

**Chinese Ambassador H.E. Wang Ke's Speech at the  
Extraordinary Meeting on COVID-19 of Health Ministers  
of Southern African Development Community  
Member Countries**

*(9 March, Julius Nyerere International Convention Centre,  
Dar es Salaam )*

Honorable Chairperson, Prof. Ummy Ali Mwalimu, Minister for Health,  
Community Development, Gender, the Elderly and Children of  
Tanzania,

Ministers, Representatives,

Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, Executive Secretary of Southern  
African Development Community (SADC),

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

I am honored to be invited to attend this Extraordinary Meeting on  
COVID-19 of SADC Health Ministers. First of all, on behalf of the  
Government of China, I would like to extend greetings to the meeting  
and appreciation to the Chair, the Government of Tanzania and the  
co-organizer, SADC Secretariat.

Today I am standing here with a heavy heart. As you all know, the

unprecedented coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19, arrived all of a sudden, which has become a public health emergency of international concern. More than 80,000 my compatriots have unfortunately been infected, and over 3,000 have passed away because of the disease. Currently, the COVID-19 is rampaging around the world, with up to 25,000 confirmed cases and almost 500 fatalities being reported in 101 countries and regions outside China. In Africa, 9 countries including South Africa have reported 78 confirmed cases, which shows that COVID-19 is posing a rising threat to southern Africa region.

It is against this backdrop that today, the Health Ministers of SADC member countries gather here to discuss and plan for the preparedness and appropriate responses to COVID-19 epidemic. We Chinese often say, “In all things, success lies in preparedness”. We believe that this extraordinary meeting is very timely and significant because it will provide important guidance to SADC member countries in their joint defense against the virus.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The outbreak of COVID-19 is a major public health emergency that has spread in the fastest speed, caused the most extensive infection and is the most difficult epidemic to contain in my country since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Under the strong leadership of President Xi Jinping, the Chinese Government and its people have taken the most comprehensive, the strictest, and the most uncompromising preventive and control measures to contain the epidemic. Now we have brought the severe situation under control, and

the positive trend is expanding. As of 8 March, in mainland China, the daily number of new confirmed cases has dropped to 40, which is a decline of more than 98% compared to the peak number; The daily number of new confirmed cases outside Hubei, the hardest hit province, caused by local transmission has fallen to zero for 2 consecutive days (all the 7 reported confirmed cases in the two days are imported ones); The number of cured cases has reached 58,000 and the nationwide cure rate has surpassed 70%; The national fatality rate is around 3.9%, and outside Hubei, the rate is only 0.9%. All these are achieved through painstaking efforts and great sacrifices made by the Chinese Government and its people. It also demonstrates tremendous resolve, courage, wisdom and sense of responsibility of the Government and people of China.

In the face of the epidemic, China bravely rises to the challenge. Through strong leadership and nationwide mobilization, the Chinese Government rapidly established a joint prevention and control system that covers everybody and every corner of the society. This is an all-of-society approach in which every citizen participates and every field is covered. The most important experiences are the following three: **The first is decisiveness.** We have unprecedentedly imposed a lockdown on Wuhan, the epicenter of the epidemic and the provincial capital of Hubei with 11 million residents, activated top-level public health emergency response in all provincial-level administrative regions in mainland China, in order to reduce the movement of people to the minimum and control the spread of the virus. **The second is**

**swiftness.** We have implemented the strategy of “early detection, early reporting, early quarantine, and early treatment”, in order to block the transmission of the virus in a timely manner. We spent only one week to identify the pathogen and genetic sequence of the virus. We expanded the number of hospital beds with an average speed of 3,000 beds per day. Within a short period of time, we have renovated or constructed 86 hospitals and 16 makeshift hospitals specially designated for COVID-19 patients, which increased the admission capacity of Wuhan hospitals to more than 60,000 beds. We have also dispatched over 40,000 healthcare workers and 60,000 plus tonnes of medial and daily supplies to Hubei from various parts of China. These have turned a severe shortage of healthcare workers and hospital beds in Wuhan and Hubei province to a surplus, and greatly improved the conditions for treating the patients. **The third is preciseness.** We have been improving our prevention and control measures, and treatment methods based on the characteristics and development trend of the epidemic, as well as the accumulated clinical experiences. The Diagnosis and Treatment Protocol for COVID-19 Patients has been updated for seven times in less than two month. We take Wuhan and Hubei as the main battlefields, classify all the patients into three groups: severe cases, mild cases and suspected cases, and quarantine and treat them separately, in order to avoid cross-infection. As a result, the admission rate and the cure rate have increased significantly, while the infection rate and the fatality rate have decreased considerably.

Here I would like to commend my lovely compatriots, the 1.4

billion Chinese people. No matter they are healthcare personnel, community workers or volunteers who fight at the front-line, or ordinary citizens who quarantine at home, or overseas Chinese who make donations to their motherland to fight the disease, the exemplary contribution, self-discipline and unprecedented solidarity have won respect and appreciation from the world, which I am so proud of.

In the face of the epidemic, China also bravely assumes its international responsibility. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, China has been taking the prevention of overseas spread of the disease as its important task. We have canceled all outbound tourist groups, strictly screened passengers at all exit ports across the country, and required all Chinese citizens going abroad to observe and follow the epidemic control measures, and quarantine themselves for two weeks upon their arrival at the destination countries. No second country hit by the disease is taking these strict measures like China. It is because of these measures that although China had serious situation in the past two months, it has up to date not exported a single case of COVID-19 to Africa.

Meanwhile, China attaches great importance to the concerns raised by foreign governments about the safety of their citizens in China, the Chinese Government has been protecting foreign nationals in China as they were Chinese citizens. Likewise, the teachers in Chinese universities have been taking good care of foreign students as they were their sons and daughters. At present, in Hubei, there are nearly 1,500 students from SADC member countries, among them three fourths are

in Wuhan. For these students, China has not only tried its best to protect their health, but made detailed and considerate arrangements for their life and study. Please rest assured that all of them are safe, with no one infected with the virus.

In front of the common challenge faced by the world, China has taken a cooperative attitude. We have been open and transparent to the international society, by sharing the genetic sequence of COVID-19 with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other countries, publicizing epidemic data on a daily basis and actively collaborating with the international experts led by the WHO to conduct their site inspection in China. According to the WHO, it is because of China sharing detailed data on tens of thousands of confirmed cases that the world is getting a clearer picture of the outbreak. In addition, although facing enormous tasks in epidemic control, China has provided material and technological support to some countries heavily affected by COVID-19, and vulnerable regions with weak public health systems. Two days ago, China announced its donation of US\$ 20 million to the WHO to support its epidemic control efforts, especially in developing countries, including Africa.

At the same time, the international community has lent much moral and material support to China, which has enhanced our confidence and strength to overcome the difficulties. Many of the support come from SADC countries. Leaders of all friendly SADC countries and SADC Executive Secretary have send letters to Chinese leaders to express sincere condolences and support. Some countries

have donated funds, masks and other medical supplies. The solidarity from you all has once again reinforced our belief that “A friend in need is a friend indeed”. Here, on behalf of the Government of China, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the governments and brotherly people of the SADC member countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Medical and healthcare cooperation has always been a traditional field and highlight of China-Africa cooperation, particularly when Africa was in face of major threats to its public health security, China has never stood on the sideline. In 2014, when Ebola erupted in western Africa, many countries chose to evacuate their citizens and agencies, but China became the “hero in harm’s way”, dispatching more than 1,000 medical staff to three infected countries and donating supplies with a total value of 750 million RMB. In 2018 when Ebola staged a comeback, China provided its support to the Democratic Republic of Congo and other affected countries with funds, supplies and technical assistance. After the outbreak of COVID-19, China promptly provided nucleic acid test kits to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and supported Africa in its effort to step up early warning and personnel training. Meanwhile, Chinese ambassadors in African countries have conducted close communication with the government of their respective country of residence, sharing China’s experiences in the epidemic prevention and control.

At present, COVID-19 is spreading in many countries outside China with a fast speed and the numbers of affected African countries

and confirmed cases are increasing day by day. Confronted with this common enemy, we must work together and cooperate more closely. In the face of the epidemic and in the spirit of building an even stronger China-Africa public health community, I propose, on behalf of the Government of China, that we join hands to fulfill the following tasks:

**Firstly, to remain confident and keep calm.** China's battle against the epidemic has demonstrated that COVID-19 is preventable, controllable and curable. As long as we adopt a strong sense of responsibility, rational attitude and scientific methods, and take the initiative to formulate effective work plans, which should include vigorously popularizing the knowledge on self-protection against the disease, focusing on intensifying border screening and improving detection capability, quickly identifying and tracking infected cases and close contacts, and blocking transmission channels, we can effectively contain the spread of the virus and prevent them from entering the territories.

**Secondly, to enhance exchanges and cooperation.** Information sharing, coordination and cooperation on a regional and global scale is crucial to curb the spread of the epidemic. We should inform the WHO of the situation in an open, transparent and timely manner and enhance cooperation with other countries to prevent the virus from spreading across borders. China is willing to share with African countries the information and its experience in fighting against the epidemic and do everything within our capacity to provide support to Africa in preventing and containing the outbreak, including provision of more

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test kits and medical supplies, and convening in the near future of video conferences specially for African countries.

**Thirdly, to resist rumors and discrimination.** Together with the outbreak of virus, we see political and information viruses as well as virus in human nature. These man-made viruses are sometimes more horrible than the physical virus. In this difficult time, China and Africa must strengthen unity to jointly fight against the rumors fabricated to spread panic, fight against the discrimination incited on the ethnic or nationality basis, and fight against the conspiracy planned to use the epidemic to suppress and stigmatize other countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current situation of COVID-19 requires all countries in the world to have a sense of urgency and take immediate action. This is a war without smoke, and we are all fighters in the war, racing against time to battle the virus. China has full confidence in winning the war and will continue to stand firmly with Africa and the rest of the international community to defeat the COVID-19 outbreak.

Thank you.