



OPENING STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY MR ELIAS MPEDI MAGOSI,
SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

**OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TWENTY SEVENTH SESSION OF
THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS
AND EXPERTS (ICSOE) OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

13th OCTOBER 2021

Master of Ceremonies

Your Excellency, Honourable Thabo Sophonea, Chair of the 26th Inter-governmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE), and Minister of Finance of the Kingdom of Lesotho;

Honourable Mr. Felix Lafiel Mlusu, MP, Minister of Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Malawi;

Your Excellency, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, COMESA Executive Secretary;

Ambassador David Claude Pierre, Representative of the African Union Permanent Representative to SADC;

Dr Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa;

UNDP Resident Representative and Representatives of United Nations Agencies in Southern Africa;

Senior Officials and Experts;

Representatives of Intergovernmental Organizations;

Officials from the Government of the Republic of Malawi and Delegates from all SADC Member States;

Distinguished Guests and Representatives of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a great pleasure for me to give remarks at this 27th session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE) of Southern Africa, held under the theme *“Building Back Better from COVID-19 in Southern Africa: Fostering Commodity-based Industrialization, Manufacturing and Regional Value chains.”*

First, let me start by thanking His Excellency, President Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, the Government and People of Malawi for their traditional warm welcome, hospitality and splendid arrangements made for this meeting under these challenging circumstances of COVID 19.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, as you may be aware, SADC recently adopted the new Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-30 to guide the work of the region for the next ten years. This Plan is anchored on the SADC Vision 2050 that is aligned to key global and continental frameworks such as the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the

African Union's Agenda 2063. I wish to once again extend our appreciation to UNECA for its support rendered to the SADC during the preparation of these two documents.

The theme for the 27th session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE) of Southern Africa is consistent with key priorities of SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020-2030. In particular, the RISDP aims to promote regional value chains and increase value addition in selected priority sectors such as agro-processing, mineral beneficiation and pharmaceuticals. This is done in order to develop a vibrant agricultural sector that will stimulate domestic and regional production of essential inputs, and improved investment in productive agro-industry value chains.

I am confident that the deliberations in this meeting will help to identify innovative and practical ways to revive and accelerate our development agenda following the sharp slowdown that was experienced as a result of the COVID-19

pandemic. This meeting, and more specifically its selected theme, yet again reflects the ECA's unrelenting commitment and support to our region's and Africa's socioeconomic development.

SADC also greatly appreciates ECA's support towards the development of our regional industrialization strategy and roadmap. It is anticipated that the Strategy, which is now being operationalized, will help to transform our economies and promote sustainable development, taking advantage of the region's abundant and diverse natural resources.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted to note that the theme for this session takes our developmental strategies forward. The goal of the industrialization strategy is to: *“develop viable regional value chains capable of interacting with global value chains and identify areas where the SADC region can have the greatest success in capturing high opportunities based on present and future strengths and capabilities.”* The Strategy

sets three mutually compatible priority growth paths, namely, agro-processing, minerals beneficiation and downstream processing, and enhanced participation in value chains at the national, regional and global levels.

Taking agriculture as an example, increased agricultural productivity and higher quality products are central to the development of agro-industries and agriculture-based value chains. A vibrant agricultural sector will stimulate domestic and regional production of essential inputs such as fertilizers and farm machinery. Currently, productivity in the agriculture sector, which is the mainstay of our economies, is much lower than in other sectors. Most of the region's population lives in rural areas, where unemployment and poverty rates are higher than in the urban areas. In this case, an agriculture revolution offers an attractive source of employment with potential to contribute to the region's industrialization. However, infrastructure and investment in these areas fall far short of the levels necessary to support a thriving agriculture based economy.

Therefore, as part of building back better, there is a strong case for a deliberate strategy for rural industrialization to locate agro-processing industries in rural areas, facilitate rural industrial clusters and make agriculture and agro-processing attractive for prospective small scale rural farmers and large scale investors.

Industrial revolution in SADC is unlikely to take off without rapid, sustained productivity growth in agriculture. That is why we welcome the discussion held in the expert group meeting on boosting agricultural value chains taking advantage of new opportunities provided by the AfCFTA.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me call upon the region and Member States to take advantage of the 27th session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE) of Southern Africa whose theme aims to facilitate the region's better recovery from the impacts of COVID 19 by fostering commodity-

based industrialization, manufacturing and regional value chains with a view to catalyze industrialization. I wish you successful deliberations.

I thank you for your kind attention.