

Minister Lindiwe Sisulu: SADC Council of Ministers Meeting

26 Mar 2018

Welcome Remarks by the Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers, Ms L.N. Sisulu, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa

Your Excellencies, Ministers and Deputy Ministers;
SADC Executive Secretary, Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax;
SADC Deputy Executive Secretaries;
Heads of Senior Officials' delegations;
Officials from our Member States
Officials from the SADC Secretariat;
Members of the media here present;
Ladies and gentlemen;

It is my singular honour and privilege to welcome you all to this the SADC Council of Ministers' Meeting. As I welcome you, allow me to extend a special word of welcome to the following Foreign Ministers who are, like me, attending the Council meeting for the first time:

Hon Minister, Mr Manuel Augusto of the Republic of Angola;

Hon Minister, Mr Jose' Pacheco of the Republic of Mozambique;

Hon Minister, Mr Joseph Malanji of the Republic of Zambia; and

Hon Minister, Retired Major General Dr Sibusiso Moyo of Republic of Zimbabwe.

I am also pleased to welcome to the SADC family, our 16th new member, The Union of Comoros represented by the Honourable Minister, Mr Souf Mohamed El-Amin: Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

I hope that those of us who are new to the Club will find this meeting refreshing and fulfilling. I can at least attest that in my previous engagements with the Council as Minister of Intelligence and Minister of Defence, I always found our SADC meetings focused, result-orientated and very fulfilling.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe it is important to start from the beginning. What is the beginning? The beginning is the founding Treaty establishing our own Southern African Development Community (SADC). The 1992 SADC Treaty correctly outlines foundational principles under which we as member states ought to act. For purposes of emphasis, it is important that I lift these principles:

Sovereign equality of all Members States;

Solidarity, peace and security;

Human rights, democracy and rule of law;

Equity, balance and mutual benefit; and

Peaceful settlement of disputes.

These are the principles that guide us all the time in our journey towards regional economic integration. We gather here this morning to think and strategise together on how best and how fast we can improve the lives of all our peoples. We have clear and common objectives towards regional economic integration and sustainable development. Our experience in Kigali was truly uplifting. We should therefore continuously seek to unlock our regional potential and opportunities to effectively address the core issues of unemployment, underdevelopment, and poverty alleviation and contribute fully to the upliftment of the continent.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am exceptionally pleased that this Council meeting takes place in the year that we celebrate the centenary year of the birth of one of the fathers of our nation, Mr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. To our people and I am sure to many in the region, he will always be affectionately known as Madiba!

Former President Mandela stands out as one of the most notable leaders of our liberation struggle who mobilised international solidarity against Apartheid and contributed to establishing and shaping a post-apartheid democratic South Africa. As we celebrate the centenary of Madiba, we draw inspiration from his exceptional wisdom, humility and resilience and ability to rise above his circumstances and chart the path toward a free, non-racial democracy. He was a true international statesman and we will continue to draw invaluable lessons from his outstanding leadership and compassion, for decades to come.

When South Africa joined the SADC community in 1998, President Mandela shared with us the following words: "Our vision for the SADC region is therefore the highest possible degree of economic integration, consistent with our socio-economic and political reality. Our tasks as governments are to provide the environment that will release the creative abilities of our people to produce wealth to create development".

As we enter our twenty sixth year as a SADC family, we must continuously reflect on our progress. Our objectives in SADC are informed by the SADC Common Agenda which seeks to advance peace, stability and sustainable development in our region. It is important to note that the political and security situation in the region remains stable, though there are some political and security challenges which the region must continue address.

As you are aware, the SADC Common Agenda has also guided us to develop economic blueprints such as the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, the Regional Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2015 -2063, the Strategic Indicative Plan of the Organ and the Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan.

In our pursuit of a common SADC future, it is clear that in our region there is a critical need for industrial development underpinned by a sound infrastructure. As SADC Chair, South Africa is working towards ensuring the practical implementation of the SADC Industrialisation Plan as adopted by the SADC Extra-Ordinary Summit in March

2017. As a result, South Africa's theme for her Chairship year titled "Partnering with the Private Sector in Developing Industry and Regional Value Chains", further emphasizes the importance of regional industrialisation.

Industrialisation remains a core pre-requisite for prosperity in the region and has to be achieved through a strong partnership with the private sector. It is therefore, clear that all SADC Members should focus on the need to strengthen the region's capabilities both inside and outside of government in order to advance regional industrialisation. It is our belief that SADC Governments should identify priority value chains and take steps to attract the private sector into these specific sectors.

As part of our regional strategy, South Africa is also working on a set of deliverables which will focus on some high-impact cross border projects in order to support manufacturing and the creation of new regional value chains. We will report back to the next SADC Summit in August this year on progress in this respect.

Our vision for our Chairship is to provide for ourselves policy direction and for all of us an enabling environment for a sustainable programme that prioritises the preparation of high impact cross-border projects that are pragmatic, that enhance skills, create jobs and boost regional trade.

As indicated, we have all committed to improving the quality of life for our people to advance sustainable economic development. To this end, we have a long journey to travel and we cannot be found to be wanting or to have failed. It is therefore, fundamental that we unleash the appropriate resources and make a concerted effort to work together towards the SADC our people deserve and a SADC we can be proud of. Our gratitude to the SADC Secretariat, ever so passionate about their work. We pledge our continued support as it delivers on its annual work programme and mandate and to strengthen its governance and institutional capacity in order to enhance its effectiveness.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen

We have an extensive agenda ahead of us. Let us accord the work before us the required attention and provide the necessary political direction on the way forward.

I welcome you once more and trust that you will find the arrangements put at your disposal conducive to our successful deliberations.

Thank you.

Merci.

Obrigada.

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