



**REMARKS BY**

**HER EXCELLENCY DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX  
SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE**

**VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE SADC COUNCIL OF  
MINISTERS**

**13 AUGUST 2020**

**Honourable Prof. Palamagamba John Kabudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania, and Chairperson of SADC Council of Ministers;**

**Honourable Verónica Nataniel Macamo Dlhovo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique, and Incoming Chairperson of SADC Council of Ministers;**

**Honourable Ministers;**

**SADC Deputy Executive Secretaries;**

**Senior Officials from the SADC Member States;**

**Your Excellences, Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**

**SADC Secretariat staff;**

**Our partners from the media;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I am greatly honoured to address your meeting today. Allow me to begin by expressing our gratitude to the United Republic of Tanzania for the continued cooperation during her tenure as Chairperson of SADC, notwithstanding challenges posed by COVID-19. The cooperation rendered to the Secretariat, and the innovative ways of conducting our business have allowed for business continuity. May I also express our gratitude to you, Honourable Ministers, for attending this meeting despite your busy schedules compounded by the challenging environment that we are operating in, and for the support we have continued to receive from SADC Member States. This is the fifth virtual meeting of Council, and more than 10 virtual sectoral Committee meetings held since March 2020 when Council decided to suspend face-to-face regional meetings in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a clear testimony of your commitment to steer regional cooperation and integration. Despite the uncertainties imposed by COVID-19, the Council continued to discharge its functions. May I, on behalf of the Secretariat and SADC citizens, express our profound gratitude to you Honourable Ministers.

On a very sad note, the SADC Region lost a great man, His Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Chairperson of SADC **from [...]** August 2003 to August 2004, who passed away on 23 July 2020. The late President Mkapa was a great and selfless man, a Pan-Africanist at heart, and visionary leader who had a very strong passion for

regional cooperation and integration, who led from the forefront the fight for independence, development, and sustenance of peace, security and stability of our region and the continent at large. Allow me, on behalf of all us, to pay homage to this great man, and to convey our deepest condolences to the Mkapa family, the government and people of the United Republic of Tanzania. Being the first speaker on the list, allow me to request that we all rise and observe a minute of silence in honour of this great leader [**Minute of silence**]. May his soul rest in eternal peace, Amen.

### **Honourable Ministers,**

During this meeting, the United Republic of Tanzania will be handing over the Chairpersonship to the Republic of Mozambique. Allow me to express our sincere gratitude to the Chairperson of Council, Honourable Prof. Palamagamba John Kabudi, for his wisdom and constant availability whenever we sought his guidance. Thank you Honourable Minister for your dedication to the SADC development and integration agenda, a number of activities were carried out, despite the severe challenges associated with the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 threatened the smooth functioning of our organisation, but with your timely interventions, SADC business continued and key milestones were attained. The United Republic of Tanzania, yourself, and your Team were always available for the region, and indeed we moved and progressed collectively as a united region. *Asante sana Mhe, asante sana Tanzania.*

### **Honourable Ministers,**

Notwithstanding the challenges posed by COVID-19, the region managed to push forward the 39<sup>th</sup> SADC Summit Theme, that of “**A Conducive Environment for Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development, increased intra-regional trade, and job creation**”. Several milestones were achieved in this regard, including the signing of the Protocol on Industry by 12 Member States, following its approval by Summit in August 2019. While we celebrate the signing by all, except four Member States, it should also be noted that it is only **the Republic of Seychelles** that has ratified the Protocol. May I commend the Republic of Seychelles for this commendable step, and encourage all Member States to ratify the Protocol and facilitate its implementation to commence in earnest.

During the year, the region also commissioned 3,595 Megawatts (MW) of electricity, contributed by Angola, DRC, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Tanzania. The commissioned capacity is approximately 90 percent of the targeted capacity of 4,000 MW. This is commendable, considering that electricity is one of the key drivers for industrialisation, productivity growth and economic development.

As part of the SADC Regional Response to COVID-19, the region resolved to enhance regional pharmaceutical manufacturing capacities, whereby Member States are encouraged to develop local and regional pharmaceutical manufacturing capacities that are safe and uphold highest standards of integrity. This is a noble step, which needs to be safeguarded and emulated in other critical sectors of SADC economies, especially as part of the SADC industrialization agenda.

Furthermore, the region developed SADC Guidelines on Movement of Goods and Services across the region during COVID-19, and Standard Operating Procedures. The guidelines and the Standard Operating Procedures have greatly facilitated movement of essential goods, and gradually movement of all goods and services. This milestone contributed not only to containment of the spread of COVID-19, but also enabled the mitigation of socio-economic hardships to SADC citizens, while minimizing disruptions to economic activities in the region.

**Honourable Ministers,**

In line with the directive of your meeting of 29 May 2020, the SADC Secretariat in collaboration with COMESA and EAC Secretariats developed Tripartite Harmonized Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures for Transport and Trade Facilitation during COVID-19, which were approved by the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Council of Ministers on 29 June 2020. The Tripartite Harmonized Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures will be complemented by two Electronic Systems, namely the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System that has been piloted in some corridors in the EAC region; and the Corridor Trip Monitoring System, which will be piloted in some parts of North South Corridor. These systems will enable COMESA, EAC and SADC to efficiently manage registration of cross border trips; the recording, monitoring and surveillance of driver wellness; tracking of vehicles, vehicle loads and drivers; contact tracing; and to manage queues at borders and ports.

**Honourable Ministers,**

In recognition that the impacts of COVID-19 cut across a number of sectors, Secretariat carried out an in-depth analysis on the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on SADC economies. The Assessment indicates that in 2019/20, the economic performance of the region slowed down with real Gross Domestic Product growth averaging 2.0 percent, while annual inflation increased to an average of 12.1 percent in 2019 from an average of 8.2 percent in 2018. The regional economic growth is expected to contract by an average of about 3.8 percent in 2020, mainly due to the adverse impacts of COVID-19. The assessment also presents detailed sectoral impacts, and proposes recommendations that will be tabled during this meeting for your consideration.

As demonstrated by the foregoing achievements, COVID-19 has among others, taught us that we can deliver even under challenging circumstances, as long as we remain vigilant, put in place the needed measures, and establish an environment that will enable us to mitigate the risks and address the challenges. At this juncture, allow me to commend all SADC Member States for the difficult decisions and the rigorous measures put in place to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19, reduce human suffering, and minimize the damage to SADC economies. May I also continue encouraging SADC citizens to remain vigilant and comply with preventive measures. As your Secretariat, we remain vigilant, and continue being innovative as we adapt to the demands of a dynamic global environment.

### **Honourable Ministers,**

This year marks the fifth and last year of the implementation of the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2015-2020). During the year, a Review of the Revised RISDP (2015-2020), was conducted, whose findings have informed the development of the SADC Vision 2050 and RISDP (2020-2030). The proposed SADC Vision 2050, and RISDP (2020-2030) will be tabled during this meeting for your consideration. The SADC Post-2020 agenda is to be based on a peaceful, stable, secure and a democratically governed region as the foundation for the attainment of its three core pillars namely Industrial Development and Market Integration; Infrastructure Development in Support of Regional Integration; and Social and Human Capital Development; aligned to cross cutting issues. The aspirations and pillars of the proposed RISDP (2020-2030) are also aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The approval of Vision 2050 and RISDP (2020-2030) is very crucial to our region, in order to provide a strategic direction to the SADC regional integration agenda, for the region not to operate in a vacuum, **as the current RISDP lapsed in March 2020.**

### **Honourable Ministers**

It is also with great pride that I report that our region remained peaceful and stable during the year, and continued to uphold democratic principles. Since August 2019, five (5) Member States, namely Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique and Namibia held elections, while the Kingdom of Lesotho witnessed a peaceful transfer of power in May 2020 following the resignation of the Former Prime Minister. Allow me to congratulate these Member States for the peaceful and successful elections, and for upholding SADC democratic principles, and congratulate elected or re-elected and appointed leaders.

As I conclude may I extend my gratitude to SADC Member States for the support throughout the year in the implementation of SADC activities, and pushing

forward our integrations agenda. May I once again thank the Chairperson of Council, Honourable Prof. Palamagamba John Kabudi, whose tenure is coming to an end, and to welcome the Incoming Chairperson of SADC Council of Ministers, Honourable Verónica Nataniel Macamo Dlhovo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique. Honourable Minister, be assured of our unwavering support as you assume the Chairpersonship of Council.

May I also express our gratitude to the Senior Officials under the leadership of the Outgoing Chairperson of Senior Officials, Ambassador Brigadier Gen. Wilbert Augustine Ibuge, for the hard work and dedication to SADC agenda during the year. I also wish to recognize the support continuously accorded to me by my Deputy Executive Secretaries and the entire Secretariat Team, without whom I would not manage to steer the work of Secretariat. I thank you Team for your usual professionalism and dedication towards results.

I also thank our Cooperating Partners for the continued partnership.

With these remarks, I am confident that once again, through this meeting, the Council will contribute to our integration agenda.

**Thank you very much!**  
**Merci beaucoup!**  
**Muito obrigada!**  
**Asanteni sana!**