



**OPENING REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS, HON D. GARWE AT THE
SADC MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (DRM),
GREAT ZIMBABWE HOTEL: 11-14 MAY 2026**

Theme: “Building Back Better Together: Advancing Resilient Recovery and Sustainable Development in SADC”

- The Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Masvingo Province, **Hon. E. Chadzamira**;
- Your Excellencies, Ministers responsible for Disaster Risk Management;
- Distinguished Delegates;
- Senior Government Officials;
- The SADC Secretariat;
- Development Partners;
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my singular honour and privilege to welcome you all to Zimbabwe for this important Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Risk Management (DRM) under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Allow me to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to each one of you. Your presence here demonstrates our shared commitment to safeguarding the lives, livelihoods and development gains of our region in the face of increasingly frequent and severe shocks.

This meeting is convened at a critical moment for our region. The recent rainfall season has once again reminded us of the devastating power of nature. Our sister countries: Malawi, South Africa, Mozambique and Madagascar endured significant loss and disruption due to severe flooding and cyclones experienced during the past rainfall season. Homes were destroyed, infrastructure damaged, livelihoods and economic activities disrupted and communities were displaced. These events are not isolated but are part of a growing pattern driven by climate variability and change.

I would like to applaud the SADC Humanitarian and Emergency Operations (SHOC) for the timely deployment of Emergency Response Teams in the affected Member States. The region stood in solidarity with our brothers and sisters during their trying times. I would like to commend all Member States, partners and responders who contributed to these efforts. Your actions embody the true essence of regional cooperation. I therefore urge SADC to continuously strengthen the SHOC's capacities to be able to assist Member States to prepare, respond and recover from disasters. I am reliably informed that the Region is developing a SADC Prepositioning Strategy which will enhance regional preparedness through mobilisation and stockpiling of humanitarian relief/resources for Anticipatory Action.

Your Excellencies,

The disasters we face today are becoming more complex, more intense and more interconnected. Floods, droughts, cyclones and other hazards are no longer occasional shocks, they are recurring challenges that threaten our development trajectory. We must therefore move beyond reactive approaches and embrace a proactive, forward-looking agenda. This encompasses incorporating Anticipatory Approaches in our programming in efforts to cushion communities from the adverse effects of weather inclement.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this year's theme "***Building Back Better Together: Advancing Resilient Recovery and Sustainable Development in SADC***" is both timely and strategic. It calls upon us not only to recover from disasters but to do so in a way that reduces future risks and strengthens resilience. This theme dovetails with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030); the SADC Disaster Risk Management Strategy; Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and our local development strategies. Let us also prioritize the operationalization of the SADC Disaster Risk Management Strategy, ensuring that it translates into tangible outcomes at national and community levels.

Comrades and Friends,

Building Back Better (BBB) is not merely about reconstruction; it is about transformation. It is about ensuring that when we rebuild schools, hospitals, roads and communities, we do so in a manner that withstands future shocks. It is about integrating disaster risk reduction into all sectors of the economy.

Distinguished Delegates,

The SADC region has made commendable progress in strengthening Disaster Risk Management systems through the establishment of regional frameworks,

Early Warning Systems (EWSs) and coordinated response mechanisms. These initiatives are indeed a testament to our collective resolve. However, more needs to be done. We must therefore continue to strengthen the SADC Emergency Operations Centre (SHOC) and ensure that it is fully capacitated to coordinate timely and respond effectively. We must therefore invest in data, technology and information sharing to enhance Early Warning for Early Action.

Your Excellencies,

Climate Change remains a key driver of disaster risk in our region. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns and extreme weather events are undermining our efforts to achieve sustainable development. This reality calls for a paradigm shift. We must embed climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction into our national development plans. In that regard, infrastructure must be climate-proofed to withstand vagaries of climate change; agriculture must also adapt while urban planning must be alive to climate risk. In doing so, we will not only reduce vulnerability but also unlock opportunities for green growth and innovation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the heart of disaster risk reduction are our communities. It is the communities that are first affected and often first to respond to disasters. We must therefore empower these grassroots communities through **Community-Based Disaster Risk Management** systems, as well as promoting inclusive approaches that leave no one and no place behind. This ensures that women, youth and persons with disabilities are actively involved in decision-making processes. Resilience building begins at the local level, hence our policies must reflect this reality.

Distinguished Delegates,

No single country can address disaster risks alone. Partnerships are essential.

We must continue to engage with development partners, the private sector, civil society and international organisations to mobilise the resources and expertise required to implement our programmes. At the same time, we must strengthen domestic resource mobilisation and ensure that disaster risk reduction is adequately funded within our national budgets. Investing in prevention and preparedness is far more cost-effective than responding to disasters after they occur.

Excellencies,

The digital age presents us with new opportunities to enhance disaster risk management. From satellite imagery and geographic information systems to mobile-based early warning platforms, technology can significantly improve our ability to predict, prepare for and respond to disasters. Let us harness these innovations and promote knowledge sharing across the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we deliberate, I implore ourselves to focus on actionable outcomes. Let this meeting produce concrete recommendations that will strengthen our regional systems, enhance coordination and accelerate the implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction strategies. Let us reaffirm our commitment to the principles of solidarity, resilience and sustainable development.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate that the challenges we face are significant, but they are not insurmountable. Together, as the SADC family, we have the capacity, the knowledge and the determination to build a safer and more resilient

region. Let us seize this opportunity to chart a bold and transformative path forward.

It is now my great pleasure to declare this SADC Meeting of the Committee of Ministers Responsible for Disaster Risk Management officially open.

I THANK YOU!



**OPENING SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE, CDE DR E.D. MNANGAGWA AT
THE SADC MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (DRM),
GREAT ZIMBABWE HOTEL: 11-14 MAY 2026**

Theme: “Building Back Better Together: Advancing Resilient Recovery and Sustainable Development in SADC”