

STATEMENT

BY

**H.E. MR. STEVE MATENJE, SC, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAWI ON BEHALF OF THE
SOUTHERN AFRICA DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)**

ON

**AGENDA 60: AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT AND
FOOD SECURITY**

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(Check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the countries of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), namely: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe and my own country, Malawi, on the agenda item 60: Agriculture Development and Food security.

SADC aligns itself with the statements made by the distinguished representatives of Sudan and Nepal, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and Least Developed Countries respectively. We thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report contained in document A/64/221 on Agriculture Development and Food Security which is before the Committee, under this agenda item. The recommendations and conclusions contained therein are sound and deserve serious consideration by this Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

No other sector is as crucial to tackling the SADC regional problem of food security and poverty as the food, agriculture and natural resources sector. The sector has massive potential in ensuring food security, fighting poverty and providing employment to the people of Southern Africa.

In short, the sector is crucial to the achievement by SADC Member States of the internationally-agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

However, while the SADC region is well endowed with a diversified natural resource base, the resources are not used to the full potential and in a sustainable manner, mainly because of a lack of appropriate and affordable agricultural technologies in a number of SADC Member States. For this reason, although overall production of cereals in the region has improved partly due to surplus production in Malawi, South Africa and Zambia, the rest of the region continues to experience food deficit in varying magnitude.

Consequently, agricultural and natural resource productivity among small-scale farmers has generally remained below potential. Agricultural incomes of many smallholder farmers have declined and food insecurity has increased markedly. The high levels of poverty and HIV and AIDS have also adversely affected agricultural yields and incomes.

Mr. Chairman,

The population of the Southern Africa Development Community Member States stands at approximately 228,900,000. Population growth over the last years has increased the pressure on the region's natural resources, thereby posing new challenges for their conservation and sustainable use to achieve food and nutrition security in the region.

These challenges require coordinated interventions by all stakeholders in the agriculture and natural resources sector. In this regard, SADC's strategic objective is the coordination and harmonization of agricultural policies and programmes of its Member States in order to increase agricultural and natural resources production and to promote trade, food security and economic development in the region on a sustainable basis in line with its Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), and the Dar es Salaam Declaration and Plan of Action on Agriculture and Food Security. The Dar-es-Salaam Declaration and Plan of Action constitute a long term strategy to ensure food security in the SADC region.

For these reasons, at their meeting in 2008, SADC Ministers responsible for agriculture and food security agreed in principle on the need to formulate a regional policy on agriculture and food security. SADC is determined to make the SADC region free of hunger and malnutrition.

Mr. Chairman,

Unfortunately, SADC's commitment to overcoming food and nutritional insecurity in the region continues to be undermined and threatened by climate change. Erratic rains, flush floods and drought in various parts of the region are largely to blame for low production in the agriculture and natural resource sectors as are the current global financial and economic crisis, rising costs of food, energy and agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds and pesticides.

These challenges threaten to reverse the progress that the region has made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals since most SADC countries remain net importers of food and are, therefore, highly vulnerable to adverse weather conditions and any escalation in the cost of food.

In this regard, SADC hopes that the political will generated by the High-level Summit on Climate Change convened by the Secretary-General on 22nd September, 2009, will help to clear the way for a successful outcome of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December this year.

For their part, SADC Governments have, in the meantime, pledged to increase public investment in agriculture by a minimum of 10 per cent of their national budgets and to raise agricultural productivity by at least 6 per cent. Other interventions are being targeted at improving access to agricultural inputs especially fertilizer through the provision of temporary subsidies targeted at smallholder farmers. Furthermore, given the role of women in agricultural production and attainment of food and nutrition security, SADC is determined to implement its policies and strategies on the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment in the SADC region.

Mr. Chairman,

SADC appreciates the work of the Secretary General's High-Level Task Force (HLTF) on the Global Food Security Crisis which was formed in April, 2008 to create a plan of action for addressing the current crisis and coordinating its implementation. The Task Force responded very well to the request for a plan of action and produced the

Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) and has since provided governments, international and regional agencies and organizations, and civil society groups a range of outcomes and actions which could form the basis of responses to the crisis.

The Task Force underscored the need to scaling up safety nets and assistance that targets improvement of productivity, market access, fair trade and promoting agricultural investments that focus on smallholder farmers and rural development to turn agriculture into a vibrant economic sector with positive effects on poverty reduction.

In this regard, SADC welcomes the convening of the World Summit on Food Security scheduled to take place in Rome from 16th to 18th November, 2009, in order to look at key actions to tackle the food crisis affecting millions of people in the world. SADC hopes that the Summit will address the issue of food security holistically including with regard to the production, distribution, storage and marketing of food at both the global and national levels.

Mr. Chairman

As a region, SADC will implement its agricultural development programmes through intergovernmental cooperation as well as support from our development partners. In this regard, SADC calls upon the G20 countries and international financial institutions to implement their financial pledges to the developing countries and strengthen the global financial system and architecture. This would facilitate a fair and sustainable recovery of Member States from the current financial and economic crisis and facilitate the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

The G8 group of countries, the World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB) and others in the international community have repeatedly pledged support to SADC in the area of Agriculture and Food Security. We look forward to the materialization of this support and use it to promote sustained public and private investment in agriculture including fisheries, forestry, conservation of natural resources and the environment and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

I thank you for your attention.