



REMARKS

BY

**HER EXCELLENCY DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX,
SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SADC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
WINDHOEK, REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

15th MARCH 2019

Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of Namibia and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers;

Honourable Ministers;

Ambassador Selma Ashipala-Musavyi, Chairperson of the SADC Standing Committee of Senior Officials;

SADC Deputy Executive Secretaries;

Senior Officials from SADC Member States;

SADC Secretariat Staff;

Our Partners from the Media;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Allow me to begin by expressing our profound gratitude to the Government and the people of the Republic of Namibia for their hospitality and warm welcome. Indeed, every time that we have been in Namibia, we have always felt at home. May I also thank you, Honourable Ministers, for making time to attend the Council of Ministers meeting.

The main objective of this Council meeting is to receive a report on implementation of the 2018/19 Corporate Plan and Budget, and deliberate on the proposed plan and budget for the 2019/20 fiscal year. In terms of progress, I am pleased to report that during the nine-months period from April to December 2018, performance stood at 77% with a budget utilisation of 76%.

Focus during the year under review remained on fostering industrialisation. A number of activities that are in line with the SADC industrialisation pillars, namely industrialisation, competitiveness, regional integration, and cross-cutting issues, as well as programmes in support of industrialisation, were implemented successfully. A detailed progress report will be presented during the course of your meeting.

Honourable Ministers,

An analysis of the plan and budget indicates improvements in aligning budget allocations to the SADC Resource Allocation Framework. In this regard, allocation for Industrial Development, Market Integration and Infrastructure,

increased from 38% in 2015/16 to 48% in 2018/19, which is slightly lower than the Resource Allocation Framework by 2%. Allocations to Peace and Security increased from 14% to 17%, slightly higher than the Resource Allocation Framework by 2%; while the allocation for programmes of regional dimension decreased from 48% to 35% during the same period, which is in line with the SADC Resource Allocation Framework. The Secretariat will continue to ensure that the Resource Allocation Framework is adhered to, and that the available resources are allocated in line with SADC priorities, and will be utilised prudently.

Notwithstanding SADC's aspirations to industrialise, progress in regional economic integration remains mixed. After experiencing robust economic growth prior to the global financial and economic crisis of 2008/09, economic growth in the region has slowed down, thus compromising macroeconomic convergence. Furthermore, huge disparities remain in the region in terms of income, with about half of Member States having a GDP per capita below US\$1,000. Inclusiveness also remains a challenge for the region. The structures of the economies of the region remain undiversified with a growing resource-based and stagnant manufacturing sector. In addition, the goods market in the region remains small. While intra-SADC trade is increasing at a slow pace, the region's total trade with the world remains small at between 15% and 21%. This points to the need to intensify implementation of the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap, by ensuring that all interventions in the three pillars of the Industrialisation Strategy, which aims to accelerate economic growth through technological and economic transformation, and as such enhance comparative and competitive advantage of our economies, are implemented in a synergetic manner.

Honourable Ministers,

In terms of operationalisation of the 38th Summit theme on "*Promoting Infrastructure Development and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development*", the Secretariat, in collaboration with Member States and the youth, carried out a number of activities since the adoption of the theme in August 2018. These include the SADC Youth in Fisheries and Aquaculture Event held in September in Lilongwe, Malawi, and the Southern Africa Internet Governance Forum hosted in Durban, South Africa, in November. These offered the youth an opportunity to discuss technological themes such as fostering incubator activities for the disadvantaged groups in the digital economy, and the regional fisheries and aquaculture sectors. In addition, multimedia messages on issues relevant to the youth were developed; and a

Ministerial and Cooperating Partners Roundtable was convened in October to discuss the synergy between sustainable energy and youth empowerment. The 2019 SADC Secondary School Essay Competition is also dedicated to exploring how Youth-focused programmes can contribute to the advancement of sustainable economic growth and youth empowerment in the region. Furthermore, the SADC Youth Forum was convened in December 2018 in Windhoek, Namibia. The Secretariat will continue to ensure the broad-based participation of the youth in socio-economic development processes, as part of the regional integration agenda.

Honourable Ministers,

On peace and security, the region continues to enjoy peace and tranquillity. In a bid to consolidate democracy, SADC supported elections in Madagascar and the Democratic Republic of Congo in December 2018. May I congratulate the two countries for holding peaceful elections, and thank SADC Member States for their support. May I also extend my gratitude to our SADC Chairperson, and the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, for the exemplary leadership to ensure adherence to the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, and the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with the SADC Treaty.

The SADC Preventative Mission in the Kingdom of Lesotho (SAPMIL) ended its mission in November 2018, and all troops and personnel have since been repatriated to their home countries. Please allow me to thank all the Troop and Personnel Contributing Countries for their support during SAPMIL's tenure. SADC remains ready to support the Kingdom of Lesotho through Mediation and National Dialogue led by the SADC Facilitator, and through the Oversight Committee, which will continue to serve as an early warning mechanism.

During 2019, a number of Member States are expected to hold elections, including Comoros later in March, Malawi and South Africa in May, Botswana and Mozambique in October, Namibia in November, and Mauritius in December. May I call upon Member States to support these countries, and in doing so, ensure the consolidation of democracy in the region.

Honourable Ministers,

In support of the African Union continental agenda, the Secretariat has continued to work with SADC Ambassadors accredited to the AU in providing inputs towards the AU institutional reform process. Through engagements with the AU at various levels, a number of SADC concerns have been addressed.

With regards to the ACP-EU post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement, Secretariat continues to work with SADC Ambassadors in Brussels to provide inputs into the negotiations, so as to ensure that SADC interests are taken on board. A comprehensive progress report regarding SADC engagement with the AU and the ACP-EU dialogue processes will be submitted to you during the course of your meeting. His Excellency Professor Kaire Mbuende, who is the Chairperson of the SADC Committee of Ambassadors in Brussels, is here with us to provide more insights on the ongoing negotiations. May I commend the work done by our Ambassadors both in Addis Ababa and Brussels for ensuring that our region is well represented, and our interests are considered.

Honourable Ministers,

There is no doubt that sustainable financing is key for the region to successfully and sustainably realise the objectives of the SADC development and regional integration agenda. While the Region continues to receive financial support from International Cooperating Partners, to whom we are grateful, there is an urgent need for the Region to aggressively complement ICP resources with innovative financing mechanisms. In this regard, Member States' commitment to the finalisation and implementation of the SADC Resource Mobilisation Framework cannot be overemphasised.

While also appreciating the ongoing work towards operationalising the SADC Regional Development Fund, where a total of nine Member States, namely Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, have signed the Regional Development Fund Agreement, operationalisation of the Fund remains critical. More efforts and commitment are, therefore, required so as to expeditiously operationalise the Fund.

Honourable Ministers,

On Food Security, unpredictable weather patterns and adverse climatic conditions continue to stifle regional efforts to ensure sustainable food self-sufficiency. Predictions indicate that the SADC region will receive normal to below normal rainfall between October 2018 and March 2019. This is likely to have a negative impact on the 2019 crop yield, resulting in food shortages for many households, particularly as a majority of our citizens depend on rain-fed agriculture. The Secretariat continues to monitor the region's food and nutrition security through the regional and national early warning systems and vulnerability assessments, and a comprehensive report will be submitted to

Council during its sitting in August 2019. Member States are encouraged to continue promoting innovative farming practices, and adopting technologies that will sustain yields during erratic rains, while also helping farmers to cope with the impacts of droughts.

In addition to droughts, floods are also becoming frequent in the region. It is with great sadness that we learnt that the floods in Southern Malawi have killed at least 45 people to date, affected 460,600 people, and displaced 31,700, resulting in the declaration of a state of emergency by His Excellency, Professor Peter Mutharika, on 8 March 2019. We are also informed that *Cyclone Idai* has killed at least 10 people in Mozambique in recent days, affecting 63,000 people and displacing 10,000. We express our condolences to and stand in solidarity with the Governments of Malawi and Mozambique and the families of the departed.

The region also received the sad news of the passing on of His Excellency France Albert-Rene, the second President of the Republic of Seychelles, who passed away on 27 February 2019. The late Albert-Rene will always be remembered for leading Seychelles to be amongst the developed countries in our region.

Honourable Ministers,

On a pleasing note, the International Court of Justice on 25 February 2019 issued a judgement on the long-standing dispute between the Republic of Mauritius and the United Kingdom over the Chagos Archipelago. The Court ruled in favour of Mauritius, and called upon the United Kingdom to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible. As a region, we join Mauritius in celebrating this milestone, and encourage the urgent conclusion to the illegal occupation of the island. We commend the support rendered to Mauritius by African Countries.

Honourable Ministers,

Your meeting is being held in March, a month dedicated globally as the Women's Month. While we are making significant efforts in achieving gender equality and equity, more still needs to be done for us to realise our gender parity aspirations. May I call upon all Member States to intensify efforts towards advancing gender equality, and the empowerment of girls and women.

Honourable Ministers,

For the Fiscal Year 2019/20, the major focus remains on implementation of the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap, as complemented by the Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan. The region will also continue with consolidation of Peace, Security and Political Stability.

As I conclude, allow me to thank all Member States for their contributions, and support in ensuring the successful implementation of the regional integration agenda. Allow me to also express our profound gratitude for the guidance and wisdom that the Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers, Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of Namibia, and her Team continues to provide since assuming the role of Chairperson in August 2018. It is through her guidance, and Member States' support, that milestones that will be presented during your meeting, have been attained.

Let me also appreciate the work done by the Standing Committee of Senior Officials, under the leadership of Ambassador Selma Ashipala-Musavyi, in preparing for your meeting. In addition, allow me to appreciate the support that the region continues to receive from our valued Cooperating Partners.

May I also thank the SADC Secretariat staff for their tireless efforts and professionalism in serving the region.

With these few words, it is my humble honour and privilege to invite the Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers to deliver her opening remarks.

Your Excellency...