiary Services**

Conference

Sunbird Livingstonia Hotel

Salima, Malawi

Tuesday, 19 May 2026

- The Director of SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Affairs, **Professor Kula Theletsane**;
- The Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Homeland Security, **Mrs Linda Moyo**;
- The Commissioner General of the Malawi Prisons Service, **Ms Wandika Phiri**;
- All Heads of Corrections, Prisons and Penitentiary Services in SADC Member States or their Representatives who have attended this conference and are present here today;
- The Directors and other Senior Officials in the Ministry of Homeland Security and Malawi Prisons Service here present;
- Officials from the SADC Secretariat;

- The M&E Experts and other senior officials from SADC Member States attending this conference,
- Members of the Press;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning!

It gives me great pleasure and honour to join you today on this auspicious occasion to preside over the official opening of the 2026 SADC Heads of Corrections, Prisons and Penitentiary Services Conference here in Salima, in Malawi.

On behalf of His Excellency Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Malawi, I extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to you our brothers and sisters from all SADC Member States, to our beautiful country, Malawi, fondly known as the Warm Heart of Africa.

The 2026 SADC Heads of Corrections, Prisons and Penitentiaries Conference is taking place at an important moment. It is an important moment because it is when many correctional systems around the world, including Malawi, are undergoing significant transformation in response to emerging security, social, and developmental advancements and challenges. The role of correctional institutions has evolved beyond traditional custodial functions to encompass rehabilitation, reintegration, protection of human rights, and contribution to national and regional peace and security.

Distinguished Delegates, the chosen theme for this year's conference, *"Pathways to Change:*

Facilitating Effective Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Corrections,” appropriately reflects the direction our correctional systems must continue to pursue.

As governments within the SADC region, we have a collective responsibility to ensure that correctional facilities become institutions of offender rehabilitation. Thus, those who enter our correctional facilities should emerge better equipped to reintegrate into society as productive and law-abiding citizens. This is essential not only for reducing recidivism, but also for promoting sustainable public security and safety, as well as long-term national socio-economic development.

In this regard, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, commonly known as the Nelson Mandela Rules, are an important international benchmark for humane correctional management and the treatment of inmates. The Rules strongly emphasise the importance of comprehensive rehabilitation programming of offenders as a required pathway towards their successful reintegration into society.

These Rules emphasise what the former South African President Nelson Mandela once observed, and I quote:

“...no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.” End of quote.

These words remind us that the strength and credibility of our justice systems can only be displayed in the manner in which we treat those people in our custody. This is why the Nelson Mandela Rules call upon all of us to uphold human dignity and respect for the fundamental rights of people incarcerated in our correctional facilities.

The Mandela Rules further advocate for prisoners’ access to healthcare, education,

vocational training, family contact, and mental wellbeing, and also the hiring of professional correctional administration.

Ladies and Gentlemen, these principles align perfectly with this conference theme. If we are truly to create meaningful “Pathways to Change,” then our correctional systems must provide environments that support offenders’ rehabilitation and their successful reintegration.

However, the attainment of these rehabilitation and reintegration objectives requires our Governments’ deliberate and sustained investment in correctional infrastructure, staff development across specialised fields, including

psychosocial support and case management training, as well as provision of education and vocational training programmes, healthcare services, and mental health support systems.

Equally important is the need for correctional services to strengthen partnerships and collaboration with communities, civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, and other stakeholders in supporting offender rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. Rehabilitation of people in our correctional facilities cannot be achieved by correctional services alone; it requires collective societal participation and support.

In this regard, I therefore commend the inclusion of sessions focusing on measuring success through the Nelson Mandela Rules and sharing best practices from around the globe. Such engagements are critical in ensuring that our correctional systems continue evolving in line with international standards and regional aspirations.

Director of the Organ, Distinguished Participants, regional cooperation remains critical in addressing shared challenges affecting correctional services. Issues such as prison overcrowding, transnational crimes, violent extremism, radicalisation, and correctional

systems' technological advancement require collective and coordinated regional responses.

I therefore commend SADC Member States for maintaining this important platform for cooperation, dialogue, and knowledge sharing. I am particularly encouraged by the ongoing efforts to review the Regional Strategic Action Plan for Corrections/Prisons/Penitentiary Services and strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Strategic planning and evidence-based decision-making remain essential for effective institutional reform, accountability, and sustainable progress within the corrections sector.

As I conclude, allow me to sincerely commend the Malawi Prisons Service, the SADC Secretariat, and all stakeholders whose dedication and collaboration have contributed to the successful organisation of this important regional conference. Your meticulous preparations and effective coordination are deeply appreciated and stand as a testament to the spirit of cooperation, professionalism, and regional solidarity that continues to strengthen the SADC Community. These qualities remain among the distinguishing attributes that position SADC as a well-coordinated and exemplary regional bloc.

I urge all delegates to use this conference to exchange experiences, identify practical solutions to our correctional challenges, and strengthen partnerships that will advance correctional reforms within our region.

Distinguished Delegates, as you spend your time in our country, I also encourage you to take time to enjoy the beauty and hospitality of Malawi, the Warm Heart of Africa. Salima offers one of the most beautiful stretches of Lake Malawi, with its calm waters, beautiful sunshine, and breathtaking scenery that reflect the natural charm of our nation.

Please experience our rich culture, warm people, and unique traditions. I encourage you to enjoy our local cuisine, especially the famous and delicious Kilombero rice or nsima served with Chambo fish, which remain among Malawi's treasured delicacies.

We sincerely hope that your stay here will leave lasting memories and further strengthen the bonds among our nations. Malawi is not only your host this week, but your second home, and we look forward to welcoming you again in the future.

In fact, Commissioner General of the Malawi Prisons Service and your organising team, please

consider taking our distinguished guests to one of the cultural heritage centres around this district so that they may return home with a true experience of Malawi's culture and the warmth of our people.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, with these few remarks, it is now my singular honour and privilege to officially declare the 2026 SADC Heads of Corrections/Prisons/Penitentiary Services Conference officially open.

I wish you successful deliberations.

May God bless you all, and God bless all our countries in the SADC region.

I thank you.