



OFFICIAL REMARKS

by

**HONOURABLE DR. LINDIWE N. SISULU, MINISTER OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

**OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON OF SADC COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS**

AT THE OCCASSION OF

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

13 AUGUST 2018

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

- Honourable Ms Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of Namibia, and the In-Coming Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers;
- Honourable Ministers;
- SADC Senior Officials;
- Your Excellencies Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
- Your Excellency, Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, Executive Secretary of SADC;
- Heads of Continental and Regional Organisations;
- Heads of International Organisations;
- Colleagues from the Media;
- Distinguished Invited Guests;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

I feel extremely delighted to stand here this morning, to say a few words before I handover the mantle to my successor and dear Sister, Honourable Ms Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of Namibia, and the In-Coming Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers.

Before I go any further, permit me to express my sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Namibia for their warm reception and hospitality, as well as the excellent facilities that have been put at our disposal since our arrival in this historical city of Windhoek. This is, indeed, a “place by streams” that has several fountains of invigorating waters and fresh air, characteristics that will certainly make for fruitful meetings.

For South Africa, August is Women’s month and every year during this time, we remember the sacrifices and the contribution of women in the struggle for a democratic and free nation. At regional level, women continue to enhance our shared vision of attaining a stable, peaceful, secure and prosperous SADC community.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

When South Africa was afforded the opportunity to Chair SADC, taking over from the Kingdom of Eswatini, we resolved to build on the initiatives that were started in Victoria Falls, were taken to Gaborone and later to Lozitha.

We needed to maintain the focus on industrial development, promotion of regional value chains and value addition in the region. In this regard, the theme for our tenure of office “***Partnering with the Private Sector in Developing Industry and Regional Value Chains***”, was chosen with the full realisation that our goals can only be met if we focus on strong and meaningful partnerships with the private sector, which is part of the engine for sustainable economic growth.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the time that the historic decision, to frontload industrialisation in the regional development framework, was taken in August 2014 by our Heads of State and Government in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe; we have collectively and tirelessly worked to ensure that the dream becomes a reality through the implementation of our various blueprints.

Not only has our community produced the best strategy for our region and the first of its kind, the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap, we have also taken concerted efforts to ensure that we are able to build productive capacities within Member States.

Through this strategy, we recognise that trade liberalization can meaningfully contribute towards sustainable and equitable development whilst meeting the goals for poverty alleviation. Production should not only be in terms of quantities, but also quality, based on effective and efficient systems, while being mindful of the comparative advantages of Member States.

Honourable Ministers,

We all know that for a long time regional industrial growth, particularly in the manufacturing sector, has been less impressive, and our economies are insufficiently diversified. We have, for a long time relied on very few primary commodity exports, making our Member States extremely vulnerable to price shocks. It is now time, that we diversify our economies, increase participation of Member States in Regional Value Chains and promote value addition. We must collectively work towards accelerating economic integration processes that will promote specialisation and the development of Regional Value Chains.

I am delighted that we have progressively put in place policies and institutions that will promote the adoption of technological know-how, ensuring modernisation of production systems, as well as embracing skills development, science and technology. To further realise these objectives, we will have to continue strengthening financial systems that would facilitate availability and movement of capital. Above all, we will continue to ensure that the region has well developed infrastructure to facilitate trade and the easy movement of goods and services.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to optimally achieve the objectives as set out in our work programme, we need to further strengthen and cultivate private sector involvement. The role of our governments is to put in place policies and initiatives that would create an enabling environment for the private sector to grow.

We are catalysts, something which should be appreciated by Member States so that our investment, trade and industrial policies are able to shape incentives to attract private sector involvement. It is for this reason that we have taken a very proactive approach to engage the private sector in the SADC regional integration agenda. In this regard, efforts are underway to develop a cooperation framework for private sector participation of businesses operating in SADC.

To this end, the SADC Industrialisation Week, recently held on 30 July to 1 August 2018 in Windhoek has been running for the third year

successfully. The event provides a useful platform for private sector companies domiciled in SADC Member States to showcase their products produced as a result of regional value chains and promotion of value additions. It is also an excellent platform for engagement and continues to foster opportunities for intra-regional trade and investment.

As we move forward, there is more work to be done on SADC industrial development initiatives. We therefore need to prioritise trade facilitation bottlenecks such as inadequate infrastructure and customs procedures, as well as weak logistics systems which raise trade costs and hinder the ease of doing business. Transport costs and transit delays in Southern Africa are reported to be particularly higher than in most other regions, and have a potential to reverse the gains in regional industrial development.

Without resource mobilisation which provides options for funding our programmes and agenda, we cannot achieve envisioned objectives as outlined in our approved strategic blueprints. Regional integration is not an option and, as such, we must strive to establish sustainable funding mechanisms for the implementation of SADC programmes and projects.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

As I mentioned during my speech in March, 2018 in Pretoria, the SADC region remains relatively peaceful and stable. Peace, security and stability are essential ingredients for sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation, addressing inequalities and underdevelopment in the region.

The region's democratic footprint and its prevailing positive security and political climate is undoubtedly conducive to the promotion of investment inflows into the region and contributes towards intra-regional trade and the movement of capital.

We will, therefore, continue to guard our hard-won freedom by ensuring that Member States continue to adhere to good governance, the rule of law, and ensuring that regular national democratic elections are held. We remain seized with political developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of Madagascar, in order to find lasting solutions to achieve peace and stability.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me once again express, my profound appreciation on behalf of my Government and the people of the Republic of South Africa. It has indeed been a great honour and privilege to steer the affairs of Council of Ministers. The cooperation and support I received from Honourable Ministers and the SADC Secretariat, led by Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax, gave me and my team the energy to drive our SADC work agenda.

As I hand over the Chairship to Namibia, I take comfort that my dear Sister, Honourable Ms Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of Namibia, will continue to successfully advance the regional integration agenda.

I implore each one of us to render unwavering support to the Incoming Chairperson of Council as we demonstrate to the continent and the rest of the world our collective commitment to the ideals and values of SADC.

I thank you all for your attention, and wish you fruitful deliberations.

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