



MEETING OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

13 MAY 2026

MASVINGO, ZIMBABWE

MINISTER HLABISA OPENING REMARKS

Programme Director,

Honourable Minister Daniel Garwe, Minister of LG and Public Works of the Republic of Zimbabwe,

Honourable Ministers responsible for Disaster Risk Management in the SADC Region,

Deputy Ministers and Heads of Delegation,

The SADC Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration, Ms Angele Makombo N'tumba

Representatives of the SADC Secretariat,

Representatives of International Cooperating Partners,

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address and officially open the 6th Ordinary Meeting of the SADC Committee of Ministers Responsible for Disaster Risk Management, which is being held in the beautiful City of Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

We sincerely appreciate the Government and People of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements for this meeting. We meet at a time when our region continues to face increasingly complex and interconnected disaster risks.

As SADC, we are reminded that disasters know no borders. Intense tropical Cyclones, floods, droughts, wildfires, disease outbreaks, and other hazards continue to affect our communities and livelihoods, leaving a trail of destruction to infrastructure and economies.

Climate change, rapid urbanisation, environmental degradation and socio-economic vulnerabilities exacerbate the frequency and intensity of these disasters.

Over the past few years, our region has experienced devastating impacts from tropical cyclones, prolonged droughts associated with El Niño conditions, and severe flooding, which have displaced communities and disrupted development gains.

Each SADC member state can share its painful story of how disasters have devastated communities in the region, leaving our communities unable to recover and remaining vulnerable to future shocks.

These cumulative crises reverse development, resulting in high mortality rates and chronic food insecurity. We are therefore compelled to strengthen our collective resolve to build resilient societies and ensure that no one is left behind, including our youth, women, people with disabilities and the elderly.

This meeting, therefore, comes at a critical moment for our region. It is both strategic and timely. It provides us with an opportunity to reflect on our progress, assess existing gaps, and strengthen regional cooperation in Disaster Preparedness, Early Warning Systems, Response, Recovery and Resilience-Building.

It also sets the foundation for the Ministerial engagements that will follow, including focused discussions on resilient recovery, financing and partnerships.

As Ministers Responsible for Disaster Risk Management, we must ensure that Disaster Risk Reduction is fully integrated into National and Regional Development Planning.

Investing in Prevention, Preparedness and Resilience is not optional; it is essential for sustainable development and the protection of our people.

Let us hold on to the firm belief that Regional Solidarity and Cooperation remain the cornerstone of an effective Disaster Risk Management System within SADC.

We must continue to share information, strengthen risk intelligence, promote people-centred multi-hazard early warning systems, and enhance coordination mechanisms to enable rapid and effective responses when disasters occur.

We must further recognise the importance of resilient recovery and reconstruction efforts that not only restore what has been lost but also reduce future risks.

Recovery processes must prioritise vulnerable communities, protect livelihoods, and promote inclusive and sustainable development.

This is in line with the theme of our meeting, “ *Building back better together: Advancing resilient recovery and sustainable development in the SADC*”

Honorable Ministers,

As we meet over the next two days, let us be guided by the Principles of Partnership, Cooperation, and Shared Responsibility.

Let us use this platform to advance practical solutions that strengthen the resilience of our communities and institutions across the SADC region.

We must continue to work closely with local governments, traditional leaders, civil society, the private sector, academia, and development partners to build a whole-of-society approach to Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the African Union Programme of Action and the SADC Disaster Risk Management Strategy continue to provide important guidance for our collective efforts.

Our task now is to accelerate implementation and translate commitments into meaningful action on the ground.

Together, let us continue building a safer, more resilient and sustainable SADC region for present and future generations.

I wish all delegates fruitful and productive deliberations.

I declare the meeting officially open.

I thank you.