

Draft SADC position for the 43rd Session of the UN Commission for Social Development

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/csocd2005/Statements/Mauritius.pdf>

We, Members of the Southern African Development Community:

Recalling the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen on 6 to 12 March 1995, and the twenty fourth special session of the Great Assembly, entitled “World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world,” held in Geneva from 26 June to 1 July 2001.

Recalling further the agreed SADC Position of Ministers Responsible for Social Development in Pretoria, South Africa, on 31 March 2000, in the preparation for the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

Emphasizing the significance of the 43rd Session of the UN Commission for Social Development, which will mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

Recalling also the outcomes of the Extraordinary Summit of the African Union (AU) on employment and poverty reduction, and the Forum for Social Partners, held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in September 2004.

Noting the progress made so far by Southern African Development Community (SADC) in pursuing a broad integration and sustainable development agenda that goes beyond trade liberalization. This approach accords the opportunity to prioritise social development in view of its crucial role both as a factor and as a more comprehensive measure of development. To this end, numerous policies have been put in place in the relevant priority including social and human development.

Encouraged by the fact that the region as a whole has been able to attain the medium level of human development. The average Human Development Index (HDI), which incorporates life expectancy at birth, enrolment rates at all levels, adult literacy, and real per capita income, for the SADC region during the late 1990s was about 0.54 in comparison to 0.56 in the mid – 1990s. This level was higher than that of Sub-Saharan Africa and those of other economic blocks in the African region that ranged between 0.46 and 0.36.

Appreciated that some SADC Member States have achieved sustained annual GDP growth rates close to the 7 to 8% that is critical for meeting the target of halving poverty by 2015. Progress has also been recorded in key social indicators. In some member States the increase in primary school

enrolment has been up by 20%, while adult literacy increased by between 6 and 15% in certain Member States.

Further note that SADC Member States continue to pursue pluralism, democratic governance and commitment to the rule of law, through the expansion of civil liberties, electoral reforms and strengthening of local governance structures.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned positive indicators and progress, acknowledge that the Region is still faced with daunting social and human development challenges. These include, amongst others:

Poverty

In the SADC region, the low levels of income and high levels of human deprivation largely reflect poverty. Average GNP per capita for the region stands at about US\$932. About 70% of the population in the region lives below the poverty line of US\$2 a day with about 40% below the US\$1 a day absolute poverty line. Poverty in the SADC region is particularly acute among various vulnerable groups such as households headed by older persons and children. These vulnerable groups are now on the increase due to the impact of HIV and AIDS pandemic. With regard to human poverty, the levels range from the 11.6% to about 54.7%.

Poverty in SADC is a consequence of economic, technical, environment, social, political and exogenous factors. Often, the poor lack adequate capital in the form of physical, financial, human, natural, and social assets. Poverty has also undermined traditional coping mechanisms and reduced the livelihood options open to vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, women and young people.

HIV and AIDS

Since the mid 1980s there has been a rapid increase in the prevalence of HIV and AIDS with some countries in the region now having amongst the highest levels of infection in the world. Most countries have prevalence rates of around 20% for the entire adult population between the ages of 15 and 49.

Factors contributing to the spread of the disease include, poverty, gender inequality, intergenerational sex, illiteracy, stigma and discrimination, alcohol abuse and lack of communication about the disease due to cultural barriers. The pandemic has had a negative impact on society. This is manifested by the increase in the number of orphans, high infection rates amongst women and the loss of the economically active age group. The pandemic is undermining socio-economic development efforts and gains in SADC countries.

Employment

Employment levels and labour productivity trends in the region are generally low largely due to a combination of factors. These include distortions in factor prices, short-term negative effects of macro economic interventions and unfavorable global trade and financial environment. The use of capital-intensive techniques of production in some sectors of the economy that have the potential for employment generation has further aggravated the unemployment problem. As a consequence, a large proportion of the growing labour force is absorbed in the informal sector, which is currently characterized by low levels of income and underemployment. The youth and women are the most affected by unemployment and underemployment.

Gender Equality

Although there has been progress in achieving greater representation for women in government and intergovernmental structures in some countries in the region, there are still challenges in the promotion of gender equality. Women constitute the majority of the poor in the region and have lesser access to, and control over productive resources such as land, livestock, credit and modern technology. In addition, women have limited access to adequate health facilities, formal education and employment. Most women are engaged in the informal sector of the economy where returns are extremely low and unreliable.

Social Integration, Children, Youth and older persons

The current situation of increases in violent crime, human and drug trafficking as well as the existence of refugees from a few Member States are a reflection and consequence of the disintegration of family and communal life. Older persons bear the burden of social disintegration as a result of the impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Consequently older persons have to care for orphans with their limited resources. Despite the growing understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of poverty older persons still face a situation where they are largely excluded from concrete actions being developed to improve the lives of the poorest. Sub Saharan African countries account for nearly 40% of the children in the world who are not in school. These are particularly vulnerable to exploitative labour and other forms of abuse, including the risk of contracting HIV and AIDS.

THEREFORE

Reaffirm SADC Member States commitment to address social and human development challenges, as stated above and within the context of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. To this end the SADC region has set for itself policy objectives, priority areas, strategies and targets, including those in the area of social development. These are articulated in the Regional Indicative Development Strategic Plan (RISDP), the SADC Charter on Fundamental Social Rights and the Draft SADC Code on Social Security.

Reaffirm also, the commitment to Gender Equality and to strengthening policies and programmes that improve, ensure and broaden the full participation of women in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life, as equal partners, and cultural life, as equal partners, and to improving their access to all resources for the full exercise of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms by removing persistent barriers.

Reaffirm further, that education, employment creation and improvement in working conditions, which are some of the indispensable elements of poverty eradication, and social integration, gender equality and overall development, should be at the centre of development strategies and international cooperation in support of national policies.

Commit SADC Member States to the ideal of the AU and its Programme, the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). In the SADC context, NEPAD is embraced as a credible and relevant continental framework, and this RISDP as a regional expression and vehicle towards the ideals contained therein. The NEPAD strategies on social human development are being taken into account and harmonized in the RISDP.

Further call for enhanced coordination within the United Nations System as well as the ongoing efforts to harmonize the current initiatives on Africa and requests the Commission for Social Development to continue to give prominence in its work to the social dimensions of NEPAD. Calls on SADC Member States to elaborate on the elements for inclusion in the resolution on the social dimensions of NEPAD during the forthcoming session of the UN Commission for Social Development.

Invite United Nations agencies, funds and programmes operating within SADC region, that in their development agenda they should plan and coordinate their activities in a manner that addresses the linkages in the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and MDGs as well as RISDP, and in this context, requests them to draft an integrated plan to be presented in a future meeting of SADC Ministers responsible for social development.

Recognise that the Commission for Social Development decided to hold three thematic high-level round tables in the framework of the 10-year review on the three core issues of the Copenhagen Summit: eradication of poverty, promoting full employment, and fostering social integration. These create platforms and opportunities to further engage and influence the global plan of action to the benefit of the SADC and African Region.

Furthermore reaffirm, that SADC Member States have made commitments to implement and align the SADC agenda to other major development initiatives. These include resolution 57/27ob of 23 June 2003, on the coordinated approach to promote social development within the context of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow up to the outcomes

of major United Nations Conferences and Summits in the economic and social fields. These include, inter alia:

- I. The millennium Development Goals agreed to by the international community at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000.
- II. The agenda of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), The Cotonou Agreement between the EU and the ACPs as well as the USA's Africa Opportunity Act (AGOA) are all key challenges and opportunities for SADC.
- III. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in heavily indebted poor countries as part of the process of qualifying for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC).
- IV. The African Vision initiative that arose from the Maastricht Conference on African Futures hosted by the Dutch government in 1990. Many African countries have undertaken National Long-Term Perspective Studies (NLTPS) leading to the development of National Vision statements.
- V. Social safety nets. Some Member States have already put in place social security systems consisting mainly of child support grants, disability grants and old age pensions, school feeding schemes and access to healthcare.