

**THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EAST AFRICAN COOPERATION**



**SPEECH BY HON. PROF. PALAMAGAMBA JOHN KABUDI (MP), MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EAST AFRICAN COOPERATION AND CHAIR OF THE
SADC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF SADC
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING ON 29TH MAY, 2020,**

JNICC DAR ES SALAAM

Honourable Ministers,

Dr. Stergomena Tax, Executive Secretary of the SADC Secretariat,

Permanent Secretaries and Senior Officials,

Representatives of International Cooperating Partners,

Senior Officials from the SADC Member States and SADC Secretariat staff;

Representatives of the Media;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

If feel privileged to once again in my capacity as the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers to welcome you all to this virtual of Council of Ministers meeting of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

I wish to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Ministers for reserving time out of your busy schedule to participate in this important meeting. Surely your presence in this meeting not only give value to this meeting but is the evidence of the commitment you have to the work of the Council and SADC at large.

Honourable Ministers,

Allow me, on your behalf to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Executive Secretary Dr. Stergomena Lawrence tax and her team at the Secretariat for their invaluable effort in organizing this important meeting and unflagging efforts in coordinating the work of SADC institutions. We are passing through challenging times that can have negative effect to the work of the Council and SADC at large. However we have been able to prevail and We therefore appreciate the role and cooperation of our experts in all participating with the Secretariat in

facilitating this meeting. On behalf of my fellow Ministers, I wish to reiterate our full support to the work of the Secretariat as it delivers on its annual work programme and mandate.

Honourable Ministers,

This virtual Council Meeting is a follow up to the Council Meeting which took place in March 2020 Meeting. It is also taking place at a time when the COVID 19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc at national, regional and global levels. The complexity and severity of the pandemic has been unprecedented in recent times as evidenced through various measures taken by Governments across the world and across the region to contain the spread of the virus. We have witnessed the humanitarian effect of the pandemic but mostly how these effects also cut across many aspects of economic activities.

In the last Council Meeting in March 2020, we had consensus on the need for a host of measures to mitigate the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic. These included scaling up engagement of our cooperating partners to mobilize support in areas which include provision of personal protective equipment (PPEs), essential medical equipment and supplies, disaster risk reduction and management, cross-border screenings, digital infrastructure for effective communication and development of recovery strategies.

While progress on some of these measures is evident, still there are some challenges especially in the implementation of the Regional Guidelines on Harmonization and Facilitation of Cross Border Transport Operations across the Region. Reports on the disruption of cross border transport, congestion at border posts and increase time and cost of transportation of goods pose a challenge to all of us. As a block, we have an urgent need for fast tracking the harmonisation and synchronisation among Member States in order to ease congestion at border posts.

This is the time to strengthen our solidarity, to contain the spread of the virus, while at the same time maintaining movement of essential goods and services across regional borders. This is the time to avoid unilateral actions and increase consultations. And let me urge all of us to treat our drivers with respect and dignity they deserve. Yes we need to take measures to contain the spread of the virus, but let us not stigmatize the drivers and treat them as pavers of Covid-19. Let us treat them humanely, let us appreciate the risk are taking, while we are taking measures to contain the spread of Covid-19. Our drivers are demoralized, because they have been seen as the cause of Covid-19 and not as foot soldiers to transport essential goods and services. Once again I appeal all of us to treat these drivers with dignity, with sympathy, with empathy, without compromising the necessary measures of containing Covid-19.

Our solidarity is important at this level and normally the cohesion of any organization is tested during times of crisis. This is the time to show the world we are together in this very complex and critical times in our recent history.

Honourable Ministers,

This pandemic is likely not to end in the short term and the Region will have to practice safe trade and transport facilitation for economic growth and poverty alleviation, while containing the spread. While we take measures to contain the pandemic, we should be reminded that, the very aim of our integration among others is to boost intra-regional trade.

Let us not fail the founding fathers of this organization, let us remember that in the 1960s' when we were fighting for our independence the leaders formed what was known as the Pan African East African Movement, but it was Dr. Kenneth Kaunda who said you cannot talk of East Africa without talking of the Central Africa. This is why the movement was transformed into the Pan African Movement of East and Central Africa. And Tanganyika at that time hosted the meeting in Mwanza. It was during that meeting when all East Africa and Central Africa countries were urged to adopt at

independence the Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika as their National Anthem, Tanganyika did so in 1961 and Zambia did do in 1964. and we were always reminded by Mwalimu Nyerere that, while Mandela is incarcerated at Robben Island, because Tanganyika is singing Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika as their National Anthem and Zambia is singing Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika as a National Anthem, Mandela is free while is in prison. This is why when Mwalimu gave the African National Congress of South Africa Mazimbu, he openly said Mazimbu is not a homeland, Mazimbu in morogoro is not a Bantustans, Mazimbu in Morogoro is a free South Africa. and it beckons the future of South Africa. The multi-ratio South Africans were born in Mazimbu before Mandela was released. And today during in our opening, our National Anthem Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika reminds all of us, we are Africans, we are together and let us continue to be together while we are fighting this pandemic.

As I speak, Intra-Regional trade in SADC countries is low, below 20%, hindering member states from realizing their economic potentials. As we continue with our efforts to increase intra-regional trade through implementation of the SADC Protocol on Trade (2005) and the establishment of SADC Free trade area, this pandemic should fuel these efforts.

We should now convert our industries to produce more sanitizers, more masks, more PPEs, so that we are able to share and sell PPEs made in South Africa, made in Tanzania, Made in Namibia, made in Botswana and made in Lesotho. We should be able now in the Region to buy and sell sanitizers made in Tanzania, made in Mauritius, because Mauritius they have a lot of sugar and they produce a lot of alcohol. So let us turn this challenge into an opportunity of emboldening our industrialization and intra-trade in the Region.

In challenging times like this, this Block should increase the cooperation among countries, to rip benefits from our integration. During this meeting we will have an opportunity to be updated on the status of SADC intra-Trade and Industrialization. It is my expectation that during this meeting we will

deliberate on some of the measures that boost SADC intra-trade at these challenging times.

Honourable Ministers,

As we continue to implement the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Road Map 2015-2063, we will take advantage of increased need of medicines and medical supplies and create conducive environment for the establishment of new pharmaceutical industries and provide various incentives to the existing ones. Through this we will create more jobs and boost our economy.

I urge all member states to work towards improving the policy environment for industrial development, to the broad and robust measures build resilience for both business and individuals in our countries.

Honourable Ministers,

During this meeting we will consider the reports on the implementation of various decision of the Council. The success of our integration depend so much on the implementation of the decisions of the Council on a number of issues. I wish to appreciate the efforts of the Secretariat making follow ups and coordinating the implementation of our decisions. I urge all member states to continue their commitment in implementing the various decisions of the Council.

Honourable Ministers,

Our region is still recovering from the effects of a series of natural disasters such as disease outbreaks, droughts, cyclones and flooding. While SADC can boast of a robust and responsive early warning system that periodically provides advisories. These multiple hazards are not without effect on national emergency preparedness and service delivery systems, highlighting the urgent need to strengthen measures that build resilience,

disaster preparedness and response including for pandemics and epidemics and related hazards.

During this meeting we will receive the implementation of the Council decision on disaster and risk management.

Honourable Ministers,

On your behalf, allow me to thank Senior officials for their excellent work in the preparation of this meeting. It is through their efforts that our meeting has been made possible.

I once again thank all of you for finding time to attend this meeting. I am confident that our meeting will not only unpack the issues on our agenda but also provide the much-needed guidance going forward. Your cooperation in ensuring that we work expeditiously during this Council meeting, to ensure that the discussions are, as usual, meaningful and results oriented will always be appreciated as we have an extensive agenda ahead of us. It is my sincere hope that discussions and deliberations during this meeting will help us to streamline our future activities and make them more effective.

As we commence our deliberations, I leave you with the following timeless Nigerian Proverb, "***In the moment of crisis, the wise build bridges and the foolish build dams.***" I am sure we are wise, and we will build bridges in SADC, instead of building dams which will enclose, drown and kill us.

With these few remarks I thank you so much for your kind attention, Asante Sana, Muito obrigada, merci beaucoup and once again welcome to this meeting.