

## Press Statement for the SADC Gender Programme at the SADC Council of Ministers February 2006 Gaborone Botswana

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Presently, the SADC region has experienced varied degrees of progress in ensuring the implementation of the set commitments. The region also registers concerns with regard to disparities that still exist between men and women in areas such as Human/legal rights, power sharing, access to and control of economic resources, education and health. Of further concern is the limited enabling environment that is determined by the state of institutional structures/Framework, policies, and resources.

In further pursuance to accelerate the advancement of the SADC Gender agenda, more than 110 delegates from twelve SADC member states, civil society, and development partners gathered to Gaborone, Botswana on the 6-9 Dec 2005 for a Regional Stakeholders Conference on Gender and Development. The purpose of the conference was to reflect, take stock and re-strategize progressive measures to implement the set commitments to achieve gender equality in the region. The major output of the conference was a Regional Implementation Framework on Gender and Development 2005-2010. Major interventions reflected in the Framework include; national and regional consultations on elevating the SADC Declaration into a Protocol; Gender Mainstreaming; Women's Human Rights; Education; Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; Media and Information; Women in Politics and Decision Making and Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms. The framework also has clear timeframes/targets and responsible parties for both regional and national levels. The Regional Implementation Framework on Gender and Development 2005-2010 will ensure better coordination of efforts in implementing the priorities of the region in Gender and Development.

### **From a Declaration into a Protocol:**

As concerns to accelerate gender equality and equity in SADC evolve, discussions on upgrading the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development into a Protocol are also intensified. The motivation behind that arises from the reality that in legal terms, a declaration is a 'statement of intention and commitment', which has more of a moral than a binding effect. To adopt a protocol on gender equality would therefore strengthen the commitments of member states which are already expressed in the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development. To upgrade this Declaration would be a progressive step for SADC; as the process would take on board existing commitments, consolidate them, and use the lessons from their implementation to design new strategies and to accelerate progress towards gender equality.

Experience has shown that while there is progress in the region towards achieving gender equality, the results are quite patchy and there are new emerging challenges/issues such as HIV/AIDS, globalisation, human trafficking that call for more rigorous approaches. A clear road map has been drawn to expedite consultations at regional and national level in regard to the elevation of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development into a Protocol.

### **Women's Representation in Politics and Decision-Making**

Shared below is the status on female representation based on the elections held between 2005-2006.

Country	% Female Parliamentarians	% Female Ministers	% Female Deputy /Ass.Ministers	Last Elections	Next Elections
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<b>Angola</b>	16.4%	11%	11.1%		2006
<b>Botswana</b>	11.1%	29.4%		2004	2009
<b>DRC</b>	12	2.5%	-		2006
<b>Lesotho</b>	12 (UH 36%) (LH 11.7%)	23%	33%	2002	2005
<b>Malawi</b>	17%	20%	-	2004	2009
<b>Mauritius</b>	17%	4%	-		2005
<b>Mozambique</b>	33.3%	24%		2004	2009
<b>Namibia</b>	24.4%	14.81%	15%	2004	2009
<b>South Africa</b>	32.75%	42.9%	47.6%	2004	2009
<b>Swaziland</b>	19 (Sen.6.7%) (HA 10%)	18.8%	-	2003	
<b>Tanzania</b>	28%	20.7%	28.1%	2005	2010
<b>Zambia</b>	13.7%	23.8%	9.75%	2001	2006
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	15.8%	19%	5.26%	2005	2010

**Sources: National Reports submitted to SADC Secretariat**

SADC member States have made progressive steps in achieving the goal towards equal participation of women and men in decision-making which is needed to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Most of the countries have surpassed the initial target of 30% and are progressively moving to achieve the 50% target. This is an important move that all SADC Member States should follow.

Summit 2005, approved the decision to increase the target of 30% female representation in political and decision making structures by 2005, to 50% in line with the continental target set at the African Union. To realize full implementation of this decision, Member States must endeavor to adopt affirmative action to protect women and enshrine it in national constitutions. In addition to that, electoral reforms to legislate proportional representation in political decision making positions should be accompanied by operational guidelines.

Political parties and the media must be sensitive to gender issues by mentoring women candidates through effective training and provision of financial support. There is need for more efforts in setting up support funds for women in politics during the elections, while strengthening their capacities in communication and negotiations.

#### **Regional Policy on Gender and Development:**

SADC is undergoing a process of developing a regional Policy on Gender and Development. This is yet another practical demonstration that SADC is prepared to translate its commitments into action for the achievement of gender equality and equity. The Policy is to serve as a guide to the national level policy development, reviews as well as implementation thus facilitating policy harmonization. SADC has taken firm steps to ensure that the process of gender mainstreaming is effective therefore, policy measures such as this one are employed to ascertain success in that regard. Initial activities undertaken on this initiative so far include the meeting of experts to make technical inputs in the initial draft outline in October 2005. The next processes include consultations/consensus building with the member states as well as other stakeholders.

#### **Legal Reforms:**

The recent follow-up trends on progress pertaining to the implementation of the commitment to reform laws and constitutions within SADC Member States show that ; achievements have been recorded in some areas but a lot still has to be done to address the problem in a more holistic approach. It is crucial to translate global and regional declarations and protocols such as CEDAW and expedite constitutional reforms to enable domestication of international commitments into national laws. This brings about the need for Member States to enact legislation that domesticates all regional and international instruments that are legally binding. Member States also have to ratify some of the protocols including the Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

In a bid to eliminate harmful cultural and traditional practices, there should be concerted efforts to harmonize customary and common laws. It is necessary to amend Constitutions

to eliminate the provisions that currently exist for the discrimination of women and girls through customary and personal law to ensure that member States Constitutions are gender sensitive. For Member States that do not have that, it is important to include and adopt an Equality Clause or a Bill of Rights in the Constitution. All policies and programmes should mainstream a rights based approach so that all persons in SADC acquire full citizenship rights.

**Institutional and Structural Framework and Capacity Building:**

The issue of strengthening and re-building institutional mechanisms for advancing gender equality is very critical for successful implementation of the RISDP Gender and Development priorities. Presently, Member States are at different levels of progress in ensuring enabling environments for implementing gender. There is need to equip National Gender Machineries with adequate staffing to execute the mandate. Member States must also ensure adequate resource allocation to the national gender machineries both at government and civil society level. There is need to strengthen the capacity of the National Gender Machineries to deliver even at local levels. Decentralization and strengthening of institutional structures and linkages at district and community levels to advance the realization of Gender Equality goals is one of the necessary measures to empower our communities. Above all, other sectors of the economy must address gender concerns in their planning, budgetary, implementation and monitoring and evaluation processes, by developing sector specific gender competencies and mainstreaming capacity. Effective implementation of the recommendations of the SADC study to assess the capacities of national gender machinerie