



SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SADC PF STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRADE, INDUSTRY, FINANCE AND INVESTMENT TO THE 52ND PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION

Mr President, I beg to move that the 52nd Plenary Assembly do adopt the Report of the Standing Committee on Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment, laid on the table of the House on 5 December, 2022.

Mr President, pursuant to its mandate as set out in Rule 42 (b) of the Rules of Procedure, the Standing Committee on Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment convened its meeting virtually, in form of a public hearing, ahead of the 52nd Plenary Assembly on Saturday, 26th November, 2022.

The public hearing was held under the theme: “*Consolidating Democracy by Bringing Parliament to the People*”. It was convened to provide an opportunity for direct engagement between SADC citizens and citizens’ representatives in the quest to capture current and emerging issues prevailing in the socioeconomic environment.

Mr President, as this August House may know, public hearings are a functional framework in advancing participatory democracy as they provide a vehicle for direct public involvement in matters of common interest. As the Forum is in the process of transforming into a consultative and deliberative SADC Regional Parliament, there is need for deeper and more impactful interaction with citizens to bolster their confidence in the benefits of parliamentary engagement at national and regional level.

Mr President, some of the submissions made at the public hearing confirmed the prevailing impediments to free movement of people in the SADC Region and Africa at large. It is regrettable that despite the many existing Regional Economic Communities, free movement of people is not guaranteed within the Region and in Africa. The

prevailing situation leaves very little hope and threatens prospects for both trade in services and trade in goods, especially the movement of medical supplies and other essential commodities in the continent.

Evidently, Mr President, services are increasingly becoming tradable across borders and continue to play a significant role in the economic growth of SADC countries and largely contribute to competitiveness of businesses and export diversification. The relevance of trade in services was visibly witnessed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when travel restrictions were in effect and heavily impacted this particular type of trade. Given the current space that trade in services occupies in international trade, Mr President, the SADC Region cannot afford to pose unnecessary restrictions on free movement of people.

Mr President, the matter of informal cross border trade was also extensively discussed during the public hearing. What emerged is that over eighty percent of women are active participants in informal cross border trade in Southern Africa. Sadly, the valuable contribution of women informal traders to trade in Sub-Saharan Africa remains largely unrecognised.

Despite the existence of policy frameworks at regional level, cross border traders, majority of whom were women, continue to face numerous challenges which include sexual harassment, lack of adequate information on customs procedures and information on

new developments, including the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement, and many other non-tariff barriers.

Following the presentations and the deliberations that ensued, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** that Small scale cross border trade, which is often characterised by more women has broad poverty, employment, food security and other development ramifications.
- ii. **FURTHER NOTED** that while efficient and functional trade programmes are necessary to address various challenges faced by informal cross border traders, they were insufficient.
- iii. **RECALLED** that the Revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2016) provided for the empowerment of women, elimination of discrimination and the promotion of gender equality and equity through gender-responsive legislation, policies, programmes and projects.
- iv. **COMMENDED** SADC for extensively deliberating on matters of value addition and industry promotion at its 42nd Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government held in August, 2022 under theme *“Promoting industrialisation through, agro-*

processing, mineral beneficiation, and regional value chains for inclusive and resilient economic growth”.

Given the foregoing, therefore, the Committee recommends that the 52nd Plenary Assembly should:

- a) **CALL UPON** SADC countries to explore joint initiatives and research with other countries of the region in order to scale up production of condoms and close up the prevailing annual deficiency of 3 billion condoms in Sub-Sahara Africa and improve access to condoms.
- b) **URGE** SADC States to build competitive and resilient pharmaceutical value chains to guarantee commodity security given the current status of most SADC countries being net importers of medical and pharmaceutical products and the risk it places on the health of the regional population;
- c) **ENCOURAGE** SADC Parliamentary Forum in collaboration with SADC Secretariat and SADC Governments to aggressively advocate for operationalisation of the proposed health finance hub in order to accelerate efforts towards sustainable regional health commodity security and universal health coverage through sustainable health financing.

- d)** In light of the growing population of young people, **CALL UPON** SADC Member states to ensure that there was full and meaningful engagement of young people in all discussions pertaining to the regionalisation and domestication of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.
- e)** **IMPLORE** SADC governments to put in place concrete measures as well as a mix of interventions that directly address cross border trade challenges such as infrastructure, security and cumbersome trade requirements which have direct impact on the cost of trade.
- f)** **ENCOURAGE** Member States to intensify the flow and exchange of information among traders in order to eliminate unnecessary delays at border posts. Further, **URGE** SADC government to enhance elimination and reporting mechanisms for non-tariff barriers at regional level.
- g)** **DIRECT** the SADC PF secretariat to collaborate with the SADC Secretariat and other regional partners in sensitising citizens and Parliamentarians regarding the Revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2016) and related keys issues on gender-responsive legislation, policies and programmes, SADC Vision 2050SADC and Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030.

- h) IMPLORE** SADC PF, in collaboration with national Parliaments and the civil society, to scale up monitoring mechanisms and ensure that respective SADC governments design and implement trade policies that promote inclusive development such as gender mainstreaming.

- i) CALL UPON** SADC Member states to aggressively build capacities in value addition and mineral beneficiation to minimise economic costs as a result of exporting unfinished products and in turn capitalise on the intrinsic benefits such as employment opportunities, development of related industries among others.

I therefore submit these recommendations to this 52nd Plenary Assembly for favourable consideration.

Mr President, I beg to move.