



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA
DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY ON AGENDA ITEM 29:
ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

DELIVERED BY

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THIRD COMMITTEE**

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(Check against Delivery)

Chairperson

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) namely Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kingdom of Eswathini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own country, Namibia.

SADC aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Morocco on behalf of the African Group.

We take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the reports submitted under this important agenda item, and we take note of the recommendations contained therein.

Mr. President

One of SADC's founding objectives is to "mainstream gender in the process of community building" as stated in its 1992 Treaty, which eloquently illustrates the longstanding political commitment of our region to the advancement of the gender equality agenda.

The inclusion of this issue in the SADC Treaty by which our regional community was established, and its election as a top objective in our subregion emanates from the recognition that gender inequality has negative and multidimensional impacts on economic development, poverty alleviation strategies, fulfillment of human rights, and participation in decision making processes for further strengthening regional integration.

From the outset SADC held the view that empowering women empowers our community, as we recognize the role of women in inclusive and sustainable development, as well as upholding it as a unique vector to address gender imbalance, social inequalities and assuring equal opportunities for all.

SADC's policies for advancing women also take into account that the main objective of regional integration cannot be achieved if challenges arising from gender inequality are not properly addressed. In this context, gender mainstreaming and advancement of women is of paramount importance for gender equality.

Chairperson

According to SADC's Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, women constitute the majority of poor people in the region. Pervasive inequalities exist between women and men in the region as a result of limited access to, and control over, productive resources by women, as well as their limited access to adequate health facilities, formal education and employment opportunities. Furthermore, women are over represented in the informal sector where incomes are extremely low and unreliable and livelihoods are precarious.

While recognizing that these scenarios undermine the contribution of women to the development of the region, and bearing in mind the nexus between the advancement of gender equality and of fundamental human rights, SADC is committed to removing all forms of gender inequality. This includes eliminating all forms of gender based violence, specially violence against women and to combating trafficking in persons, particularly women and children.

Beyond the principles enshrined in its founding Treaty, and as part of its commitment to the cause, SADC has adopted various legal and programmatic instruments, which are observed by the majority of member states. These include:

- ✓ The SADC Declaration on Gender and Development (1997) and its 1998 Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children;
- ✓ The Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2015-2020); and
- ✓ The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

It's our firm conviction that under those frameworks, and through ongoing activities at national level, we will be able to:

- ✓ Facilitate constitutional and legal protection of women and men equally at all levels;
- ✓ Increase the participation and representation of women at all levels of decision making;
- ✓ Increase women and girls access to education and training programmes;
- ✓ Reduce poverty among women;
- ✓ Reduce food and nutritional insecurity among women and children, specially pregnant and nursing women;
- ✓ Empower women economically by improving their access to entrepreneurial skills, technology and financing and to other forms of informal and formal employment;
- ✓ Acknowledge and value women's unpaid labour;
- ✓ Prevent and eliminate all forms of gender based violence and understand its causes;
- ✓ Contribute to the improvement of health promoting equality and equity in the eradication of diseases;

- ✓ Reduce gender inequalities that continue to expose women to HIV and implement gender responsive prevention, treatment, care, support, and impact mitigation programmes;
- ✓ Increase women's equal participation in peace keeping efforts at all levels and to prevent and eliminate incidences of human rights abuses and gender based violence.

Chairperson,

The results achieved so far in advancing women in the SADC region are encouraging, particularly in terms of Members States' Constitutions and other legal provisions to assure the enjoyment of equal rights for women. We include here access to justice, women's representation in political and decision-making processes, and women's access to education, health and employment.

Despite these achievements, we face challenges related to early marriage, family laws, the impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, communicable and non-communicable diseases, gender-based violence and trafficking of persons.

To address those challenges, we view partnerships as an important pillar to complement our countries' efforts towards assuring full social and economic participation of women and girls. These are outlined in our continental and international frameworks, including the African Union Agenda 2063 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Chairperson

As I conclude, I would like to reaffirm SADC's commitment to the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of women; and to highlight SADC's vision of "a region where women, men, girls and boys

have equal opportunities to participate freely as equal partners in all spheres of public and private life, including in all decision making processes, and have equal access to and control over productive resources and services, as well as contribute to and benefit from all development processes and initiatives”.

I thank you for your kind attention.