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2021 – A time for consolidation

by Joseph Ngwawi

AN EVENTFUL year awaits southern Africa in 2021 as the region intensifies the implementation of several priority programmes and moves to contain the simmering security challenges in some Member States and a health pandemic that continues to sweep across the world.

The year 2021 promises to be an exciting period for SADC as it marks the first full year since the approval of SADC Vision 2050 and its implementation plan, the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030.

The Vision and the RISDP 2020-2030 were approved by the 40th SADC Summit held virtually in August 2020, hosted by Mozambique.

The Vision 2050 sets out the long-term aspirations of SADC over the next 30 years while the RISDP 2020-30 outlines the proposed development trajectory for the region until 2030.

Under the SADC Vision 2050, the region endeavours to,

- create a conducive environment to advance regional cooperation and integration and uphold free movement of

goods, people or labour, capital and services;

- shift away from the current reliance on international cooperating partners towards a more diversified approach that is better integrated and complementary;
- improve the implementation of policies and programmes through institutional reforms that recognise the roles and responsibilities of various actors such as the SADC Secretariat, SADC National Committees and National Contact Points;
- strengthen mechanisms to track progress by Member States in the implementation of SADC programmes and compliance to protocols and legal instruments; and
- improve visibility and awareness of programmes to attract the interest and participation of citizens.

These aspirations are expected to be addressed through the rollout of the RISDP 2020-2030, which identifies strategic priorities called Pillars as well as crosscutting issues:

- ♦ Foundation Pillar: Peace, Security and Good Governance;



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- ❖ Pillar 1: Industrial Development and Market Integration;
- ❖ Pillar 2: Infrastructure Development in Support of Regional Integration;
- ❖ Pillar 3: Social and Human Capital Development; and
- ❖ Crosscutting Issues: Gender, Youth, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management.

The RISDP 2020-2030 replaced the RISDP 2015-2020, which came to an end in 2020 and had similar priority areas that focused on Industrial Development and Market Integration; Infrastructure Support for Regional Integration; Peace and Security; and Special Programmes of Regional Dimension.

Under the foundation pillar of RISDP 2020-2030, SADC targets to remain a peaceful and stable region, enabling its objectives of socio-economic development, poverty eradication, and regional integration to be further prioritised, pursued and achieved.

One of the strategic objectives under this pillar is to strengthen the capacity of the region for conflict prevention, management and resolution, including enhanced early warning systems to enable tracking and monitoring of political, security and socio-economic threats.

This is an area that SADC is expected to be seized with during 2021 due to the security threat in northern Mozambique where an armed insurgency has triggered a humanitarian crisis with a surge in internally displaced persons.

The SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation is developing a comprehensive regional response amid fears that the drums of war could silence hopes of peace in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado.

The Organ agreed in late 2020 on urgent regional action to

address the acts of terrorism in Cabo Delgado province and expressed continued SADC solidarity with the government of President Filipe Nyusi.

The insurgency has displaced more than half a million people in the province, with thousands killed.

The main concern for the region is that the longer it takes to resolve the issue, the more complex the crisis can become and it could be more difficult to find a solution.

SADC is expected to continue with its democratisation process, with Zambia scheduled to hold general elections in August while South Africa is set to elect local government councilors during the year.

Another priority area for SADC in 2021 is to maintain momentum in implementation of activities under the Industrial Development and Market Integration pillar.

This has been a top priority for SADC since 2014 when the region decided to frontload industrialisation in the regional development framework and culminated in the adoption of an Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap the following year.

The development of regional value chains and their integration into global value chains remains one of the main focus areas for the region.

Promotion of value chains will enable SADC Member States to specialise in those productive processes and activities where they have competitive advantages.

To date, the profiling of value chains in the minerals, pharmaceutical and agro-processing sectors has been completed.

Prospects of a good harvest during the 2020/21 farming season is good news for the region as agriculture is one of the main suppliers of raw materials for the industrialisation drive.

Most countries in the region have received above-normal rainfall since late 2020 and are forecasting bumper crop harvests when the season comes to an end around April.

At the continental level, SADC will be seized with implementation of activities related to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The AfCFTA became operational on 1 January 2021 and aims to boost intra-Africa trade by promoting the smooth movement of goods across the continent through improved infrastructure development, investment flows and enhanced competition.

On the RISDP 2020-2030 pillar of Infrastructure Development in Support of Regional Integration, the target is for SADC to have efficient and effective cross-border infrastructure apparatus, services and networks to support and facilitate deeper regional integration.

In the area of energy, the region plans to commission more than 3,700 megawatts of electricity in 2021 as part of ongoing efforts to attain self-sufficiency in the power sector.

Under the third pillar of Social and Human Capital Development, SADC is targeting to have a high quality of life in which the citizens are well educated and enjoy long, healthy and productive lives that reinforce the link between economic growth and sustainable human development in order to end poverty in all its forms.

A priority during the year will be to strengthen and harmonise regional health systems for the provision of standardised and accessible health services to all citizens, improved food and nutrition security for the socio-economic wellbeing of people in the region.

COVID-19 is expected to remain an area of concern for

southern Africa, with SADC Chairperson, President Filipe Nyusi of Mozambique rallying the region on 29 January to establish a facility to jointly mobilise resources to acquire COVID-19 vaccines. See page 4.

Nyusi called on ministers responsible for health in the 16 SADC member states to urgently consider establishing a mechanism to facilitate joint acquisition and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

"In this regard, we recommend the SADC Committee of Ministers of Health to establish a strong regional collaborative strategy which pools resources together to urgently acquire the vaccine for distribution to our citizens setting priorities in accordance with the level of risk," Nyusi said in a statement.

Regarding the crosscutting issues of Gender, Youth and Climate Change, the vision is that, by 2050, SADC will be a community where citizens are treated equally regardless of gender, and where the youth are empowered.

The year 2021 presents another opportunity for the SADC region to consolidate the gains it has made so far in promoting gender equality and equity.

One of these initiatives are ongoing efforts by Member States to take concrete action in driving the legislative agenda to advance gender equality in the renewable energy sector.

Women face challenges in accessing renewable energy products and technologies because of the prohibitive start-up cost of installing such equipment.

SADC will also give priority to disaster risk management due to an increase in the frequency and severity of natural disasters in southern Africa.

The region has experienced at least three tropical storms since late December 2020. □

SADC Electoral Advisory Council SEAC

THE SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) has begun the process of reviewing its strategic plan to strengthen its operations and develop a new five-year Strategic Plan (2021-2025).

The SEAC is tasked with advising SADC Member States on adherence to regional principles and guidelines governing the conduct of elections.

Adopted at the 24th SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Mauritius in August 2004, the Principles and Guidelines Governing the Conduct of Elections contain agreed criteria for the conduct of elections in SADC Member States as well as procedures to be followed by SADC observer missions.

The electoral guidelines aim to enhance the transparency and credibility of elections to avoid electoral disputes, and ensure the acceptance of election results by the contesting parties.

The regional guidelines are not legally binding and are subservient to national law. It is not mandatory for a Member State holding elections to invite a SADC Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) to observe its elections, but most Member States find it beneficial to do so.

In addition to advising on adherence to the SADC electoral principles and guidelines, the 16-member SEAC is tasked with encouraging the development, improvement and review of electoral laws and regulations in SADC Member States, and developing strate-

gies on handling electoral disputes.

The SEAC, which was first conceived in 2005, was inaugurated in April 2011 as a statutory body created under the SADC Inter-State Politics and Diplomacy Committee (ISPDC).

The ISPDC reports to the Ministerial Committee of the Organ (MCO) on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation which is made up of the ministers responsible for foreign affairs, defence, public security and state security from SADC Member States.

The MCO reports to the SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government.

In line with the MCO Decision of August 2016, the SEAC Strategic Plan (2021- 2025) is expected to strengthen the de-

sign elements of the SEAC programme and ensure that there is a well-articulated and current logical framework that will guide implementation and enable the monitoring of impact; as well as strengthening understanding and awareness of SEAC across the region through a comprehensive outreach programme aligned to SEAC post-election missions.

The proposed strategic plan is expected to be aligned to regional strategic plans including the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP 2020-2030).

SEAC has contributed to promoting peace and stability in the region by encouraging Member States to adhere to the agreed principles and guidelines.

The Council is composed of one representative from each Member State, selected and appointed by the MCO from a list nominated by governments.

Members of the Council are drawn from a wide-range of disciplines including retired judges, ambassadors, professors and civil society officials from the SADC region.

To avoid conflict of interest, SEAC members cannot be serving Members of Parliament or Government Ministers, and cannot be active in party politics or sit on any election management body.

They must be individuals of the highest reputation with experience in democracy and governance issues, and must be over 40 years of age. ▢

SADC adopts new Labour Migration Action Plan

SADC HAS adopted a new labour migration plan that takes into account the changing global dynamics in the labour market.

The new Labour Migration Action Plan (2020-2025) was approved by the 40th SADC Summit held in August 2020, and replaces the previous action plan that ran from 2016 to 2020.

The plan is premised on the notion that well-managed labour migration is mutually beneficial and can facilitate greater development and economic stability for all countries in the SADC region.

The new plan is expected to promote skills transfer and match the labour supply and demand for regional integration.

SADC adopted the a new action plan in line with Article 19 of the SADC Protocol on Employment and Labour, which seeks to protect and safeguard the rights and welfare of migrant workers, to offer better opportunities to contribute to countries of origin and destination.

According to 2017 statics from the African Union, Southern Africa is host to 37.5 percent of the continent's total 14.2 million international mi-

grant workers, an estimated 5.4 million.

The SADC region is home to the largest stock of international migrant workers, ahead of both East Africa and West Africa, with intra-SADC migration accounting for about 45 percent.

Given this background, it is envisaged that implementation of the adopted policy instrument, through a multi-sectoral approach, will contribute to the protection of labour migrants' rights and offer an opportunity to make a greater developmental impact on countries of origin and destination. ▢

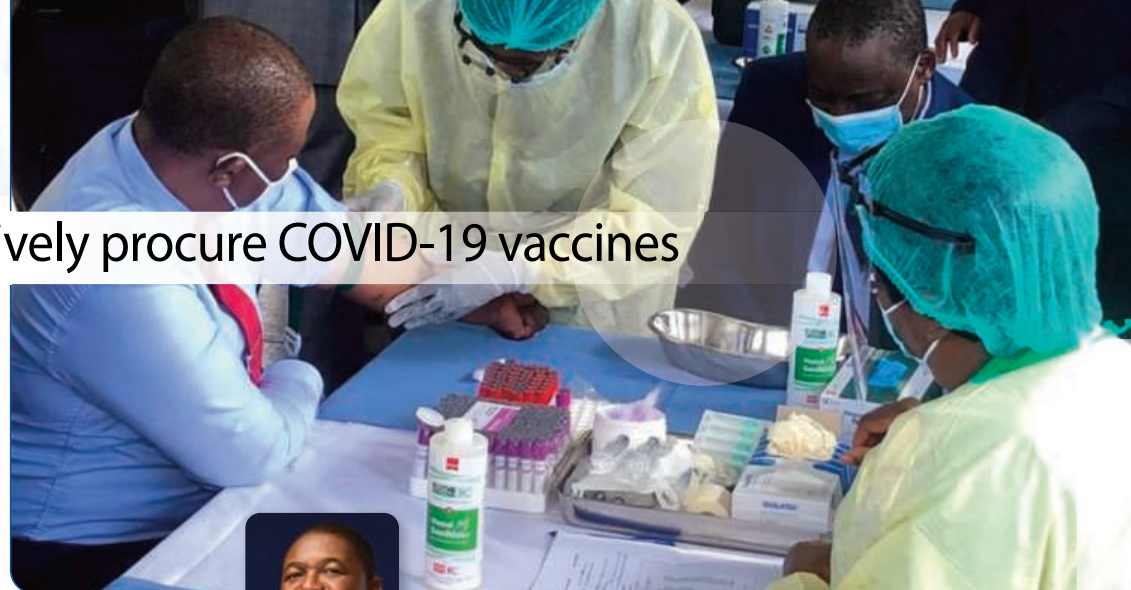


SADC to collectively procure COVID-19 vaccines

THE MAGNITUDE, complexity and severity of the novel coronavirus, commonly known as COVID-19 is unprecedented and calls for a collective resolve among SADC Member States.

The SADC Chairperson, President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi of Mozambique said in January that while individual Member States are making notable strides to contain and curb the high infection and mortality rates, greater progress will be achieved “if we stand together and collaborate” to overcome the pandemic.

“At this delicate time, it is urgent that we continue to build on these important strategic alliances and take additional measures that will as-



sist us in addressing the growing challenges posed by the second wave of the pandemic in our region, and other waves that may emerge,” President Nyusi said in a statement.

He said one such alliance among SADC Member States will be to pool resources and ensure that the region procures COVID-19 vaccines as a

collective body.

“In this regard, we recommend the SADC Committee of Ministers of Health to establish a strong regional collaborative strategy which pools resources together to urgently acquire the vaccine for distribution to our citizens, setting priorities in accordance with the level of risk,” he said.

While individual efforts by

Member States are commendable, collective procurement by the region is critical as it will allow southern Africa to source the vaccine in bulk at cheaper prices.

President Nyusi said there is also need to “enhance vaccine research capabilities and develop regional manufacturing capacity for vaccines in the future.”

“We must intensify cooperation and collaboration between Member States, through increased data sharing, policy harmonisation and standardisation, pooled procurement of essential medical and non-medical equipment to address the pandemic in a more effective way.

“The region should also reinforce its health systems so that they remain ready to deliver other life-saving services and better withstand future pandemics.”

In addition to health measures, it is critical for SADC to embark on common regional strategies, and harmonised and synchronised initiatives including electronic platforms to monitor the safe cross-border movement of people, vehicles and goods.

“I call upon all fellow SADC citizens to redouble their collective and individual commitment, as only by working together we will overcome the COVID-19 pandemic – the major challenge of our lifetime,” Nyusi said. □

Namibia ratifies African Medicines Agency Treaty

NAMIBIA HAS become the first SADC Member State to ratify the Treaty for the establishment of the African Medicines Agency (AMA).

Namibia deposited the instrument of ratification to the African Union (AU) Commission in February, making it the fifth African country to do so.

The establishment of an AMA is expected to contribute to improved regulation of medicines, medical products and technologies in the continent.

AMA will be a specialized agency of the AU with its own rules, membership and resources to enhance the capacity of State Parties and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), to regulate medical products in order to improve access to quality, safe and efficacious medical products on the continent.

The agency will complement the work of Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), by providing technical support in the quality control of drugs at the request of Member States which do not have the structures to carry out these examination/controls/checks.

Speaking at the official deposit of the instrument, the Namibian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Emilia Mkusa said the establishment of AMA is critical in making essential medicines and medical products accessible in Africa and underscored the need for other Member States to ratify the treaty, adding that “Namibia will advocate and support in mobilizing other SADC Member States to ratify AMA.”

The process of approval of a continental legal instrument

requires, first, signing, and then ratification, a process that differs from country to country.

A protocol “enters into force” following ratification by at least 22 AU Member States. This advances the continental law from being a stated intention to actual application. Those member states that join after a protocol has entered into force are said to “accede” to the protocol.

According to the AU Commission, plans are already underway to select where the Agency will be based.

Member states will be invited to put in an offer to host the agency.

Following an assessment of each country’s bid to host, a report shall be presented to the AU Summit for a decision on the hosting of the agency. □

Cyclone response SADC strengthens disaster risk management

by Egline Tauya

SOUTHERN AFRICA is on high alert amid increasing frequency of tropical storms which often degenerate into devastating cyclones.

The SADC Climate Service Centre has urged national meteorological and hydrological services in all the 16 Member States to closely monitor these events and update relevant institutions such as disaster risk management agencies at country level to support preparedness and response measures to protect lives and property.

While memories of a prolonged spell of heavy rain and widespread flooding brought to some parts of southern Africa by Cyclone Eloise in January are still fresh in the minds of the public, a new tropical system named Guambe developed in February and intensified in the southern half of the Mozambique Channel.

As climate change warms up seawater, making the coastal low-lying areas vulnerable, Cyclone Guambe is the seventh named tropical system in the South-Western Indian Ocean domain during the 2020/21 rainfall season.

Although not as devastating as Cyclone Eloise, a combination of torrential rain and extensive flooding affected a large part of the coast and adjacent interior of southern Mozambique. This covered the region from Beira, through Vilanculos and southward to Inhambane.

Cyclone Eloise, which affected Botswana, Eswatini, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, resulted in significant damage and destruction of property, roads and infrastructure, to-

gether with much flooding and the resultant loss of life across the region.

In Madagascar, the Disaster Management Unit reported that the cyclone affected over 1,000 people and left one person dead.

More than 500 people in different communities have been displaced, and 134 houses were flooded, while about 100 classrooms were destroyed.

According to the National Institute for the Management of Disasters in Mozambique, the cyclone led to heavy rains and widespread flooding that affected more than 21,500 people in the country, resulting in the loss of three lives.

More than 3,900 hectares of farmland have been inundated and over 50,000 square kilometres of land in Sofala and Manica provinces have been flooded with impacts on livelihoods, agriculture production and food security, and other ecosystem services.

In some parts of Botswana, Eswatini, South Africa and Zimbabwe, heavy rains and flooding led to the loss of 13 lives as well as the destruction

of infrastructure and property.

In Mozambique and Zimbabwe, Cyclone Eloise affected some areas which were hit by Cyclone Chalane in December 2020 and were still recovering from Cyclone Idai of 2019, one of the worst recorded tropical storms to ever affect Africa and the Southern Hemisphere.

While preparing for Cyclone Chalane, which affected Mozambique and Zimbabwe at the end of December 2020, one village man in Chimanimani district said that at times the instructions in response to crisis are confusing.

"It's tricky. The government is telling us to go to higher ground, yet Cyclone Idai badly hit those who were living on higher ground. What do we do then?" he said.

This illustrates the need to promote climate-proof structures resistant to both floods and strong winds, at the same time identifying locations which are not exposed to potential rockslides.

These were the sentiments of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-

operation that met in January to assess the impact of cyclone Eloise.

The SADC Organ called on Member States to strengthen the implementation of resilience-building initiatives and contingency planning, as well as improve early warning and response mechanisms to minimise the impact of disasters and natural hazards on the people of the region.

SADC and its International Cooperating Partners established a new Thematic Group on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management in late 2020 due to the increasing severity and frequency of disasters, according to a SADC report, for purposes of ensuring a robust engagement mechanism on climate change-related issues.

SADC has established a standalone Disaster Risk Reduction Unit responsible for coordinating regional preparedness and response programmes for transboundary hazards and disasters. The unit operates under the SADC Organ on Politics Defence and Security Cooperation. □

SADC and ARC strengthen cooperation

SADC AND the Africa Risk Capacity (ARC) have strengthened their cooperation in disaster management in the wake of increasing climate and other natural disasters in the region.

The joint commitment is supported by a Memorandum of Understanding signed by SADC and ARC in October 2019, which provides for cooperation in disaster risk financing in policy frameworks, vulnerability assessments, and

building capacity for disaster risk financing and early warning.

ARC is a specialised agency of the African Union established to assist governments to improve capacities to better plan, prepare, and respond to extreme weather events and natural disasters.

The agency is a cooperative mechanism providing risk profiling, layering and quantification, early warning, operational planning for early

response and disaster risk financing to enable African countries to strengthen their disaster risk management systems and access rapid and predictable financing when disasters strike.

The ARC's area of focus has expanded beyond food security and vulnerability to include tropical cyclones and epidemics. In this regard Madagascar and Zimbabwe have already benefitted from ARC group's risk financing. □



Regional solidarity key to addressing food insecurity

THE SADC Regional Vulnerability Committee has called for solidarity among Member States as the region faces record levels of food insecurity in the context of COVID-19.

Described by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the most serious health emergency in generations, the pandemic has affected the global socio-economic landscape and has resulted in the loss of many lives.

In the agriculture sector the impact of COVID-19 has adversely affected food and nutrition security and rural livelihoods, as well as disrupting access to key agricultural inputs including labour and output markets for many farmers.

According to a report released in July 2019, *Synthesis Report on the State of Food and Nutrition Security and Vulnerability in Southern Africa*, the region estimated that 41.2 million people would be affected.

In December 2020, the figures were reviewed to 51.3 million, taking into consideration the impact of COVID-19.

This is the highest number ever recorded by SADC, and the figure could rise again with the extended impacts of COVID-19.

The SADC Regional Vulnerability Committee that met virtually on 22 February for its Annual Organisational Meeting (AOM), said there is need for a joint approach among Member States to record food insecurity in the context of COVID-19.

The AOM of the SADC Regional Vulnerability Committee aims to provide the National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVACs), the Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committees (RVACs) and International Co-operating Partners (ICPs) with

an opportunity to reflect on the work they have done and collaboratively find solutions and advance good practices among Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (VAA) practitioners in the region.

NVACs traditionally conduct annual face-to-face assessments on the State of food and nutrition security and vulnerability six months ahead to inform their national projections.

These national projections are then integrated into a regional projections by the RVACs.

However, due to COVID-19 challenges, most countries have adjusted their assessments, hence the increase in people in the levels of food insecurity in SADC.

The pandemic has also seen most countries conducting remote monitoring instead of field assessments.

Mobile data collection and use of very high-resolution satellite imagery for “hotspot mapping” are some of the innovative techniques that NVACs have adopted to ascertain food insecurity.

The information on the state of food and nutrition security and vulnerability in individual member states and the rest of the region is critical as it allows national governments and partners to develop humanitarian and development actions to prevent, prepare for and respond to food insecurity.

In Madagascar, for example, the national data formed the basis of a January 2021 Flash Appeal, while in Zimbabwe, the national results were the basis of the December 2020 Situation Report issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

In 2019, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Zimbabwe declared states of disaster based on NVAC analysis of drought impacts.

“The wealth of data that the RVAA has generated over the years forms a good basis for some of the discussions and engagements in the food systems conversations such as the UN Food systems summit” said Andrew Odera, who is the Head of Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping for Southern Africa and Indian Ocean States at the World Food Programme.

Odera said it is critical for Member States and partners to find ways of strengthening the use and uptake of RVAA products and knowledge assets to support decision-making and influencing policy in the midst of multiple challenges such as climate-change-induced impacts of recurrent drought, floods and increased cyclonic activities, as well as increasing extreme poverty driven by COVID-19.

The SADC RVAA Programme was established in 2005 to strengthen the capacity of Member States to undertake

and utilise vulnerability assessments to inform policy formulation and emergency interventions that lead to a reduction in vulnerability in the region.

The first phase of the SADC RVAA Programme, which ran from 2005-2011, sought to inform broader approaches to tackling food insecurity, including safety nets and social protection.

The second phase covered the period 2012-2016 and focused on expanding the scope of the programme to include urban areas and chronic poverty issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS and climate change, as well as influencing policies and programmes.

The current phase of the SADC RVAA Programme, which spans the period 2017-2021, seeks to consolidate gains from the previous phases, while at the same time broadening the programme to cover chronic vulnerability, contributing to climate resilient livelihoods and addressing the challenges of institutionalisation and capacity development of national committees.

Since its establishment, the SADC RVAA Programme has made significant progress in providing timely and credible information that has influenced policies, and its products are now a vital reference point for decision-makers in addressing food and nutrition security issues. □





A bumper harvest expected in southern Africa

by Neto Nengomasha

A BUMPER harvest is imminent in southern Africa following the favourable rainfall received during the 2020/21 agricultural season.

According to the latest SADC Food Security Early Warning System Agromet Update released at the end of February, crops were in good condition in much of SADC due to the consistent rainfall experienced so far.

The report notes that crops were between vegetative and maturing stages in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as the southern, central and western parts of the United Republic of Tanzania.

The good rains have positively impacted on livestock, as grazing conditions and water availability have improved in many parts of the region.

The latest reports from the Famine Early Warning System Network (FewsNet) indicate that Malawi expects to achieve above-average crop production in the 2020/21 season owing to the consistent rainfall and increased access to inputs by farmers.

The first round production estimates by the Ministry of

Agriculture and Food Security show that Malawi is expected to produce about 4.4 million metric tonnes of maize, which is 42 percent above the five-year average and 21 percent above the national requirement.

These prospects may be revised downward due to dry spells in some southern districts of the country.

Reports from Lesotho reveal that the country is likely to have a better harvest than the previous three years despite localised flooding caused by heavy rainfall that occurred in late January and early February.

Although Zimbabwe is yet to finalise the results of its first crop and livestock assessment, preliminary findings indicate excellent conditions country-wide, with the exception of the southern parts of the country where crops have been damaged by leaching.

The Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, Monica Mutsvangwa said in February that an estimated 2.5 to 2.8 million metric tonnes of maize and 360,000 metric tonnes of traditional grain is anticipated in the 2020/21 season.

This will be about three times the harvest of the 2019/20 season.

The Zambia National Farmers Union said the country is anticipating a bumper harvest as crop production

is likely to exceed previous records of the past four years.

If the region continues to receive sufficient rainfall until the end of the season, southern Africa is likely to achieve its food security status after years of consecutive droughts.

The 2020 Synthesis Report on the State of Food and Nutrition Security and Vulnerability in southern Africa had indicated that about 44.8 million people across 13 SADC member states were food insecure due to a poor harvest and low rainfall experienced in the 2019/20 agriculture season.

The impact was further exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19.

In the previous rainfall season of 2018/19, the region recorded a decline in cereal production due to insufficient rain, leaving an estimated 41.2 million people in 13 SADC Member States food-insecure.

Despite the generally good picture in the region for this year, some parts of southern Africa are still likely to have crops and forage negatively impacted by drought in the 2020/21 season. These areas include parts of Angola, Madagascar and Namibia.

Though the 2021 national cereal production for Mozambique is expected to remain near average, there are concerns of drought in the northern part of the country while the central and southern provinces were affected by Tropical Cyclone Guame at the beginning of February.

In January, large areas of cropland were flooded by

Tropical Cyclone Eloise in Mozambique, which also affected parts of Eswatini, Madagascar, South Africa and Zimbabwe. In late December 2020, Tropical Storm Chalane had caused some flooding in Mozambique.

According to UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reports, initial assessments indicate that Tropical Cyclone Eloise affected over 100,000 hectares of cropland in Mozambique, although the extent of damage to crops is yet to be known.

Further, the persistent rainfall has resulted in leaching and waterlogging of crops in areas such as the north-eastern and central Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

In order to reduce food insecurity in the region, SADC Member States have continued to put in place various strategies at national and regional level.

The strategies include a combination of short-term measures such as social protection programmes to support those immediately affected, as well as medium- to long-term strategies focused around areas such as the maintenance of domestic and international supply chains and incentives for the diversification of agricultural production.

Member States are further advancing their water-harvesting technologies so as to harness the available water for future use. sardc.net □





Towards renewable energy solutions

SACREEE-IRENA agreement on renewable energy solutions

THE INTERNATIONAL Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREEE) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together on accelerating the deployment of renewable energy solutions in southern Africa.

Under the agreement, the two organisations will cooperate on decentralised technologies, policy development, capacity building programmes and regional events aimed at attracting investments to the region.

Southern Africa has seen remarkable improvement in electricity access over the past decade largely due to a strong commitment from SADC Member States to take advantage of the region's vast renewable energy potential to improve energy security and meet rising energy demand.

As a result, the total share of renewables in power generation rose from 23 percent in 2015 to almost 39 percent in 2018. However, despite significant progress, electricity access remains a challenge.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has re-emphasised the importance of reliable, affordable, clean energy," the IRENA Director-General, Francesco La Camera, said at the signing ceremony of the memorandum.

"It has served as a stark reminder that the new energy age must be inclusive, just and low-carbon if we are to achieve sustainable development in southern Africa and around the world. Africa can seize the moment for meaningful change, and dramatically improve socioeconomic outcomes by moving decisively towards the energy transformation. This agreement will bolster regional progress."

By building capacity in the SADC region, IRENA and SACREEE aim to accelerate renewable energy deployment and achieve universal energy access by creating environments more conducive to renewable energy investments.

The two organisations will conduct joint activities under the Africa Clean Energy Corridor (ACEC) in the areas of renewable energy resource assessment, long-term planning, as well as investments, policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks.

Implementation of activities under the ACEC provides a comprehensive opportunity to avoid greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

"SACREEE has implemented several joint programmatic activities with IRENA through the African Clean Energy Corridor initiative and the SADC Renewable Energy Entrepreneurship Support Facility since 2017," SACREEE Executive Director, Kudakwashe Ndhlukula said.

"The renewal of this Memorandum of Understanding will expand and strengthen our collaboration in areas of mutual interest and given mandates. We therefore appreciate the continued partnership and support from IRENA towards the fulfilment of our mandate towards an energy secure and resilient society through clean, affordable and sustainable energy solutions.

IRENA and SACREEE will work together to accelerate renewable energy investments through the implementation of the Southern African Investment Forum that will facilitate access to sustainable finance in the region.

The forum is part of IRENA's contribution to the Climate Investment Platform (CIP), designed to advance sustainable energy projects to investment maturity and facilitate their access to finance.

Key forum activities include matchmaking between projects, project developers, and potential financiers and investors.

IRENA and SACREEE renewed their commitment to support entrepreneurship in the region.

The two organisations previously partnered on establishing the SADC Renewable Energy Entrepreneurship Support Facility.

The objective of the Facility was to enhance and strengthen the capacity of small to medium entrepreneurs in assessing the business potentials of sustainable energy, develop viable business plans and loan requests, and managing their businesses successfully. sacreee.org. □

2,480 Megawatts of electricity added in 2020

A TOTAL of 2,480 Megawatts (MW) of new electricity was added to the regional grid in 2020.

This represents about 77 percent of the targeted capacity of 3,215 MW that was expected to be commissioned in 2020. The addition of new electricity to the regional power grid is critical as it allows SADC Member States to share surplus energy.

All mainland SADC Member States with the exception of Angola, Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania are interconnected through the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) regional grid. Plans are now at an advanced stage to interconnect Angola, Malawi and Tanzania to the SAPP network.

SAPP is responsible for coordinating the planning, generation, transmission and marketing of electricity on behalf of member state utilities in SADC. □



UN SG – Phase out the use of coal by 2030

THE GLOBAL community should work together to phase out the use of coal by 2030 to ensure the world meets its goals to curb global warming.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said emissions-cutting pledges by governments fall far short of what is needed to limit climate heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

However, if immediate action is taken to end the use of fossil fuels such as coal, the world could address global warming.

“Phasing out coal from the electricity sector is the single most important step to get in line with the 1.5-degree goal,” he said.

Scientists estimate that coal used in electric power generation must fall by 80 percent below 2010 levels by 2030 to meet the 1.5C warming limit, an ambitious goal set by more than 190 nations in the 2015 Paris Agreement. □



SADC steps up efforts to exploit its natural gas reserves

SADC IS exploring ways of harnessing the potential of the massive reserves of natural gas that exist in the region following the development of the Regional Gas Master Plan which seeks to unlock the potential of gas in Southern Africa.

SADC has some of the largest deposits of natural gas in the world and harnessing this would improve the energy situation in the region and contribute to the regional energy mix, which is dominated by coal.

At their meeting held in October 2020, the SADC Ministers responsible for Energy received and considered reports on the high-level implementation plan of Phase I of the Regional Gas Master Plan (RGMP I) and urged Member States to develop gas infrastructure and markets in the region.

The Ministers endorsed the Roadmap for the second phase of the Regional Gas Master Plan (RGMP II) and commended the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) for supporting the development of RGMP I.

They also commended DBSA and the International Development Corporation (IDC) for offering to support RGMP II.

Natural gas is becoming more significant to the region’s energy sector as various countries develop their respective gas-fields, including Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The main producers of gas in the SADC region at present are Angola, United Republic of Tanzania, DRC and Mozambique, although Namibia has significant reserves of natural gas offshore.

Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe have unconventional gas re-

serves in significant quantities in the form of coal-bed methane and shale gas.

Exploration has taken place in other SADC Member States although the exact amounts of reserves are not yet known for these countries.

It is envisaged that the exploitation of the vast reserves of natural gas, shale gas and coal-bed methane in SADC Member States could result in significant opportunities for employment and contribute billions of dollars to the regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Natural gas has many potential uses in the region to generate electricity or as chemical feedstock in industrial processes or as fuel for vehicles. Another potential use of gas is in the production of fertilizers.

Therefore, the exploration of natural gas, presents a significant opportunity for SADC to address its energy challenges to move forward the Industrialisation Agenda and deepen integration. □

Private sector key to advancing regional integration

SADC HAS urged the private sector to enhance manufacturing capabilities through building a strong portfolio in pharmaceuticals and prioritising industrialisation.

SADC Executive Secretary Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax said this during a virtual meeting with the SADC Business Council in February.

The SADC Business Council is an umbrella body for the private sector comprising national apex bodies of the private sector in each of the 16 SADC Member States.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the operationalisation of the Business Council and the progress on activities in support of SADC industrialisation and the regional integration agenda.

Dr Tax said dialogue would result in huge progress in the operations of the Business Council and called upon the parties to concretise the partnership between the private and public sectors, effectively operationalise the Council and build a strong network linkage with its affiliates.

She said that the specific objectives of the constitution of the Business Council will be guided and aligned to what is contained in the SADC Treaty, including other statutory documents such as the legal instruments, the SADC Vision 2050 and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-30.

Chairperson of the SADC Business Council, Eduardo Sengo said the Council is poised to adopt a private agenda for the region which

will ensure that all private members/associations, and chambers of commerce can influence and advocate for discussions which will enhance their mandate.

He said that this will help Member States to deliberate on pertinent topics such as the free trade zones and industrialisation agenda, including removal of trade barriers.

Sengo advocated for more engagement and dialogue with the political leadership to help the business world to eliminate business barriers, and for implementing conducive legal instruments which will support the transformation of the economies of the SADC Region.

The meeting also discussed the status of preparations for the SADC Industrialisation Week, which the two parties jointly host annually, bringing

together the public and private sectors, International Co-operating Partners (ICPs), Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and policy makers in the region to forge wider understanding of the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2020-2030, and facilitate its implementation.

The SADC Industrialisation Week is scheduled to take place in Maputo, Mozambique in May/June, while another one is slotted for August in Lilongwe, Malawi.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Council, Mr Peter Varn-dell updated the meeting on the operations of the Council and stated that drafting of the rules of engagement between

the two parties has been finalised and is awaiting input from the SADC Secretariat.

He said the Council has been involved in core activities relating to operationalizing and implementation of projects and other activities, and is in a good position to commence implementation of recommendations put forward in its five-year strategy.

On Non-Tariff Barriers, he said that a huge amount of work has been ongoing to facilitate SADC Member States through workshops on pharmaceuticals and transport/logistics including preparation of terms of reference for a regional trade and transport working group. *sadc.int* □

SADC and UNOCT strengthen cooperation

SADC CONTINUES to be ready and willing to co-operate with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) in fighting terrorism, as this remains a huge challenge in southern Africa, the SADC Executive Secretary, Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax has said.

Speaking during a virtual meeting with the Under Secretary-General of the UNOCT, Vladimir Voronkov in early February, Dr Tax commended UNOCT for the cooperation that continues to exist with SADC in a number of areas of collaboration, at national and regional levels.

The cooperation between SADC and UNOCT dates back to 2015 following the process of development and adoption of a Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategy for Southern Africa by the SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government.

Voronkov assured SADC of continued commitment by the UNOCT to support the region in the implementation of the Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategy and in the establishment and operationalisation of a SADC Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre.

He further noted the need to enhance cooperation with SADC Member States on matters pertaining to South-South Cooperation in which countries of the Global South help each other by sharing technical or economic knowledge and skills to facilitate development.

Voronkov briefed Dr. Tax on the upcoming 2021 Counter-Terrorism Week and related activities which will take place in June 2021 and implored SADC to participate as it offers a good platform for countries to share ideas on dealing with threats posed by terrorism. *sadc.int* □





African Continental Free Trade Area now operational

AFRICA CELEBRATED the year 2021 in style by operationalising the largest trade arrangement that will boost intra-regional trade across the continent and change the global economic landscape.

As per the December 2020 decision of the African Union (AU) Assembly, the integrated trade market known as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) started trading on 1 January 2021.

The AfCFTA secretary general, Dr. Wamkele Mene said this a historic moment for Africa that will allow the continent to dictate its own developmental path.

For too long Africa has been over-reliant on exporting primary commodities, which is detrimental to its economic development and undermines its ambition for prosperity and greater integration.

Thus the launch of the AfCFTA will break down colonial barriers by opening up borders and encourage intra-regional trade among African countries.

The integrated market will facilitate the smooth movement of skilled personnel in the region and deepen people-to-people exchanges, as well as turn the migrant challenge into a human capital boon for Africa.

Mene said it is now critical for Africa to focus more on how to eliminate non-tariff barriers and barriers to intra-Africa investment by creating innovative and holistic trade systems such

as developing vibrant value chains.

"We have to reconfigure Africa's supply chain," he said, adding "we have to reconfigure and relook at how we establish value chains in a way that makes us more self-sufficient as a continent."

The African Business Council (AfBC) also hailed the start of the integrated market, saying it presents enormous business opportunities for local companies to boost their business.

"The AfCFTA gives us an opportunity to drive our agenda," Dr. Amany Asfour, the interim chairperson of the AfBC said.

"This is an opportunity for us all to come together and support the implementation of the AfCFTA. We are a united voice, and we can do this together."

The AfCFTA is an enlarged market that brings together all the 55 AU member states, covering a market of more than 1.2 billion people and a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of more than US\$3.4 trillion.

According to the AU, the AfCFTA when fully operational is expected to increase African

intra-regional trade from the present 10 percent to about 40 percent.

The AfCFTA will build on the existence of other FTAs in the continent such as the SADC FTA and the pending "Grand" FTA involving the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community and SADC.

Establishment of the AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects or initiatives under Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want, which is a continental vision and strategic framework adopted by the AU in 2013 to optimise the use of the continent's resources for the benefit of all Africans. □

COMESA-EAC-SADC aim for deeper integration

THREE REGIONAL communities in eastern and southern Africa are determined to conclude all processes to ensure that their integrated market is a success.

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC) and SADC agreed in February to rapidly conclude the ratification and implementation of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA).

The TFTA aims to strengthen and deepen economic integration of the southern and eastern African regions, and to harmonise policies and programmes across the continent in the areas of trade, customs and infrastructure development as well as movement of goods and people.

The Chairperson of the Tripartite Task Force, Dr Stergom-

ena Lawrence Tax, who is the SADC Executive Secretary, said implementation of the TFTA will pave the way for the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Ten Member and Partner States have ratified the TFTA Agreement -- Botswana, Burundi, Egypt, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Eswatini and Zambia. This is still short of the 14 ratifications required for the TFTA to enter into force in accordance with Article 39 (3) of the TFTA Agreement.

The TFTA Agreement was launched in June 2015 with the aim of promoting economic and social development of the region, and creating a large

market with free movement of goods and services to advance intra-regional trade and strengthen regional and continental integration for the benefit of the people of the Tripartite region.

Together, the COMESA, EAC and SADC Member and Partner States represent 53 percent of the African Union membership, constitute over US\$1.4 trillion Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which is roughly 60 percent of African continental GDP, and have a combined estimated population of more than 800 million, making the COMESA-EAC-SADC TFTA an important building block for the implementation of the AfCFTA. □





Gender Based Violence

SADC develops tools to guide response to GBV

by Nyarai Kampilipili

SADC IS developing tools to guide the regional response in addressing gender-based violence.

The tools are aimed at reducing and stopping the prevalence of sexual and Gender Based Violence (GBV) in SADC which are a challenge to efforts in achieving gender equality and promoting peace and security within the regional integration agenda.

Violence against women and girls is a pandemic in SADC and an obstacle to equality, development, peace and human rights.

The tools that are currently under development include the Regional Sexual and Gender-based Violence Training Guidelines which are aimed at supporting the capacity-building of frontline officers to ensure effective and efficient prevention as well as provision of comprehensive GBV services.

The training guidelines will contribute to raising awareness on gender-based violence, its impacts and consequences, and responses.

The Regional Guideline on Developing GBV Standard Operating Procedures and Referral Mechanisms are the second set of tools under development aimed at facilitating access to quality, timely and appropriate services for GBV victims and survivors.

The guidelines for development of operating procedures will contain steps to follow in providing essential services to GBV victims by various sectors including health, social services, police and justice, and provide guidance on coordination of essential GBV services at national level.

To complement these tools, SADC will embark on a regional inventory of sexual and gender-based violence legislation to assist Member States in addressing identified gaps.

Currently, in response to GBV, the region is guided by the revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development; Vision 2050 and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020-2030; the Regional GBV Strategy 2018-2030 and its Framework of Action; and the SADC Regional Strategy on Women, Peace and Security 2018-2022.

These SADC documents clearly affirm the principles of women empowerment and gender equality, and recognize the prevention and reduction of GBV as an essential el-



ement in attaining an environment conducive for peace and security.

The Revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development provides for the empowerment of women, elimination of discrimination and attainment of gender equality and equity through enactment of gender-responsive legislation and implementation of policies, programmes and projects.

The protocol was revised in 2016 to align with the provisions of other instruments such as the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063 and the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2015-2063.

The GBV Strategy was developed to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the Revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development with a specific focus on the Articles addressing GBV while the strategy on women, peace and security gives due attention to the need to combat any human rights violations of women and children, with emphasis on addressing sexual GBV.

SADC also developed the 10 Year Strategic Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2009 – 2019). GBV is used to manipulate and control women, men, boys and girls who fall victim of trafficking in persons and forced labour.

The development of these tools is being conducted under Key Result Area (KRA) 4 of the Support to Peace and Security in the SADC Region (SPSS) programme being implemented by SADC with the support of the European Union.

The SPSS programme is mandated to strengthen the capacity of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation to promote peace, security and democracy across the SADC Region in line with the SADC Treaty and the Protocol on Politics Defence and Security Cooperation of 2001.

KRA 4 is centred on enhancing capacity in SADC for gender-sensitive conflict prevention, management and resolution and for addressing the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence through strengthening SADC's capacity to address issues of SGBV.

The capacity building programmes engage service providers, in particular law enforcement officers, on effective response to GBV and supports Member States upon request to review or develop their national GBV action plans.

The programme specifically engages parliamentarians as policy makers and advocates for change in response to GBV as they have a critical role in the development and implementation of SGBV laws.

The programme therefore partnered with the SADC Parliamentary Forum to sensitise Members of Parliament on the regional SGBV response.

The SPSS Programme was launched in April 2019 to promote peace, security and democracy in the region and aligns with the SADC Vision 2050 in providing a framework for a conducive and peaceful environment to enable regional integration. □



Is the 50:50 target achievable by 2030?

by Nyarai Kampilipili

THE INTERNATIONAL Women's Day on 8 March is a time to reflect on the progress made by the global community in promoting gender equality and parity.

While significant progress has been made to facilitate gender parity in political decision-making positions, more action is needed to attain the target of 50:50 representation, and the pace of progress is worrisome.

Only three countries in the world have reached the 50:50 target. These are Rwanda at 61.3 percent, Cuba (53.4 percent) and the United Arab Emirates (50 percent).

As of January 2021, women accounted for only 25.5 percent of global parliamentary seats, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

In sub-Saharan Africa, women make up 25 percent of the total parliamentary seats.

In SADC Member States, progress towards the equal participation of women in decision-making positions has also been slow, especially in Parliaments, although some have made significant gains.

During the period 1997-2005 when the target was 30 percent, only three countries had reached the target in parliament -- Mozambique, South Africa and the United

Republic of Tanzania, at 34.8 percent, 32.8 percent and 30.4 percent, respectively.

In 2016, the target was revised to 50:50 by 2030 in line with other global targets and South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique are closest to achieving the target, at 45.8 percent, 44.2 percent and 42.4 percent, respectively.

Following recent elections held in the region in 2019 and 2020, it is apparent that the majority of SADC Member States will not reach gender parity in political and decision-making positions by 2030 if the trajectory continues.

The existence and functioning of Parliaments without a significant proportion of women contributes to less sustainable development globally and regionally.

Women offer different perspectives and interests in the decision-making process and have unique experiences which are often overlooked due to under-representation.

Available statistics clearly illustrate the limited representation and participation of women in structures of power and decision-making at all levels of society and that there can be no sustainable democracy without gender equality and empowerment of women.

If women continue to be marginalised in positions of decision-making, the world will continue to miss out on its development potential.

Under-representation in decision-making continues to prevent women from developing and influencing gender-responsive solutions that contribute to sustainable development.

While raising numbers is a primary concern, it is equally important that once in leadership positions, women use their posi-

tions of influence to contribute substantively to the advancement of gender equality, a process that can help fast-track the attainment of the 50:50 target by 2030.

It is therefore important for SADC Member States to develop and strengthen efforts towards gender equality and women empowerment.

The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development opens a unique possibility for Member States to intensify measures for strategic implementation of the gender commitments in collaboration with all stakeholders from civil society, private sector, communities and other development partners.

Gender equality in politics is not only about the access of women to leadership positions, but also about equal opportunities in political competition.

For southern Africa to achieve gender equality in leadership, a level playing field for both men and women must be provided and Member States should safeguard the achievements already made in gender parity and develop innovative measures to fast track equal representation.

Celebrated annually on 8 March, International Women's Day provides an opportunity for the global community to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women, while taking note of the barriers that hinder the acceleration of gender equality.

The theme for this year's commemoration is "Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World."

The theme encourages women in leadership to play a role in shaping the pivotal decisions that progress the advancement of women and attainment of gender equality, particularly in a COVID-19 affected world. □





Busy election season for SADC in 2021

by Joseph Ngwawi

SOUTHERN AFRICA is expecting a busy election calendar in 2021, with at least three polls scheduled to take place during the year.

SADC Member States that are due to hold elections during the year are Zambia, South Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius.

Zambians are due to go for polls on 12 August to elect a president as well as members of the National Assembly and local government councillors.

President Edgar Lungu of the Patriotic Front will be vying for a second full term in office and is expected to face the challenge of Hakainde Hichilema, leader of the opposition United Party for National Development (UPND).

According to the 2021 General Election Calendar published by the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) in February, Zambians are expected to electronically inspect the provisional voters roll using their mobile phones or the ECZ website between 7 February and 7 May.

"In our quest to be innovative and provide convenience for the registered voters, we have devised electronic means of verification of voter details on the provisional register, especially now that the country has not been spared by the

COVID-19 pandemic," ECZ Chief Electoral Officer, Kryticous Nshindano said in February.

A physical inspection of the voters roll is available for the period from 29 March and 2 April for those without access to mobile phones or the ECZ website.

The physical inspection will also allow voters the opportunity to bring to the attention of ECZ officials their objections, appeals, notifications of death, transfers and delimitation concerns.

According to Nshindano, the provisional register stood at just over seven million voters as of 25 February, out of which about 3.7 million or 53.4 percent are women.

The nomination court is scheduled to open from 10-14 May for the nomination of presidential candidates.

Nominations of those vying for the right to represent Zambians in the National Assembly are set for 11 May, as will be acceptance of papers for mayoral candidates.

ECZ will accept nominations for ward councillors on 12 May, ahead of the campaign period which is scheduled to take place between 14 May and 11 August.

South Africans are scheduled to vote for councillors in local government elections at a date yet to be announced.

Local government in South Africa consists of eight metropolitan municipalities, 44 district municipalities and 205 local municipalities.

The largest metropolitan areas are governed by metropolitan municipalities, while the rest of the country is divided into district municipalities, each of which consists of several local municipalities.

The councils of metropolitan and local municipalities are elected through a system of mixed-member proportional representation, in which half of the seats in each municipality are elected on the First Past The Post system in single-member wards and the remainder are allocated according to a system of proportional representation.

The proportional representation system takes into account the number of ward seats won by a party and ensures that the final number of seats it holds is proportional to its percentage of the vote.

District municipality councils are partly elected by proportional representation and partly appointed by the councils of the constituent local municipalities.

The African National Congress has been the majority party in most municipalities across South Africa since independence in 1994, with the exception of those in the Western Cape.

Its overall share of the municipal vote has, however, declined, dropping from 61.95 percent in 2011 to 53.91 percent during the last local government polls held in 2016 amid growing discontent regarding the state of the economy and perceived corruption.

Mauritius is due to hold local government elections this year at a date to be announced.


Depending on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic, SADC is expected to deploy teams of observers to each of the Member States holding elections to monitor the provisions of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted a lot of socio-economic activities in SADC, especially due to the restrictions on movement of persons and public gatherings.

Due to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, SADC was unable to physically deploy its SADC Electoral Observation Missions (SEOMs) to elections held last year.


Instead, SADC adopted a virtual approach in which it consulted with electoral stakeholders in the various Member States that held elections in 2020.

These included Malawi, Seychelles, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania. □



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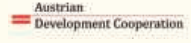
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February – April 2021

February 2, Global	World Wetlands Day Celebrated annually on 2 February, World Wetlands Day aims to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and the planet, and how to protect them. This marks the date of adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.
6, Virtual	34th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly African leaders meet for the 34th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly to discuss the advancement of continental integration. The 2021 theme is “Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want”. The Democratic Republic of Congo will become Chair for the next year.
March 8, Global	International Women’s Day The theme for International Women’s Day 2021 is “Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world.” This celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and highlights the gaps that remain.
12, Virtual	SADC Council of Ministers Meeting The SADC Council of Ministers, which meets twice a year, is responsible for supervising and monitoring the functions and development of SADC, and ensuring that policies are implemented to advance regional integration. Council is chaired by the Member State that is chairing SADC for the period so this virtual meeting is hosted by Mozambique to review progress on the SARDC work programme and integration targets.
15-26, Hybrid Virtual	Commission on the Status of Women The UN Commission on the Status of Women, the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, meets annually in March in New York to assess progress. The CSW theme for their 65th session to be held in March 2021 is, “Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.” Due to the evolving COVID-19 situation, CSW65 will take place in a hybrid format with mostly virtual meetings.
17 -23, Virtual	UN Economic Commission for Africa The 53rd Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development will discuss current development on the continent, under the theme: “Africa’s Sustainable Industrialisation and Diversification in the Digital Era in the Context of COVID-19”.
April 7, Global	World Health Day April 7 of each year marks World Health Day. From its inception at the First Health Assembly in 1948 and since taking effect in 1950, the commemoration has aimed to create awareness of a specific health theme to highlight a priority area of concern for the World Health Organization.
TBA, Virtual	SADC Energy Thematic Group Meeting The Energy Thematic Group meeting is a coordination forum attended by the SADC Secretariat, energy subsidiary organisations and cooperating partners. The meeting reviews the energy situation in the region and initiatives to improve access to energy in the SADC region.

Southern Africa Liberation Day

MARCH 23 is a memorable date in the liberation history of Southern Africa, dedicated to honour the men and women who fought for freedom and liberation across the SADC region.

The day commemorates the independence of all SADC Member States, and is a public holiday in Angola to mark the liberation victory at Cuito Cuanavale in southern Angola in 1988, against the armed forces of the apartheid regime of South Africa.

This victory at Cuito Cuanavale, a small town in the province of Cuando Cubango, was the last liberation battle that transformed the future of southern Africa, leading to the successful negotiations for the independence of Namibia (1990) and dismantling of the apartheid administration in South Africa (1994), enabling the region to advance to regional development and integration.

This was the last major battle for liberation in southern Africa and the victory is not only significant to southern Africa but a source of pride for the entire African continent.

From November 1987 to March 1988, thousands of combatants from the People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA) supported by the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and the Cuban Revolutionary Forces fought to defend the country and the region.

Apartheid South Africa had invaded southern Angola in 1975 August, prior to Angolan independence in November, and remained until the formal peace agreement when South African troops and administration were withdrawn from Angola and Namibia in 1989. During that period, there were periodic airstrikes in the area targeting the Angolan army, SWAPO fighters, and refugee camps, including direct South African military attacks.

The South African Defence Force stretched itself too far in defence of their apartheid system of racial segregation, when they conducted raids and attacks further into the country in 1987 against the well-trained and armed Angolan army and SWAPO liberation fighters, strengthened by the Cuban military, some of whom lost their lives and are considered heroes in Africa due to their support for liberation.

Apartheid South Africa was confronted in southern Angola and their advance was halted in a major military confrontation that lasted for several months, culminating eventually in the decisive clash at Cuito Cuanavale in March 1988.

The defeat of the South African apartheid forces at Cuito Cuanavale led to negotiations involving the United Nations, Angola, Namibia, Cuba and South Africa, among others, which eventually resulted in a South African withdrawal from Namibia, which returned to UN mandate for a transitional period leading to elections for a Constituent Assembly and Independence two years later, on 21 March 1990.

This was followed by democratic elections in South Africa four years later, on 27 April 1994.

Between those dates, on 17 August 1992, at a Summit of regional leaders meeting in Windhoek, in independent Namibia, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was formally established, growing out of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) born in 1980 and taking over its mandate for "Southern Africa: Toward Economic Liberation".

SADC Heads of State and Government, meeting again in Windhoek in August 2018 at the 38th SADC Summit, took the decision to declare 23 March as Southern Africa Liberation Day. □

Documenting, Sharing and Teaching Liberation Heritage

THE SADC Hashim Mbita Project to document Southern African Liberation Struggles was established in 2004 as the inspiration of Brig-Gen (rtd) Hashim Mbita, who served as Executive Secretary of the OAU Liberation Committee for 22 years from 1972 until his mission was accomplished in 1994.

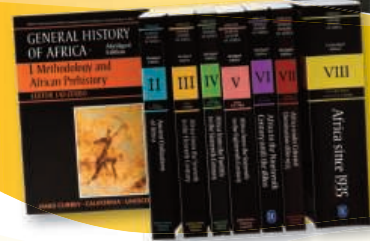
Ten years later he set out to organize the collection of stories and documents from people across the region who had direct experience of the liberation period. The result is a publication of nine volumes which contain a narrative of stories told by the people of the region and their liberation movements, about their role and that of the Front Line States, and support by various organisations and countries within and outside Africa.

The publication was launched at the 34th SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe in 2014 in the original languages, and has recently been fully translated into the SADC Official Languages for wider distribution.

The publication is a significant tool in teaching and consolidating the rich liberation history of southern Africa.

SADC has recently partnered with UNESCO and the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) to review and strengthen the teaching of liberation history in schools and to produce accessible materials about the liberation heritage, in text, images and videos, and also shared on social media. These are produced in modules covering the broader regional solidarity, and the first module has been developed, titled, Youth in the Liberation Struggle.

The series beginning with 12 modules will draw on documents, interviews and archives as well as the Hashim Mbita Project and the UNESCO General History of Africa, among other sources. □



PUBLIC HOLIDAYS IN SADC

February – April 2021

1 February	Abolition of Slavery	Mauritius
3 February	Heroes Day	Mozambique
4 February	National Armed Struggle Day	Angola
12 February	Lunar New Year/ Spring Festival	Mauritius
16 February	Carnival	Angola
21 February	Youth Day	Zimbabwe
3 March	Martyrs Day	Malawi
8 March	International Women's Day	Angola, Zambia
11 March	Moshoeshe's Day	Lesotho
	Maha Shivratri	Mauritius
	Leilat al - Meiraj	Comoros
12 March	National Day	Mauritius
	Youth Day	Zambia
18 March	Cheikh Al Maarouf Day	Comoros
21 March	Independence Day	Namibia
	Human Rights Day	South Africa
23 March	Southern Africa Liberation Day	Angola
29 March	Martyrs Day	Madagascar
2 April	Good Friday	All SADC except ... Angola, Comoros, DRC, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique
3 April	Holy Saturday	Seychelles, Zambia
4 April	Easter Sunday	Namibia, Zimbabwe
	Peace and Reconciliation	Angola
5 April	Easter Monday	All SADC except ... Angola, Comoros, DRC, Mauritius, Mozambique
	Family Day	South Africa
7 April	Women's Day	Mozambique
	Sheik Abeid Karume Day	Tanzania
13 April	Ougadi	Mauritius
18 April	Independence Day	Zimbabwe
19 April	Public Holiday	Zimbabwe
	King's Birthday	Eswatini
25 April	National Flag Day	Eswatini
26 April	Union Day	Tanzania
27 April	Freedom Day	South Africa

A shared future within a regional community