



OPENING REMARKS

BY

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

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

**THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SADC COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS**

ON

**15 MARCH, 2017
ROYAL SWAZI SPA, EZULWINI, KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND**

H.E. Paul S. Dlamini, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland,

His Royal Highness Prince Hlangusemphi, Minister of Economic Planning and Development of the Kingdom of Swaziland and Chairperson of SADC Council of Ministers,

Honourable Ministers,

Mr. Bertram Stewart, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development of the Kingdom of Swaziland and Chairperson of the SADC Standing Committee of Senior Officials,

Permanent Secretaries and Directors General present,

Deputy Executive Secretaries of SADC, Dr. Thembinkosi Mhlongo and Madam Emilie Mushobekwa,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Representatives of International Cooperating Partners,

Senior Officials from the SADC Member States and SADC Secretariat staff,

Representatives of the Media,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured and privileged to welcome you to this March 2017 SADC Council of Ministers' Meeting. Allow me, from the outset, to pay tribute to His Majesty, King Mswati III and his Government for the guidance provided in the implementation of the SADC Regional Integration and Development Agenda since he assumed chairpersonship of SADC in August 2016. I wish to also thank you, Your Excellency, Honourable Paul Dlamini, for taking time from your very busy schedule to come and officiate at this meeting. This, no doubt, attests to the importance that the Kingdom attaches to the values and ideals of SADC. Allow me to further thank the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the continued hospitality extended to us every time we are in this beautiful Kingdom.

Your Excellency,

The 36th Ordinary Summit, which was held at Lozitha Palace in August, 2016, took a number of key decisions, among them, the convening of the SADC Ministerial Retreat, finalisation of the Costing of the Action Plan and Governance Structure for the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap 2015-2063, implementation of the 36th Summit Theme, operationalization of the SADC University of Transformation, and the finalisation of the SADC Secretariat Organisational Structure. I am delighted to report that, with the support from the Chairperson of Council, and SADC Member States, tremendous progress has been made.

The last three days saw a successful convening of the Ministerial Retreat. The Retreat took stock of the performance of SADC and reflected on "***The SADC We Want***". The Ministers engaged in candid discussions on the future of our Community. Among others, they emphasised the need to focus on key priorities with impacts on the livelihoods of SADC peoples, and devise modalities for doing business differently in order to enhance effectiveness and efficiency at all levels.

Resolutions of the Retreat will be presented to Council and Summit for consideration.

Guided by the Ministerial Task Force on Regional Economic Integration, the Secretariat finalised the draft Action Plan of the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap 2015-2063. It is anticipated that Council will reflect on the proposed activities contained in the Action Plan around the three main pillars of the Strategy. In tandem, the Council will consider corresponding key outputs; that are to be realised through the Costed Action Plan.

Your Excellency

The Secretariat remains committed to the operationalization of the 2016 Summit Theme, and is doing so through the identified three main areas, namely; the development of the Resource Mobilisation Framework, Operationalization of the Industrialization Framework (Esibayeni Declaration) and through the planned Investor's Forum on Sustainable energy Infrastructure.

To this end, we have secured funding to support a proposed High-Level Ministerial Workshop and a Regional Investors' Conference on Regional Energy Projects, to be officially launched by His Majesty King Mswati III, in his capacity as SADC Chairperson. We expect that the event will showcase investment opportunities in the energy sector, and open up opportunities for investment, as well as leverage additional resources, focusing on specific flagship projects. Special attention has also been placed on the finalisation of the Resource Mobilisation Framework, a subject, which was also extensively discussed during the Ministerial Retreat. Inputs obtained during the Retreat will be used in the finalisation of the Resource Mobilisation Framework.

In order to monitor and assess delivery and impact of the SADC programmes and projects towards greater regional integration and cooperation, the Secretariat has developed a comprehensive but user-friendly monitoring and evaluation system. We count on the support of Member States for the effective rollout and utilisation of the system.

Your Excellency,

We cannot overemphasize the importance of an appropriate, right-sized and skilled staff complement at the SADC Secretariat in coordinating the implementation of the agreed priority programmes. Following the finalisation of the proposed SADC Organisational Structure, I am confident that, upon its consideration and approval by Council, the Secretariat will speedily move towards its operationalisation. With the new drive towards industrialisation, the proposed new Directorate of Industrial Development and Trade should be able to coordinate effective implementation of the SADC industrialisation agenda.

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to inform you that, following the end of tour of duty of the Directors in various Directorates, three Director positions were filled in the last two months, namely; Director of Policy, Planning and Resource Mobilisation (Zambia), Director of Budget and Finance (Namibia), and Director of Human Resources and Administration (Botswana). I wish to invite Council to welcome the new colleagues. Likewise, I take this opportunity to wish them a successful and rewarding career at the SADC Secretariat.

It would be remiss of me not to commend the Committee of Senior Officials, and Finance Sub-Committee for having worked diligently to finalise the SADC Secretariat Organisational Structure, and other activities reflected in the proposed 2017/18

Corporate Plan, whose budget shall be presented to Council for approval.

Substantial financial resources will be required to coordinate implementation of the Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap, the SADC Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan (RIDMP), the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP), and implementation of the SIPO and other Priority Programmes of Regional Dimension. To this end, it is critical that the region seriously considers the proposed innovative financing mechanisms under the proposed resource mobilisation framework, an assignment that is on-going in consultation with Member States. The resources to be mobilised through these modalities would support both Secretariat and Member States' coordination costs, and more importantly the actual implementation, and downstream investment costs for industrialisation, infrastructure development and agricultural production.

Your Excellency,

As I conclude, allow me to thank Secretariat staff for the continued diligence and professionalism in delivering on the SADC Integration Agenda. Let me end my remarks with a famous African Proverb that says: "***When spider webs unite they can tie up a lion***"; which resonates well with the Member States' unified commitment to the priorities of the SADC Region.

At this juncture, I wish to invite His Excellency, Honourable Paul S. Dlamini, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland to officially open the Meeting of the SADC Council of Ministers. The floor is yours, Your Excellency.