



**EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF HEALTH ON THE MPOX  
OUTBREAK**

**04<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024**

**REMARKS BY THE SADC DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR REGIONAL  
INTEGRATION- MS. ANGELE MAKOMBO N'TUMBA**

**Honourable Dr. Douglas Mombeshora, Minister of Health and Child Care for the Republic of Zimbabwe and Chairperson of the SADC Ministerial Committee on Health.**

**Honourable Ministers from SADC Member States**

**Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Africa Regional Director,**

**Dr Jean Kaseya, Director General – Africa CDC**

**Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen.**

It is my singular honour to address you in this second Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministers of Health in the year 2024. You will recall that at the beginning of this year your committee was met virtually, to deliberate and guide the region on the Cholera Outbreak that required urgent attention from our Leaders both in the public and the private sectors and today we are back yet again, meeting in a similar fashion on another outbreak, Mpox.

Chairperson before I delve deeper into my brief remarks, let me congratulate you for your new role as the Chair of the SADC Committee of Ministers of Health, which you assumed in August when Zimbabwe took over from Angola as SADC Chair. Please be assured the Secretariat's unwavering support as you execute your function.

Evidently our region is increasingly facing disasters of different kinds including epidemics and disease outbreaks. This therefore necessitates regular convening of your Committee at very short intervals and I recognise the important role of this committee in defining our coordinated regional approach in ensuring our collective preparedness and response to public health threats.

**Honourable Chairperson,**

Our continent is currently experiencing a multi-country Mpox outbreak whose epicentre is in our region, with a rapid spread that has led to the declaration of Mpox as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and a Public Health Emergency of Continental Security by the World Health Organisation and the Africa CDC respectively. These decisions were driven by the worsening Mpox situation on the continent, since 2022. In 2024 alone, more than 18000 cases and 517 deaths have been reported from 13 AU member states. As you can see, the epidemic may get out of control if we do not act collectively.

While the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) accounts for 96% of all cases and 97% of all deaths reported in 2024, the recent spread in neighbouring countries such as Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda of a more virulent clade require from the SADC region to take the necessary measures and support the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa who have officially reported cases, in their efforts to control the Mpox and ensure safety for the entire region. We are aware that if not

properly managed, Mpox could spread across to countries that have reported cases , hence the need to act swiftly and decisively.

**Honourable Chairperson,**

Drawing on the lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Mpox outbreak requires a multisectoral and coordinated response from different sectors including those responsible for animal health programmes, disaster risk reduction, trade, transport, immigration and port health and the community at large. We strongly believe that no one Member State alone, can lift the challenge of eliminating the spread of Mpox without strong regional collaboration on cross-border surveillance. While the increase in trade between SADC countries signals improved economic cooperation between Member States, the intense movements of people, goods and services are often a strong factor in cross-border transmission of diseases.

Information sharing on diseases of high epidemic potential and the establishment of a regional epidemic early warning system are critical for our collaborative efforts to address the resurgence of communicable diseases in our region.

I am delighted to learn that during the 74<sup>th</sup> Regional Committee of the WHO AFRO, the Africa Region Member States met to discuss and agree on effective measures to address the epidemic and in this meeting, we want to learn from the responses at the global and continental levels, including embracing the recently developed.

WHO has developed the global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan to curb outbreaks of human-to-human transmission of Mpox through coordinated global, regional, and national efforts. The Response Plan and other important tools will help our response against the Mpox.

Let me also urge all member States including those with no Mpox outbreaks at present to intensify their public health surveillance and ensure that conditions that are likely to fuel an outbreak are eliminated through strong mitigation measures. We urge Member States to continue the implementation of policies that support the building of stronger healthcare systems by focusing on high-value healthcare investments and consistent monitoring of the health systems performance.

As I conclude, honourable chairperson, allow me to thank the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe for convening this emergency meeting and for the strong mobilization of other government sectors to enhance coherence in today's deliberations.

With these few words I wish you fruitful deliberations.

THANK YOU

MERCI BEAUCOUP

MUITO OBRIGADO

ASANTE SANA

