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STATEMENT

By

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to the United Nations

At the 49th Session of the Commission for Social
Development

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

I have the honour to address this session on behalf of the Member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) namely: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own country, Namibia.

Since it is my first time to take the floor, allow me to extend my congratulations to you and the Bureau on your election and to assure you of the cooperation and support of SADC during the deliberations of this session, which will focus on poverty eradication.

SADC wishes to align itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman

The SADC region is one of the less developed regions in the world despite being endowed with a variety of natural and human resources. Approximately 45% of the total population lives on 1, 25 US\$ a day.

The World Summit for Social Development in 1995 defined absolute poverty as "a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information." Poverty in the SADC region is mainly due to the low levels of economic and social development. This is exacerbated by factors such as natural disasters, disease prevalence, pandemics and human made factors such as isolating policies of colonialism and apartheid.

Poverty in SADC has also undermined traditional coping mechanisms and reduced the livelihood options open to vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, women and the youth, who are the most affected by unemployment and underemployment.

Mr. Chairman

SADC Member States have predominantly underdeveloped economies that are undergoing different stages of development resulting in an economic and social growth that is heterogeneous across the region. Some countries are well endowed in natural resources and are generating considerable levels of wealth, while others have relatively lower levels. The social and economic performance across the region is reflected not only in the level of the natural resources available but also in the management of macroeconomic policies.

Each of the SADC member states has a history of colonial occupation. While this has contributed to the differences in the post colonial experiences and the levels of development, SADC countries have responded to this challenge by making and have made poverty reduction, the central objective of national and regional developmental policies.

Mr. Chairman

The region has one of the highest numbers of people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS and most countries in the region seriously lag behind in their implementation schedules to achieve the MDG targets.

HIV and AIDS also contribute to the high mortality rates in women and children and high expenditures in the health sectors. HIV and AIDS worsen poverty because it lessens the productive capacity through a reduction in the labour force caused by illness and death, thereby slowing down economic development.

Most of the infected and affected are the youth who at the same time are the productive segment of the population. HIV and AIDS also affect the family unit and wears down the social fabric through stigma which also negatively affect gender relations. The poor and vulnerable communities are more susceptible and are less resilient to HIV and AIDS and external shocks.

The region is also plagued by other serious diseases with Malaria and Tuberculosis topping the list. This situation has made an impact on people's standard of living. Disease also increases morbidity and leads to faster progression of the AIDS virus. Existing policies have addressed the medical needs of diseases but not the social needs associated with diseases like, access to clean water and subsidised quality food.

A more holistic approach to HIV and AIDS and other diseases is necessary to minimise the relationship between disease and poverty.

Mr. Chairman

SADC has been implementing a long-term plan for the region called the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), which identifies poverty as "one of the major development challenges facing the SADC region" and assigns top priority to poverty eradication, achieving sustainable economic growth and deepening economic integration. The RISDP target is to halve the proportion of the population that lives on less than US\$ 1 per day between 1990 and 2015.

The RISDP identifies regional economic integration as a key strategy for this objective and sets targets for deepening economic integration. These include the establishment of a SADC Free Trade Area in 2008, Common Market by 2015 and the Monetary Union by 2016, with a regional currency by 2018.

Mr. Chairman

SADC's Vision is that of a common future, a future within a regional community that will ensure economic well-being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice and peace and security for the people of Southern Africa. This shared vision is anchored on the common values and principles and the historical and cultural affinities that exist between the people of Southern Africa.

SADC region remains committed to addressing challenges regarding poverty in the region. SADC also expects to receive concrete pledges on technical and financial support from the international community, development partners and the private sector in line with international development commitments. We call on the developed countries, to meet their commitments with regard to development aid that were made at different forum.

I thank you.