



SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE ISHMAEL NDAILA ONANI, MP PRESENTING THE REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES (FANR) AND TRADE, INDUSTRY, FINANCE AND INVESTMENT (TIFI)

Mr President, I beg to move that this Plenary Assembly do adopt the Report of the of the Joint Committee on Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) and Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment to the 52nd Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, laid on the table on 5th December, 2022.

Mr President, the Joint Committee draws its mandate from Article 14 of the Constitution of the SADC PF and Rule 42 (b) and (c) of the Rules of Procedure of the SADC PF.

The Committee met on 1st May, 2022, to consider the theme *‘Expanding Investment in Agroecology in Southern Africa for Sustainable Development and Climate Adaptation.’* The Committee

was privileged to benefit from presentations by highly qualified and experienced resource persons from within the SADC Region.

Sir, allow me to highlight some salient issues that the Joint Committee encountered during its deliberations.

Mr President,

Let me begin by stating that the agriculture is of major social and economic importance in the SADC region. The region is relatively well endowed with arable land and water resources which are critical for a thriving agricultural sector. However, despite such endowment, the agriculture sector is characterised by a number of challenges such as low investments and the adverse effects of climate change, among others.

With regard to climate change, this August Assembly will agree with me that some countries in the region are already experiencing the effects of climate change in the form of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods. It is also a fact that most developing countries, SADC countries inclusive, have very low adaptive capacity to cope with the challenges brought about by climate change. Sadly, this phenomenon has a huge bearing on the food security of the people of the region. One of the motivating factors for the region to transition from industrial agriculture to agroecology is the fact that agroecology can be used to fight climate change. Studies conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation in

Kenya and Senegal revealed that agroecological approaches helped build resilience through increased adaptive capacity and reduced vulnerability in agroecosystems.

It is, therefore, imperative that as SADC Member States, we begin to look at agriculture through a climate change lens and ensure that we dedicate enough resources towards climate mitigation and adaptation.

This Joint Committee learnt through its interactions with the resource persons that most SADC Member States do not prioritise investments towards the agriculture sector. According to the 2022 African Union Biennial Report on the Malabo Declaration, only Seychelles (8.87), Egypt (8.56), Eswatini (8.54), and Zambia (8.07) against the 2022 benchmark of (7.5) were on track to achieve Commitment No. 2 on Investment Finance in Agriculture by the year 2025. These statistics are a source of worry because without meaningful investments, it will be difficult to grow the agriculture sector. In this regard, this Joint Committee strongly urges SADC Member states to take the necessary steps towards fulfilling their Seven Malabo Declaration commitments as required.

Further, Mr President, another area of concern relates to the Malabo Declaration is the failure by some SADC Governments to submit data as required. This data is critical to the compilation of Biennial Review Reports. In this vein, all SADC Member States are

encouraged to strengthen their agricultural data collection and management systems to ensure that all the Malabo Declaration goals and targets are accordingly reported upon.

Mr President,

Agroecology utilises natural inputs which are environmental friendly, this is the opposite of industrial agriculture which relies heavily on hybrid seeds, chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and reduces the carrying capacity of ecosystems over time. It is also noteworthy that agroecology is not a new concept in Africa and that many countries are already practicing it. However, while agroecology is practised in some SADC countries, it is not reflected in most Member States' policy documents or even at regional level. In light of the foregoing, the Joint Committee strongly urges SADC Member States to ensure that agroecology is entrenched in respective Member countries' legislation, policies and national development plans in order to promote sustainable agricultural practices.

Let me now acquaint this House with one of the notable findings that this Joint Committee came across during its deliberations. The Joint Committee is gratified to report that Zimbabwe has made tremendous strides in its quest to transition from industrial agriculture to agroecology. The Zimbabwean Government has in its National Agriculture Policy Framework for 2019 – 2030 clearly stated that “the process of enhancing agricultural productivity and

production must be anchored in sustainable production systems based on agroecology”.

Mr President,

During its deliberations, concern was raised to the effect that agroecology as a farming system could not produce enough food to guarantee the food security of the people in the region. This arose mostly from the fact that conventional agriculture was mechanised and had the ability to produce more food. It is important to note the Centre for Coordination of Agriculture Research and Development for Southern Africa conducted studies in Malawi focusing on agroecology and some of the findings of the study point to the fact that transitioning to agroecology would result in improved food security, income and sustainable land use.

Following the above deliberations, the Committee recommends to the 51st Plenary Assembly to:

- (i) **URGE** SADC Members States to prioritise funding and promote investments in order to improve and sustain the performance of the agriculture sector and ensure a food secure region.
- (ii) **FURTHER URGE SADC** Member States to strengthen and/or develop robust mechanisms to prevent misuse of both domestic and foreign public resources in the agriculture sector.
- (iii) **ENCOURAGE** SADC Parliaments and parliamentarians to strengthen their oversight role in execution of policies, laws and budgets relating to agriculture in general and climate change in particular.
- (iv) **CALL** on SADC Member States to review, inter alia, legislation, policies and national development plans in order to promote agroecology. Noting

that although the agroecology farming system is practised in many SADC countries, it is absent in critical policy documents both at national and regional level.

- (v) **IMPLORE** SADC Member states to fulfil their seven Malabo Declaration commitments and progressively allocate at least 10 per cent of public expenditure to appropriate and high-quality agriculture and nutrition, including agroecology.
- (vi) **ENCOURAGE** SADC Governments to strengthen agricultural data collection and management systems to ensure that all Malabo Declarations goals and targets are accordingly reported, noting that failure by Member States to submit data rendered the Malabo Biennial Review Reports incomplete.
- (vii) **ENCOURAGE** Member States to promote education and knowledge transfer on agroecology and related practices on all levels of education, namely; university; vocational education; formal; and informal. This is critical for all stakeholders especially smallholder farmers for them to understand the reasons for adopting such an approach to farming.
- (viii) **IMPLORE** SADC Member States to ensure that the transition from industrial agriculture to agroecology should be preceded by robust research to ensure that the process does not create inequalities and food insecurity in the region.

Finally, Mr President, the Joint Committee wishes to place on record its gratitude to the SADC PF secretariat for the sterling work that went into facilitating its meeting whose output is this report. The Joint Committee further extends its appreciation to all the resource persons who delivered insightful and well researched presentations. Lastly, appreciation goes to ActionAid International, and particularly the Partnership for Social Accountability.

Having said that, Mr President, I commend the Report of the Joint Committee for favourable consideration by this august Assembly.

Mr President, I beg to move!
