



REMARKS BY

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SADC DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR REGIONAL
INTEGRATION**

**OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
MEETING OF MINISTERS OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR AND SOCIAL
PARTNERS**

27 MARCH 2025

VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE

- **Honourable Edgar Moyo, Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers;**
- **Honourable Richard Moyo, Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Republic of Zimbabwe;**
- **Honourable Ministers here-present;**
- **Senior Government Officials here-present;**
- **Ms. Nester Mukwehwa, Chairperson of the SADC Private Sector Forum;**
- **Ms. Mavis Koogotsitse, Executive Secretary of the Southern Africa Trade Union Coordination Council;**
- **Mr. Alexio Musindo, Director of the ILO Decent Work Team for East and Southern Africa;**
- **Mr. Justin MacDermott, Chief of Mission for South Africa & IOM Sub-Regional Director for Southern Africa a.i.;**
- **Distinguished Delegates;**
- **SADC Secretariat Staff;**
- **Members of the Media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

On behalf of the SADC Secretariat, it is my singular honour and privilege to welcome you all to this meeting of SADC Ministers of Employment and Labour and Social Partners. Your strong presence here today, with such high representation from across the region and beyond, underscores the significance of this meeting and reaffirms our collective commitment to regional integration and decent work for all our fellow citizens.

Allow me to begin by expressing our deepest gratitude to the Government and the people of the Republic of Zimbabwe for graciously hosting us in this magnificent town of Victoria Falls, best known as Mosi-oa-Tunya (The Smoke That Thunders). This setting offers us a great opportunity to experience one of the world's natural wonders, which is a true testament to the beauty and potential of our region.

Honourable Ministers

This year's meeting takes place in the context of mounting challenges within our labour markets, as key indicators reveal a worsening situation. For example, the unemployment rate remains persistently high in several Member States, with figures showing an upward trend and surpassing 30% in several countries. As we all know, the situation of youth in terms of unemployment is increasingly and truly untenable. At the same time, informal employment remains dominant in most of the Member States. This reality highlights that

the structural transformation mode of our economies is not towards improved and sustainable decent work opportunities.

Decisive action is needed to reinforce labour market governance and strengthen employment policies across Member States. The study on National Employment Policies (NEPs) in SADC has revealed significant gaps that must be addressed urgently. Several Member States lack NEPs altogether, while others have outdated policies that do not reflect current labour market realities. It is concerning that many NEPs do not have dedicated budget allocations, leading to underfunding and weak implementation. Furthermore, there is weak coordination between NEPs and broader macroeconomic and sectoral policies, which limits their effectiveness in driving transformation.

Noting these significant gaps, the Secretariat will continue supporting key initiatives to strengthen capacities for the development, design, implementation and monitoring of responsive NEPs, working closely with our development partners. In this process, we urge the Member States to develop more coherent and well-coordinated employment policies, which are integrated into national and sectoral strategies to drive meaningful impact.

Honourable Ministers,

In view of the persistently high rates of youth unemployment and youth Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET), the Secretariat commends the Employment and Labour Sector for working closely with the SADC Education and Skills Sector in developing the draft Revised SADC TVET Strategic Framework 2025-2034. This initiative exemplifies the kind of joint-sector coordination that is often lacking in our development efforts. This collaboration must be further deepened at the national level to strengthen the employability of school leavers and young graduates, while also equipping others with the requisite skills and resources to venture into productive self-employment.

The draft Framework itself is quite innovative and has mainstreamed interventions to address emerging challenges and opportunities, in areas such as just transition and digitalisation. With targeted investments in training and infrastructure, the shift to green and digital economies presents new opportunities for youth to build skills and access markets. In addition, the Framework institutionalises the role of our social partners, i.e. the employers' and workers' organisations, in its implementation. This is particularly critical, as the private sector must be at the forefront of TVET delivery to ensure skills alignment with economic needs.

Upon your recommendation, the Ministers responsible for Education and Skills Development, and Science and Technology and Innovation will be requested to approve the Revised Strategic Framework in June 2025. Thereafter, the Secretariat will coordinate its implementation and resource mobilisation.

Honourable Ministers,

Regarding the SADC Protocol on Employment and Labour, it will be recalled that you took a bold step and challenged each other to complete all the national processes for

consideration of ratification between 2024 and 2026. In this regard, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Republics of Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe for having signed the Protocol during Summit in August 2024. The Republic of Angola deserves recognition for leading the way towards ratification, following recent approval by the National Assembly. To date a total of seven Member States have signed the Protocol. We look forward to additional signatures, and ratification, being recorded at the next Summit of Heads of States and Government in August 2025. We must maintain the momentum as this instrument is key to the realization of our collective ambitions in employment and labour.

Honourable Ministers,

Over the past five years, significant progress has been made in labour migration governance through the SADC Labour Migration Action Plan (2020-2025). Since our last meeting, Zambia has joined the now six Member States with National Labour Migration Policies, while others continue to make progress in this area. Additionally, Angola, Mauritius and Zimbabwe are among the countries that have enacted key legislative amendments to strengthen migration management, notably on fair and ethical recruitment. To further these efforts, the Secretariat will this year convene a Joint Meeting of Chiefs of Immigration and Labour Commissioners, to strengthen cooperation for the benefit of Member States and the labour migrants themselves, in accordance with your previous directives.

SADC acknowledges the European Union for funding the Southern African Migration Management (SAMM) Project, which was instrumental in supporting our initiatives, especially at the country level. We also thank the UN Agencies, especially the ILO and IOM for their funding and technical support on labour migration. We look forward to sustaining the gains through future initiatives.

Indeed, as we reflect on the lapse of various project funding arrangements, we must acknowledge that this challenge is a new normal. The evolving global order has led many of our traditional donors and partners to adopt a more inward-looking approach due to increasing uncertainties on multiple fronts. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that Member States take full ownership of regional and national programmes by increasing domestic funding to ensure sustainability. This cannot be overemphasized, particularly in such critical areas of regional integration as employment and labour.

Honourable Ministers,

It is commendable that SADC continues to be at the forefront of shaping the world of work through active participation in continental and global initiatives. In this regard, allow me to extend special recognition to the Government of Zimbabwe, and indeed to our Chairperson and Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, whose candidature has been submitted for the position of President of the 113th Session of the International Labour Conference (Geneva, Switzerland) in June 2025. Accordingly, let us all rally behind him at the upcoming conference; and make it the most successful Conference in history through our representation and participation. We also express our

appreciation for the ILO's continued support, including their availability to share key insights into the Conference Agenda throughout this meeting. As we continue to make a mark at the global level, let us translate this leadership into progress in our respective countries in order to make decent work the centre piece of our development efforts.

As I now end my remarks, allow me to thank the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe, once again, for the warm hospitality and excellent meeting arrangements. Your Chairpersonship of SADC has been exemplary and is a true demonstration of your dedication to regional cooperation.

What is left is for the Honourable Ministers and Social Partners here present to deliberate on the key issues emanating from the Senior Officials and to make key decisions that should transform the employment and labour landscape for the better.

Accordingly, it is an honour for me to now request the Chairperson of this tripartite Ministerial Committee **Honourable Edgar Moyo**, to deliver the official opening remarks for this meeting.

I thank you! Merci beaucoup! Muito obrigada! Asante sana!