



**REMARKS BY**

**DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SADC**

**DR. THEMBINKOSI MHLONGO**

**SADC JOINT MEETING OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING & SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

**HOSTED BY MALAWI**

**17 JUNE 2022**

- Director of Ceremony;
- Honourable Minister, Ms Agnes Nyalonje, Minister of Education, Republic of Malawi - Chair
- Ms Chikondano Mussa Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Education, Republic of Malawi – Chairperson of Senior Officials
- Honourable Ministers responsible for Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation present;
- His Excellency Prof Mohammed Belhocine , Commissioner, Education, Science and Technology African Union Commission
- Prof Lidia Arthur Brito, Director, Regional Office for Southern Africa, UNESCO;
- Senior Officials;
- Member from the Diplomatic Corps;
- International and regional cooperating partners
- Distinguished Delegates;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

All protocols observed:

It is with great pleasure and honour that I address and welcome you this morning to this Joint virtual meeting of SADC Ministers of Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation. I am thankful to the Government of the Republic of Malawi for organising and hosting this important meeting despite the constraints imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic.

Let me at the outset, thank the Honourable SADC Ministers who have prioritised this meeting despite many other equally important and pressing demands. I also wish to thank the International Cooperating Partners (ICPs), for their continuous support towards the implementation of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020-2030 priorities, which are related to Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation sectors.

Let me, also thank the **Chairperson of the Senior Officials Ms Chikondano Mussa Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Education** for ably chairing the meeting of senior officials from 14-16 June 2022. I would also like to thank the Honourable

Minister, Her Excellency Ms Agnes Nyalonje Minister of Education, of the Republic of Malawi for hosting the Joint SADC Ministerial meeting on Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation on this auspicious day of 17 June 2022.

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

The Secretariat finds this year's meeting extremely important for the region as it provides governments the opportunity to, among others, jointly deliberate and explore strategies to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic on our education and science, technology and innovation sectors. In addition, the meeting will review progress on the implementation of the Protocols on Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation respectively.

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

As you may be aware, in August 2020, Summit approved the SADC Vision 2050 and Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) (2020-2030), both of which position Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation as critical components of regional integration under Pillar 1 on Industrial Development and Market Integration and Pillar 3 on Social and Human Capital Development respectively. Therefore, your meeting, will consider and approve a number of key sectoral policy tools and interventions, towards the realisation of the SADC Vision of "a peaceful, inclusive, competitive, middle to high income industrialised region, where all citizens enjoy sustainable economic well-being, justice and freedom."

One the policy frameworks to be considered by the Ministers is the SADC Qualifications Recognition Manual, which is one of the most important tools to foster the implementation of the SADC Qualifications Framework. The Recognition Manual, will serve as a new and innovative tool that sets clear and uniform standards for recognition practice. Such a tool will have multiple uses - serving as a starting point for policy makers in order to review and improve national regulations, as a manual for credential evaluators and as an informative tool for foreign learners, education and training institutions and other stakeholders.

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

You will recall that the first half decade has passed since the adoption of the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework (SADCQF), several achievements have been made with Member States aligning their national qualification frameworks with the regional framework. We also give thanks to Member States and International Cooperating Partners who have played a key role in providing the necessary technical and financial support towards the implementation of the regional qualifications framework. However, much remains to be done, and the Implementation Review Report which will be presented at this meeting, provides a number of

recommendations which should serve to fast-track the implementation of the SADC Qualifications Framework.

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

At your meeting of June 2021 you had also requested that the Secretariat in partnership with International Cooperating Partners update the study report on the Education Sector Response to COVID-19. I am happy to report that your meeting will consider the Follow Up Report on SADC Member States Education Sector Response to COVID-19. Some of the report findings include best practices and innovative solutions adopted by Member States during the various waves of the pandemic in their attempt to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the education sector and in their attempt to minimise inequity and to ensure continuity of learning. The Report has also highlighted the need for policy reforms to better cope with future crisis and the need to develop new means for education financing. What COVID-19 has also brought to the fore is the need to prioritise online and distance education. In this regard, you will be happy to learn that, following your directive from last year's meeting, a Draft Regional Open and Distance Learning Strategic Plan (2022-2030), with its accompanying Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be submitted for your consideration. The ODL Strategic Plan (2022-2030) is underpinned by the vision that "All Member States have robust, responsive, and inclusive ODL systems that provide equal access to quality education and training to all"

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

I am also very pleased to inform the Honourable Ministers that the present meeting will also consider the adoption of a Regional Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Framework. The development of the Regional ESD responds to the aspirations enunciated in the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020–2030 that endorses sustainable development and ESD. In addition, this Framework also aligns with the UNESCO ESD for 2030 framework and supports the wider Sustainable Development Goals, and Africa's Agenda 2063 commitments to sustainable development and education. It also contributes to informing the wider programme of the SADC –UNESCO Futures of Education initiative which seeks to reaffirm education as a common good, and to support a transformative orientation to education.

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

Some of the challenges we face in this sector, is the absence of coherent articulation arrangements and pathways within the education system in the SADC Member States. Currently in SADC, the TVET programmes are not designed with a view to progression to higher levels of education and this means that TVET graduates have limited opportunities to progress to earning academic degrees given that their TVET training also does not allow for Recognition of Prior Learning. TVET has a huge potential in

developing skills that will contribute to SADC's industrialisation agenda. I urge Member States and all stakeholders to promote and support TVET programmes in order to realise the ambition of developing skills for industrialisation in the SADC region. This is an important issue that needs to be addressed. Chairperson, the meeting of Senior Officials extensively engaged on this matter with a view to proposing a SADC Regional TVET Symposium in the course of the current year.

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

The RISDP 2020-2030 has an important Outcome that relates to: "Enhanced regional technological capability and capacity through science, technology and innovation". In this regard, the Protocol on Science, Technology and Innovation as a legal instrument gives guidance to the implementation of regional programme on science, technology and innovation. The SADC Protocol on STI signed by the Heads of State in 2008 entered into force in 2017. The aim of the Protocol is to foster cooperation and promoting the development and transfer of science, technology and innovation (STI) within Member States. The objectives of the Protocol include, among others: the establishment of institutional mechanisms to strengthen regional cooperation linkages and coordination of STI Programmes; promoting the development and harmonisation of STI policies and strategies in the Region; pooling of resources for scientific research, technological development and innovation within the Region; and promoting Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and its technologies especially in rural communities; protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs); and promotion of gender equity and equality for STI. Your meeting today will receive updates and recommendations on the acceleration of the above key components of the protocol.

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

You will be aware that although it took a long time for the Protocol to enter into force there has been some significant progress made through the implementation of the Protocol on Science, Technology and Innovation with the development of a number of policy instruments and tools such as the SADC Cyber-Infrastructure Framework, Regional Framework on Intellectual Property, Regional Framework on Innovation and Technology Transfer and SADC Charter on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Organization among others. There has been considerable progress in the adoption of science, technology and innovation policies in the region by member states.

At member state level there has been progress in establishing institutional mechanisms and instruments to support national systems of innovation such as, innovation parks/hubs, research and technology centres/organisations focusing on various scientific fields, research and innovation funds, and increased international

cooperation in research and innovation through joint collaborative partnerships and programmes.

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

You will recall at your meeting in June 2019 meeting held in Namibia, Ministers endorsed and approved the First Regional Report on Research and Development Investment. As per the 2019 report majority of SADC Member States reported a Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) as a percentage of GDP of less than 1%. The need and the importance of increased expenditure for research and development is also adopted within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular Goal 9 on “Building resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”. Under Goal 9, indicator 9.5.1 is research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP. The meeting of senior officials noted the need to invest in technology and innovation in socio-economic sub-sectors of impact in the composition of the gross domestic product to increase value addition to commodities and natural resources which will also increase levels of intra-trade and accelerate industrialisation in the region. The World Science Report 2021 published by UNESCO states that globally 80% of the countries still invest less than 1% OF Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Research and Development (R&D). The report also states that the G20 countries still account for nine-tenths of the research expenditure, researchers, publications and patents.

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

With the rich biodiversity in the region there are huge opportunities to create value to our indigenous knowledge assets. Governments and private sector need to increase investments for research and innovation by supporting local institutions for higher learning institutions and research and technology organizations. The meeting will also consider Regional Research Ethics Guidelines which have been developed for use by individual researchers, research institutions and governments of member states as a standard approach to applying moral ethical and professional codes of research integrity and conduct, and good ethical practices when undertaking research.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the value of digital technologies in the case of emergencies. A number of countries in the world adapted the use of technology and innovations especially in the health sector. According to the October 2020 Report the World Health Organization reported that Africa accounted for about 13% of 1000 new or modified existing technologies developed worldwide in response to the pandemic. Of these 58% involved digital solutions, self-diagnostics tools and contact-tracing apps. A further 25% of the solutions were based on three-dimensional (3D) printing and 11% on robotics.

**Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman.**

With these brief remarks, Honourable Ministers, senior officials and distinguished delegates, it is now my great pleasure to introduce and welcome the Honourable Minister, Her Excellency Ms Agnes Nyalonje Minister of Education in Malawi to make her official opening remarks

I thank you.