

KEYNOTE SPEECH BY ADVOCATE DUMA GIDEON BOKO PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA AT THE 2024 SADC SUSTAINABLE ENERGY WEEK CONFERENCE

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VENUE: Gaborone International Convention Centre (GICC)

1. It is an honour and privilege that I stand here to deliver this opening address at the inaugural SADC Sustainable Energy Week Conference, Themed: “Accelerating Sustainable Energy Solutions for an Energy Secure SADC Region”.

2. This conference has brought together various stakeholders in the energy sector to discuss modalities of increasing energy access to our people. We need to acknowledge that energy is a basic human need, hence the need to improve and accelerate our capacity for generating and distributing energy in its various forms, with a leaning to renewable energy sources.

3. Countries across the SADC region face challenges related to energy poverty. This constrains our economies, leaving millions of our people, especially in rural areas, without access to critical services like health, education, communication, amongst others.

4. A clarion call for an energy secure region is, therefore, urgent in order to drive industrialisation and integration of our economies in pursuit of fulfilling the vision of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement.

5. Your Excellencies, As a member of the global village, Botswana and other SADC States have acceded to some agreements and treaties, among which are;

- a) the Paris Agreement and the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol signed in 2016;
- b) The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) towards reduction of carbon emissions by 2030;
- c) The 2030 Agenda -Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and
- d) The recent Dar es Salaam Declaration of 2025.

6. Ladies and Gentlemen, Implementation of energy supply strategies needs collective efforts, as it transcends our boundaries. No single country can do this alone. A sustainable, secure energy future requires deep cooperation across borders. By developing regional energy projects, harmonising our policies, and sharing best practices, we can

maximise the benefits of our collective resources.

7. I am, therefore, encouraged to see existing collaborations in the energy sector, such as the:

- a) SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREEE), for promoting wide adoption of renewables and energy efficiency in the region;
- b) the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP), paving the way for a more integrated SADC electricity market; and
- c) the Regional Energy Regulators Association (RERA), advancing harmonisation of the SADC energy regulatory environment for the development of a sustainable regional energy market.

8. This signals that there is a convergence of understanding of the urgency of meeting sustainable, accessible and affordable energy supply. It, therefore, behoves us as a region that we honour what

we have pledged to do, thus moving from rhetoric to action. Let us continue to leverage upon these successes, recognising that our strength lies in unity.

9. Distinguished Delegates, I urge each Member State in the SADC region to prioritise sustainable energy policies in their national development agendas. We should incentivise renewable energy and energy efficiency projects and initiatives, enforce environmental protections, and establish clear roadmaps for a just and equitable energy transition, which is relevant to the realities of our countries and region.

10. As a region, let us set tangible targets, not only to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, but also to increase our use of renewables. In Botswana, we have set ourselves a target to scale up electricity production to at least 8,000 MW within four years from now, as part of our ongoing efforts to modernise our power sector, with a strategic shift towards a solar-dominated energy industry. We believe that by doing this, we will have laid the foundation for a more sustainable and competitive energy landscape.

11. Investing in sustainable energy is not only an environmental decision but an economic imperative. It is estimated that Africa could meet over 60 percent of its energy needs through renewables by 2050. In the SADC region, we have vast renewable resources - solar, wind, hydropower, and geothermal, which can be exploited for socio-economic benefit.

12. In this regard, I encourage development of well-planned energy systems, appropriate and consistent policy and regulatory frameworks, responsive financing mechanisms and well capacitated institutions to harness this potential. We can unlock these resources to power our industries, homes, and public institutions through development of appropriate value chains.

13. Captains of Industry, I encourage private sector participation, as they have the ability to mobilise private capital. From small and medium enterprises to global investors, we invite you to partner with us, not only to build infrastructure but to also cultivate the talent and knowledge necessary to sustain it. I call upon you to be innovative and exploit the available value chains to create jobs and grow the economies of our countries.

14. Ladies and Gentlemen, Let me emphasise that we are committed to a sustainable energy-secure SADC region. Today, we are planting the seeds of change. Together, with the support of each government, private sector, development partners and other stakeholders we can create a SADC region where provision of energy services can create the necessary jobs for our people. Let us act boldly, for we owe it to ourselves and to generations yet to come.

15. Distinguished Delegates, In concluding my remarks, I am grateful for the opportunity afforded Botswana to host this inaugural conference. I am hopeful that the outcomes of this conference will benefit all our countries and bring the much needed developments. It is my pleasure to wish you fruitful conference deliberations and I therefore, declare the 2024 SADC Sustainable Energy Week Conference officially open.

16. Thank you for your attention

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