



Statement by the Executive Secretary, Her Excellency Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, on the occasion of the launching of SADC's 40th Anniversary

The date, 1st April 2020, marked exactly 40 years since the establishment of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), the precursor to our regional community, the Southern African Development Community (SADC). SADCC—the Conference—was established in 1980 by nine majority-ruled countries in Southern Africa who signed the '*Southern Africa: Towards Economic Liberation*' Declaration at the inaugural meeting of SADCC in Lusaka, Zambia. These nine countries were Angola, Botswana, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

When it was formed, SADCC's aim was to liberate the economies of the majority-ruled countries in Southern Africa from their inherited dependence on South Africa, then under the apartheid administration. While the focus was now on economic liberation, SADCC was still committed to uproot colonialism from the region, as Namibia and South Africa were not yet liberated. Political liberation of the entire region was achieved after the fall of apartheid in 1994 when South Africa became the latest country in the region to attain majority-rule.

In 1992, almost 30 years ago, SADCC—the Conference—was succeeded by SADC—the Community—whose goal was to achieve economic development, peace and security, and growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa, and support the socially disadvantaged through Regional Integration.

To date, membership has grown to 16, as Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe make up the regional grouping.

I am pleased to join all our 16 Member States in commemorating our 40th anniversary, which will culminate into a grand regional commemoration during the 40th SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government to be held in August 2020. As we commemorate the founding of SADCC, we honour the founders of this regional organisation who envisioned a region that would collectively advance the cause of national political and economic liberation, paving the way for economic integration in Southern Africa. They established a platform for addressing matters affecting the region.

The liberation of countries of the region required the countries to be united in purpose. That quest for unity by SADCC's founders laid the foundation for the achievements we see today in the region, and the commemoration gives us an opportunity to reflect on those achievements. This will be the focus of the next couple of months as we, in

partnership with the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC), will reflect on the journey that we have travelled together as a regional community and showcase the achievements attained in the last 40 years.

As we celebrate the progress that we have made in the past 40 years, we must not lose sight of the critical challenges that lie ahead of us. Going forward, we must collectively and decisively address challenges related to climate change; youth unemployment and gender inequality; infrastructure development; industrial development and trade; peace, security and stability; among others. It is for this reason that we are formulating the SADC Vision 2050, which will give us a strategic direction to address these challenges and chart the path for inclusive and sustainable development for our region.

Going forward, we look up to all SADC citizens to take on the mantle passed on to us by our founders, and work towards achieving socio-economic development of the peoples of Southern Africa, and attaining a truly integrated region.

I appeal to you to be on the look-out for the SADC@40 commemoration updates that will be posted on our platforms listed below:

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