



INTRODUCTORY MEDIA STATEMENT

BY

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**SADC KGALE VIEW BOARDROOM
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INTRODUCTION

A very good afternoon to you all members of the media! This is my inaugural meeting with you since I assumed duty a week ago. My intention this afternoon is to introduce myself to you and to share with you some of my immediate tasks.

Allow me at the onset to acknowledge the crucial role played by the media in advancing SADC regional integration agenda. I therefore, look forward to continue interacting with you whenever possible in order to keep you updated on what is happening in our region.

I note with satisfaction that in the 25 years of its existence, SADC made tremendous achievements in a number of areas of regional cooperation and integration notably, in the areas of (i) Governance, Democracy, Peace and Security, (ii) Infrastructure and Services, (iii) Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment, (iv) Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources and (v) Social and Human development. Notwithstanding these achievements, our region still has a long way to go in order to emerge as an effective and competitive player in international relations and world markets.

As you are all aware, more recently SADC went through a restructuring exercise which, among other things, decided on the need to centralize the operations of the organisation at the Secretariat and the development of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP).

The main aim of this exercise was to increase the effectiveness of our organization and hence accelerate the pace for achieving economic growth, sustainable development and eradicating poverty.

Concerning my activities at the moment, first, I am in the process of meeting with different Directorates and Units at the Secretariat to take stock of the main activities and programmes that are on-going. I also intend to visit Member States next month in order to get first hand information on what they expect from the Secretariat. This will enable us to prepare an operational roadmap on how the organization should move forward taking into account the expectations of our Member States.

In this regard, I hope to be able to share my ideas on the Secretariat *modus operandi* with the Finance Sub Committee in November, 2005 and subsequently with the Council of Ministers in February, 2006. Meanwhile, I will do my best to ensure that none of the ongoing activities are disrupted in the process. In this context, there should be no doubt that our major focus will continue to be the implementation of Summit and Council decisions and advising our Member States accordingly.

In addition, I wish to inform you that my current priorities include (i) the implementation of the RISDP, the stabilization of the Secretariat particularly the need to expedite the recruitment of permanent staff among other things, (iii) consolidation of the SADC National Committees, the strengthening of SADC relationships with the International Cooperating Partners (ICPs), the strengthening of all stakeholders involvement in SADC business in particularly the Private Sector and the Civil Society.

Having said all this, I am aware of the challenges facing the organization which include high levels of poverty, food insecurity, HIV and AIDS, low levels of investment among others.

With the effective implementation of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) and the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) as well as the deepening of political and economic reforms in our Member States, we should be able to address these and other challenges. The regional plans have clear time-bound goals and targets that Member States have committed to adhere to in order to reduce poverty and accelerate economic and social development in our region.

Furthermore, to effectively implement these plans, there is an urgent need to strengthen the human and financial capacity of both the SADC National Committees and the SADC Secretariat which are the major drivers of the plans at the national and regional levels.

It is also my intention to continue prioritising our programmes and activities as we cannot implement everything at the same time given resource constraints facing our organisation.

THE WAY FORWARD

It is my conviction that SADC should strive for deeper regional co-operation and integration for it to effectively address the challenges of poverty, HIV and AIDS, food insecurity, gender inequality among others. By addressing the challenges, our Member States will be moving a step closer in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Regarding regional and continental relations, forging sound relationships with sub-regional, continental and multilateral organizations is indispensable. SADC will continue to strengthen ties with sister Sub-Regional Economic Communities and the African Union. It is our collective responsibility to ensure the success of the AU and as a building block for the AU, we will continue to be a major driving force in the process of full integration of the African Continent. Our development initiatives at the SADC level are aligned with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the continental flagship development programme. Already our Indicative Strategic Development Plan is the regional expression of NEPAD.

Collective capacity, responsibility and action on the international front should be maintained and further enhanced in order to minimize the risks of globalization and better exploit its opportunities.

In this regard, SADC will continue to strengthen its relationship with the International Cooperating Partners (ICPs). The RISDP and SIPO will be the basis for our continued partnership.

SADC will strive to consolidate itself as a vibrant regional economic and trading bloc and maintain solidarity in multilateral negotiations which address key issues such as market access, debt burden, technology transfer, and private and official financial resource flows.

In conclusion, allow me to say that despite the daunting challenges facing us, our region has remarkable economic potential to overcome poverty, achieve higher and sustainable levels of political stability, economic growth and social development. Through deeper integration we can accelerate the pace and achieve our goals sooner than later.

I thank you for your attention. Muito Obrigado!