



Communiqué

2002 SADC Consultative Conference SADC Institutional Reform for Poverty Reduction Through Regional Integration

October 28-29, 2002

1. The SADC Consultative Conference was held at the Botswana Conference and Exhibition Centre in Gaborone, on 28-29 October 2002. The Conference was attended by representatives all SADC Member States except the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritius, Seychelles, International Cooperating Partners from countries in Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas, Asia, and Europe Representatives of the various agencies of the United Nations, international and regional organisations, the private sector, the labour movement, non-governmental organisations and civil society, also attended the Conference. (A list of countries and organisations represented is attached).
2. The Conference was convened under the theme “**SADC Institutional Reform for Poverty Reduction Through Regional Integration**”. The theme was chosen in order to facilitate dialogue among key stakeholders including International Cooperating Partners with a view to identifying additional actions and strategies the region should adopt to ensure that the current institutional reforms lead to deeper poverty reduction and its eventual eradication in the SADC region.

3. His Excellency President Festus G Mogae of the Republic of Botswana officially opened the Conference. In his keynote address, His Excellency the President welcomed delegates to Botswana, and observed that poverty is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today, hence the decision by SADC to make poverty eradication one of its priority areas. President Mogae said poverty eradication and the upliftment of living standards of the people should be the concern of all development stakeholders.
4. He further emphasized that poverty eradication should underpin the development strategies of all countries and called for the coordination of approaches to poverty reduction to ensure mutual consistence at the country and regional levels in order to optimize development gains.
5. President Mogae also noted that poverty elimination, economic growth and development as well as employment creation are inextricably linked. Furthermore, most developing countries have come to recognize the vital role which regional cooperation and integration could play in achieving economic growth and development, both at regional and individual country levels and in facilitating their integration into the global economy. He called for the continued support, collaboration and concrete assistance of the International Cooperating Partners, to SADC's efforts towards the elimination of poverty.
6. Honourable Dr Ana Dias Lourenco, the Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers and Minister of Planning of the Republic of Angola addressed the official opening ceremony and noted that the conference was taking place at a time when the region was confronted with a food crisis and high levels of poverty. She noted that an estimated 14.4 million people will be facing critical food shortages by March next year in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe unless adequate humanitarian assistance was secured immediately. Angola and the DRC also face similar situations. She appealed for assistance from the cooperating partners to cushion the effects of the food crisis.

7. Dr Ana Dias Lourenco acknowledged that poverty in the SADC region is compounded by a number of factors such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, gender inequality, inadequate resources for social sectors and the heavy debt burden.
8. Speaking on behalf of International Cooperating Partners, the Norwegian State Secretary, Mr Olav Kjørven pointed out that poverty was the lack of freedom to meet one's basic needs and those of one's family. He noted that the world was becoming insecure because of the increasing gap between the rich and poor. He pledged Norway's support to countries with good poverty reduction strategies and concrete policies that fulfill the preconditions for development, such as democracy, the rule of law and effective public management.
9. The Executive Secretary of SADC, Dr Prega Ramsamy, also addressed the official opening session of the conference. In his statement, he assured Co-operating Partners that SADC was poised for a definite take-off that will lead to sustainable economic growth and development. He noted that the combination of peace and stability in the region with the institutional reforms and the emergence of the strong desire for Africa to take its destiny in its own hands as reflected by NEPAD's Action Plan auger well for the SADC region. He said that a lot had been done to determine strategies, policies and programmes that will assist SADC to fulfill its objectives of deeper integration and poverty reduction with a clear vision of reducing poverty by half by the year 2015.
10. In passing a vote of thanks, the Minister of Finance and of Development Planning of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Honourable Mr Timothy Thahane thanked President Mogae for his inspiring words and the Government and the people of the Republic of Botswana for hosting the Consultative Conference. Mr Thahane also pointed out that in the endeavour to eradicate poverty there should be clear, precise and timebound goals. He also further pointed out that peace and stability are critical ingredients for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

11. During the plenary session presentations were made by representatives of the Governments of SADC Member States, the Southern African Regional Poverty Network, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the Association of SADC Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONGO), representing NGOs/Civil Society in the region and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). All stakeholders were in agreement on the need to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty if the SADC region is to achieve sustainable development. The presentations also enumerated the causes of poverty and the need for collective efforts to eradicate it.

12. In response to the presentations made, several countries and organizations made interventions during the plenary session, namely; Botswana, Canada, China, Cuba, Denmark, France, Japan, Lesotho, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, SADC Parliamentary Forum, Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), IUCN, UNICEF and UNIFEM. A number of the cooperating partners also called for the development of new avenues of cooperation with SADC along the lines of what exists between SADC and the European Union and SADC and the United States of America. The interventions focused on the relevance of the SADC Programme of Action and activities at national levels aimed at the eradication of poverty and the need for SADC to complete the restructuring exercise including the RISDP so that cooperating partners can assist SADC to implement its priority activities based on a programme approach. The issues of HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, gender inequality, civil strife and the inadequate development of human capital and their impact on poverty were also discussed in the plenary and a number of cooperating partners indicated their positions on these issues. In this regard, the Vice Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Co-operation of Cuba and the representatives France and India extended invitations to the Executive Secretary of SADC to visit their countries during the course of 2003 to discuss the cooperation agreements with SADC.

The issue of debt was also vigorously debated and delegates agreed on the need to ensure the sustainability of the debt relief programmes such as the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative to avoid a relapse into the debt trap of participating countries. The SADC Member States further called for the writing off of existing debts to enable for the heavily indebted countries to concentrate on poverty eradication programmes.

13. Four interactive group sessions were held under the clusters of Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment; Food Agriculture and Natural Resources; Social and Human Development; and Infrastructure and Services.
14. These sessions, chaired by SADC Ministers, were attended by representatives of International Cooperating Partners and Stakeholders who actively participated in the discussions.
15. On Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment, the conference reached the following main conclusions;
 - ◆ that the overarching strategy for poverty reduction is wealth creation. In this context it acknowledged the direct links between gender equality, economic growth and poverty reduction. It also noted that the removal of trade barriers and the liberalisation of financial services can foster growth and poverty reduction, as well as be a catalyst for sustainable development;
 - ◆ that while progress has been made in the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Trade, there is need to review the implementation time frame in order to speed up tariff reduction, which would facilitate cross-border trade;
 - ◆ that the region's products should be internationally competitive which could be done through the adoption of new technologies and diversification of

export products, the value addition to primary commodities particularly minerals and agricultural products;

- ◆ in order to facilitate the development of the informal sector and small and medium scale enterprises, where many of the poor of the region, especially women, are concentrated, there should support for entrepreneurship development and simplification of business registration procedures. In particular, support for the small and medium scale mining sector was emphasised;
- ◆ SADC should fully participate and take advantage of the preferences offered by the Cotonou Agreement, the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the Everything but Arms initiative of the EU as well as those offered by Canada. With respect to AGOA the United States of America should extend the duration of the initiative in order to provide certainty to investors;
- ◆ In the area of finance and investment, concern was raised on the low foreign direct investment flows to the region which have a direct impact on wealth creation;
- ◆ Progress has been made in the liberalisation of the financial sector but concern was raised at the proliferation of micro-finance institutions, which mostly service the poor, especially women, but which are not regulated. It was recommended that studies on micro finance be carried out in SADC Member States, with a view to exchanging best practices, as well as develop an appropriate regulatory framework;
- ◆ SADC Member State should accelerate the removal of all legal instruments and other procedures which inhibit the participation of women in business;

- ◆ There is a need for capacity building and training in entrepreneurship and gender mainstreaming in the region order to increase the supply of the necessary skills.;
- ◆ The need to identify and strengthen existing institutions as well as the establishment of centres of excellence on banking, financial services, trade law, trade negotiations and tax issues was emphasized;
- ◆ The importance of coordinating donor support to capacity building programmes at regional level.

16. Under Food Agriculture and Natural Resource, the conference identified the following main issues;

- ◆ the need for an integrated and participatory approach to deal with the multi-dimensional nature of poverty. This should include cross-cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS, gender and the environment;
- ◆ the importance of a regional poverty reduction strategic programme;
- ◆ enhancing the capacity of agricultural institutions at all levels, particularly at the grassroots levels;
- ◆ strengthening capacity for sanitary and phyto sanitary activities;
- ◆ promotion of technology to address the workload of women;
- ◆ strengthening linkages between research, extension and farmers; ensure that the research is demand driven and market led; ensure value added to research products;

- ◆ importance of the availability of financial/credit facilities to vulnerable groups to ensure their active participation in agricultural activities;
- ◆ enhancing the control of transboundary animal diseases such as Foot and Mouth and New Castle; the importance of small stock development targeting the poor;
- ◆ promoting exploitation of indigenous forest products to address poverty;
- ◆ the need to share benefits from wildlife management with rural communities;
- ◆ facilitating access of disadvantaged groups to land in particular women and youth;
- ◆ providing incentives to attract youth into agricultural activities in order to retain them in rural areas;
- ◆ undertaking a comprehensive regional study on the rural-urban migration of the youth;
- ◆ promoting land use planning;
- ◆ promoting water resource development and management particularly for irrigation and aquaculture targeting the poor;
- ◆ increasing investment into agriculture

17. The main conclusions of the conference on Social and Human Development included:

- ◆ stressing the importance of achieving universal primary education by the year 2015; and eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005.
- ◆ the need to promote productive employment opportunities and establishment of centres of specialization in the areas of productivity was also stressed;
- ◆ The need for SADC to clearly articulate measures to address the link between poverty and health in its future programmes and also ensure that gender, as well as reproductive health issues are clearly catered for. It was also recommended that there should be a regional programme on nutrition to cater for the needs of the growing population, in particular vulnerable groups and households;
- ◆ the importance of controlling illicit drugs in the fight against poverty was highlighted;
- ◆ the importance of Culture, Information and Sports, in particular the mainstreaming of African languages in the SADC integration agenda;
- ◆ the need for the RISDP to specifically articulate gender concerns and strategies to address disparities as well the needs of children in the region.

18. The main conclusions on Infrastructure and Services include;

Energy

- ◆ SADC Member States should intensify efforts towards harnessing new and renewable sources of energy (such as solar, biomass and wind) in the short to medium term and to aim at rural electrification as the ultimate long-term objective.
- ◆ Special attention should be paid to the development of appropriate technologies that will have an effect on reducing the costs of energy services.

- ◆ The participation of stakeholders should be promoted at policy formulation and programme/project implementation.
- ◆ SADC Member States to put more emphasis on providing the enabling environment in form of policy, legislation and regulatory frameworks.
- ◆ Cooperating Partners should assist the SADC Region with the development of appropriate technologies and the financial resources needed to implement identified priority activities.

Tourism

- ◆ There is a window of opportunity to use tourism as a means of showcasing the overall image of the region.
- ◆ Tourism can assist in creating an appropriate environment that will attract investments to a wide range of sectors in SADC member states which in turn will lead to sustainable economic development in the region and hence poverty reduction.
- ◆ Intensification of the marketing, investment and promotion of tourism
- ◆ Facilitation of the integration of community based tourism into mainline tourism promotion and development.

Transport and Communications

- ◆ more emphasis on consultation of all stakeholders.
- ◆ More emphasis on transparency in decision making as the only way of attracting private sector participation.
- ◆ more projects that directly relate to poverty alleviation need to be undertaken at national level.
- ◆ Governments should continue playing a major role in terms of developing and implementing new policies aimed at improving accessibility and mobility for vulnerable communities.
- ◆ The need to design programmes and projects to address road safety and HIV/AIDS.
- ◆ the need to improve intra and inter-regional Communication services, telecommunications, post, and data transmission services in order to facilitate trade and investment thereby contributing to economic growth.

- ◆ the importance of implementing the SADC Declaration on Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in order to enhance the e-readiness status of each member state and the transition from e-readiness to e-participation

- ◆ **Water**

- ◆ There is a need to intensify efforts to improve access to potable water and sanitation in order to fight poverty, increase food security and reduce the prevalence of water borne diseases.
- ◆ Need for the development of appropriate strategies that integrate technological, sociological, environmental and human health considerations.
- ◆ Need to promote stakeholder participation in policy formulation, programme/project identification and implementation.
- ◆ Need for increased efficiency in water use to improve agricultural productivity.
- ◆ SADC should continue the efforts towards equitable and reasonable utilisation of the shared watercourses as a critical factor for conflict prevention and regional integration.
- ◆ Environmental protection essential for the sustainable development and management of water resources.

19. Dr Ana Dias Lourenco, officially closed the conference, in her capacity as Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers. In her closing statement, Mrs Lourenco noted that when addressing the challenge of poverty, there is need to take into account issues which have the effect of exacerbating poverty such as HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, gender inequality, civil strife and the inadequate development of human capital. She called for an integrated and well co-ordinated approach in the fight against poverty both at the country and regional levels. She also thanked all delegates for their frank and constructive contributions. The Chairperson lauded the Government of Botswana and the

SADC Secretariat for the efficient manner in which the conference was organized which facilitated conclusion of business within two days instead of three.

20. The Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation the Peoples Republic of China, Mr Wei Jianguo, passed a vote of thanks on behalf of the International Cooperating Partners in which he stressed the need to strengthen the relations between China and SADC. Mr Wei Jianguo pledged the International Cooperating partners' continued support to SADC in its pursuit of economic development agenda modeled on its regional characteristics. He encouraged Chinese companies and enterprises to invest in SADC countries and take part in the development of the economies of SADC countries.
21. SADC Member States expressed their appreciation to International Cooperating Partners for their continued support and assistance, especially for their rapid response to the food crisis facing the region.

SADC Secretariat
October 29, 2002