



## **REMARKS**

**BY**

**H.E. DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX  
SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE  
EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING OF MINISTERS OF HEALTH AND  
THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIV AND AIDS**

**VIRTUALLY HOSTED BY MOZAMBIQUE**

**Honourable Professor Douro Armindo Daniel Tiago, Minister of Health of the Republic of Mozambique, and Chairperson of the SADC Ministerial Committee on Health;**

**Honourable Ministers,**

**Dr Matshidiso Moeti, World Health Organisation Africa Regional Director,**

**Government Senior Officials;**

**Dr. Thembinkosi Mhlongo, Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration,**

**SADC Secretariat Staff;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this extra-ordinary meeting of the Ministerial Committee on Health. I am grateful that, despite your busy schedules, you allocated time to this important meeting. Your presence indeed bears testimony to our collective resolve to cooperate on health matters and contribute to the improvement of living standards and the livelihoods of SADC citizens.

While the COVID-19 outlook in the SADC region has been steadily improving, the trajectory of the outbreak remains unpredictable. The number of new cases of COVID-19 continues to fall in most of our Member States with an exception of a few Member States. This shows that our tremendous, coordinated response to the pandemic is showing some positive impact. From the beginning of this pandemic SADC Member States have been steadfast in the implementation of public health, and socio-economic measures to control the pandemic, this is highly commendable.

It is also encouraging to note that vaccination campaign against COVID-19 is gaining momentum on the continent, with many countries having rolled out the vaccination drive, and more people being vaccinated. Whereas the picture looks promising, the region, still lags behind in terms of access to vaccines, and available options.

While the region appeals for increased and equal access to vaccines, emphasis should also remain on the enhancement of own capacities (at regional and national levels) in research and manufacturing of medicines

and vaccines for COVID-19 and other diseases, and in exploring alternative solutions. We encourage partners to support SADC countries in this noble endeavour that is believed to be more sustainable. This approach is aligned to the African Union's recommendation on the importance for Africa to build its capabilities to manufacture vaccines to reduce dependency on global markets that have largely adopted inward looking strategies.

**Honourable Ministers,**

We remain hopeful and encouraged that the situation will gradually be under control with the roll out of vaccines globally and in the SADC Region.

The tools that helped us to successfully manage the first wave of this outbreak remain relevant and we must use them to the extent possible, by taking leaf from the valuable lessons and promising practices. The Expanded Technical Committee for Coordinating and Monitoring the Implementation of the SADC Protocol on Health developed guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures to facilitate cross-border movements of goods and public health surveillance at point of entry, and Members States adopted a coordinated and harmonized response. These efforts and tools remain relevant and need to be used and harmonized at national level if we are to move together and defeat the socio-economic negative impacts of the pandemic. May I appeal that we continue upholding a coordinated and harmonised approach, across geographical boundaries, since COVID -19 knows no boundaries.

**Honourable Ministers,** you will also recall that your Committee met in January 2021, to assess the situation of COVID-19, and made some recommendations that were approved by Council in March 2021, the recommendations, included putting on hold face to face Summit, Council and all other regional meetings, until the outbreak is contained. Council also endorsed the recommendations of your Committee and approved the proposal by Mozambique to hold a face to face meeting of the Summit of Heads of State and Government in May or June 2021, if the COVID-19 Pandemic situation is contained. Your meeting today, will therefore, amongst others, examine the recommendations of the Expanded Technical Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of the SADC Protocol on Health, and provide guidance on regional face to face

meetings, including for the May/June, 2021 Summit of Heads of States and Government, and Council of Ministers.

**Honourable Ministers,**

In conclusion, allow me to extend our gratitude to Honourable Professor Douto Armindo Daniel Tiago, the Chairperson of the Committee, and Minister of Health of the Republic of Mozambique, for his leadership in steering the work of your Committee in the difficult environment we find ourselves operating in. I wish to also commend the Senior Officials and the Technical Committee for their commitment and dedication that resulted in the progress attained thus far in the fight against COVID-19. May I also thank Secretariat Staff for their continued dedication and professionalism.

With these Remarks, let me wish your Committee fruitful deliberations.

**I thank you,  
Merci beaucoup,  
Muito obrigada,  
Asante sana.**