



STATEMENT

OF

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SADC

DR STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING OF THE SADC COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS**

**MARCH 2014,
LILONGWE, MALAWI.**

**Honourable Ephraim Mganda Chiume,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malawi
and Chairperson of SADC Council of Ministers,
Honourable Ministers,
Senior Officials,
SADC Secretariat staff,
Invited Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me, from the onset, to thank the Government and people of the Republic of Malawi for the warm welcome, hospitality, and the excellent facilities accorded to all of us since our arrival in this beautiful city of Lilongwe. It is my humble honour and pleasure to welcome you, Honourable Ministers, to this session of the Council.

This is the first ordinary Council where I stand before this august house in my capacity as the Executive Secretary of SADC following my appointment to the position in August 2013. I feel indeed honoured and humbled to have been given the opportunity and privilege to contribute to the SADC regional Integration Agenda. I wish to assure you of my firm commitment to the SADC regional integration agenda, and pledge to work together, and I count on your support in pursuit of achieving the objectives of our Organization.

It would be amiss of me if I did not thank the Government of the Republic of Botswana, as the Member State hosting the SADC Secretariat, for facilitating my assumption of official duties, and for the continued cooperation extended to me and the Secretariat.

I also wish to proudly welcome the Republic of Madagascar back into the SADC family following the holding of peaceful general elections between October and December 2013 leading to the restoration of constitutional normalcy in Madagascar. We are aware that there are still challenges to normalise the socio-economic situation in the country, but your presence here today is a strong indication that you are gradually overcoming and turning those challenges into opportunities.

Honourable Ministers,

I am aware that both individually and collectively we have a heavy responsibility to deliver on the SADC mandate. Through unity, solidarity and cooperation the people of this region have traversed many challenges as well as opportunities. I firmly agree with one of Africa's greatest icons, late President Samora Machel of Mozambique who once said "*International solidarity is not an act of charity: It is an act of unity between allies fighting on different terrains toward the same objective. The foremost of these objectives is to aid the development of humanity to the highest level possible*".

Honourable Chairperson

The main objective of this session of Council is to deliberate on the operational Plan and Budget of the Secretariat for the year 2014/15. The Council will also receive the status and progress of implementation of the 2013/14 Plan and Budget.

Based on the SADC Policy for Strategy and Policy Development, Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME), the 2014-2015 Plan and Budget takes into account the following main parameters as approved by Council in August 2013:

- i) Corporate Priorities for 2014-2018, being PRIORITY 1: Political Stability and Security; PRIORITY 2: facilitation of the implementation of pertinent policies and protocols; PRIORITY 3: Development of Targeted infrastructure; and PRIORITY 4: Development of mutually beneficial relationships;
- ii) Ceiling of the annual Member States contribution for 2014-15 as approved by Member States; and
- iii) Putting on hold all structural adjustments pending the outcome of the review of the RISDP.

While the overall rate of the 2013-2014 Implementation and budget expenditure in the first 6 months was below 40 per cent, the projected outturn for 2013-2014 is over 90 per cent. Budget out turn in the first 6 months of 2013-2014 was particularly low in the International Cooperating Partners' component. This was because some of the projects experienced low disbursements rates which have since been overcome through improvements in project management processes. I am also delighted to inform this august Council that the institutional reforms at the Secretariat have improved our shared understanding with the ICPs.

As decided by Council in August 2013, and in line with the 5 Year Medium Term Strategy and Corporate Plan, the 2014-15 plans and budget should be seen as interim plan, pending adjustments to be informed by the revised RISDP. Accordingly, the merit of the 2014-15 proposed plans and Estimates of Expenditure should be its contribution in the implementation of existing policy decisions on SADC priorities, and high impact interventions. Key areas of focus for 2014/15 are therefore:

- i) Finalisation of the preparation of the revised RISDP;
- ii) Consolidation of the SADC Free Trade Area;
- iii) Negotiations of the Tripartite SADC-COMESA-EAC Grand Free Trade Area, Tripartite Industrial development, and tripartite infrastructure development;
- iv) Implementation of Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan;
- v) Implementation of Regional Measures to Improve Food Security;
- vi) Peace building and consolidation of Democratic Practices and Good Governance in the Region; and

- vii) Implementation of the HIV and AIDS Cross Border Initiatives;

Honourable Chairperson,

Notable achievements during the implementation of the 2013/14 Plan and Budget include:

- i) Finalisation of the Review of the RISDP. To this end, a Task Force to prepare the Revised RISDP has been established and the revised RISDP is expected to be finalized for endorsement by this Council in August 2014;
- ii) Successful implementation of the Mediation Action Plan for Madagascar;
- iii) Successful conclusion of Observer Missions to the elections in the Republic of Madagascar, the Kingdom of Swaziland and the Republic of Zimbabwe;
- iv) Negotiations of the Tripartite EAC-COMESA-SADC Free Trade Area with Phase One expected to be completed in 2015.
- v) Entering into force of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development following its ratification by two-thirds of SADC Member States.
- vi) Operationalisation of the Project Preparation Development Facility (PPDF), which will enable SADC to prepare bankable projects and operationalize the Infrastructure Development Master Plan.
- vii) Finalisation of the Draft of the new SADC Tribunal Protocol.

Honourable Chairperson

In presenting the 2014-2015 Plan and Budget Estimates to Council and in order to facilitate informed decisions, it is incumbent upon me to present to Council additional elements of the framework under which our submission is being made.

A number of cost-reduction measures have been put in place including a reduction in the frequency of sectoral meetings, and the holding of technical meetings at the SADC Headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana as directed by Council.

Furthermore, the Secretariat has introduced clauses in agreements with ICPs aimed at reducing transaction costs, improving focus on institutional priorities and enhancing institutional effectiveness. Within this context, ICPs will contribute towards institutional overheads. For instance in the Contribution Agreement with the EU, a rate of 7% on amounts spent on these instruments will be paid to the Secretariat, from the 2014-15 financial year. This rate is comparable to what other international organisations obtain towards institutional overheads.

The Secretariat has also operationalised the implementation of the new Procurement Policy with the aim of maximizing economic efficiency in procurement so as to achieve value for money.

A Risk Management and Audit Implementation Committee has also been established within the Secretariat to ensure a coordinated and harmonised process of managing risks, and ensuring efficiency and financial prudence.

In addition, the Secretariat is implementing measures aimed at increasing individual staff productivity morale. These measures include re-orienting staff on the core values of SADC and SADC Secretariat.

In this regard, a re-affirmation of the existing remuneration policy is of critical importance. This will enable the Secretariat to continue acquiring and retaining the appropriate needed skills. In this regard I wish to further confirm the following:

- i) salary adjustment is underpinned by the strengthened institutional and individual performance management process and systems aimed at obtaining productivity gains; and
- ii) a functional review will commence in 2014-15 to improve quality of expected outputs and individual staff's impact.

Honourable Chairperson,

As I conclude my statement, I wish to reiterate my appreciation for the confidence placed in me by SADC Member States and the support accorded to me and the Secretariat. As Former Namibian President, Dr. Sam Nujoma once said, *"a united people striving to achieve the common good for all members of the society will always emerge victorious"*. This organization is a living example of these wise words. I pledge to serve our organization to the best of my abilities.

I wish you fruitful deliberations on the agenda before this august gathering.

Thank you!!!

Zikomo kwambili!!!

Obrigada!!!

Merci Beucoup!!!