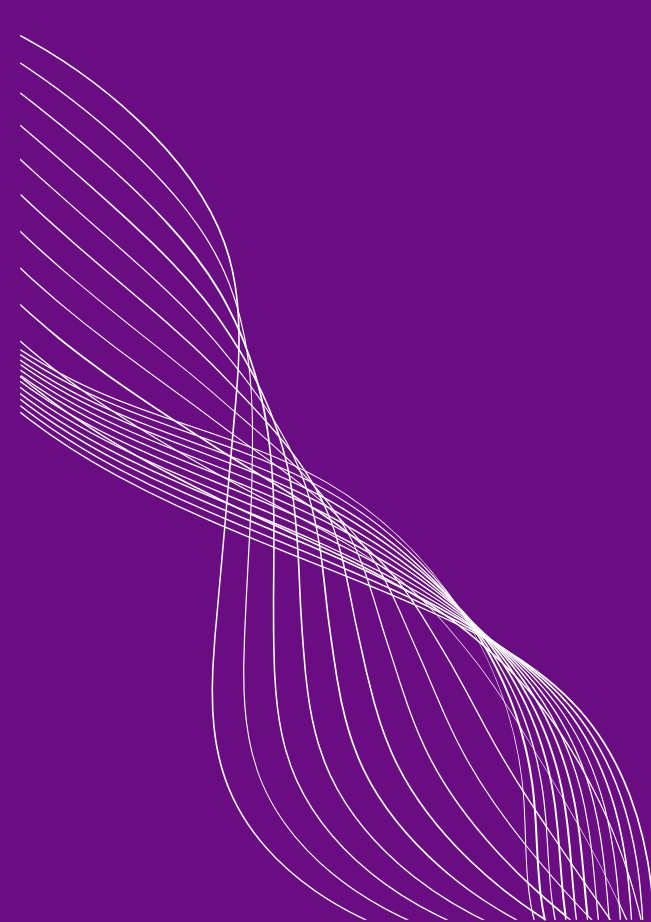




# **Southern African Development Community (SADC) People's Summit 2024 Communique to the SADC Heads of State & Government.**



The different people of Southern Africa gathered in Zimbabwe under the banner of the SADC People's Summit. Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN) welcomed over 500 people representing mining communities, youths, farmers, religious leaders and faith organizations, women's rights groups and people with disabilities, informal economy workers, human rights defenders and various other social movements during the annual People's Summit in Harare, held between 15-16 August 2024 under the theme: *"Reclaiming SADC for Peoples Development: Building People Power, Voice and Agency towards Democracy and Inclusion."* Inspired and guided by the scripture, **Isaiah 1:17**; *'Learn to do good, seek justice, defend the oppressed, bring justice to the fatherless, plead to the widow's cause'* we hereby make the following submissions;

### **We are cognizant of the developments noted in various sectors;**

**In Health:** Marked progress is **noted** in reducing HIV/AIDS prevalence, with cases dropping from 868,000 in 2010 to 413,600 in 2022 while all Member States are developing national strategies for HIV prevention among key populations and adolescent girls and young women (AGYW).

**In Agriculture:** Set against the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and Malabo Declaration target of 6% annual growth rate of agriculture value addition to gross domestic product (GDP), it's **recognised** that the implementation of the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) surpassed targets.

**In Education:** Progress in more than 80% of Member States aligning their national qualification frameworks with the SADC Qualifications Framework is **applauded**, although challenges in infrastructure and qualified teacher shortages persist.

**In Employment and Youth:** The drafting of the SADC Youth Empowerment Policy Framework is **recognised**. **Concern** is noted about continued youth unemployment, with the industrial employment share far below targets.

**In Climate Change:** SADC Secretariat's efforts to enhance Member States' capacity on climate change resilience under the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+) is recognised.

**In Gender:** commending the SADC Heads of State and Government for the significant strides made in advancing gender equality and the rights of women and girls. The adoption and implementation of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, the SADC Model Law on Ending Child Marriage, and various national policies aimed at promoting women's empowerment are noteworthy achievements.

**In Trade: We recognize progress** in regional trade initiatives, including the introduction of a simplified trade regime between Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania, while emphasizing the need for SADC countries to better prepare for African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) implementation through capacity building, policy harmonisation and infrastructure development to ensure widespread benefits across the region.

## **Gathered in common accord, the participants at the Harare Summit;**

- Challenged dominant narratives and discourses and discussed the rights, experiences and aspirations of those most affected by neoliberal domination and marginalization in the region.
- Committed once again to the inclusion of all women, men, youth and children of the Southern African Development Community in the decisions taken by Member States through solidarity and collective action for a more just, peaceful and prosperous community for all.
- Collectively agreed to engage and influence SADC Heads of State and Government to promote and support the articulated aspirations and hopes of poor and marginalized groups including women, youth and persons with disabilities in the region.

In a time of great promise and global uncertainty, as representatives of Civil Society Organizations, mining communities, youths, farmers, religious leaders and faith organizations, women's rights groups and people with disabilities, informal economy workers, human rights defenders and various other social movements, we share with the Heads of State and Government and the people of SADC our shared reflections, concerns, and recommendations on the prevailing conditions that affect the men, women and children of the Region.

### **Natural Resources Governance**

The SADC region is endowed with mineral resources that place the region in a position to catalyze development if these mineral resources are judiciously and sustainably exploited. However, the unjust, inequitable and exclusive global tax architecture that serves the interest of the developed countries at the expense of deepening poverty and depriving the region from optimizing its mineral revenues, needs to be addressed. We urge the SADC Heads of State and Government to:

- Support the UN Tax Convention to help standardize the tax systems and minimize the practices of evasion and avoidance of tax, that bleeds the region of much needed resources for development.
- Empower local community leaders to engage with governments and multinational companies in negotiating natural resource contracts through building their capacity and giving them power to engage. This includes traditional leaders.
- Speak with a unified voice in support of the UN Tax Convention and avoid negotiating in silos as individual countries which erodes the region's negotiating power.
- Encourage member states to domesticate the SADC Public Finance Model Law which, inter alia, deals with illicit financial flows from the region.
- Implement policies that enhance the region's control over the resources that the region own to ensure that resource exploitation benefits the region meaningfully.

## **Democracy, Human Rights & Governance**

Taking note of shrinking civic space in some member states across the region, we call on all SADC Heads of State and Government to preserve open and constitutional democracies. We advocate for the establishment of sustainable living conditions for all people, to acknowledge the essential connection between political stability and economic prosperity. We urge the SADC Heads of State and Government to:

- Strengthen regional electoral systems to encourage broad participation from marginalised groups and improve dispute resolution to restore confidence in democracy, while enhancing legal and institutional frameworks to protect human rights, ensure judicial independence, combat corruption, and uphold transparency and accountability in governance.
- Repeal laws that restrict freedoms of expression, assembly, and association to ensure the safety of human rights defenders and establish a task force to review and revise restrictive laws affecting civil society and human rights defenders.
- Support local governments through devolution and decentralisation, ensuring the inclusion of marginalised groups especially women, youth, and people with disabilities in governance processes, and increase avenues for citizen involvement in decision-making.
- Guarantee universal access to water, sanitation, and health services by investing in infrastructure and reform public sector institutions to improve service delivery and reduce bureaucracy.

## **Economic Justice**

We recognize the urgent need to address the following issues, which act as barriers to economic growth, justice, and regional development such as increased economic inequalities and poverty in the SADC region. We urge the SADC Heads of State and Government to:

- Prioritize and significantly invest in social services, aligning with agreed regional and international Protocols and Conventions.
- Uphold findings of the AU High-Level Panel (AU HLP) Report on Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs), which recommended the establishment of public beneficial ownership registers among member states.
- Establish a regional gender-sensitive urban design manual for the Informal Economy. This will guide planning for inclusive markets, particularly for people with disabilities, youth and women traders within the SADC region.
- Institute mechanisms to extend Social Protection for workers in the Informal Economy.
- Create One-Stop Border Posts (OSBP) across the region to streamline and expedite the free movement of goods and people and fully implement the simplified tariff regimes (STRs).

Adopt a Beneficial Ownership Transparency Standard for the Region to guide member states in strengthening and establishing beneficial ownership legislation and registers.

Take action to address the challenges of investment and trade with the European Union (EU) in the broader context of new the evolving global economy and geopolitical situation.

Take ownership of funding their development agenda to reduce reliance on debt and aid.

To unite and negotiate with the EU as a common bloc, guided by the SADC Trade Protocol especially on EU- Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA's). Until this unity is achieved, the people of Southern Africa recommend the abandonment of the EPA processes, i.e. negotiations, ratifications and/or implementation.

To develop a progressive framework to shape the future of critical minerals, including a focus on increasing beneficiation and value addition of these vital resources. We also call upon SADC leaders to protect local food producers from agricultural liberalization policies which potentially open local food markets to unjust competition from heavily subsidized European farmers.

To accelerate the implementation of the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap (2015 - 2063) as a means to increase intra-SADC trade (currently at 17% of total SADC trade).

### **Gender Justice & Women's Rights**

Acknowledging the role women play in society and the serious concerns on gendered division of labour, economic disparities, reinforced gender stereotypes, inequalities and the undermining of women and girls' rights and empowerment, we urge the SADC Heads of State and Government to:

Institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting and policies that are inclusive of women's rights and needs, particularly those from marginalized groups and communities across the SADC region.

Recognize the economic value of unpaid care work in national budgets and implement policies that reflect its importance.

Expedite the implementation of affirmative action policies that ensure women's active participation in political, economic, and social decision-making spheres at all levels.

Prioritize the reform of land tenure systems to ensure that women have secure land rights.

Adopt a multi-sectoral approach to comprehensively address the issue of child marriage and violence against women and girls.

Domesticate the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage.

## Youth and Student Movements

- The future of young people in the SADC region can only be achieved through peace, freedom, justice and respect for human rights. We urge the SADC Heads of State and Government to:
- Invest in Youth empowerment through job creation, entrepreneurship opportunities, access to capital and markets.
- Advance an accessible, decolonized education system in the region that recognizes local talent and innovation.
- Allow the free movement of goods and people in the region as well as the removal of visas to allow true regional integration and development for young people.
- Promote inclusion and full participation of young people in decision-making processes.

## Climate Change

We recognize the unprecedented and interdependent crises of climate change and debt characterized by a debilitating public debt burden that dents SADC ambitions for climate justice and resilience building. The severe repercussions for environmental sustainability, social justice and economic equity. We urge the SADC Heads of State and Government to:

- Quantify the climate-induced losses and damage to make a case for funding SADC member states through grant-based (and not loan-based) financing from the Global North to alleviate the debt burden and increase climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- Prioritise and create green climate budgets at central and sub-national levels. This is key to resource agro ecology, indigenous knowledge systems and seed sovereignty for food systems transformation.
- Adopt ecofeminist approaches to combat climate change and enhance regional cooperation on climate resilience projects such as water harvesting. Stop the expansion of industrial agriculture and use of petrochemicals and synthetic fertilizers in food systems.
- Mainstream gender transformative and inclusion approaches in the climate discourse through heightened sensitisation, decision making and education. We call for greater inclusion of communities in the exploitation of resources and the inclusion of Protection risk management, participation of women and resilience issues in SADC Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy.

- Prioritize investments in renewable energy infrastructure, such as solar, wind, and hydropower projects, to replace fossil fuels in its energy mix. Endorsing the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty is key in renewable energy transition.
- Claim reparations from Developed countries to invest in renewable energy and all transition efforts.
- Develop a consolidated protocol on Climate Change management that bridges gaps emanating from fragmented frameworks and protocols dealing with environmental management.

We, the people of Southern Africa, hereby submit this communique to the SADC Heads of State and Government with an unwavering commitment to complementing governments' efforts in advancing the same causes articulated above.

Adopted on this 16th day of August 2024 at Harare, Zimbabwe.

ENDS...///

For SAPSN,

**Janet Zhou, Secretary General**

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