



**SPEECH BY EMMA KALIYA, CHAIRPERSON SOUTHERN AFRICA
GENDER PROTOCOL ALLIANCE**

**AT THE MEETING OF SADC GENDER MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE
FOR GENDER/WOMEN'S AFFAIRS**

SOGECO GOLDEN PEACOCK-LILONGWE-MALAWI

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Your Excellency, On behalf of the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance that is made up of focal networks in all fifteen SADC countries. and also brings together regional NGOs, Men for gender equality, and faith based organizations, we feel very privileged and greatly honoured to have been given this opportunity to speak during this very important gathering.

Your Excellency, I want to register our appreciation for your participation today which demonstrates that you have women's welfare at heart. We do not want to take this for granted especially as we very well know that as Head of State and Government, you have a very busy schedule.

First and foremost, allow me to begin by thanking the Government of Malawi and all other SADC Member states for enabling us to make our voice heard at this strategic gathering. As Civil Society representatives, we do believe that this is a grand opportunity for Malawi and SADC as a whole to profile our advances in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. We want to assure our governments that we are your firm partners and allies in taking forward the gender agenda in our countries.

Advocacy for gender equality in our region (SADC) is unique in the extent to which it has opened the door to civil society participation. Together with our Governments, we have campaigned for the SADC Protocol. With less than a year to go until the deadline for the SADC protocol and the Millennium Development Goals, we have changed our slogan from **"Yes we can"** to **"Yes we must!" As time is not on our side.**

The enabling environment that Member States have created for participation by civil society, through the SADC Gender Unit, goes a long way in explaining the progress we have made. This forum of gender ministers is unique in its sharing of space, and use of civil society as a resource, especially on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

SADC is the only region in the world that has brought together all existing continental and international instruments for the promotion of gender equality into one legally binding Protocol with 28 specific targets to be achieved by 2015. These go well beyond the MDG's which have only eight targets specific to gender equality.

The Protocol is also unique in the extent to which governments and civil society have worked together from the crafting of the instrument, to adoption, ratification and now implementation.

Since 2009, the Alliance, in partnership with Member States, has produced an annual regional and 15 country Barometers, tracking progress towards the attainment of gender equality.

The experience of the last six years shows the enormous value and mobilising power of specific targets. Gains have been made in areas like education and women's political representation. With an average of 26% women in parliament and 24% in local government, the SADC region comes second only to the Nordic countries with regard to women's political representation. Seven SADC countries now have constitutional, legislated or voluntary quotas to advance gender parity. The average representation of women in these countries is 38%, compared to 17% in countries with no quota.

Since the first Barometer in 2009, eleven SADC countries have undertaken constitutional reforms of some kind that have a bearing on gender equality. Some countries have enacted while others are in the process of passing gender equality laws as a way of domesticating the Gender Protocol. To date, six countries have aligned their national gender action plans to the gender protocol and costed its implementation.

With less than a year left before the deadline of the targets for both the gender protocol and the MDGs, we are called upon to revision our future direction in line with the draft Sustainable Development Goals.

In line with demands by gender ministries and activists, the draft global development framework includes a stand- alone goal on gender equality that goes well beyond the provisions of the MDGs. For example the Draft Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cover violence against women; harmful traditional practices; sexual and reproductive health and care work.

Voice, choice and control are the key watchwords in the post 2015 gender agenda.

It is however worth noting that as an Alliance, we consulted a broad cross section of SADC citizens across the region what they would like to see strengthened or added to the Gender Protocol post 2015 at 30 districts, national and a regional summits.

Over the last five years the Alliance has collected almost 2000 case studies of the SADC Protocol@Work, including areas that need strengthening.

The recommendations are detailed in the 2014 SADC Gender Barometer to be launched ahead of the Heads of State Summit. Highlights of the Barometer have been made available in packs provided to all delegates.

It is our desire that SADC emerges as a leader especially as far as gender equality and women's empowerment are concerned. We know that this can be achieved through ensuring its domestication and resource allocation.

Honourable Ministers, your meeting here today is therefore a crucial one as it is happening towards the countdown to 2015. We are very sure that this is time to plan, re-strategize and re-prioritise for 2030, in line with the global agenda in order to keep the momentum.

Your Excellency, we are well aware that in less than a month from now, Malawi will be handing over the chairpersonship of SADC to Zimbabwe.

In partnership with our Governments, it is of paramount importance that we continue strengthening our synergies in the areas of capacity building, resource mobilisation and in the development of broad based gender sensitive strategies. As CSOs from across the SADC region, we commit to working with our governments so as to shape the roadmap to gender equality.

I therefore call upon my fellow CSO leaders to support these efforts in order to accelerate the pace of change in the critical count down to 2015. Yes we must, and yes we can!

Thank you, merci, obrigada, zikomo kwambili!