

Swift response averts food crisis in southern Africa ... HIV/AIDS poses long-term threat to food security

by Munetsi Madakufamba

A recent four-nation assessment mission of the food crisis in southern Africa has revealed that the situation has stabilised owing to a "good response" by the international community, regional governments and NGOs, but the worsening HIV/AIDS pandemic is unleashing a long-term threat to food security in the region.

"The international community has so far succeeded in averting a humanitarian catastrophe in southern Africa, but the monumental proportions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is unleashing a disaster which threatens the very existence of countries," warned two United Nations Special Envoys after a week-long UN inter-agency mission to Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

SADC Executive Secretary, Prega Ramsamy was part of the mission, which was led by James T. Morris, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Needs in Southern Africa. Stephen Lewis, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa was also part of the mission.

Ramsamy said the objectives of the mission were to reassess the humanitarian situation, review response efforts, and the coordination mechanisms implemented to date.

"Special emphasis was placed on the impact of HIV/AIDS including the long-term food security implications, hence the presence of ... Stephen Lewis in the team," said Ramsamy.

He added that the "findings [of the mission] among other things indicated that southern Africa faces a calamity, which links HIV/AIDS, severe food shortages and chronic poverty. It is disturbing to note that the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the world are in our region. This is both exacerbated by and contributes to food

insecurity."

The mission noted that the calamitous conjunction of HIV/AIDS, severe food shortages and chronic poverty has left more than 15 million in need of assistance across the region. Meanwhile, the pandemic is changing the nature of famine in southern Africa. It is cutting agri-

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WFP



The Herald

Presidents Mugabe, Chissano and Mbeki hold copies of the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park treaty at the signing ceremony in Xai Xai, Mozambique, in December. (Top) UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Needs in Southern Africa, James T. Morris meets Red Cross personnel in Lesotho.

Africa's largest game park established

by Bonifacio Antonio

Presidents Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe signed on 9 December the treaty which formally establishes the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park, one of the world's largest biodiversity conservancy area.

The park, straddling parts of Mozambique, South Africa and

Zimbabwe and covering an area of 4.4 million square kilometres, is the largest in Africa.

The Mozambican side of the park, in Gaza province, covers the districts of Massingir, Mabalane and Chicualacuala, where a large number of animals and plant species, some of them endangered, can be found. In South Africa, the Greater Limpopo Park includes the Kruger National

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SADC TODAY

Southern African Development Community
Vol. 5 No. 6 January 2003

SADC TODAY is produced by the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) six times a year on behalf of the SADC Secretariat in Gaborone, Botswana. It's contents do not necessarily reflect the official positions and opinions of the SADC Secretariat or SARDC. Materials from this newsletter may be reproduced freely by the media and others with attribution to SADC TODAY.

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Dialogue is the key tool for co-operation

by Bonifacio Antonio

The recent SADC-EU ministerial conference strongly agreed that the Berlin Initiative, aimed at contributing to peace, democracy and sustainable development in southern Africa, is a unique vehicle for frank, open and in-depth dialogue between the two regions.

"The conference expressed the desire to enhance political dialogue outside regular meetings to tackle issues as and when they arise," states the official communiqué issued at the end of the conference held in the Mozambican capital Maputo from 7-8 November.

The need for dialogue between the two regions was highlighted by the Mozambican President, Joaquim Chissano, in his opening speech.

"Dialogue is the most important pillar in co-operation. Through it we can have an opportunity to clarify issues and positions, consolidate partnerships and reach consensus on matters of mutual interest," declared President Chissano, stressing that "it is through dialogue that we deepen our mutual understanding."

Chissano underlined the very fact that the conference took place was a testimony to the commitment to strengthen dialogue between SADC and the EU.

The Mozambican President said that thanks to the dialogue, Mozambique is enjoying a decade of peace, and it is now witnessing social and economic development with major investments being made throughout the country.

In relation to Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chissano said that "with the peace and stability in these countries, we can channel all our efforts and resources towards the reduction and ultimate eradication of absolute



Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano delivering his opening speech at the SADC-EU Ministerial Conference held in the Mozambican capital Maputo.

poverty in the SADC region. The economic integration process will be accelerated and would take more foreseeable steps."

With regard to the current food crisis affecting the SADC region, particularly Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Chissano said that it is aggravated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is a catastrophe of unprecedented proportions. "We now have in the region an estimated 10 million citizens living with HIV/AIDS accounting for about five percent of the total population of the region."

During the conference, the EU reiterated its strong commitment to support SADC countries' efforts in developing and implementing efficient responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The conference welcomed the launch of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In this regard, the conference noted that

NEPAD provides for the African Peer Review Mechanism, which is a self-monitoring mechanism for African leaders to identify problems and to take corrective measures to ensure sustainable growth and development.

The Danish Minister for European Affairs, Bertel Haarder said that NEPAD will increasingly be the framework around which the international community will concentrate its efforts in promoting Africa's development.

On the question of Zimbabwe, SADC and EU could not reach agreement, according to the final communiqué.

In his statement, the Irish Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Tom Kitt, said that Ireland had "shared the burden of colonialism with much of Africa", and, like Zimbabwe, had to embark on a land reform, after achieving independence from Britain. "We therefore know that this issue has to be dealt with in a way which does not sow further division". □

Year 2002 in southern Africa

By Munetsi Madakufamba

The launch of the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the peace processes in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the elections in Zimbabwe and Lesotho, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development rank as the main highlights of an eventful year in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The African Union, rising out of the completed mission of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to achieve political independence across the African continent, was appropriately launched in South Africa less than a decade after the end of apartheid and the first democratic elections.

Following the achievement of political independence as envisaged by the founding fathers of the OAU in 1963, it was now necessary to refocus the continental body. The OAU was transformed into the AU, with an even tougher mandate of seeking Africa's economic development, positioning Africa as a global player and delivering its population from the manacles of poverty.

NEPAD is the development framework of the AU, presented as a long-term vision of an African-owned and African-led development programme. It is a pledge by African leaders, "to eradicate poverty and place the continent on a path of sustainable development, as well as facilitate countries, both individually and collectively, to participate actively in the global economy."

Often confused as a separate and competing organisation to the AU, NEPAD is in fact its implementation plan, open for adoption by member countries based on their individual cir-



Celebrations in Durban, South Africa to mark the launch of the African Union (AU) and its New Partnership for Africa's Development.

cumstances.

NEPAD's long-term objectives as stated in its Programme of Action "The Strategy for Achieving Sustainable Development in the 21st Century", are to:

- eradicate poverty in Africa; and promote the role of women in all activities.

Among the specific targets of NEPAD is the achievement of International Development Goals (IDG) such as:

- to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half between 1990 and 2015.

Given the options at the regional, continental and global levels, it is up to individual countries to adapt implementation plans within the confines of their national circumstances. The ultimate objective is to bring about poverty eradication and human advancement within the context of an ecologically and democratically sustainable environment.

This is to be done within internationally agreed principles, as adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and restated at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa in September.

The World Summit, which brought together over 40,000 delegates and

100 world leaders, made several resolutions that seek to achieve development through sustainable means.

The African Union foresees stronger regional groupings to facilitate the continent's place in global affairs, and it is expected that the current restructuring of SADC will better position it to play a more effective supporting role for member countries.

The transformation of SADC institutions began last year with the clustering of sectors previously coordinated by member states into four directorates for central management at the SADC headquarters in Botswana. Originally scheduled for completion in December 2002, the process has been extended by one year to December 2003 to allow more time for tasks such as the Regional Indicative Development Plan. This plan, to be presented to SADC Council of Ministers in February 2003, will outline strategic priorities for the region. The year 2002 also saw SADC win the prestigious aviation's Smith Laurel Award in May. A clear indication of SADC's competence in the management of its air space.

In Angola, the guns have finally fallen silent, and while it is never part of African tradition to celebrate the death of a person, the demise of long-time guerrilla fighter Jonas Savimbi early 2002 marked a major turning point for southern Africa in general and Angola in particular. Following the departure of their leader of more than three decades, his rebel movement agreed to a long overdue peace agreement, signed on 4 April with the government of President José Eduardo dos Santos.

The government has since embarked on a demobilisation exercise, reintegrating former guerrilla forces into the society. The challenge

President's Office - Zim

of rejuvenating the economy is the next hurdle, albeit surmountable. Angola's wealth in petroleum and diamonds is unparalleled in the region. With other untapped mineral resources and fertile lands, it must only be a matter of time before Angola's economy emerges from the ravages of war.

While peace appears to have returned to Angola, it may be premature for any celebrations in its northern neighbour, the DRC. The peace process has been a stop-and-go affair, with agreements signed between government and some rival groups leading to the withdrawal of government-allied troops from Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, while the Rwandan army continues to support its allies through a physical presence in the DRC. Latest reports of renewed fighting in some rebel-dominated territories put a damper on prospects for peace in 2002.

A power sharing accord was signed on 17 December 2002 in Pretoria, South Africa which will see the formation of a transitional government to be headed by President Joseph Kabila, with four vice-presidents drawn from government, the Rwanda-backed Rally for Congolese Democracy, the Uganda-backed Movement for the Liberation of Congo and other smaller opposition groups.

On the back of positive developments in Angola and DRC, the SADC summit, held in the Angolan capital Luanda in October, had every reason to hail the moment that "guns fall silent" in the region. Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, now the Deputy Chairperson of SADC, summed it up in closing the summit when he said: "Together we must face the challenge to keep the guns silent in the entire SADC region – silent for good".

And with such a promising turn of events in the region, the summit, chaired by host President Dos Santos,

focused on other emerging challenges, notably the anticipated drought in the region.

About 14 million people in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe are at high risk of starvation in the period to March 2003. Southern Africa is threatened by the worst drought in almost a decade. In July, SADC launched a joint appeal for food aid, as well as playing an advisory role on the emergent issue of food grown from



Paul Wiede



The Herald

(Above) Zimbabwean soldiers on arrival from the DRC where they fought alongside soldiers from Angola and Namibia in defence of the DRC government. (And top) Former SA President Nelson Mandela (left), former OAU Secretary General, Salim Ahmed Salim (centre) and Netherlands' Crown Prince of Orange, Willem Alexander, opening the Water Dome at the WSSD.

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO).

Member countries were advised to assess their own situation in accepting or rejecting GMO food, which comes mainly from the United States of America. Most countries which rejected GMO food, eventually accepted it with conditions such as making sure that all grain is milled before distribution to avoid contamination with local varieties. Zambia has remained steadfast that it will not feed its people on genetically modified food, only accepting it for the thousands of

refugees it plays host to.

Food security, HIV/AIDS and poverty are some of the socio-economic challenges that are transboundary in nature and thus require a collective approach at the regional and continental levels. These developments may have put into context the point South African President Thabo Mbeki has been making – that poverty is the biggest facilitator of HIV/AIDS. And if poverty exacerbates the spread of AIDS, then hunger would just be the last stroke.

The drought has hit southern Africa at a critical moment, when the region is battling with a disaster posed by HIV/AIDS. Preliminary research has shown that hungry HIV-positive people are more likely to succumb to opportunistic infections faster than those with a balanced diet.

The March presidential election in

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As guns fall silent....

DRC wages new war to mend damaged economy

by Chengetai C. Madziwa

War can indeed compromise the economic progression of a nation, but it cannot destroy its inherent potential to do well given a peaceful environment. The end of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) signals a new opportunity for the country to realize its long-standing, well-documented potential so badly compromised during years of conflict and misrule.

The DRC economy was severely shaken by a four-year conflict, which drew in foreign troops from Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe on the side of government, and Rwanda and Uganda, siding with the rebels. The situation is fast changing for the better, following the signing of peace agreements between belligerent parties and the subsequent withdrawal of foreign troops.

With its new found stability, the country is faced with the challenge of correcting the state of the economy, which did not only suffer from the recent war, but had experienced a steady decay under the dictatorship of the late Mobutu Sese Seko.

Rebuilding is not an impossible task. The country has vast natural resources, which include minerals such as cobalt, copper, diamonds, gold and oil as well as vast areas of arable land. These endowments have made agriculture and mining the bedrock of the nation's economy.

DRC is ranked fourth in the world in diamond production after Botswana, Russia and South Africa. Already the country's largest foreign exchange earner, diamonds are far from being produced at full potential. Other minerals such as copper and cobalt are also key to the country, contributing a significant 20 percent to state revenue.

Agriculture is another important sector for the DRC. The sector employs a large proportion of the population and it contributes about 45 percent of GDP. Coffee is the leading cash crop. Despite the excellent equatorial weather experienced in the



country, crops such as maize, rice, cotton and bananas are only grown at smaller scale.

While the entire economy suffered from the impact of war, the industrial sector was the worst affected as it depends mainly on foreign direct investment.

In 2000, the sector, made up of mainly food processing, textile, smelting and chemical factories, contributed only about 10 percent of GDP. This was due to insufficient direct investments, a small domestic market and a lack of foreign exchange convertibility. The lack of efficient transportation was also a major drawback.

"One major reason for low performance of the industrial sector is low levels of production due to the fact that some factories had been destroyed in the war," says Richard Biladi, a diplomat at the DRC Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe.

With the return of peace, all this should now change. Investors from the region and beyond have already started flocking to Africa's third largest country.

In particular, South African and Zimbabwean investors are already penetrating the DRC market in the major sectors which include mining and agriculture as well as retailing and telecommunications. Other countries such as USA, France, Belgium and other European countries are joining in.

DRC is strategically important to southern Africa in a number of areas such as water, electricity and forestry resources.

Its mighty Congo River has a hydropower capacity of 100,000 megawatts, making it a potential source of power supply for the whole region. The Inga Hydropower station on the Congo River supplies electricity to neighbouring Congo Republic, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

As Biladi said, "It is important for African countries to work together because they share similar interests and thus economic achievement in one nation can be mutually beneficial to other African states".

However, he emphasized the fact

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Measures to improve agricultural output needed as risk of another drought looms in southern Africa

As fears for yet another poor agricultural season in southern Africa increase, calls for better measures that seek to revive the agricultural sector are getting stronger and even more urgent.

"It is of grave concern to note that early indications are that there will be equal or even greater food shortages throughout the region during the next consumption/marketing year April 2003 to March 2004," said SADC Executive Secretary Prega Ramsamy at a recent press briefing in Gaborone, Botswana.

He said member states are "implementing measures that seek to revive the agricultural productivity and food production, increase people's incomes

and promote trade in agricultural and food commodities."

Ramsamy cited some of the measures as the need to:

- increase the allocation of resources to agriculture;
- give priority to irrigation agriculture to reduce over-depend

ence on rain-fed agriculture;

- undertake a feasibility study of alternative forms of food reserves, which may include physical stocks, and the use of futures markets to provide strategic grain reserves for the region; and

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DRC wages new war to mend damaged economy

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that for the country to be able to fully focus on economic development, there is need for lasting peace and a deliberate policy to correct social consequences of the war. A social recovery programme is necessary to support any economic processes aimed at rebuilding the economy, he said.

The rehabilitation of road and rail infrastructure will also be crucial to support efficiency in all the sectors of the economy. This is also crucial in linking the country with the rest of the region.

International organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF have already given the country thumps up, granting loans of US\$450 million and US\$750 million respectively.

With these positive signs, and if peace can be guaranteed, it will only be a matter of time before the DRC can claim its position among Africa's vibrant economies. □

Swift response averts humanitarian crisis in southern Africa

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cultural productivity, weakening and decimating the population and undermining people's ability to recover from natural and man-made shocks.

"Without a radical and urgent approach, which addresses the terrifying reality of the pandemic and how it is indelibly woven with chronic food shortages, even worse crises will stalk vulnerable people for generations to come. I am overwhelmed by the very real prospect of nations of orphans," said Morris.

Lewis described the crisis as unparalleled in history. "The incredible assault of HIV/AIDS on women in particular has no parallel in human history. Women are the pillars of the family and community – the mothers, the care-givers, the farmers. The pandemic is preying on them relentlessly, threatening them in a way that the world has never yet confronted."

In a revised appeal expected in February, the mission agreed to incorporate anti-retroviral drugs.

In July last year, SADC in collaboration with the UN and other international cooperating partners launched a joint appeal for food aid and other non-food items such as seeds and medicines amounting to US\$611 million.

The response to date, totalling US\$646 million, has been described as good. The distribution and adequacy of the international aid has varied from country to country.

The situation on the ground in the six worst affected countries, which

also include Mozambique and Swaziland, indicates that there is still an enormous amount of work to be done over the next few months.

Lesotho is forecast to endure another year of severe food shortages. Currently, 740 000 are facing severe food shortages caused by recurrent drought and already erratic weather has undermined chances of an improved harvest this year.

In Swaziland and southern Mozambique a lengthy dry spell after planting has once again hit crop potential across large swathes of the countries. In Malawi and Zambia, recent rains have fuelled hopes of a much-better maize harvest than last year but the situation – although stabilized by international assistance – remains precarious with millions of people still vulnerable.

The situation in Zimbabwe has been described as a cause for serious concern. More than seven million people are currently in need of assistance. The mission said along with continued economic difficulties, people in Zimbabwe will experience continuing food shortages in the coming year due to a combination of dry weather and lack of affordable food on the market.

SADC is working with the international community and local institutions to closely monitor the remainder of the rainy season and crop development with a view to determining appropriate levels of emergency food aid beyond the upcoming harvest in April/May. □

Conflict prevention and co-operation in SADC's shared waters

by Bonifacio Antonio

A culture of dialogue needs to be nurtured in SADC's shared watercourse systems if the risk of conflict among riparian states is to be minimised. This is the message that came out of a recent training workshop attended by senior officials of the water sector from eight SADC countries.

The five-day workshop in the Mozambican capital Maputo, was co-organised by the Mozambican Higher Institute for International Relations



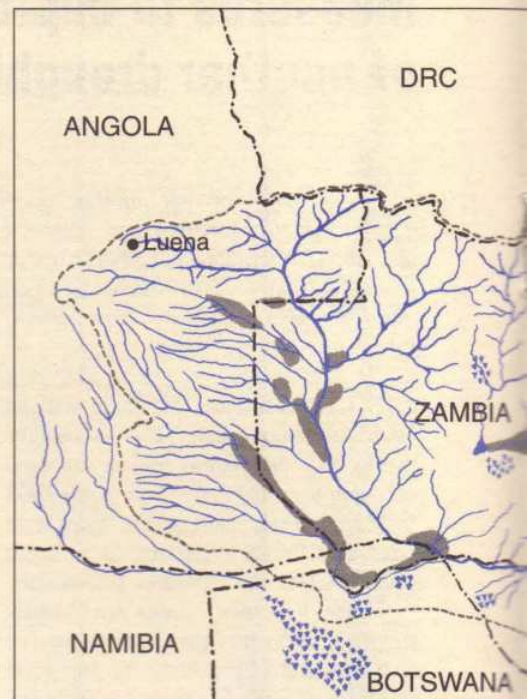
Fishing in the Incomati, a watercourse shared by Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa.

(ISRI), the Zimbabwe-based organisation WaterNet, and the South African Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR). It discussed issues related to integrated water resources management, human rights and conflict management.

According to the ISRI Deputy Rector, Patricio Jose, the meeting was motivated by the fact that "water is greatly becoming scarce, [in comparison with] the high demand levels caused by its use for different purposes".

Jose said that the course offered at the workshop allowed the participants to get an understanding of problems around shared water resources in the region. "We analysed together ways to prevent conflicts that may rise from the use of shared water resources. We also created capacity of conflict management where they may occur."

He said that the need for a permanent dialogue in this process was regarded as the best method of conflict resolution, as the international rivers do not belong exclusively to a single nation.



The Zambezi River Basin: Shared by eight countries

Jose said that during the course the participants analysed specific cases of

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Year 2002 in southern Africa

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Zimbabwe, during which emotions reached boiling point about the country's controversial land reform programme, further heightened the diplomatic stand-off with former colonial power Britain.

The pre- and post-election periods attracted the attention of regional and international players. Won by President Robert Mugabe's ruling Zimbabwe African National Unity – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), the election was as hotly contested on the ballot paper as it was in the world media. Despite disapproval from local opposition and several European countries and the US, as

well as the SADC Parliamentary Forum, ZANU-PF won the election and remains the ruling party, with full support from fellow SADC governments.

In May, Lesotho held its legislative election, which despite contestations from the losing parties, was not as eventful and violent as the 1998 poll which left the capital Maseru in ruins. Seen as an opportunity to heal the wounds of Lesotho's recurrent political problems, the election passed with no incident. Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili's ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) claimed a majority victory.

In Seychelles, the ruling Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) led by President France Albert Rene won a majority in the legislative election held on 4-6 December, trouncing its main rival the Seychelles National Party (SNP). Seychelles is a tiny archipelago in the Indian Ocean with a population of about 100,000. The country joined SADC in 1997, along with DRC.

For most of southern Africa, the events and processes in 2002 have rooted the conditions necessary for planned socio-economic and political endeavours, and the tone has been set for 2003. □

Conflict prevention and co-operation in SADC's shared waters

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shared rivers such as Pungue (which is shared by Mozambique and Zimbabwe) and Incomati (shared by Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa). "We are already starting to witness some worries which result from the utilisation of these rivers," he said.

According to Jose, there is already a perception at the SADC level that "we need to start a serious dialogue on these issues related to common water resources". He cited the SADC protocol on shared watercourse systems as one of the greatest achievements that resulted from this dialogue.

"So, what we are doing now is to present the results of this protocol, namely, its meaning and the ways in which this protocol can peacefully be used to solve any conflict that may occur," he said.

However, issues of integrated water resource management including conflict management are more clearly spelt out in the revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses which has so far been ratified by six member states, namely, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa.

In the southern African region, the Zambezi River basin is the most shared, with an area of about 1.3 million sq km and a population estimated at 40 million. The Zambezi Basin covers the territory of eight countries - Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The basin is of critical importance to SADC, with more than 30 large dams that have been built for domestic and industrial use, for farming, water supply, irrigation and power generation. □



Africa's largest game park established

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Park and the area of Makuleke, while in Zimbabwe it covers the Gonarezhou National Park, the sanctuary of Manjiji and the Malipati region.

Currently, the Mozambican side of the park is home to about 20,000 people, 6,000 of whom may have to be moved from the buffer areas regarded as fundamental for the development of tourism and the conservation of biodiversity. The remaining 14,000 people are said not to pose any problem for the implementation of the park's activities.

Speaking during the launch in Mozambique's town of Xai Xai, President Chissano said that the establishment of the park testifies regional commitment in implementing the international and regional conventions on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

"The Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park is extremely rich in cultural

diversity and natural biological resources. If these resources are well and jointly managed, they may place the southern Africa region as one of the best destinations of tourism in the world," he said.

Chissano said that the success of this conservation initiative will depend greatly on the local communities' participation in the development of the park. He said that the park is located in a region where its rich biodiversity is capable of providing great opportunities to alleviate the poverty that affects local communities, through investing in environmental tourism.

Speaking at the same occasion, President Mbeki said that the creation of the park shows that nothing is impossible in the relationship between the different states. "The park creates a world without frontiers to our people," he said.

President Mugabe said that the most important aspect "is to achieve the

needs of our people". He added that "The Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park must be a project which brings real benefits to the people."

The game park is unique in that it allows co-existence between human beings and wildlife, and tourists are able to cross from one country to another using a single visa.

Following the introduction of 30 elephants in October 2001 in the Limpopo park, the South African government recently introduced about 1,000 other large animals, including elephants, giraffes, zebras, impalas, warthogs and other species.

In May 2002, the German Development Bank agreed to make six million euros (about 5.5 million US dollars) available to help finance the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park. The money is being used to support all the activities needed to set up infrastructure on the Mozambican side of the park, including the drafting of a management plan. □

HIV/AIDS - Promoting the fight against stigma and discrimination

by Chengetai C. Madziwa

HIV/AIDS is one of the major challenges to development in the SADC region. Statistics on the pandemic have been made available with the good intention to highlight the magnitude of the problem, but the figures have often been rehashed to the extent of forcing those affected into resigning themselves to the situation.

For southern Africa, such statistics show that the region has recorded nearly four million deaths, which have left behind three million orphans, and an estimated 10 million people in the SADC region are living with HIV/AIDS. These figures point to the fact that the extent of the pandemic has reached crisis proportions and is now affecting every aspect of the lives of people in the region.

Initiatives in response to this growing challenge have, however, been taking place widely in SADC countries. Governments with the support of international donors have launched massive HIV/AIDS education and prevention campaigns. However, the continuing increases in HIV infections have become a cause for concern with regards to the effectiveness of the campaigns.

"Stigma and Discrimination: Live and Let Live"

The theme for the 2002 World AIDS Day, "Stigma and Discrimination: Live and Let Live" implies that society's attitudes can reduce the effectiveness of programmes in reducing HIV infections.

Stigma and discrimination of those infected by HIV or those suffering from AIDS, refers to the disgrace, prejudice and embarrassment associated with the disease. In many societies in the region such attitudes towards HIV and AIDS exist.

HIV infected people often become outcasts shunned by their friends, workmates and even family. They are viewed as an embarrassment to their families and in some cases may be taken from the urban to the rural areas so as to hide their illness from friends and relatives.



The medical consequences of stigma and discrimination are that the individual may not have access to or may avoid life-saving treatment and thus endure further suffering.

Faced with prejudice, people may avoid HIV testing altogether. Thus an individual who is infected but has not been tested will not be aware of their HIV status and may go on spreading the virus unknowingly.

Activities surrounding the 'World AIDS Day' focused on ways to alleviate such social attitudes towards HIV and AIDS.

The commemorations were also an

Statistics on the pandemic have been made available with the good intention to highlight the magnitude of the problem, but the figures have often been rehashed to the extent of forcing those affected into resigning themselves to the situation.

opportunity for civil society, non-governmental organizations and government to come together and reiterate the importance of HIV/AIDS prevention with one voice. Such unity is essential if attitude changes are to be achieved both at a national and regional level.

These attitudes have for a long time now inhibited AIDS prevention education and have thus contributed to the rising global infection rate which has reached up to 42 million infections.

This poses a challenge to the SADC region to try and change social attitudes towards the pandemic. One way to do this would be through the media, which has some degree of power to influence people's perceptions. Careful choice of words in reporting on HIV/AIDS issues can avoid reinforcing prejudice, according to a study by Pitts and Jackson in Zimbabwe.

It is thus critically important for the SADC region and the world as a whole to swiftly move away from the state of denial that promotes stigma and discrimination. This would improve the effectiveness of any programmes aimed at HIV prevention and education and would more likely reduce the incidence of infections than has been achieved to date. □

Engendering political participation: Countdown to 2005

By Pamela Mhlanga

The past five years have seen unprecedented change in the democratic landscape in southern Africa. This has resulted in the resurgence of debates on people-centred development, democratic participation, and active dialogue aimed at significantly transforming the lives of the people of the SADC region.

Issues of gender equality in political participation, and engendering visionary leadership to drive the region forward, have come to the fore. Debates and action have intensified to ensure radical change of the current under-representation of women in politics and decision-making in SADC.

There is a growing appreciation of the benefits to be derived from increased women representation, such as the ability to bring different perspectives to the process and quality of decisions. It is also good democratic practice that women, who form a majority in the region, be represented in proportion to their numbers.

Moreover, it is a matter of human rights and justice.

In the next three years, the gender responsiveness of electoral systems, and their ability to transform in order to empower women in particular, will be under the spotlight as eight SADC countries, namely Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Tanzania will be holding either presidential, legislative or local government elections. This means that there is a need to audit electoral systems, including intra-party processes for gender responsiveness, and identification of strategies to empower women in the political arena. Commitment is also required at the highest level to transform politics and decision making in a manner that will enable women to participate equally with men.

In SADC there is recognition at the highest level that gender equality, is indeed a democratic imperative and a fundamental human right. This is reflected in the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, which is one of the sin-

gle most important instruments signed by Heads of State and Government, and commits them to ensuring a minimum 30 percent of women in decision-making and political positions by 2005.

In spite of these commitments, the current picture of women's representation in politics and decision-making in SADC leaves room for significant improvement, as the table in the next page shows. As at October 2002, half of the countries had more than 15 percent women in their parliaments; South Africa and Mozambique had reached the 30 percent target, with Seychelles coming close at 24 percent.

In an attempt to assist member states to meet this target, the SADC Secretariat designed a regional programme of action on women in politics and decision making in 1999. Activities under this programme include training of trainers in capacity building for women MPs, research, lobbying and advocates. Since 2000, the Secretariat has monitored the

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Measures to improve agricultural output needed

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- diversify the food crop production and the diets to include roots and tubers, pulses and other drought tolerant crops.

The 2002/2003 crop season has already been affected by the delayed onset of the rains in some countries. Countries such as Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, some parts of South Africa and Zimbabwe had not yet received adequate planting rains by the end of November 2002.

However, as of mid December, the rainfall situation improved with most countries experiencing medium to high rainfall.

Countries that have received good rains include Angola, Lesotho, Mauritius, parts of Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania.

Meanwhile, Cyclone Daphne has caused floods in Malawi and Mozambique, leaving thousands of people displaced.

SADC has since launched an appeal for assistance to member states that are implementing recovery programmes. As of January, the recovery programme had only received 34 percent of the US\$31.2 million required, hampering its progress.

Programmes in member states include distribution of agricultural starter packs consisting of seeds and fertilizers, subsidized farm inputs and tillage equipment. A meeting of the SADC Seed Security Network held in Mbabane, Swaziland on 25-26 November 2002 noted that most countries had adequate seed supplies

except for Angola, DRC, Malawi and Zambia. Some farmers, however, had no purchasing power to procure the inputs.

Meanwhile, a 17-member SADC delegation left on 18 January on a 17-day fact-finding mission on biotechnology. Ramsamy said the USAID-funded mission will take the delegation to the United States, Belgium and South Africa.

He said, "the fact-finding mission comes against the backdrop of ongoing sensitive debates in the region about the status of biotechnology for international development and particularly its implications on food safety, contamination of genetic resources, ethical issues, trade related issues and consumer concerns." □

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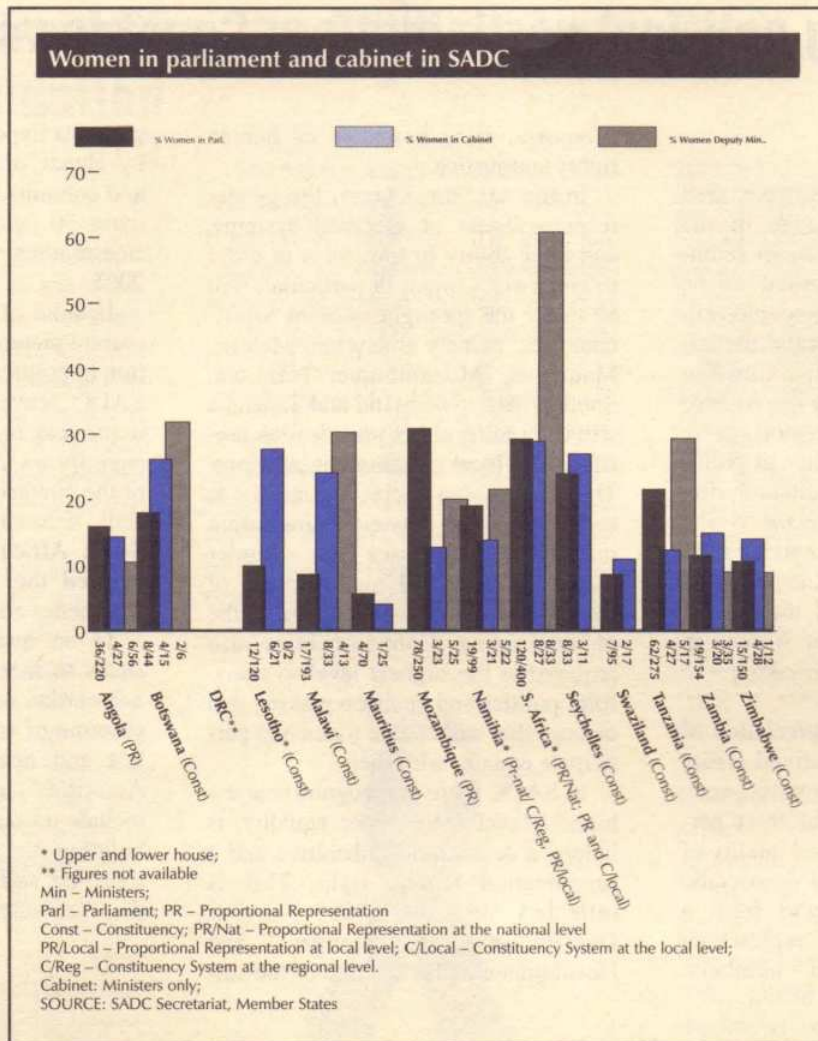
progress of member states through annual reporting mechanisms to SADC policy organs such as the Council of Ministers and the Summit. At the October 2002 SADC Summit held in Angola, for example, member states presented progress reports in implementing this commitment.

The Summit observed that women remain largely under-represented in decision making positions, and urged member states to continue to seize the opportunity presented by elections, cabinet reshuffles and others, to nominate more women to positions of decision making.

As at February 2001, approximately half of the countries just averaged 15 percent in parliaments with only three -- South Africa, Mozambique and Seychelles -- close to the 30 percent. Mozambique and South Africa are conducting elections in the next two years, and all eyes are on them to significantly shift the figures to beyond 30 percent.

In 2000, three SADC countries held elections, and only Tanzania increased female representation in parliament from 16.3 to 21.2 percent. Mauritius and Zimbabwe experienced a drop by approx. 2 and 4 percent respectively. Tanzania and Mauritius are holding elections in the next three years, thus the time for revisiting their electoral systems and making them gender responsive is now, if the 'critical mass' of a minimum 30 percent and beyond is to be reached.

In SADC, it has been noted that a combination of factors have influ-



enced positive change, namely women quotas at party and national levels, enacting constitutional and legal provisions, and adopting affirmative action policies, according to a SADC Parliamentary Forum report.

It has further been observed that the proportional representation system, combined with a legislated or party-based quota for women has significantly improved women's representation in politics. A quota in favour of women contained in the national constitution, as in the case of Tanzania, is a mandatory and sustainable strategy that transcends political lines. Special nominations and appointments, as provided for in some electoral systems such as Botswana, Swaziland and Zimbabwe also create opportunities for women to enter politics.

A number of gains made by women in the arena of politics and decision-making in SADC have resulted from concerted lobby and advocacy by gender activists, as well as training, information provision, exchange programmes to empower women aspiring for, or in political office.

The launch of the Regional Women Parliamentary Caucus in April 2002 is a milestone in providing opportunities for women MPs across borders to lobby for increased numbers of women in politics and decision-making in SADC.

While numbers are a good indicator of gender responsiveness, and an increase in strategic political and leadership positions for women spells 'progress', it has been observed

that 'gender transformation is not necessarily a by-product of access'. Thus accessing power positions by women does not automatically translate into a 'women-friendly' environment where they can realize their fullest potential, according to a 2000 SADC report.

Factors such as 'patriarchy, political and institutional constraints, culture and attitudes, lack of support, skills and resources' still hinder full participation, says the same report. Thus, the countdown to beyond 30 percent of women in politics and decision-making in SADC might score successes in terms of numbers, but make no significant change in engendering democratic politics and leadership, if structures and institutions in which women enter do not fundamentally transform. □

Solar eclipse: Science versus tradition

by Tafadzwa Sekeso and
Chengetai C. Madziwa

While scientists present rational and logical explanations to natural occurrences such as those associated with astronomy, African traditionalists have for many years shaped their own understanding and beliefs about natural phenomena.

The total eclipse is one such phenomenon, which has been scientifically described as the covering of the sun by the moon in a straight line. The sun is 400 times larger than the moon and 400 times more distant, so if standing in the right place at the right time, one can watch the moon cover the sun completely - a period called 'totality', which, unsurprisingly, can be an extremely emotional time for people and animals alike.

The total eclipse that graced southern Africa on 4 December 2002 from Angola, through Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa and disappearing into the Indian Ocean at Xai Xai in Mozambique was a rare spectacle for the region.

However, African tradition is convinced based on beliefs over decades, that the occurrence of a natural disaster such as drought is linked to an eclipse of the sun.

Thus whilst those who believe in science celebrate the event and feel privileged to have experienced it in their own life time, traditionalists may be preparing for an imminent disaster or perhaps go through a ritual process to avert any calamity.

Though scientifically it is amongst the most spectacular astronomical events known to mankind, it is also not the best of news to people living in southern Africa as it could mean, for the second year running, yet another dry spell this season.

The past decades or so have not been good for the region, which has faced some of its worst droughts in living memory. For instance in the

periods 1982-83, 91-92 and 2001-2002, the region experienced severe droughts. Perhaps coincidentally, the same periods in 1982, 1989, 2001 and 2002, the region experienced either total or partial eclipse.

"The eclipse could be one of the many factors that affect weather patterns even though its occurrence is not frequent," said Engineer Siamachoka from the Zambezi River Authority. □



Youth competition launched

The SADC Secretariat has launched the SADC Secondary Schools 2003 Essay Competition under the topic: "The production of illicit drugs, trafficking and abuse pose a serious threat to the economic and social fabric/development of the SADC region. How can this problem be addressed; and if you were to advise the Executive Secretary of SADC on this matter, what will be your advice?"

A sound illustration of the effects of drug abuse and trafficking on the socio-economic development of the economies of SADC is expected from participants. The Essayists are also expected to come up with recommendations that are tailored towards drug supply reduction and what advice the participant would give to the Executive Secretary of SADC on this issue.

The Secretariat sponsors the competition with prize money for national as well as regional winners. The three regional winners would travel to Tanzania around August/September 2003 for the SADC Heads of State and Government Summit, where the winner of the first prize may be required to read excerpts from the essay at the opening ceremony. The deadline for submission is 31 May 2003. □



Children enjoy the rare spectacle of the December 2002 eclipse that travelled through Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique.

Seychelles: Ruling party wins

The ruling Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) led by President France Albert Rene has won a majority in the legislative election held on 4-6 December 2002, trouncing its main rival the Seychelles National Party (SNP).

The SPPF collected 18 directly elected seats and another five on the proportional basis with its 54.3 percent of the votes, bringing its tally to 23. The SNP which garnered 42.6 percent of the votes won seven electable seats and another four through the proportional representation system, making a total of 11.

The Seychelles National Assembly consists of 25 members elected from

Tanzania forecasts higher growth

Tanzania's economic growth, hailed by donors as being on the right path, is projected to strengthen in 2003 due to a steady pursuit of "sound" macroeconomic policies, monitored by the World Bank and IMF, according to official estimates released recently.

At about six percent, the projected rate for the year is, however, still below the 7-8-percent level needed to achieve the national target of halving food insecurity and basic poverty by 2010, the attainment of international targets under the Millennium Development Goals.

Performance in construction and mining, and progress in agriculture are expected to yield a real GDP growth of six percent annually between 2003 and 2005, according to the estimates released at an annual government consultative group meeting with donors.

The meeting agreed that annual average inflation is expected to fall to 4.2 percent in 2003 and then to four percent in 2004 and 2005. (PANA)

single-member constituencies and nine members elected by proportional representation.

During his meeting with the SNP leader immediately after the election, President Rene declared that he hoped the opposition in the assembly would give him a hand in the task of bringing about more prosperity and happiness for the people of Seychelles. (Seychelles Nation)

Mauritius on tough gender laws

A bill proposing harsher sentences and heavy fines for sexual discrimination has been tabled before Parliament in Mauritius by Women's Rights and Family Welfare Minister Arianne Navarre-Marie, according to sources at the National Assembly.

Presenting the bill during a recent session, Navarre-Marie said it recommends a 100,000-rupie (US\$3,335) fine and an imprisonment term not exceeding two years for persons found guilty of gender-based discrimination.

"The punishments proposed are more severe than in the first draft that was distributed earlier last year to initiate public debate," she told MPs, adding that "the revised draft also includes sexual harassment."

The minister said the bill seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy whether it concerns employment, education, the provision of goods, services and accommodation.

The bill further recommends the creation of a department of sexual discrimination within the national human rights commission to investigate related complaints. (PANA)

Angola to increase oil production

Angola estimates to produce about 1.4 million barrels of oil per day from the year 2004, compared to the present daily production of 925,000 barrels, the former Angolan Oil Minister, Botelho de Vasconcelos has said. "There are perspectives of increasing the production because the investments are still on the blocks which were discovered on deep waters."

"All these projects and discoveries are being developed and we want the daily production for the year 2004/2005 to reach 1.4 million barrels," he said during an interview with a local news agency.

Oil is a key resource in Angola, contributing 60 percent to Gross National Product and 90 percent of exports. However, there is a limited number of local companies in the sector. Vasconcelos noted that efforts were being made to involve more indigenous companies in the oil industry. (Angola Press Agency)

HIV/AIDS threatens development

Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano has described the ever growing rate of infection with HIV, the virus that causes the lethal disease AIDS, as a threat to the development of Mozambique.

Chissano was speaking during a ceremony to launch a book *AIDS in Mozambique* by the Mozambican Youth Association Aro-Juvenil, which is aimed essentially at literate adolescents.

"Everyone should worry about this pandemic, because it is a matter of the survival of the human race," he said.

Chissano added that because young people are the main targets of this disease, it is their responsibility to take serious measures to reduce the risk of infection. (AIM)

An MPs Companion on Gender and Development

The *SADC MPs Companion on Gender and Development in Southern Africa* fulfills a crucial regional gender information gap by providing necessary information to facilitate the work of parliamentarians in advocating for gender and development issues.

The 132-page book was produced and published under Engendering Parliaments, a joint two-year project with funding from the USAID Regional Centre for Southern Africa.

The Forum is a regional organization of 12 parliaments of SADC established to spearhead participation of parliaments in regional integration of SADC as well as contribute to a conducive environment for peace, democratic governance, gender equality and equity, and the attainment of human rights.

The five topics contained in the book are specific and succinctly serve as tools for parliamentarians to analyze and address gender issues in their wide-ranging work. The book starts with a chapter on parliamentarians'

role in advancing gender equality and equity in SADC. A substantial length of this section focuses on the central role that national parliaments and individual parliamentarians can play as gender advocates, with supporting arguments. It highlights the key challenges facing women in decision-making positions and the costs of excluding gender practice in parliamentary and other broader processes.

A chapter is dedicated to the various international and regional instruments that address the issues and challenges of gender. With this chapter, it is hoped that "MPs can get a grasp of the range of instruments that are an important frame of reference on gender".

With a particular emphasis on parliaments and cabinets, a chapter in the book "analyses the representation of women and men in these institutions, indicating the gender gaps in representation".

After the Beijing conference, repackaging and disseminating the wealth of information available on gender in the region became an all too

necessary undertaking.

Available in English and Portuguese, the Companion will be a useful source of information that will assist MPs to advance the objectives and translating into practice commitments of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

The SADC MPs Companion on Gender and Development in Southern Africa should "empower Parliamentarians in accelerating the pace of gender equality in SADC countries".

(Reviewed by Shumbana Karume. Available from SADC PF, P. Bag 13361, Windhoek, Namibia. Email: info@sadcpf.org Website: www.sadcpf.org or from SARDC-WIDSAA, P.O. Box 5690, Harare, Zimbabwe. Email: widsaa@sardc.net website: www.sardc.net) □

Recent Publications and Acquisitions

22nd SADC Summit Anniversary Brochure, Luanda, Angola 1-3 October 2002.
SADC Secretariat.-2002.

Available from: SADC Secretariat,
SADC House, P/Bag 0095,
Gaborone, Botswana.
Email: registry@sadc.int
Website: www.sadc.int

Communities and Reconstruction in Angola.
Robson, P (ed).-

Available From: ADRA, Praceta Farinha
Leitao 27, CP3788, Luanda, Angola.

Email. dg.adra@angonet.org
Land: Facing the Millennium Challenges in Unity and Hope
Mpunga, S. Jekemu, W and Ruswa G.
(eds).-2002.

Available from: Konrad Adenauer
Foundation, 26 Sandringham Drive,
Alexander Park, Harare.
Email: kas@mweb.co.zw

Southern Africa Malaria Control Review: Malaria Control Progress in southern Africa 1997-2000.
- 2001

Available from: Southern Africa Malaria
Control Programme (SAMC), World Health
Organization,
PO Box CY 348, 95 Parklane, Harare
Zimbabwe.
Website: www.malaria.org.za

The State of the World's Children 2003.
- 2003

Available from: United Nations Children
Fund (UNICEF), 6 Fairbridge Avenue,
PO Box 1250, Harare, Zimbabwe.
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SADC diary

2003	Event	Venue		
February	3-4	African Union Extraordinary Summit	Ethiopia	
	3-5	SADC Subcommittee on Customs Cooperation Meeting	Botswana	
	4-5	SADC Policy Makers Workshop on Wetlands Management	South Africa	
	6	Gaborone Based SADC Heads of Mission Meeting	Botswana	
	10-11	SADC Finance Subcommittee Meeting	Swaziland	
	12-13	SADC Members States Workshop on the Draft Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP)	South Africa	
	12-14	Commonwealth Symposium on Gender and Multilateral Trade	Fiji	
	14	SADC Workshop on the Draft RISDP (Cooperating Partners)	South Africa	
	15-17	SADC Ministers of Mines and Minerals Meeting	South Africa	
	18-19	SADC Review Committee of Officials Meeting	Botswana	
	20	SADC Ministerial Troika Meeting	Botswana	
	20	SADC Review Committee of Ministers Meeting	Botswana	
	20-25	Non Aligned Movement (NAM)	Malaysia	
	24-25	SADC Senior Officials for Integrated Committee of Ministers	Angola	
	26	SADC Inaugural Meeting of the Integrated Committee of Ministers	Angola	
	27-28	SADC Standing Committee of Officials Meeting	Angola	
	28	ACP Committee of Trade Ministers Meeting	St Lucia	
	March	1	SADC Finance Committee Meeting	Angola
		2-3	SADC Council of Ministers Meeting	Angola
		6-8	NEPAD Gender Forum	South Africa
16-23		Third World Water Forum	Japan	
26-28		Nepad Civil Society	Ghana	
28-30		African Urban Spaces: History And Culture	USA	

Currency checklist

Country	Currency	(US\$1)
Angola	Kwanza (100 Iwei)	53.30
Botswana	Pula (100 thebe)	5.67
DRC	Congo Franc	409.00
Lesotho	Maloti (100 lisente)	8.93
Malawi	Kwacha (100 tambala)	91.08
Mauritius	Rupee (100 cents)	30.34
Mozambique	Metical (100 centavos)	24,455.00
Namibia	Dollar (100 cents)	8.93
Seychelles	Rupee (100 cents)	5.62
South Africa	Rand (100 cents)	8.93
Swaziland	Lilangeni (100 cents)	8.93
Tanzania	Shilling (100 cents)	1,036.00
Zambia	Kwacha (100 cents)	4,559.00
Zimbabwe	Dollar (100 cents)	55.00

Source: Standard Chartered Bank, Zimbabwe Ltd, 10 January 2003

Public Holidays in SADC for the period
January 2003 – March 2003

Date	Holiday	Country
1 January	New Year's Day	All SADC
2 January	Public Holiday	Botswana, Mauritius, Seychelles
4 January	Martyr of Colonial Repression	Angola
4 January	Martyr's Day	DRC
12 January	Zanzibar Revolution Day	Tanzania
15 January	John Chilembwe Day	Malawi
17 January	Lumumba's Day	DRC
18 January	Kabila Hero's Day	DRC
19 January	Thaipooam Cavadee	Mauritius
1 February	Commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery	Mauritius
1 February	Chinese New Year	Mauritius
3 February	Heroes Day	Mozambique
4 February	Start of Liberation War	Angola
1 March	Maha Shivaratree	Mauritius
8 March	Women's Day	Angola
11 March	Moshoeshoe's Day	Lesotho
12 March	Independence Day	Mauritius
12 March	Youth Day	Zambia
13 March	Ougadi	Mauritius
21 March	Independence Day	Namibia
21 March	Human Rights Day	South Africa
27 March	Victory Day	Angola