

OPENING REMARKS

BY

**PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT THE VIRTUAL
EXTRAORDINARY SUMMIT OF SADC HEADS OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT**

CAPETOWN, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

21ST OCTOBER 2026

**Your Excellency President Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic
of Zambia and incoming Chairperson of SADC,**

**Your Majesty King Mswati III, King of the Kingdom of Eswatini and
Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security**

Cooperation,

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

**Honourable Ronald Lamola, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation and Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers,
Your Excellency Elias Magosi, Executive Secretary of SADC,
Honourable Ministers,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

It is my privilege to address this Extraordinary Summit of the Southern African Development Community.

I thank Your Majesties and Excellencies for joining this important meeting and for all the work that you have to do at such a time.

We meet just over two months after our successful 46th Ordinary Summit, held in Durban in August this year.

At that Summit we reaffirmed our collective commitment to building a peaceful, secure, integrated and prosperous Southern Africa.

We undertook to accelerate industrialisation, develop local infrastructure, transform agriculture and harness our minerals to drive the development of our economies.

We realised the future prosperity of our region would be dependent on our ability to deepen economic integration, expand productive capacity, create jobs and improve the lives of our people.

We meet today to deal with the institutional matters that are needed to carry out these commitments.

The strength of our regional organisation ultimately depends not only on the decisions we make but also on the ability of our institutions to implement them.

Your Majesties and Excellencies,

This Extraordinary Summit has been convened primarily for the resolution of outstanding issues relating to leadership and the institutional functioning of our

organisation.

Among these are the appointment of the Deputy Executive Secretary responsible for Regional Integration and the election of the Incoming Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

These are important responsibilities that are at the heart of SADC's ability to fulfil its mandate.

The Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration plays an important role in translating our collective aspirations into tangible development results.

As we push to accelerate regional industrialisation, build cross-border infrastructure, promote trade and investment and strengthen regional value chains, we need a Secretariat that is well-equipped, efficient and responsive.

We need an organisation that moves with greater urgency from agreements to implementation, from strategies to programmes, and from commitments to measurable results.

Our citizens need to feel the benefit of regional integration in their daily lives.

They must see these benefits in the availability of employment opportunities, in improved transport and energy networks, in greater food security, in increased trade and in growing economic opportunity.

Regional integration should be more than a mere aspiration expressed in declarations. It must become a reality for the people living in Southern Africa.

All leadership decisions we take today must therefore strengthen our institutional capacity to advance the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020–2030 and our longer-term Vision 2050.

Your Excellencies,

The election of the Incoming Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation is equally important.

Peace, security and political stability are, in the end, the very basis on which the development and prosperity of our region are built.

Our organisation has a proud history of solidarity, cooperation and collective action in the pursuit of peace and security.

We have shown that when we work together we can, indeed, help to resolve disputes, strengthen democratic governance and set up the conditions for sustainable development.

And yet a lot of work is still to be done.

The ongoing instability and humanitarian suffering in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo require our continued attention as a community, and we must work together to achieve a peaceful solution.

We will continue to support the African Union and other regional and international partners to put an end to conflict and create the conditions for lasting peace.

We need to continue to support inclusive dialogue, political stability and institutional reform in Madagascar, and the return to constitutional normality.

In Mozambique we recognise the continued efforts to promote peace, security and development as well as steps to combat terrorism in Cabo Delgado.

These examples show that peace does not come easily.

Peace must be nurtured, institutions must be strengthened and the legitimate aspirations of our people must be addressed.

We have to remain true to constitutionalism, democratic governance, the rule of law and peaceful resolution of disputes.

When we decide the Incoming Chairperson of the Organ, we are entrusting leadership of a structure that will play a fundamental role in the future of our region.

Your Majesties and Excellencies,

As we strengthen our institutional leadership, we must also be cognisant of the larger issues facing Southern Africa.

Among the most pressing of these is the increasing frequency and severity of climate-related disasters.

Our region continues to experience terrible droughts, floods, tropical cyclones and other extreme weather events.

The severe El Niño-induced drought of 2023 and 2024 showed the vulnerability

of our region to changes in climatic conditions.

Food and water insecurity affect millions of our people. Agricultural production declined, livestock were lost, and the livelihoods of the least developed communities were severely disrupted.

As we approach another agricultural season, the developing El Niño conditions present new threats to food security, water supply and economic activity.

At the same time, recurrent flooding and cyclones continue to threaten communities, particularly in areas that have faced repeated disasters.

Such challenges have implications that are much broader than national boundaries.

They threaten regional food supplies, damage shared infrastructure, disrupt trade and place enormous pressure on public finances.

They can reverse the development gains our countries have made over many years.

We cannot keep rebuilding the same infrastructure after every disaster without investing enough in preventing and reducing the damage caused by future disasters.

So we need to further strengthen our regional disaster preparedness and response capabilities, improve early warning systems and accelerate investment in climate-resilient infrastructure.

In this regard, I wish to congratulate His Excellency President Daniel Francisco Chapo of Mozambique for organising the International Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in Africa in Maputo from the 13th to the 15th of October 2026.

We are proud of President Chapo, who has been selected by the African Union as the Champion for Disaster Risk Management and has put the urgent problem of disaster preparedness and resilience at the centre of our continental agenda.

Mozambique's experience of recurrent cyclones, floods and other natural disasters gives particular importance to this initiative. The conference has given us an opportunity to increase cooperation, mobilise investment and encourage a more proactive approach to disaster risk management.

As SADC, we should build on the results of this conference and work towards a region that is better prepared, more resilient and more able to protect its people and its development gains.

This would require more cooperation in water management, agricultural resilience, disaster financing, infrastructure development and the protection of vulnerable communities.

It requires us to recognise that our security is not only political and military. It is economic, environmental and human.

Your Excellencies,

These challenges only reinforce the necessity of having strong, capable and effective regional institutions.

Our people look to SADC not only as the organisation that brings governments together, but also as a community that provides leadership and real solutions to common problems.

Today's decisions must therefore help to establish an organisation that is more effective, more responsive and more able to meet our regional priorities.

We need to keep the solidarity, consensus and mutual respect which have defined our organisation throughout its history.

We also need to have continuity and stability in our institutions, from the top down and from the bottom up.

As Chairperson of SADC, I am confident that, through our common wisdom and determination to make decisions that are good for our organisation and the people we serve, we will achieve the best for all.

I wish to thank the Council of Ministers, the Secretariat and all officials who have undertaken the preparatory work for this Extraordinary Summit.

Let us approach our conversations with a common determination to strengthen the institutions of our Community, advance regional integration and consolidate peace and stability.

The true measure of our success will not be the number of resolutions we adopt, but the progress we make in improving the lives of the people of Southern Africa.

I look forward to constructive and fruitful discussions.

I thank you.

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