



WELCOME REMARKS

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ELIAS M. MAGOSI,
SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE VISIT TO THE SADC SECRETARIAT
BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. EMMERSON DAMBUDZO MNANGAGWA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE, AND
CHAIRPERSON OF SADC,
AND PRESIDENT DUMA GIDEON BOKO
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

13 DECEMBER 2024

GABORONE, BOTSWANA

Your Excellency Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of SADC;

President of the Republic of Botswana, Advocate Duma Gideon Boko;

Honourable Professor Amon Murwira, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers;

Honourable Dr. Phenyio Butale, Minister of International Relations of the Republic of Botswana;

Honourable Ministers from the Republics of Zimbabwe and Botswana present here;

Ambassador Albert Ranganai Chimbindi, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Senior Officials;

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners of SADC Member States accredited to the Republic of Botswana and SADC;

Government Officials from the Republics of Zimbabwe and Botswana;

Mrs. Neo Bogatsu, Representating Bongwe Investments Limited;

SADC Deputy Executive Secretaries;

SADC Directors and all Secretariat Staff;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good afternoon!

Your Excellencies, it is my distinct honour and privilege to stand before you today, to welcome you and your delegations to the Secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), here in Gaborone, Republic of Botswana. As the Secretariat we are honoured that you set aside time off from your busy schedules to visit and interact with us today and appreciate the work we are doing in facilitating the region's quest to achieve and strengthen deeper regional integration and development.

On behalf of the Secretariat, and my own behalf, I wish to express our profound gratitude, to you, Your Excellencies for graciously honouring our invitation and being in our midst today.

Over the years, the SADC Secretariat has had the honour of welcoming the Heads of State and Government from various SADC Member States. Your Excellencies' visit today is another strong manifestation of the commitment to SADC by its Member

States at the highest levels of leadership. We are honoured Your Excellencies, that your visit coincided with the handover of the SADC Headquarters Building to SADC, which we just witnessed a few moments ago. The SADC Headquarters is more than just a physical space; it represents the hard work, dedication, and vision of the SADC Heads of State and Government, and by extension a symbol of dreams of the citizens of our region yearning for prosperity. It is a reminder to everyone who passes by it or walks through its corridors, of our shared aspirations and collective and relentless pursuit of the region's socio-economic development. We are, therefore, immensely grateful that Your Excellencies have received the SADC Headquarters on behalf of other SADC Heads of State and Government.

Your Excellencies, your visit to the Secretariat comes almost three months after the Republic of Zimbabwe successfully hosted the 44th Summit of the SADC Heads of State and Government, which was held under the theme; ***“Promoting Innovation to Unlock Opportunities for Sustained Economic Growth and Development towards an Industrialised SADC”***. This Theme takes us further on a transformative journey towards industrialisation, which started in Zimbabwe, through the directive of the 34th SADC Summit, exactly ten years ago, to place industrialisation at the core of the SADC regional integration agenda. SADC had set out on a path to accelerate industrialisation, to drive forward the region's economy, and unlock the immense potential of our people and the abundant natural resources in our possession. Under the Chairship of Zimbabwe between 2014-2015, the region developed and adopted the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2015-2063, whose primary orientation is to engender economic and technological transformation of the SADC region through industrialisation, modernisation, skills development, science and technology, financial strengthening, and deeper regional integration.

Your Excellencies, the 44th SADC Summit theme provides a unique opportunity to shape the future of our region, and the steps we must take to accelerate progress on our industrialisation agenda. To this end, the region ought to continue to harness the power of innovation to accelerate implementation of key regional value chains and promote technological transfer to increase manufacturing of value-added products, and ultimately, realise economic growth and prosperity in the region. In this regard, as your Secretariat, we will continue to support Member States in the development of value chains to capitalise on their competitive advantages to unlock opportunities for promoting economic growth and creating decent jobs.

We also remain committed to facilitate infrastructure development and interconnection, in support of regional integration and intra-regional trade. To date, intra-regional trade stands at a worrying low level of about 23%, signifying that, as SADC, we are trading more with the rest of the world than we do amongst ourselves. One of the reasons for this unfortunate reality is the continued application of non-tariff barriers. Despite zero import duty on 85% of products traded among SADC Member States, intra-SADC importers and exporters continue to encounter new and long-standing unresolved non-tariff barriers. It is therefore imperative to re-dedicate our collective efforts to implement measures to reduce these barriers and promote intra-regional cooperation and integration. The benefits of an enlarged regional market to the SADC economy and citizens are innumerable including expanded markets for smaller economies, competitive pricing, broader product and services ranges, among others. Our collective market of 389 million people, and a combined Gross Domestic

Product (GDP) of US\$841 billion dollars, provides an enormous potential for trade and investment opportunities, as well as economic growth.

In our quest to facilitate enhanced intra-regional trade within our community, we are in the process of compiling information to produce a list of the top 10 exports and imports of SADC Member States, and also establish what the region trades with the rest of the world. This will be used to develop strategic interventions and actions to improve access to markets within our community and facilitate improved intra-regional trade within the region. I am hopeful that the completion of this exercise will produce declarations on how we will trade going forward. The status quo is not ideal, Your Excellencies, and must be changed without delay.

Your Excellencies, our region's expanding development needs, coupled with the increasing measures to preserve peace and security, require extended efforts towards mobilising resources to support the implementation of the regional integration agenda. To this effect, as your Secretariat, we are mobilising resources for the prioritised projects covering all the strategic priority areas of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020-2030.

We are grateful that this visit provides a unique opportunity for the entire Secretariat to receive guidance from the Chairperson of our Community in our endeavours to achieve deeper regional integration. We are indeed appreciative of Your Excellency's leadership, and insights in dealing with issues of regional integration since the assumption of your mandate as SADC Chairperson in August 2024.

As I conclude, I wish to recognise, in a special way, the following:

- First, the President of the Republic of Botswana, Advocate Duma Gideon Boko. I want to heartily congratulate you Mr President for your historic win during the 30th October 2024 elections in Botswana. I want to assure you of our commitment to work with your government and the people of this great country to pursue the ideals of the region including those for Botswana.
- I would also like to commend the country for an exemplary, peaceful and seamless transfer of power from one administration to another, which is a rare feat in our continent, and indeed a compelling standard by which both African countries and the rest of the world, including some countries in the west, might I had, should measure themselves against. I would like to congratulate you Mr President and former President Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi for making this often difficult and treacherous exercise appear so easy and enjoyable to watch and bear witness to.
- I would also like to thank the Government and the people of the Republic of Botswana for the continued support to the Secretariat, and for enabling our staff to work in the region seamlessly and effortlessly. Many of us feel at home here in Gaborone and elsewhere in the country, and we continue to enjoy the warmth and hospitality that Botswana are known for.
- Professor Amon Murwira, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers,

and his predecessor, Ambassador Dr Shava for their support and guidance given to me personally and the Secretariat.

- Ambassador Albert Ranganai Chimbindi, the Chairperson of the SADC Standing Committee of Senior Officials who is a critical link between the Secretariat and the Chairperson of SADC.
- the SADC Secretariat staff for their professionalism, commitment, dedication, and personal sacrifice in continuing to serve our region and to deliver on our mandate and assigned responsibilities.
- and, last but not least, my deputies for facilitating the activities of the Secretariat, and for supporting me in this challenging but fulfilling role.

It is now my singular honour to humbly invite His Excellency Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of SADC, to deliver his address.

I thank you! Tatenda! Muito Obrigado! Merci beaucoup! Asante Sana!

Ke a leboga!