

Regional Economic Development and Integration in the SADC Region

Lecture delivered by Dr. Leonardo Simão, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique at the University of Botswana

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Distinguished Faculty Members of the University,

Dear Students,

Honorable Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a special pleasure to be in Botswana, particularly here in Gaborone, where, over the years, I have spent many days and hours, participating in meetings and other events aimed at trying to find ways and means to make our region a better place to be born and live for every citizen of our countries.

Having served for two terms as Foreign Minister of Mozambique, between 1994 and 2005, I had the privilege of participating in many events and initiatives that greatly contributed for the shaping of our region. There were many of them, but I will only mention two, as mere illustration, namely the restructuring of SADC from a decentralized institution to its current format, with the aim of better equip it for the challenge of regional integration, with more focus, higher technical competence and vigor.

The quality and intensity of the debates which took place during about two years of the process of restructuring SADC were very high, with different points of view

fighting to find their way for acceptance and adoption by the membership, in a democratic process of building a better SADC Secretariat to spearhead and speed up our integrated development.

Another event I want to mention here as having occurred during my time is the SADC participation in assisting Lesotho to overcome another political crisis and prepare the country for elections. The work then done was intense, given the magnitude and complexity of the political challenges this sister country was going through, but SADC succeeded then in assisting Lesotho to organize elections considered free and fair by the international community, which brought legitimacy to the elected institutions and stability to the country. Unfortunately this assistance was since required more than once and SADC continues to assist, which bears testimony of the solidarity of the region when one of its members is in need.

During those years I was very fortunate to be a member of a team of great male and female foreign ministers and other high officials, who have made a great contribution for the overall development of our region that only history, with its objectivity, will establish its value and dimension. One of such persons is the late Prof. Stan Mudenge, then Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe. As an historian Stan Mudenge was always bringing to our debates a unique and critical perspective of the past, which has meaningfully assisted all of us in crafting our common future.

The other great man is Lieutenant General Mompoti Merafhe, who passed away last 7 of January. From the first time we met, I enjoyed every single moment I have spent with General Merafhe, everywhere. Indeed, I've greatly benefited from his unique experience, firm defence of principles and unflinching friendship. I spent many years trying to understand the source of my strong bond to him, and I discovered we were born the same day, 6 of June, although 17 years apart. I could not share this coincidence with him, because when I discovered it my elder brother, mentor and friend was dead, after having done an outstanding work for Botswana, the SADC region, Africa and the world at large.

Stan Mudenge and Mompoti Merafhe did a great job, a unique contribution for our region, everywhere from the SADC region itself, the OAU/AU, the UN, the Commonwealth, as well as in other international *fora* and organizations. The

quality of their interventions in those gatherings highly contributed for the prestige and respect our regional organization commands.

For all these reasons, I invite you all for a minute of silence in memory of these two eminent sons of our region and Africa as a whole. [Silence].

Thank you, very much.

Thank you, very much, Mme. Executive Secretary, for your kind invitation, which gives me this opportunity to revive through some events which contributed to make me a SADC citizen.

My sincere thanks go also to the University of Botswana for the kind words said about me, but, more importantly, for according me this rare opportunity to share some experiences and reflections with the youth, our leaders in the making. By talking to them, I hope to be investing in our future leaders, to be good leaders.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, even before the independence of his country had expressed his firm resolve and the commitment of then Tanganyika to give support to the liberation of Africa, when he said about lighting a candle on the top of Mount Kilimanjaro that “would shine beyond our borders, giving hope where there was despair, love where there was hate and dignity where before there was only humiliation”.

This commitment of Tanzania for the liberation of Africa from colonialism, apartheid and racial minority regimes was unequivocally expressed by the active participation of Mwalimu Nyerere in the creation of the Organization of the African Unity and by his offer to host its Liberation Committee, during the first and inaugural summit of the continental organization, held in Addis Ababa, in 25 May 1963. The role of the Liberation Committee was to coordinate and support all the effort and actions for the total liberation of the Continent, one of the two main objectives of the OAU, established in the Article II of its Charter. The other key objective of the OAU was the promotion of the unity and solidarity of the continent.

According to Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun, first Assistant Secretary-General of the OAU, and participant of the OAU inaugural Summit, it was President Nyerere who proposed to his colleagues at the Addis Ababa Summit the creation of the Liberation Committee and offered Dar es Salaam as its headquarters. Led during its last twenty years by that great son of Africa, Brigadier General Hashim Mbita, who passed away last April, the Liberation Committee was closed in 1994, after the demise of the Apartheid in South Africa, which marked the total liberation of Africa, thus achieving one of the fundamental objectives that led the creation of the OAU.

The Founding Fathers of the OAU, such as Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Kwame Nkrumah, Ben Bella, Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Sékou Touré, Haile Selassie, Jomo Kenyatta and Léopold Senghor, were pan-Africanists who received strong influence from previous generations of other pan-Africanists, that include eminent activists, such as, Henry Sylvester Williams, Marcus Garvey, Malcom X, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Cheik Anta Diop, George Padmore, WEB Du Bois and others, who, from the 19th century onwards, in Europe, the US, the Caribbean and Africa, undertook several actions denouncing and combating slavery, colonialism and racial discrimination, through articles in the press, demonstrations, debates, holding of pan-African conferences, among other means of raising awareness and revolt leading to a collective resolve to fight against those injustices.

The OAU Founding Fathers and other leaders got their political education in this environment, many of them still as students, like most of you in this room today. As political activists, they were divided into two groups, the so-called the Casablanca Bloc and the Monrovia Bloc. It took a lot of effort, persuasion and persistence to bring the two blocs together, agree to merge and together create a pan-continental organization, the Organization of the African Unity, which culminated with their participation in its inaugural summit that adopted its Charter, in 25 May 1963.

As their name suggests the pan-Africanists were advocating the unity and integration of Africa, from the very beginning of their activism. Therefore, African unity and integration are two capital objectives pursued by the continent, adopted by the OAU, particularly in the Lagos Plan of Action, in 1980, and reiterated in many other resolutions, especially the Abuja Treaty, in 1991.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

Tanzania fully complied with its pledge to support the struggle for the liberation of Africa, in particular the liberation movements of Southern Africa. During that period the Frontline States emerged as the result of regular consultations among the leaders of the then independent countries of the region, namely Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Seretse Khama and Leabua Jonathan and some leaders of the liberation movements, to follow up the development of the struggle, discuss strategic issues, and fine tune the much needed multi-dimensional support.

These informal but highly strategic meetings continued throughout the struggle period, until the end of the apartheid in South Africa. In 1976, after the independence of Angola and Mozambique, the Frontline States started to present themselves as such, but never created a formal organization. The independence of Zimbabwe, in 1980, brought a new impetus to the work of the Frontline States, in an international environment more and more hostile to the apartheid regime, which, as a result, had increased its aggressiveness to targeted countries of the region, including economic sanctions and sabotage.

That aggressiveness was interpreted by the Frontline States as, although slowly, but steady approaching end of the apartheid. It was time to start thinking about a post-apartheid Southern Africa.

Thus, in 1980, the Southern Africa Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC) was established, in Lusaka, to harmonize the policies and development strategies of the region, excluding apartheid South Africa. In turn the apartheid regime was busy promoting its own regional economic initiative, called the Constellation of States, resolutely opposed by the members of the SADCC, who aspired the development of the region, but not under the leadership of the apartheid regime.

Mme. Executive Secretary,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The political situation of the region experienced an important development, in 21 March, 1990, with the independence of Namibia. This transcendental political event reinforced the feeling in the region that the end of the apartheid regime was fast approaching. This meant that the objective conditions for a faster pace of development of the SADC region were in the horizon, because the military aggressions to member states opposed to the apartheid regime would stop, as well as the economic sabotage they were suffering and the new South Africa, once integrated into SADC, would play an important catalytic role for the development of the region, given the size of its economy.

Thus the Southern Africa Development Coordinating Conference was transformed into the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), in 1992, with the stated objective of boosting the efforts for the integration of the regional economic development. In this new political environment, the SADC region could take bolder steps towards its development, distributing among the member states the responsibility of coordinating the different sectors. This distribution of responsibilities in coordinating the different sectors brought positive results to the region, as shown by the statistics of those days.

However, the institutional weakness of a given coordinating country was reflecting itself in the overall performance of the organization, resulting in imbalances in the implementation of the various projects. On the other hand, it was difficult for the Secretariat to effectively assist each coordinating member state, providing the necessary technical support. These and other realizations led the organization to change its institutional structure, in order to bring more coherence among programs and projects and higher technical expertise in each one of them.

The end of the apartheid in South Africa symbolically happened in 1994, with the holding of the first multiracial elections in the country, followed by its admission in the SADC. The expected new political and economic dynamism took place, which demanded a critical revision of the structure and functioning of our regional body. Thus, the restructuring of the SADC institutions implied the amendment of its 1992 Treaty, to reflect these changes and institute the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP). This was a big step forward in the

process of bringing more focus, coherence and speed to the regional development.

The RISDP established the process of the long aspired economic regional integration to happen according the following steps: Free Trade Area (2008), Customs Union (2010), Common Market (2015), Monetary Union (2016) and the adoption of the Single Regional Currency (2016).

Those days, there was high level of commitment and enthusiasm in the member states to implement the adopted regional development plan. Therefore, the first step, the adoption of the Free Trade Area, took place according to the plan, which brought a high degree of dynamism in the commercial exchanges among the countries of the region.

From a distance, it seems to me today that this initial commitment and enthusiasm in the member states to push forward their common development has declined somehow. Indeed, many plans for several areas, particularly in infrastructure and energy, have been publicized as having been approved, raising high expectations among the citizens of the region, but their implementation is not happening accordingly.

I think one of the many reasons to fail the implementation of the RISDP lies in our excessive dependence on the external donors. The old practice of the days of the struggle for liberation of crafting and adopting strategic plans and then seek the solidarity of our external friends to provide ways and means for their implementation is still well and alive among some of us. Unfortunately, this practice has to be continued afterwards, given the economic difficulties our countries went through in the first years of our independences. Today it seems that avoiding to meaningfully co-finance our own development is becoming a paralyzing culture of waiting for the donors. I do hope I'm wrong in my perception and understanding.

A second reason explaining our slow motion in regional integrated development may be the lack of focus and sense of priority in member states. Indeed, many members of SADC are also members of other regional economic communities, namely the East Africa Community and COMESA, but of SACU as well, with development agendas similar to the SADC one. In those member states, to elect the organization targeted to be the national priority attention is not easy, due to

lack of internal consensus. Therefore, the adopted attitude is to let these organizations to run their natural course and competition in the national institutional environment, hoping that time will establish their true hierarchical order. This will eventually happen, but may take a long time and valuable opportunities for development may be missed.

In the political front, development is also slow. It is true that elections are taking place with constitutional regularity in most member states, but elections are not the end of the road, but just one step, although an important step, in the building relations of quality between the governments and the citizens. Our societies are rapidly evolving, with a younger generation taking the lead. This is a generation of the most educated citizens in the history of our countries, with permanent access to information and critical views about domestic and international issues. The generation of the educated citizens I'm talking about is the result of the successful implementation of our educational policies, which produced more critical and demanding citizens.

Therefore, the challenge of governance today implies, among many other things, the development of capabilities of the national institutions, at all levels, both public and private, to positively interact with this increasingly demanding segment of our societies and provision of the necessary and promised goods and services.

The third reason I want to mention, is the SADC Secretariat. This organ is composed of citizens of high technical caliber, with strong commitment to deal with the multi-dimensional development challenges of our region. However, the volume and complexity of the matters they have to attend to are increasing and the boundaries of their actions are not yet a consensual matter among the member states. Therefore, they are constantly over stretched, with everybody complaining and demanding their attention. It is very difficult to be more focused and productive in the implementation of the RISDP under these circumstances.

I think it is time to assess the results and impact of the institutional make up adopted by the SADC summit of 2001, held in Windhoek, in particular to see how the Secretariat can be strengthened in its capability to more effectively spearhead and speed up the integrated development of Southern Africa.

I fully recognize that RISDP is a roadmap of historic dimension and its successful implementation a challenge of great magnitude. However, the long struggle initiated by our forefathers, who opposed and successfully fought slavery, colonialism and minority racial domination, cannot stop in our time, in our generation. We have the obligation to continue that struggle, this time up against a different yet also powerful and pervasive enemy, to reach economic development, permanent peace and security and poverty eradication. Their struggle was not an easy one. It certainly had its ups and downs, moments of despair and sorrow. Indeed, those steps of the same common historic process demanded courage, perseverance and faith.

Today, we are better equipped than our fore parents, I must say this way, to build a common future to ourselves. That is why we wanted to be independent, to have our destiny in our hands. Today we have it, so let us use it to the benefit of every single citizen of the SADC region.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention.

Gaborone, 6 August, 2015
