



**REMARKS**

**BY**

**SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**HER EXCELLENCY DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE-TAX**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF**

**THE MEETING OF SADC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR GENDER/  
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS**

**JOHANNESBURG**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**5TH JULY 2018**

**The Director of Ceremonies;**

**Honourable Bathabile Dlamini, Minister of Women in the Office of the Presidency, Republic of South Africa and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers responsible for Gender and Women Affairs;**

**Honourable Ministers;**

**Permanent Secretaries;**

**Senior Government Officials and SADC Secretariat Staff;**

**Head of Portfolio of Gender, Republic of South Africa;**

**Partners from the Media;**

**Distinguished Delegates;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this important meeting of the Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs. I thank you for honouring our invitation despite your busy schedules. Allow me to convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this beautiful city of Johannesburg. May I also thank the Government of the Republic of South Africa for the excellent facilities put at our disposal to make this meeting a success.

SADC places gender firmly on the SADC Regional Integration Programme of Action and Agenda, and recognises Gender as an important cross-cutting issue and enabler of regional integration, as enshrined in strategic SADC instruments, and as operationalised through the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

**Honourable Ministers,**

The SADC Ministerial Committee of the Organ (MCO), during its meeting that was held in July 2015 in Pretoria, South Africa, noted with concern, the high prevalence rate of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the SADC region. This matter, was further discussed during a Joint Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Gender and Ministerial Committee of the Organ (MCO), which was held in August 2016 in Maputo, Mozambique, where the Secretariat was directed to mobilise resources and conduct a Comprehensive Gender Based Violence study. The study is to come up with indicators that will serve as a baseline on the prevalence of GBV in the region. I am happy to report that the study has commenced, a report of which, will be presented at your next meeting. We therefore appeal to SADC Member States to provide the required information that will enable Secretariat to carry out a credible study, with reliable baseline data.

The Secretariat was also directed to finalise the Regional Dimension Women Economic Empowerment Programme (RMDWEEP). May I take this opportunity to inform you that, during the year, the Secretariat has been able to mobilize resources, and a process towards

finalisation of the RMDWEEP is at an advanced stage, progress will be presented during your next meeting.

**Honourable Ministers,**

As a region, we are required to report progress made towards the implementation of the Protocol on Gender and Development. It is worth noting that the Regional Progress Report is prepared based on national Reports, which are consolidated into the annual SADC Gender and Development Monitor. The quality of the Gender and Development Monitor, and its timely preparation depends on submissions by Member States of National Progress Reports. To this effect, may I call upon SADC Member States to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation systems, and in doing so, facilitate collection, collation, and submission of reliable and accurate data, in a timely manner. This will facilitate timely finalisation of the Regional Report, - the Annual SADC Gender and Development Monitor, and in doing so contribute to decision-making processes at Regional and National levels.

**Honourable Ministers,**

SADC Member States continue to make progress towards women empowerment as guided by the various parameters that are used to monitor the empowerment of women. According to the Gender Monitor 2016, representation by women in political and decision-making positions at various levels of governance, including the main

institutions of State; the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, continues to improve, despite the fact it fell short of the 50:50 target for 2015. While such progress is being made, the performance continues to be mixed across the region with some Member States doing well in facilitating quantitative and qualitative gender parity in decision-making positions, and others not so well.

According to the Gender Barometer 2017, the SADC region is less than two thirds, where it needs to be, to achieve gender equality by 2030. This was the key message of the 2017 Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Gender Barometer: the inaugural audit of the status of women against the Post- 2015 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

I would like commend Member States for their efforts and the progress recorded so far. The progress is a result of the efforts and commitment by all SADC Member States to attain full gender empowerment. Nonetheless, as highlighted before, more needs to be done, in order to achieve the targets that have been agreed upon at all levels, including the regional, continental and global, towards women empowerment and gender equity.

**Honourable Ministers,**

You will recall that at your meeting, held in June 2017, in Ezulwini, Kingdom of Eswatini, you urged Member States to encourage women to apply for positions when advertised by the Secretariat, and also

urged National Contact Points to submit balanced applications from both male and female candidates. The recommendations were also adopted by Council during its meeting in August 2017 in Pretoria, South Africa. The Secretariat was also directed to apply the SADC Gender Parity Principle in the recruitment of staff for the attainment of gender parity in technical positions at all levels in line with the SADC Human Resources Policies, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, and the SADC Workplace Gender Policy.

I wish to inform you that during the most recent recruitment, the SADC Secretariat endeavoured to implement these decisions. So far out of the 7 recently recruited Directors, 3 are women, out of 13 Senior Programme Officers 6 are woman, and out of 28 Programme Officers 8 are women. Notwithstanding the above, the SADC Secretariat continues to face challenges including limited female candidates who can be recruited competitively and on merit as required.

I would therefore like to call upon Member States to prioritise gender parity while submitting candidates for Secretariat positions. I would also like to call upon Member States to ensure that highly qualified women candidates are encouraged to apply for such positions, and are considered during the shortlisting by Member States.

In conclusion, allow me to thank the Senior Officials and the Secretariat Team for the hard work that contributed to the excellent preparations for this meeting. The Secretariat remains fully committed to facilitating the development and implementation of programmes that will facilitate and

provide women's economic empowerment, and gender equality and equity in our region.

With these few remarks, may I call upon the Honourable Bathabile Dlamini, Minister of Women in the Office of the Presidency, Republic of South Africa; and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers responsible for Gender and Women Affairs, to officially open the meeting; Honourable Minister.

**THANK YOU!, OBRIGADO! MERCI!**