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## High level Stakeholder Symposium:

# Catalysing effective civil society engagement in the SADC regional integration and development agenda

## Resolutions

The Southern African Council of NGOs (SAf-CNGO, formerly SADC – CNGO) held its inaugural Annual High-Level Stakeholder Symposium on 25-26 January 2024 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Symposium brought together key stakeholders to foster dialogue, collaboration, and cohesion in the pursuit of SADC's regional integration and development. The theme of the Symposium was intricately aligned with the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030, which outlines regional integration priorities for the development of a prosperous, self-reliant, and equitable SADC. The Symposium sought to identify and build consensus on strategies through which civil society of the region can effectively contribute to the implementation of the RISDP.

Participants included members of SAf-CNGO from 14 SADC countries, including Comoros, DRC, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In attendance were also representatives of FORUS, Global Campaign for Education, National Education Coalition of Zimbabwe, IndustriAll Global Union Southern Africa region, Open Society Foundations, ActionAid International, Partnership for Social Accountability Alliance, SADC Lawyers Association, Southern Africa Youth Forum, SAfAIDS, Eastern and Southern Africa Small-Scale Farmers' Forum, Economic Justice Network, Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute, Africa Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations Network (APMON), SADC Secretariat, SADC Parliamentary Forum, International Cooperating Partners (ICPs) such as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit - The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale (GIZ), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), media personnel from Channel Africa, and some individuals as observers.

### The following are resolutions of the Symposium:

#### 1. Preamble

- 1.1. **Observing** that regional integration in SADC is key in fostering unity, cooperation and purposeful togetherness for the realisation of development and the objectives of the SADC Treaty;

- 1.2. **Cognisant** of Articles 16A and 23 of the SADC Treaty which commits SADC member states to fully engage the peoples and civil society of the region in regional integration and development;
- 1.3. **Reaffirming and recommitting** to a Southern Africa regional community in which every human being lives a dignified, peaceful and secure life and participate freely in issues that affect them;
- 1.4. **Believing** that cooperation and partnerships between the state and non-state actors and among the non-state actors is an important ingredient of good governance;
- 1.5. **Concerned** about the continued absence of coherent policies, legislation and actions that enable full participation of people and civil society in matters that affect their lives in the region;
- 1.6. **Further concerned** about the high level of inequality and poverty resulting from the sluggish and inconsistent implementation of regional protocols and policies aimed at empowering citizens and ensuring equitable access to opportunities and resources within our region; and
- 1.7. **Reiterating** previous resolutions of non-state actors (NSAs) in the region on **The SADC We Want**, including the reinstatement of the original SADC Tribunal, transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a legislative body, strengthening of the SADC Secretariat and its transformation into a Regional Authority and the free movement of persons.

## 2. On SADC Secretariat and SADC Member States

- 2.1. **Realising** that there is still an urgent need to find a healthy balance between regional integration and national sovereignty to expedite the implementation of regional strategies and policies in a coherent and coordinated manner;
- 2.2. **Aware** of the challenges that SADC Member States face due to their memberships in multiple regional economic communities;
- 2.3. **Noting** that SADC and Member States have faced challenges in implementing and giving effect to the Regional Poverty Observatory and Regional Poverty Reduction Framework;
- 2.4. **Noting and appreciating** the steps currently underway to operationalise the SADC Non-State Actors Engagement Mechanism; and
- 2.5. **Encouraged** by the progress towards the operationalisation of the Regional Development Fund towards realising the long-term vision of effective mobilisation of homegrown financial resources for regional development.

## **Therefore**

- 2.6.** We call on SADC Member States to create an enabling environment for NSAs to participate in and constructively engage with SADC processes and discussions on regional priorities as outlined in the RISDP 2020-2030;
- 2.7.** Encourage SADC Member States to work together with national civil society in the domestication of SADC policies and SADC programmes and to enhance the visibility of SADC at national level;
- 2.8.** Call on SADC Member States to revisit and resuscitate the Regional Poverty Reduction Framework and adequately fund the regional and national poverty observatories;
- 2.9.** Call upon Member States to prioritise the financing of development goals by expediting the operationalisation of the SADC Regional Development Fund.
- 2.10.** Urge SADC Member States and SAf-CNGO to continue and accelerate the sharing of experience, knowledge and information on best practices in promoting sustainable human and social development;
- 2.11.** Encourage SADC Member States to improve the collection, sharing and harmonisation of statistics and information to better inform all interventions and programmes at national and regional levels;
- 2.12.** Call on SADC Member States to expedite the establishment and operationalisation of SADC National Committees and ensure their adequate financial, human and material resourcing, in accordance with the SADC Treaty;
- 2.13.** Call on SADC Member States and the SADC Secretariat to facilitate and promote the inclusion of NSAs in the establishment and operationalisation of SADC National Committees as effective platforms for participation in the national implementation of the SADC regional integration agenda; and
- 2.14.** Urge SAf-CNGO members across the region to strengthen their capacity to participate in and contribute to the operationalisation of SADC National Committees.

## **3. On SADC Parliamentary Forum**

- 3.1.** Appreciating the steps currently underway to transform the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a regional parliament; and
- 3.2.** Recognising the importance of fostering open and transparent parliamentary processes in Southern Africa.

## **Therefore**

- 3.3.** Resolve that SAf-CNGO develops and advances a framework that seeks to formulate a robust engagement mechanism between civil society and parliamentarians at national and regional levels;
- 3.4.** Call on SADC Member States to expedite the transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum to a fully-fledged regional parliament with legislative and oversight competences; and
- 3.5.** SAf-CNGO commits to revisiting the CSOs' "SADC We Want" Vision to ensure it meets the evolving context and repositions civil society priorities for constructive engagement with the development agenda over the next five years.

## **4. On advancing SAf-CNGO's key strategic and thematic engagements**

### **4.1. Climate change**

- 4.1.1.** Noting that climate change impacts on human security, development and livelihoods as well as the natural environment; and further noting that girls and women do not experience climate change in the same ways as boys and men due to historical and structural gender inequalities — which also affect how, and to what extent, girls and women can lead, make decisions, take action, and advance solutions to combat climate change; and
- 4.1.2.** Concerned with inadequate resources for climate financing and little progress on the implementation of Conference of Parties (COP) resolutions;

## **Therefore**

- 4.1.3** Call on SADC member States to develop a regional just transition development framework through an open and consultative process of key stakeholders including within the civil society movement;
- 4.1.4** Call on SADC Member States to develop (through a consultative process) and submit a regional position paper responding to the UNFCCC Global Stocktake;
- 4.1.5** That the SADC Member States put forward demands on climate financing based on harmonising and meeting the commitments of the existing funding mechanisms (i.e., the Green Fund, the Global Environment Facility, the Special Climate Change Fund and the Adaptation Fund) when the context of addressing the global South's debt.

## **4.2 Education**

- 4.2.1** Cognisant that education is a basic human right, an instrument for social change, a stepping stone to other human rights, a powerful tool for lifting marginalised and excluded children and adults out of poverty, and that it is the responsibility of states to fulfil this right.

### ***Therefore***

- 4.2.2** SAf-CNGO and its members, thematic networks and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) commits to partnering with SADC Member States and the SADC Secretariat to advance the right to education for socio-economic development;
- 4.2.3** SAf-CNGO and its members will ensure that education is one of the key thematic areas to be focused on going forward; and
- 4.2.4** Resolved to support the SADC Secretariat to develop a regional monitoring tool on education.

## **4.3 Service delivery and social accountability**

- 4.3.1** Deeply concerned that social and human development in the region has not improved for the past decade, despite adopting progressive policies and protocols in the SADC region.

### ***Therefore***

- 4.3.2** Call for the inclusive, and socially accountable, management of public resources by SADC Member States for the delivery of gender-responsive public services in fulfillment of RISDP and other regional commitments, as guided by the SADC Model Law on Public Financial Management; and
- 4.3.3** Resolved to actively participate in consultative processes toward the development and review of regional agreements, such as the review of the SADC Regional Agricultural Investment Plan and, more generally, the expected mid-term review of the RISDP 2020-2030, and other agreements to be reviewed this year, as relevant.
- 4.3.4** Call for more emphasis to be placed on the fight against GBV through continued monitoring of SADC's Regional Strategy and Framework of Action (2018-2030), which facilitates the implementation and monitoring of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development

## **4.4 Trade and development**

- 4.4.1** Believing that diversification and complimentary rather than competitive economic structures are required in implementing Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other

regional and global (WTO) commitments; Alarmed by the unsustainable demands being introduced in Economic Partnership Agreements such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Measures of the EU; Reiterating that structural transformation of economies away from primary commodity dependence is urgently needed for production, industrialisation and trade; and

- 4.4.2** Concerned that SADC economies are still male-dominated: Women constitute the majority of the poor but lack access to productive resources. SADC countries have increasingly rising debt levels posing a significant threat to development. Women continue to bear the brunt of reduced economic opportunities as a result of increasing debt levels in the region;

**Therefore**

- 4.4.3** Call on SAf-CNGO and its members to invest in developing the required competencies and capacities to effectively participate in the consultative structures and processes that exist and are being created at the national and regional levels to influence and improve the realisation of the RISDP development goals and objectives;

- 4.4.4** Further call on SADC to strengthen its commitment and actions towards meeting its objective of enhancing gender equality as well as women's empowerment and development, and eliminating gender-based violence. This can be done by further the realisation of increased participation of women in regional development and enhanced equal access to opportunities and gender parity.

**4.5 Women, youth and digital trade**

- 4.5.1** Recognising that there is need to facilitate access to digital technologies through relevant and contextual education, policy reforms, and resources; and to facilitate youth and women to own factors of production, and enhance digital security for the greater development of the region.

**Therefore**

- 4.5.2** The SAf-CNGO calls on SADC Member States to work towards harnessing the women and youth dividends in digitalisation and development by inclusively integrating current digital technology into all areas of development.

- 4.5.3** Calls on SADC Member states to Integrate gender mainstreaming in all national development as well as regional integration policies, plans and strategies.

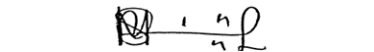
## 5 Partnering with ICPs

- 5.1 Understanding the strategic opportunities created through international solidarity, the SAf-CNGO commits to engaging its cooperating and development partners to improve the identification of mutual development areas and define mutually sustainable partnerships.

Signed:



SAf-CNGO President



SAf-CNGO Executive Director

05 March 2024