

# REPORT

#CSF2025



## 2025 CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM "Revitalizing the SADC We Want" 18<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> August | Antananarivo - Madagascar



### REPORT OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM OF 2025 #CSF2025

18-22 AUGUST 2025

ANTANANARIVO, MADAGASCAR





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## Abbreviations & Acronyms

*Civil Society Forum 2025 – Antananarivo, Madagascar*

### Regional & Institutional

- AU – African Union
- CSF – Civil Society Forum
- CSO – Civil Society Organisation
- GL – Gender Links
- NSA – Non-State Actor
- RISDP – Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
- SADC – Southern African Development Community
- SAf-CNGO / SADC-CNGO – Southern African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations
- SATUCC – Southern African Trade Union Coordination Council
- FOCCISA – Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa
- PFNOSCM – Plateforme Nationale des Organisations de la Société Civile de Madagascar
- WOSSO – Women of the South Speak Out

### Global & Multilateral

- C20 – Civil 20 (civil society engagement group of the G20)
- SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals
- UN – United Nations
- UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
- UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund
- GCE – Global Campaign for Education
- TI – Transparency International

### Policy & Advocacy

- GBV – Gender-Based Violence
- WPS – Women, Peace and Security
- ECD – Early Childhood Development
- IFFs – Illicit Financial Flows
- LGBTIQ+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, and others

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Civil Society & Regional Structures**
- **Civil Society Forum (CSF):** Annual SADC-wide platform where civil society actors coordinate advocacy, assess progress, and engage with governments on regional priorities.



- **CSOs:** Independent, non-governmental organisations, including NGOs, trade unions, youth and women's movements, and faith-based groups.
- **SADC Vision 2050 & RISDP 2020–2030:** Strategic blueprints guiding regional integration towards a peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous SADC.
- **Non-State Actors (NSAs):** Stakeholders outside government (civil society, private sector, academia, media) who shape policy.
- **SAF-CNGO (SADC-CNGO):** Apex alliance of Southern Africa's civil society, facilitating coordination and advocacy.
- **SATUCC & FOCCISA:** Regional apex bodies for trade unions and Christian councils, respectively.
- **PFNOSCM:** Madagascar's national platform of CSOs, host of CSF2025.
- **UN & Development Partners**
- **UNDP:** UN agency supporting sustainable development, governance, and resilience.
- **UNICEF:** UN agency working for the rights and wellbeing of children and youth, active in all SADC states.
- **GCE (Global Campaign for Education):** Civil society movement advocating inclusive, quality education.
- **GL:** Gender Links
- **Transparency International (TI):** Global coalition fighting corruption and promoting accountability.

### Key Policy Concepts

- **Shrinking Civic Space:** Reduction of freedoms of speech, association, and assembly limiting CSO activity.
- **Democratic Backsliding:** The erosion of democratic institutions and practices, undermining checks and balances.
- **GBV (Gender-Based Violence):** Harm or violence directed at someone due to gender or sexual identity.
- **WPS (Women, Peace and Security):** Agenda affirming women's role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.
- **LGBTIQ+:** Inclusive acronym for diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.
- **Just Energy Transition:** Shifting to renewable energy in a fair and equitable manner, protecting communities.
- **Trade Justice:** Ensuring trade agreements benefit people, not just elites or corporations.
- **IFFs (Illicit Financial Flows):** Cross-border transfer of illegally earned money, draining public resources.
- **Statelessness:** Situation where individuals are not recognized as citizens of any country.
- **Social Protection:** Safety nets like child grants, pensions, and social transfers that reduce poverty.
- **Early Childhood Development (ECD):** Holistic care and education for children under age eight.
- **Water Resource Management:** Equitable and sustainable governance of shared water resources in SADC.

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## From the Secretariat's Desk



### **Mr. Lebogang Kenneth Mabothe**

Executive Director, Southern African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SAf-CNGO)

It was my honour, on behalf of the Southern African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations, to welcome distinguished delegates and partners to the 2025 Civil Society Forum in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

This Forum continues to serve as a platform of dialogue, solidarity, and constructive engagement. It is not merely a space to catalogue our challenges, but one dedicated to crafting solutions, strengthening partnerships, and charting a collective way forward. The diversity of actors represented, from trade unions and faith communities, to youth, women's organisations, human rights defenders, and environmental advocates, reflects both the strength and breadth of civil society in our region. This diversity is our greatest asset, enabling us to address complex issues with multiple perspectives, yet always with unity of purpose: to build the SADC we want, a SADC that is peaceful, inclusive, just, and people-centred.

The agenda before us touched on the fundamentals of our integration journey:

- strengthening democracy and governance,
- advancing economic integration and social justice,
- tackling the urgency of climate change and energy transitions,
- investing in human capital – especially children, youth, and women,
- and securing the sustainability of civil society as an indispensable partner in development.

These themes are not isolated. They are deeply interconnected: good governance enables economic justice; climate resilience sustains livelihoods; strong social systems underpin stability; and a vibrant civil society threads them together.

As the Forum deliberated, participants were called to openness, mutual respect, and a commitment to actionable outcomes. The true measure of our gathering is not found in the eloquence of statements, but in the practical steps we take forward and the partnerships we forge.

This year's convening reaffirmed our collective resolve: to renew solidarity, deepen engagement with governments and regional institutions, and recommit to a just and prosperous SADC; the SADC we want, and the SADC our people deserve!



## Introduction

The 2025 Southern African Civil Society Forum, held in Antananarivo, Madagascar, convened under the theme “*Revitalizing the SADC We Want*,” brought together diverse voices from across the region to assess progress, confront challenges, and chart solutions for a people-centred SADC. The Forum was officially opened by Honourable Paubert Mahatante Tsimanaorate, Minister of Fisheries and the Blue Economy of Madagascar, standing in for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and was marked by keynote interventions from UNICEF Madagascar’s Deputy Representative, Madam Gilles Chevallier, who highlighted the centrality of children and youth in regional development; Mr. Simao Tila, President of SAF-CNGO, who reaffirmed civil society’s role as a strategic partner in integration; Ms. Mavis Koogotsitse of SATUCC and Mr. Mandlenkosi Hadebe of FOCCISA, who underscored labour and faith communities’ contributions; and national and regional civil society leaders who lent depth and legitimacy to the deliberations. The speeches collectively set the tone for robust, solutions-oriented discussions on democracy, governance, social justice, economic integration, climate resilience, and the sustainability of civil society – reinforcing the Forum’s vision of a united, just, and inclusive SADC.

### 1. Proceedings of the Civil Society Forum 2025

The Forum commenced on **18 August 2025** with an opening plenary officiated by the Government of Madagascar, represented by the **Minister of Fisheries and Blue Economy** on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. High-level representatives from **UNICEF Madagascar, SAF-CNGO, SATUCC, FOCCISA, Gender Links, The Other Foundation, PFNOSCM**, and development partners were present. The day set the tone for constructive, solutions-oriented dialogue, framing the Forum around the theme “*Revitalizing the SADC We Want*” and reaffirming civil society’s role as a strategic partner in regional integration.

Sessions highlighted the **shrinking civic space**, democratic backsliding, and the urgent need for protecting fundamental freedoms. Participants reflected on the **African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance**, the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, and shared national-level experiences of repression and opportunities for reform. Civic technology innovations were also explored as tools to enhance accountability and youth engagement.

Other sessions centred on **children’s rights, youth empowerment, gender equality and LGBTIQ+ rights**. Stakeholders, including **education coalitions, child rights networks, and gender justice advocates**, engaged in technical dialogues on education financing, early childhood development, universal child grants, and transformative gender curricula. A strong call was made for **domestic resource mobilization**, addressing illicit financial flows, and creating gender-responsive financing frameworks.

The Forum also turned to climate and economic priorities, with input from **environmental CSOs, women’s rights groups, trade justice networks, and labour unions**. Discussions tackled the **just energy transition**, food sovereignty, and sustainable water management. On economic justice, debates centred around **fair trade, illicit financial flows, cross-border trade, and women’s economic empowerment**. Participants stressed aligning regional integration with **equity, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability**. The final day mainly focused on drawing together the thematic threads into a **unified Declaration of Civil Society**. Rapporteurs presented session summaries, and participants refined the policy positions and calls to action. The **2025 CSF Declaration** was adopted, marking a strong collective voice on the future of the region. The Forum concluded with a **media briefing**,

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attended by Madagascar's leading media houses, where civil society leaders presented the outcomes to the public.

## 2. Attendance and Representation

The CSF2025 brought together over **250 delegates** from across the **16 SADC Member States**, including:

- **National civil society platforms**
- **Regional apex bodies**
- **Youth, women, and LGBTIQ+ organisations**
- **Trade unions, faith-based institutions, environmental and climate justice groups, child rights and education networks, human rights defenders**
- **Development partners and UN agencies** (including **UNICEF** and **UNDP**)

This diverse mix underscored the **breadth and unity of civil society**, alongside a recognition by governments and partners of the Forum's strategic importance.

### **Official Opening Remarks at the Southern Africa Civil Society Forum 2025** **By Hon. Paubert Mahatante Tsimanaorate** **Minister of Fisheries and the Blue Economy, Republic of Madagascar** **Antananarivo, 18 August 2025**



- Monsieur Gilles Chevallier – Deputy Representative & Acting Representative UNICEF Madagascar
- Mr. Simao Tila – President of the Southern African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SAf-CNGO), also known as the SADC-CNGO
- Mr. Lebogang Kenneth Mabothe – Executive Director of SAf-CNGO
- Ms. Mavis Koogotsitse – Executive Secretary of the Southern African Trade Unions Coordinating Council (SATUCC)
- Mr. Mandlenkosi Hadebe – Executive Director, Federation of Christian Councils in Southern Africa
- Co-Convening Partners and Development Partners here present
- Miss Elisa Marie Alberte – Leader of the PFNOSCM, National Platform of Civil Society Organizations of Madagascar
- Leaders of National Platforms of Civil Society from across the region
- Distinguished guests, friends, and colleagues...

1. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Madagascar, and particularly in my capacity representing the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, it is my privilege and distinct honour to officially open the 2025 **Southern Africa Civil Society Forum** here in **Antananarivo**. Allow me to extend a warm Malagasy welcome, "*Tongasoa eto Antananarivo!*" to all of you who have



travelled from across our 16 Member States of SADC. We are truly delighted to host you in this beautiful city, at a time when Madagascar assumes the Chairmanship of our regional organisation, the Southern African Development Community.

2. This Forum is not merely an annual gathering. It is a **strategic platform for dialogue, solidarity, and collective action**. The theme, “*Revitalizing the SADC We Want,*” could not be more fitting. It reminds us that the future of our region cannot be written by governments alone, nor by civil society alone. It must be forged through **partnerships that place the people of Southern Africa at the very heart of our policies and programmes**. As Madagascar takes up the mantle of the **SADC Chair**, we do so with humility and with responsibility. Our Chairmanship coincides with a period of enormous opportunity but also pressing challenges for our region. This Forum provides the perfect platform for frank reflection, constructive dialogue, and the generation of actionable proposals that speak to the lived realities of our people.
3. I want to begin by applauding civil society, your leadership, your resilience, and your courage. Civil society organisations have long been **strategic partners in the SADC journey**. You are the watchdogs of democracy, the voice of the marginalized, the innovators in service delivery, and the advocates who ensure that development is not only about statistics but about people.

Your efforts, whether in promoting democratic governance, advancing human rights, building climate resilience, or strengthening social protection systems, are indispensable. Without you, the vision of “*A Peaceful, Inclusive, Competitive, Middle- to High-Income SADC*”, as set out in **SADC Vision 2050 and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020–2030**, will remain incomplete.

We are equally grateful to our **development partners** UNICEF, UNDP, WWF, and many others represented here for your steadfast commitment to supporting civil society not only in Madagascar but across the entire region. Your resources, expertise, and solidarity enable forums such as this to become crucibles of ideas and engines of change. We look forward to your continued partnership as we translate discussions into tangible impact.

4. Allow me to briefly highlight the thematic issues before this Forum, which resonate deeply with Madagascar and with the broader SADC region:

- **Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights**

Our region has seen democratic gains, but also concerning trends of democratic backsliding and shrinking civic space. Civil society’s role in addressing the trust deficit between governments and citizens cannot be overstated. A vibrant civic space is not a threat, it is a pillar of resilient democracies.

- **Economic Integration and Trade**

The **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** offers unprecedented opportunities. But integration must deliver for the **small trader in Antananarivo**, the **fisher in Lake Malawi**, and the **farmer in Zambia**, just as it does for large-scale exporters. Civil society has a role in ensuring that trade is **just, inclusive, and sustainable**, and that **illicit financial flows** are curbed.

- **Social and Human Capital Development**

Education, healthcare, youth empowerment, and gender equality remain central. Too many



young people face unemployment, too many women face barriers to leadership, and too many children remain excluded from quality services. Partnerships with UNICEF and others demonstrate that **investing in human capital is investing in our future**.

- **Climate Justice, Energy, and the Blue Economy**

Madagascar, like many of our neighbours, stands on the frontlines of the climate crisis. From cyclones to droughts, the threats are real and existential. This is why climate justice and energy transitions must be people-centred. As Minister of Fisheries and the Blue Economy, I also emphasize the critical importance of sustainable oceans management, which is vital for food security, livelihoods, and economic growth across SADC.

Civil society cannot play its role without resources, capacity, and enabling legal environments. The operationalisation of the SADC Non-State Actor Mechanism is a positive milestone. Let us continue working together to ensure it becomes an institutionalised and credible platform that guarantees civil society's voice at the highest decision-making levels of SADC.

5. We are also conscious of the **global geopolitical shifts** shaping our region. From the **G20 Summit's focus on energy transitions and debt reform**, to the **C20's call for climate justice and fairer trade**, to **national dialogues** such as the one in South Africa that seek inclusive solutions to political and social crises; all these underline the relevance of forums such as this one.

### Friends, Colleagues...

6. The **SADC We Want** is one where:

- Governments and civil society are partners, not adversaries.
- Children and youth are given opportunities to thrive, not left behind.
- Women's leadership is not symbolic, but substantive.
- Our natural resources, including oceans and fisheries, are managed sustainably for the benefit of all.
- Every citizen's rights are respected and protected.

This vision can only be realised through inclusive partnerships. Governments, civil society, private sector, academia, and development partners must join forces – not in parallel, but in complementarity.

7. In conclusion, as we open this Forum, let us be guided by the principle that people are at the centre of integration. Let this week not only produce declarations, but also commitments that are actionable, measurable, and impactful. On behalf of the Government of Madagascar and the Chairmanship of SADC, I once again welcome you to Antananarivo. May your deliberations be bold, visionary, and unifying. Together, let us revitalise the SADC we want – for ourselves, for our children, and for generations to come. **With these words I wish to declare the 2025 Southern African Civil Society Forum officially open! I thank you. Misaotra betsaka. Merci beaucoup. Ke a leboga. Tatenda. Ngiyabonga. Obrigado. Asante sana!**



# DECLARATION

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**CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM**  
"Revitalizing the SADC We Want"  
18<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> August | Antananarivo - Madagascar

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## DECLARATION OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM OF 2025 #CSF2025

18-22 AUGUST 2025

ANTANANARIVO, MADAGASCAR

# DECLARATION

Southern African Civil Society Forum 2025, 18 – 22 August 2025 – Antananarivo – Madagascar

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## 1. Executive Summary

The 2025 Civil Society Forum (CSF), held in Antananarivo, served as a critical technical and strategic convening for civil society actors across the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The forum provided a platform to assess regional integration progress, identify persistent challenges, and formulate concrete actions for intervention. Discussions were framed by significant regional advances, including the adoption of key strategies on Democracy and Governance, Economic Integration and Trade, Human Rights and Social Justice, Climate Justice, Energy and Green Development and Sustainability of Civil Society.

2025 is significant year for several reasons. It is the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 which served as the global blueprint for achieving gender equality, guiding many countries toward more equitable and just societies. It is also just five years to the deadline for achieving the targets in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG 2024 Report paints a bleak picture, with the latest data showing that progress has either stopped or regressed across various sectors despite renewed commitments.

Under the theme: “**Revitalizing the SADC we Want**”, the CSF convened to critically assess the state of the SADC region, to celebrate resilience, and most importantly, to chart a concrete path of action. This meeting is a direct response to the mounting challenges that threaten the very foundations of the peaceful, prosperous, and integrated SADC.

The CSF2025 recognized that the aspirations of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) remain unfulfilled and acknowledged challenging areas such as discrimination, inequality, shrinking of democratic space, climate catastrophe, and systemic injustice and declared that targeting these challenges requires a response that is equally intersectional, bold, and rooted in the principles of human rights and social justice.

In the discussions on the main pillars of the CSF2025, we, the civil society in the SADC region, dedicated ourselves to the critical issues that define our present and determine our future, as follows: -

1. We sound the alarm on the crisis of the **shrinking civic space** and **democratic backsliding** across the region, which stifles dissent and undermines our role as essential partners in governance and development.
2. We condemn the rising tide of **anti-gender and anti-rights backlash** and commit to building robust, **intersectional movements** to resist it, understanding that our struggles for gender equality, economic justice, and civic space are inextricably linked.

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3. We demand a **regional just energy transition** policy that does not perpetuate the prevailing environmental injustices.
4. We call for a model of **economic integration** that prioritizes **trade justice** and shared prosperity over corporate profit.
5. We demand **sustainable, equitable management** of our shared **water resources** as a fundamental human right.
6. We call for the putting of **young people** and **children** at the centre of SADC's future, as architects of policy, ensuring their meaningful participation in climate action advocacy
7. We call for a radical overhaul of **education systems** to ensure basic learning for all, with a specific, non-negotiable commitment to girls' education and transformative gender education as the bedrock of true equality and development.

## 2. CSF 2025 – Guiding Interventions

- **Transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a Regional Parliament:** This represents a monumental step towards democratic accountability and regional integration. A directly elected or proportionally representative parliament would move SADC from an intergovernmental organisation to a more supranational entity with enhanced legislative and oversight powers, crucial for upholding human rights and ensuring people-centred policies.
- **Approval of the SADC Mechanism for Engagement with Non-State Actors:** This mechanism is a foundational tool for structured and institutionalised dialogue between SADC organs and civil society. It moves engagement from ad-hoc consultations to a predictable, transparent, and impactful process, ensuring that policy formulation is informed by grassroots realities.
- **Strategic Partnerships with multilateral agencies (?)** - The presence of strategic and long-term partners, including United Nations agencies which have a national presence in all SADC member states as well as a strong regional presence.
- **Adoption of Strategies on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Women, Peace and Security (WPS):** These strategies signify a regional commitment to tackling the endemic crisis of GBV and recognising the pivotal role of women in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding. They provide a binding framework for harmonised legal frameworks, survivor support services, and the meaningful participation of women in security structures.
- **SADC as a regional block that catalyzes change** - must ensure that social, economic and governance efforts are effectively aligned with the interests of

children and young people; put in place mechanisms that enable governments to partner with local organizations and CSOs to strengthen inclusiveness and accountability in service delivery.

### Core Pillars:

The aspirations outlined are the core pillars of the "SADC We Want." They shift the regional focus from purely economic growth to **equitable and sustainable development**:

- **Trade at the service of people and tax justice:** Aim to reverse the extractive nature of trade and illicit financial flows, ensuring wealth generated in the region benefits its citizens through job creation and funded public services.
- **Just energy transition and food sovereignty:** Address existential threats like climate change and food insecurity by promoting self-sufficiency, renewable energy access, and protecting smallholder farmers.
- **Expanded civic space & free elections:** Are prerequisites for all other goals, ensuring citizens can hold power accountable without fear.
- **Access to resources & local climate finance:** Focus on community resilience and equitable management of natural resources.
- **Inclusion of women, youth, persons with disability, LGBTIQ+ people and respect for human rights for all:** Are cross-cutting principles essential for legitimate and effective development.

We present this document as partners spanning the region's civil society landscape, for the revitalization of the **SADC WE WANT**. We call on Member States to carefully consider these reasoned calls as they deliberate on the next steps of our journey, as SADC, towards a free, prosperous and inclusive **SADC** underpinned by social justice for all.

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# KEY POLICY POSITIONS OF 2025 SOUTHERN AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

## 1. Civic Space in Crisis and Democratic Backsliding in the SADC Region

### Main Challenges:

- ✓ Restrictive NGO laws; censorship and internet shutdowns; intimidation and violence against journalists and activists; and the use of defamation and cybercrime laws to silence dissent.
- ✓ Women human rights defenders, women politicians, and women journalists face unique and disproportionate risks, including online harassment, gender-based violence, and intimidation, which are often overlooked in generic civic space protections.
- ✓ Monitoring of civic space is weak and rarely disaggregated, meaning the specific experiences of women, girls, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ communities, and other marginalized groups remain invisible in regional reporting and accountability mechanisms.
- ✓ The SADC region's civic space faces significant challenges, including intense competition and shrinking space, hindering democratic consolidation and advocacy. Governments impose restrictive laws, bureaucratic hurdles, and surveillance on CSOs, limiting their freedom of association and expression. Funding constraints drive organizations into competition rather than collaboration, weakening collective impact. Political instability and governance challenges create mistrust and repression, making it difficult for CSOs to mobilize and hold authorities accountable.

### Call to action

We call on SADC and Member States to:

- ✓ Adopt a robust model law to protect civic space, fundamental freedoms-speech, association and protest. No draconian laws targeting civil society organizations.
- ✓ Provide spaces for all-inclusive political dialogue to usher in pluralistic, democratic dispensations.
- ✓ Foster the unconditional and immediate release of victims of political persecution in affected member states.
- ✓ Foster the unconditional return of all exiles facing political persecution in affected member states.
- ✓ Establish a SADC-wide civic space monitor to track legislation and incidents in real-time and issue alerts.
- ✓ Launch strategic litigation to challenge repressive laws in national and regional courts.
- ✓ Intensify advocacy for the ratification and implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

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- ✓ Capacitate CSOs to use available channels and fora to denounce violation of human and labour laws.
- ✓ Adopt gender sensitive protection mechanisms that address the specific risks faced by women human rights defenders, women politicians, and women journalists, including safe reporting systems, legal support, and psychosocial services.
- ✓ Monitoring of civic space includes disaggregated data by gender, age, disability, and other intersecting identities, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics, to ensure that policies and responses adequately reflect the realities of marginalized groups

## 2. Regional justice mechanisms for responding to crises, conflict, accountability

### Main Challenges

- ✓ Conflicts in SADC countries, surges in gender-based violence cases, population displacements, arrests of journalists, and activists, persisting impunity, persisting extrajudicial killings, severe cyclone-induced droughts affecting millions of SADC citizens and compounding economic and social rights violations.
- ✓ The SADC Tribunal, dissolved in 2011 after rulings against some member states, has the potential to ensure access to justice for individuals amid widespread human rights violations. The Tribunal's potential to handle cross-border issues like human trafficking, election rigging, and violence against women and children, which exacerbate regional instability.

### Call to action

We call on SADC Member States to:

- ✓ Revive and Strengthen the SADC Tribunal by reinstating the Tribunal with full jurisdiction for individual and non-state actor access, reversing the 2014 revised Protocol that limits it to state disputes, to align with the SADC Treaty's principles of human rights, democracy, and public participation.
- ✓ Integrate Transitional Justice into PCRD Frameworks by amending SADC's draft PCRD framework to fully incorporate the 2019 African Union Transitional Justice Policy, emphasizing African norms, traditional justice systems, and redress for post-authoritarian legacies such as systemic corruption and dissent suppression in some member states, as well as Include provisions for mental health and psychosocial support for survivors.
- ✓ Enhance Accountability and Monitoring Mechanisms by establishing inclusive, decentralized oversight bodies in collaboration with the African Union, involving CSOs in monitoring human rights violations, with mandatory reporting on incidents like arbitrary arrests and impunity in some member states.
- ✓ Develop actionable national implementation guidelines for PCRD, including economic and social rights protections against land dispossession and poverty, to prevent violence recurrence and foster societal healing.
- ✓ Foster Regional Collaboration and CSO Engagement by promoting hybrid peacemaking models that merge regional norms with accountability, as seen in calls for SADC to prioritize

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human security in responses to crises like Mozambique's insurgency.

- ✓ Encourage member states to facilitate CSO participation in summits and policy dialogues, ensuring proactive measures against violations such as enforced disappearances and election-related repression, to build resilience and equitable justice across borders.
- ✓ Hold each accountable and foster solidarity in the region's foreign policy positions, ensuring not only declarations of positions on global conflicts, but those in the SADC region and on the African Continent.

### 3. Economic Integration and Trade Justice

#### Main Challenges

- ✓ Reliance in bilateral than multilateral ways of trading.
- ✓ Weak capacity to negotiate trade agreements
- ✓ Weak institutional capacity to implement the trade agreements.
- ✓ Trade agreements without clear provisions for workers
- ✓ Trade policies that benefit elites rather than creating decent jobs for the youth.
- ✓ Illicit financial flows draining resources;
- ✓ Trade negotiations and agreements are often developed without gender impact assessments, leading to policies that ignore the differentiated impacts on women and men, and exacerbating gender inequalities in access to markets, jobs, and resources.
- ✓ Women cross border traders and women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) face structural barriers such as lack of financing, harassment at border posts, discriminatory regulations, and exclusion from formal value chains, which limits their contribution to regional economic growth.

#### Call to action

- ✓ Reform of national tax authorities and international agreements to curb profit shifting and illicit financial flows.
- ✓ Trade policies that protect and promote small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and informal cross-border traders, particularly women.
- ✓ Binding clauses on labour rights in line with international labour standards in trade agreements.
- ✓ CSOs to continue to monitor and engage with our governments to influence the text of the trade agreements
- ✓ SADC Member States systematically conduct gender impact assessments in all trade negotiations and agreements to ensure that outcomes are inclusive and do not reinforce existing inequalities.
- ✓ SADC should develop targeted measures to support women cross border traders and

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women owned SMEs, including access to affordable financing, simplified and gender responsive border procedures, protection from harassment and corruption, and integration into regional and global value chains.

#### 4. Gender inequality, anti-rights and anti-gender movements

##### Main challenges

- ✓ Despite the lofty commitments, women remain most of the poor, the dispossessed, the landless, the jobless, those missing from decision-making those living with HIV and AIDS and experiencing gender violence.
- ✓ Contradictions between Customary and Statutory law result in legal gains being effectively undermined.
- ✓ Research showing that women lack a voice, from the bedroom to the boardroom, is corroborated by media monitoring studies showing that despite comprising over half the population women constitute less than one quarter of the views and voices in the news.
- ✓ Several other forms of exclusion intersect with gender to compound the misogyny associated with patriarchal norms. These include (but are not limited to) race, class, ethnicity, the rural/urban divide, age, disability, occupation (especially sex work), sexual orientation and gender identity. Women with disabilities, indigenous women and LGBTI persons experience multiple and intersecting layers of discrimination, violence, stigma and exclusion.
- ✓ Anti-rights movements are increasingly well-resourced and coordinated across the region, eroding democratic institutions and limiting the freedom of expression, assembly, and association of vulnerable groups.
- ✓ Anti-gender rhetoric is co-opting African traditional, religious, and family values to advance conservative agendas and legitimize discriminatory practices.
- ✓ Democratic backsliding and rising moral conservatism disproportionately impact the most vulnerable groups, especially women and youth, and sexual and gender minorities.

We call on SADC member states to:

##### Policy and Law Reform

- ✓ Enshrine gender equality, bodily integrity, voice and choice in all their Constitutions, and to ensure that these Constitutions take precedence over customary law.
- ✓ Adopt legislative reforms to ensure comprehensive social inclusion in law and practice without discrimination on any grounds – including youth, migrants, sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics
- ✓ Domesticate Model Laws on Ending Child Marriages, GBV and Femicide and develop a model law on safe abortion.

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- ✓ Develop SADC-wide legislation criminalizing technology-facilitated gender-based violence, create a regional data protection framework, and ensure transparency and protection for vulnerable groups, including LGBTIQ+ people
- ✓ Repeal outdated colonial laws that deny citizens their human rights through, among others, criminalizing homosexuality and gender diversity, abortion and sex work.
- ✓ Develop model laws to prevent harmful practices against sexual and gender minorities, including intersex genital mutilation, conversion therapy, and hate speech.
- ✓ Harmonize national laws with international and regional commitments, ensuring consistency between domestic frameworks and instruments such as the Maputo Protocol and Resolutions 275 and 552 of the African Commission of Human and People's Rights.
- ✓ Support the safe collection of data and the production of scientific knowledge to counter disinformation and promote the rights of vulnerable groups, including LGBTIQ+ people.
- ✓ Strengthen security and legal support for human rights defenders under threat, especially women and LGBTIQ+ people.
- ✓ Create coalitions at national and regional level to defend the most vulnerable groups, including women and youth, LGBTIQ+ people, migrants, and sex workers.
- ✓ Develop a regional early-warning and rapid response system to track and counter anti-rights and anti-gender backlash.
- ✓ Review and revitalize the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in line with the post 2030 agenda.

### Sexual reproductive health and rights

- ✓ Mainstream comprehensive, age-appropriate, and gender-sensitive sexuality education into national school curricula, with adequate teacher training and monitoring.
- ✓ Strengthen rural outreach by ensuring that SRHR services, including maternal health, contraception, and safe abortion where legal, are accessible and affordable in remote areas.
- ✓ Recognize LGBTIQ+ rights as human rights in SADC frameworks and ensure meaningful participation of LGBTIQ+ activists in decision-making processes.
- ✓ Launch a Gender Inclusivity Barometer, including disaggregated data on LGBTIQ+ populations, to measure how inclusive SADC and civil society spaces are in policy, funding, and participation.

### GBV and Harmful practices

- ✓ End gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices through advocating for more stringent penalties, educating leaders, engaging men as allies, securing funding, implementing the SADC GBV model law, training religious and traditional leaders, media engagement, and supporting re-entry to school for affected girls.
- ✓ Offer funding, training, and resources to enhance the capacity of GBV services to support individuals with disabilities.



## Economic Justice

- ✓ Recognize women's care work, remove taxes on sanitary products, promote equal education and economic opportunities with intersectional approaches, adopt and address social and cultural barriers to women's land ownership.
- ✓ Institute quotas for gender preferential procurement.
- ✓ Ensure the equal participation of women and girls in all their diversity in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

## Gender and Climate Justice

- ✓ Develop a costed SADC Gender and Climate Action Plan and update environmental protocols to ensure gender considerations.
- ✓ Increase women's participation in climate decision-making, build a pool of women negotiators, and advocate for gender-responsive national actions aligned with UN frameworks.
- ✓ Advocate for SADC countries to adopt Gender National Actions in line with the LIMA work programme on Gender.
- ✓ Map, track all the available funding mechanisms for climate financing and track how much of these funds are investing in gender responsive priority areas in Climate Action- Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Climate Investment Funds (CIF), The Fund Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF); (ii) other global donor funds, such as the Global Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Fund (GEEREF).
- ✓ Include women in just energy transition discourse, build capacity of women's rights organizations on energy issues, support gender-responsive investments, and enhance community capacity on smart agro-ecology with cross-learning exchanges.
- ✓ Work with the Tana25 group formed during the SAf-CNGO Forum to advocate for gender and climate justice.
- ✓ Conduct research and develop action plans on the intersections of between climate change, women's unwaged work and GBV.

## Gender, media and ICTs

- ✓ Mandate gender-responsive ICT policies, establish regional monitoring for press freedom and online safety,
- ✓ Invest in affordable broadband and energy access,
- ✓ Support gender-focused subsidies, and protect journalists' safety, especially women and LGBTQ+ media workers.
- ✓ Mandate transparency and accountability in how states and corporations handle personal data; create a Regional Data Protection Framework aligned with human rights principles.
- ✓ Conduct and disseminate research on ethical, gender aware use of artificial intelligence (AI).



## Women's political participation

- ✓ Electoral reform: Increase women's political participation through electoral law reviews and reforms, gender parity in political party constitutions, engaging regional gender ministers and caucuses, and domestication of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.
- ✓ Strengthen and Enforce Quota Laws: Move beyond voluntary party quotas to enact and strictly enforce legislated quotas. **Enforce quotas calling for 50% women in all areas of decision-making, while creating an enabling and safe environment for women politicians through mentorship, networking and sensitization.** Combat Violence Against Women in Politics: Enact specific laws criminalizing including online abuse and intimidation and establish robust protection systems and reporting mechanisms for victims.
- ✓ Provide Targeted Campaign Financing: Establish public funds and incentives that offer direct financial support, resources, and training to women candidates to level the playing field against male opponents.
- ✓ Engage Civil Society, Traditional and Religious Leaders: Partner with influential community leaders to challenge harmful patriarchal norms and publicly advocate for women's right to lead.
- ✓ Launch Strategic Media Campaigns: Work with media houses to eliminate gender bias in coverage, promote positive images of women leaders, and hold media accountable for sexist reporting.

## 5. Education financing and inclusion in SADC

### Main Challenges:

- ✓ Inadequate Public Investment: Despite the global benchmark of allocating 20% of the national budget or 6% of GDP to education, most SADC member states fall short. Competing priorities, narrow tax bases, and illicit financial flows continue to starve our education systems of essential resources.
- ✓ Inequitable Distribution of Resources: Even when funds are allocated, they often do not reach the most marginalized. Disparities between urban and rural schools, a lack of targeted funding for children with disabilities, girls, and those from poor households. This perpetuates inequality and exclusion.
- ✓ Over-reliance on Household Contributions: The gap in public funding is being filled by out-of-pocket expenses from parents—for uniforms, books, levies, and unofficial fees. This places a crushing burden on the poorest families, leading to school dropouts, increased child labour, and the criminalization of poverty.
- ✓ No Gender-Transformative Curricula: Our systems often stop at "gender-sensitive." We lack curricula that actively challenge harmful stereotypes, promote positive masculinities, teach comprehensive sexuality education, and highlight the contributions of women and LGBTQI+ individuals in history and science.
- ✓ Unsafe Learning Environments: Schools remain sites of gender-based violence, including

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sexual harassment, corporal punishment, and bullying based on SOGIE (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression). This unsafe environment disproportionately affects girls, young women, and gender-nonconforming youth, hindering their participation and learning.

- ✓ Policy-Implementation Gap: SADC has progressive protocols, like the Protocol on Gender and Development. However, national implementation is weak, underfunded, and lacks robust accountability mechanisms, leaving these transformative commitments on paper.

#### Implications for Our Region:

- ✓ A Learning Crisis: Overcrowded classrooms, underqualified and demotivated teachers, and a lack of basic learning materials have resulted in poor learning outcomes.
- ✓ Deepened Inequality: Education, which should be the great equalizer, is instead cementing social and economic divides. We risk creating a lost generation.
- ✓ Threatened Regional Stability and Integration: A poorly educated youth population is vulnerable to unemployment, political instability, and social ills. This undermines the very goals of regional integration, peace, and shared prosperity outlined in SADC's Vision 2050.

#### Call to action

We call on SADC Member States and regional bodies to:

- ✓ Undergo a paradigm shift from cost-cutting to smart investment.
- ✓ Lobby for a process of coming up with an alternative development financing bank to the IMF and the World Bank that will serve the interests of developing countries.
- ✓ Lead in championing the establishment of a UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt and finalization of the UN Tax Convention.
- ✓ Go beyond championing debt restructuring by advocating for debt alleviation, especially for countries in the south that are impacted negatively by climate change
- ✓ Allocate at least 20% of national budgets to education, with a specific portion ring-fenced for gender-responsive infrastructure and teacher training.
- ✓ Prioritise Domestic Resource Mobilization: Commit to and implement the Dakar Declaration which recommended 18% - 20% budget/6% GDP target of the annual national budget for education. This requires political will to strengthen tax systems, combat illicit financial flows, tack action on debt and reprioritize education in national budgets.
- ✓ Develop innovative domestic financing mechanisms such bonds, levies or taxes to ensure the availability of resources for public services like education.
- ✓ Work together for debt relief and debt cancellation and to support efforts towards a UN convention on Debt
- ✓ Invest in capacity building and specialization for teachers.
- ✓ Monitor the implementation of laws and policies to ensure that education plans and programs are delivering results
- ✓ Undertake gender responsive education initiatives (CSE, safe schools, girl friendly facilities).
- ✓ Education should continue even during emergencies, education budgets should be protected, and ring fenced and not be diverted to boost military budgets.
- ✓ Optimal financing models to be developed to guide the SADC member states and ensure that the education budgets are ring fenced and are not subject to abuse.
- ✓ Take decisive action against corruption so that the most marginalised are reached.
- ✓ Promote participatory and inclusive budget processes that actively involve women, young



people, and representatives of marginalized communities in order to achieve a more equitable allocation of resources that directly support education for all, inclusive learning environments, and gender-sensitive infrastructure.

- ✓ SADC Member States should institute disaggregated monitoring systems (by sex, disability, age, and rural/urban location) to ensure transparency and to track who benefits from education, health, and social protection resources.
- ✓ Adopt a transformative approach to gender in education policies and practices in order to challenge and change deeply entrenched gender norms and power imbalances in education systems.
- ✓ Guarantee education as a human right without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, disability or social background.

### Girls' education

- ✓ Highlight that investments in education infrastructure (budgets, teacher training) should be gender-responsive, including safe sanitation for girls and inclusion of learners with disabilities.
- ✓ Demonstrate solidarity for gender and disability inclusion by ensuring that all countries establish either independent ministries or directorates of gender and inclusion.
- ✓ Involve stakeholders (Government, Civil Society and the Community) in the design of education policies in order to ensure the inclusion of everyone in the education system.
- ✓ Prioritize the provision of education to marginalized populations especially rural girls and children with special education needs to mitigate against poverty and their direct dependency on the environment through charcoal burning among others.
- ✓ To build sovereign economies, SADC member states must decolonise education financing by scaling up domestic resource mobilization through progressive taxation, negotiating for debt cancellation, and reducing tax revenue loss through illicit financial flows.
- ✓ Strengthen the link between education and empowerment by explicitly requiring gender-transformative curricula that challenge harmful stereotypes and promote positive masculinities.

### Main Challenges:

- ✓ Revolutionize Curriculum and Pedagogy: Mandate the review and redesign of curricula and teaching materials to be explicitly gender-transformative, inclusive, and relevant to the realities of all young people. This includes integrating comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) at all levels.
- ✓ Invest in Safe Schools: Enforce strict codes of conduct and establish safe, confidential, and youth-friendly reporting mechanisms for all forms of violence in schools.
- ✓ Train teachers and administrators on gender-responsive and inclusive practices.
- ✓ Support the development of youth-led advocacy and ensure their meaningful participation in all stages of policy design, monitoring, and evaluation not just consultation.

### Children and Early Childhood Development (ECD) in SADC

- ✓ Adopt, ratify and domesticate the SADC Protocol on Children, targeting parliamentarians and relevant ministers.



- ✓ Document and share best practices in ECD service delivery from within the region to guide policy development.
- ✓ Adopt, ratify and domesticate the SADC Protocol on Children, targeting parliamentarians and relevant ministers.
- ✓ Acknowledge that care work is primarily borne by women and should therefore include recognition of unpaid care and the need for gender responsive ECD financing
- ✓ Ensure that ECD infrastructure design and teacher recruitment explicitly include women's participation and gender-sensitive pedagogy.
- ✓ Document and share best practices in ECD services delivery from within the region to guide policy development.
- ✓ Prioritize Early Childhood Development (ECD) by placing it on the agenda of the SADC Council of Ministers and Heads of State Summit. Specifically, we urge:
- ✓ Include ECD and inclusive education in the SADC Education and Training Protocol, along with an implementation strategy or additional protocol that addresses inclusivity.
- ✓ Establish ECD directorates at both the SADC Secretariat and national levels to improve leadership, coordination, and integration of ECD into Education Management Information Systems (EMIS).
- ✓ Allocate 5–10% of national education budgets to ECD and inclusive education, per UNICEF and the Tashkent Declaration recommendations.
- ✓ Investment in age-appropriate, inclusive ECD infrastructure and facilities.
- ✓ Recruit and train qualified pre-school, special needs, and inclusive education teachers to meet a 20:1 learner-teacher ratio.
- ✓ Provide quality initial training and continuous professional development for teachers, emphasizing competency-based, blended, and inclusive pedagogical approaches.
- ✓ Collaborate between Ministries of Education and disaster management departments to ensure ECD learning environments are disaster-resilient, contingency plans are in place, and data systems are established for effective emergency response.
- ✓ Universal child grants should be designed in a gender responsive way, considering women's unpaid care work and barriers to accessing services.

## 6. Prevention of, and Response to, Statelessness within the SADC Region

### Main Challenges:

- ✓ Discriminatory Nationality Laws: Several SADC member states still have gender-discriminatory nationality laws that prevent mothers from conferring their nationality on their children on an equal basis with fathers. This creates a high risk of statelessness for children, especially when the father is unknown, stateless, or unable to pass on his nationality.
- ✓ Gaps in Birth Registration and Documentation: Widespread lack of birth registration,

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particularly among rural, remote, and refugee populations, creates a high risk of statelessness. Without proof of place of birth or parentage, individuals cannot prove their entitlement to a nationality. Administrative barriers and costs further exacerbate this.

- ✓ Failure to Protect Children Born in Territory: Not all SADC countries have fully implemented safeguards in their nationality laws to grant nationality to children born in their territory who would otherwise be stateless. This is a critical protection gap that leaves generations vulnerable.
- ✓ Lack of a Formal Statelessness Determination Procedure: No SADC country has a dedicated, accessible procedure to identify and grant protection to stateless persons. This leaves them in a legal limbo, unable to access education, healthcare, formal employment, or legal recognition.

### Call to Action:

We urgently call on SADC Member States and the SADC Secretariat to:

- ✓ SADC Member States urgently repeal all gender-discriminatory nationality laws and urgently ratify the AU Protocol on Right to Nationality and the eradication of Statelessness, and domesticate its provisions in line with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, particularly the obligation to protect every child's right to a nationality
- ✓ Implement the SADC Road Map on the eradication of statelessness by adopting national action plans with clear timelines, dedicated resources, and meaningful participation of affected communities and civil society.
- ✓ To ensure that all children born in SADC, regardless of the status or circumstances, are registered at birth and guaranteed the right to a nationality, in accordance with regional and international obligations.
- ✓ Ensure Universal Birth Registration: Invest in and strengthen decentralized, accessible, and free birth registration systems, including for refugee and migrant children. This is the first and most crucial step in preventing statelessness.
- ✓ Establish a Regional Framework: Develop and adopt a SADC Regional Action Plan to End Statelessness. This plan should include the establishment of national statelessness determination procedures, the systematic mapping of stateless populations, and a commitment to accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions.

## 7. Child-centred Social Protection Systems for Strengthening Human Capital

We call on SADC and Member States to:

- ✓ Strengthen coordination, planning and alignment among government agencies implementing various social protection schemes MECHANISMS in member states
- ✓ Establish and expand universal child grants in all SADC member states.
- ✓ Integrate child protection components into all social protection programmes



- ✓ Establish a Regional Solidarity Fund for Social Protection to support Member States with the greatest financial difficulties, ensuring that no child is left behind due to national budgetary constraints.
- ✓ Address the disproportionate vulnerabilities of women headed households.
- ✓ Strengthen data collection to identify and reach the most marginalised children.
- ✓ Implement national social protection systems in line with international standards that guarantee universal coverage for children.
- ✓ Increase gradually domestic resources for social protection programmes

## 8. Corruption and Discrimination in Education and Health

### Main challenges

- ✓ Corruption exacerbates inequalities, particularly for women, girls, and marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and rural populations.
- ✓ According to Transparency International's reports, corruption in these sectors manifests through bribes, illicit fees, nepotism, and sextortion, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups who rely heavily on public services.

### Call to action

We call on SADC Member States to:

- ✓ Prioritize universal access to quality, affordable, and inclusive health services, while strengthening governance and combating corruption in the health sector to ensure transparent, efficient, and equitable allocation of resources.
- ✓ Scale up investments in inclusive, quality education by addressing inequalities and eliminating barriers such as discrimination and corruption in resource allocation, while strengthening financing, skills development, and digital learning to advance SDG 4 and unlock the region's social and economic potential.
- ✓ Take bold, coordinated action to eliminate corruption in public service delivery and foster an enabling environment where health and education systems serve all citizens equitably, without discrimination.
- ✓ Strengthen Legal and Institutional Frameworks by enacting comprehensive anti-discrimination and anti-corruption legislation that explicitly addresses extortion and discriminatory practices in service delivery, aligning with international standards like the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and AU Agenda 2063.
- ✓ Establish collaborative mechanisms between anti-corruption agencies, human rights institutions, and equality bodies, including mandatory training on ethics and gender-sensitive approaches to reduce impunity
- ✓ Enhance Transparency and Accountability in Resource Management by adopting digitalized procurement, registration, and budgeting processes to minimize opportunities for

bribery and diversion of resources.

- ✓ Promote Inclusive Reporting and Access Mechanisms by developing safe, confidential, and gender-sensitive reporting channels for corruption victims, including localized Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres, to address underreporting due to stigma.
- ✓ Foster Regional Collaboration and Data-Driven Monitoring through SADC frameworks, establish learning fora to share best practices on anti-corruption in service delivery, integrating CSO input for regional protocols on gender-responsive policies.
- ✓ Collect disaggregated data on corruption's impacts on marginalized groups to inform interventions, and condition international aid on robust anti-corruption safeguards, addressing illicit flows that drain resources.

## 9. Civic Technology Development for Children and Young People

### Main Challenges:

- ✓ Infrastructure and Connectivity: Rural areas remain under-connected, limiting access to digital platforms and opportunities.
- ✓ Education systems not equipping youth with digital skills;
- ✓ Donor Dependency - Lack of investment in local tech innovation ecosystems.
- ✓ Contracting foreign innovative technological initiatives;
- ✓ Girls and young women face limited access to digital infrastructure, devices, and skills training, which deepens the gender digital divide and excludes them from opportunities in education, employment, innovation, and civic participation.

### Call to action

- ✓ Member states to strengthen TVET & Digital Skills - Expand initiatives like S4YEEE to include civic-tech modules and digital safety in youth training
- ✓ Member states Promote blended learning (digital + in-person) in rural areas.
- ✓ Member states and CSOs to encourage private sector funding and in-kind contributions to sustain donor-backed programmes.
- ✓ Member states to leverage private sector networks to launch innovation challenges or youth civic-tech incubators.
- ✓ Member states to incorporate youth in policymaking via digital participatory tools and forums.
- ✓ CSOs to advocate for government budget line items dedicated to youth civic-tech and employability.
- ✓ CSOs to campaign for public investment in digital infrastructure to ensure affordable and reliable internet access for all, especially in marginalized communities.
- ✓ CSOs lobby governments to adopt and capitalize on local initiatives and innovations
- ✓ Member states must promote digital inclusion programmes that prioritize girls and

## 10. Climate Action and Just Energy Transition

For SADC, Climate Action and Just Energy Transition are inseparable from the goals of poverty

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eradication, economic development, and energy security. The path is fraught with challenges, but the cost of inaction continued climate vulnerability, energy poverty, and economic

By leveraging its abundant renewable resources, pursuing a people-centered approach, and securing international support as a matter of climate justice, SADC can not only overcome its challenges but can emerge as a global leader in building a sustainable and equitable green economy.

We urge SADC members states to:

- ✓ Develop National Just Energy Transition Investment Plans
- ✓ Mainstream Climate Action into National Policy
- ✓ Strengthen Regional Cooperation (SADC Secretariat Role)
- ✓ Accelerate Deployment of Renewable Energy.
- ✓ Recommend gender-responsive climate financing, tracking how funds reach women and marginalized communities.

## 11. Forced Evictions and the Energy Transition

### Key Challenges

- ✓ Weak land occupation and ownership rights: Many communities, especially indigenous and rural ones, hold land under customary or informal tenure systems that are not legally recognized by the state. This makes it easy for governments to label them as "illegal occupants" on land designated for mining concessions.
- ✓ Prioritization of Investment Over Human Rights: Governments, eager for foreign direct investment and mining royalties, often fast-track licensing for mining companies without conducting proper community consultations or human rights impact assessments. Economic interests consistently trump community welfare.
- ✓ Inadequate Legal Frameworks and Lack of Enforcement: Even in countries with laws requiring Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and fair compensation, enforcement is weak. Legal systems are often inaccessible to communities, and corruption allows companies to operate with impunity.

### Call to action For Civil Society Organizations

We hereby make a commitment to:

- ✓ Document, Publicize, and Advocate: Systematically document cases of forced evictions, including testimonies, photos, and videos. Use this evidence for targeted advocacy at national, regional (SADC Tribunal, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights), and international (UN special rapporteurs) levels to name and shame perpetrators.
- ✓ Community Paralegal and Legal Empowerment: Train community members on their legal

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rights, national laws, and international frameworks (e.g., the African Charter, UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights). Establish community-based paralegal networks to help residents navigate legal systems and challenge evictions in court.

- ✓ Strengthen Community Organizing and Solidarity Networks: Facilitate the formation of strong, representative community committees to negotiate with companies and governments.
- ✓ Build cross-border solidarity networks between communities facing similar threats from mining across SADC to share strategies and amplify their voice.
- ✓ Call for urgent review and update of existing renewable energy policies, such as the Renewable Energy Action Plan and Electricity Act, across Southern African Countries. These policies should create a structured framework that empowers local stakeholders.
- ✓ We call for tax incentives, reduced bureaucratic hurdles and increased access to grants and subsidies must be provided to support local communities access to energy sources.

### Call to action for SADC Member States

We Call to action for SADC Member States to:

- ✓ Legally Recognize and Formalize Customary Land Rights: Reform national land and mineral laws to legally recognize customary land ownership and communal tenure. This gives communities a stronger legal standing to negotiate and refuse displacement.
- ✓ Strengthen and Enforce Regulatory Frameworks: Ratify and domesticate regional and international human rights instruments. Mandate robust, independent HIAs and EIAs for all mining projects. Establish clear, transparent, and accessible grievance mechanisms for communities to seek redress for harms caused by mining operations.
- ✓ Ensure Mandatory Fair Compensation and Livelihood Restoration: Enact laws that guarantee that compensation is not just monetary but includes in-kind restitution and a comprehensive livelihood restoration plan.

## 12. Youth Participation in Climate-Sensitive Policies

### Main Challenges:

- ✓ Youth climate movements and organizations are often fragmented, working in silos on similar issues. This dilutes their collective voice and impact at the regional level.
- ✓ Youth are systematically excluded from decision-making spaces on climate and environmental policy.
- ✓ Policies are often top-down without considering intergenerational equity.

### Call to action:

We advocate for the formalization of youth climate councils at national and local government



levels with a direct reporting line to environmental ministries. We call on member states and SADC to:

- ✓ Promote and fund green entrepreneurship and skills training in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and circular economy models for young people.
- ✓ Support youth-led litigation and advocacy for climate justice and the recognition of the right to a clean environment.
- ✓ Ensure gender balance in youth climate councils and green entrepreneurship opportunities and add support for young women climate activists facing exclusion and gendered threats.
- ✓ Meaningfully engage youth and young people are involved in the ongoing review processes of the National Climate Action Plans such as the NDCs and National Adaptation Plans and Frameworks being developed towards the Fund Responding to Loss and Damage.
- ✓ Enhance capacity building and strengthening for youth and young people as UNFCCC climate change negotiators.

### 13. Water Resource Management in SADC

#### Main Challenges:

- ✓ Water scarcity is exacerbated by climate change and women often bear the brunt of sourcing water at household level.
- ✓ Pollution of water sources from mining and agriculture.
- ✓ Poor maintenance of water infrastructure and transboundary water conflicts requires intense cooperation.

#### Call to action

- ✓ Advocate for the universal adoption and implementation of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) principles at all levels.
- ✓ SADC Member States ensure the meaningful inclusion of women's organizations in all levels of water governance, while adopting gender-responsive infrastructure design, such as safe water points, accessible facilities, and provisions for menstrual hygiene management, to address the specific needs of women and girls and promote equitable access to water resources.
- ✓ Campaign against the pollution of water sources by holding corporations accountable and strengthening environmental regulations.
- ✓ Promote traditional and innovative water conservation practices and technologies, especially in drought-prone areas.
- ✓ Call for community-led management of water resources, investment in climate-resilient infrastructure, and stronger governance of shared river basins.

## 14. Sustainability

### Main challenges

- ✓ Funding challenges are acute, with donor priorities shifting away from advocacy toward service delivery, leaving CSOs in the region, where over 70% rely on external aid, struggling to sustain operations amid economic pressures and reduced global support.
- ✓ This has led to innovative survival strategies, such as local resource mobilization and digital advocacy, but overall, it threatens CSOs' ability to address issues like human rights, identity and gender rights, gender-based violence, and sustainable development.

### Call to action

As CSO we commit to collaborate in exploring strategies that help us to:

- ✓ Move away from relying solely on support from development partners
- ✓ Actively pursue avenues of home-grown funding, and explore non-traditional funding sources, including social enterprise initiatives.
- ✓ Create collaborative networks and strategic partnerships to scale the impact of the work through shared resources.
- ✓ Ensure inclusion of historically marginalized and underfunded communities, such as intersex and transgender people, in resource mobilization, support, as well as inclusive policy development.

To further address these challenges and bolster civil society's role in regional development, we call on SADC member states to:

- ✓ Protect and expand the civic space by holding each other accountable to repeal or amend restrictive legislation targeting CSOs, such as those limiting foreign funding or imposing burdensome registration requirements, to align with international human rights standards.
- ✓ Enhance Domestic and Regional Funding Mechanisms by developing sustainable funding models and allocating national budgets focusing on advocacy and community-based initiatives to replace shifting donor priorities.
- ✓ Foster Partnerships and Capacity Building by Strengthening operational partnerships between SADC, member states, and CSOs through formalized inclusion in regional bodies, such as joint monitoring of civic space under SADC's regional integration frameworks.
- ✓ Promote Inclusive Monitoring and Accountability and Adopt regional protocols for transparent donor engagement and CSO sustainability, including annual audits of funding impacts.



## 15. Concluding Summary

The **2025 Civil Society Forum** was not simply a convening, it was a reaffirmation of solidarity, purpose, and resilience in the face of regional and global challenges. Through five days of structured dialogue, participants bridged divides across sectors and nations to craft an **ambitious and actionable Declaration**. The Forum reinforced civil society's indispensable role as both **watchdog and partner** in governance, as **champion of rights and justice**, and as **catalyst for people-centred regional integration**. The outcomes of #CSF2025 now stand as a roadmap for advocacy and engagement with SADC institutions, Member States, and global partners, advancing the vision of a **just, inclusive, and people-driven SADC We Want**.

-ENDS-

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# APPENDICES

#CSF2025



## APPENDICES OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM OF 2025 #CSF2025

18-22 AUGUST 2025

ANTANANARIVO, MADAGASCAR





## 1. Appendix A – Keynote Address by Gilles Chevalier – UNICEF Representative (OIC)

### Keynote Address – "The SADC We Want"

Civil Society Forum, Antananarivo, Madagascar, August 18, 2025- Radisson Blu

Gilles Chevalier,

UNICEF Representative (OIC)

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#### Protocol order

- Distinguished delegates from our 16 SADC member states,
- Representatives of the African Union, United Nations agencies and development partners,
- Ladies and Gentlemen Leaders of National Civil Society, Trade Union and Religious Platforms,
- Dear members of the press,

-----  
Ladies and gentlemen

It is an honour for me to speak today on behalf of UNICEF in this Civil Society Forum to define the contours of "the SADC we want".

We are meeting here in Antananarivo at a moment in history marked both by intertwined, interconnected and unprecedented challenges and by remarkable opportunities for our young people, for our children.

Contextualizing the vision of "the SADC we want", it must be first of all and foremost recognized that the vision of 2050 and the Regional Strategic Development Indicative Plan (RISDP) 2020–2030 already offer us an ambitious perspective: to become a peaceful and inclusive SADC as well as an industrialized, competitive and integrated region in the global economy.

But for UNICEF, SADC can only be considered a regional block that catalyzes change **if it meets the**



**following conditions:**

- It must ensure that social, economic and governance efforts are effectively aligned with the interests of children and young people.
- It must put in place mechanisms that enable governments to partner with local organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) to strengthen inclusiveness and accountability in service delivery.

**However, reality reminds us of the road that remains to be travelled:**

- Indeed, more than 40% of the population in Southern Africa now lives in income poverty, and children make up the majority of them.
- Inequality remains among the highest in the world, with the richest 10% holding more than 50% of total income
- Youth unemployment exceeds 30% in several Member States.
- Government budgets allocated to social services fall short of international standards; As we know, very few countries invest 20% in education and 15% in health.
- Climate shocks such as cyclones in Madagascar and Mozambique, drought in Namibia and floods in Malawi too often undermine hard-won gains. And as we know, it is children and women who are most directly impacted, particularly because of the strong disruption in access to and continuity of essential services such as vaccination, education and food.
- Finally, the uncertainty of world trade and the unprecedented geopolitical tensions since the end of the Second World War are putting pressure on the future of development finance in this post-COVID period and are strongly shaking up the very notion of multilateralism from which any regional logic such as that of SADC stems.

**At the same time - as mentioned by previous speakers - some notable advances are worth**



## highlighting:

- I am thinking, for example, of the transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a regional parliament, which should allow for better representativeness and strengthened governance within the regional bloc
- Also, the SADC Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda are powerful levers for the recognition, protection and empowerment of the most vulnerable
- The adoption of the SADC Mechanism for Engagement with Non-State Actors, which brings together today and provides a formal bridge between civil society and decision-makers.
- Finally, the presence of strategic and long-term partners, including United Nations agencies including UNICEF, which have a national presence in all SADC member states as well as a strong regional presence.

At this time when SADC continues to define itself and guide what a significant part of Africa will become, the role of each actor, in particular that of the Civil Society Organizations, is in my view crucial, and your presence testifies to this.

## What are the SADC Imperatives we want?

As I said at the outset, the relevance of the priorities outlined in SADC's Vision 2050 must be recognized.

These guidelines are also echoed in UNICEF's regional agenda, of which I will mention a few points relating to children and young people in the context of the "Development of human and social capital" pillar.

**First, the development of the regional block will go hand in hand with access to quality education and learning for all.**

However, today, available data show that only 36% of children in low-income SADC countries complete lower secondary school, and nearly 30% do not complete primary school.

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To achieve this ambitious and transformative goal, Member States, in collaboration with other partners, including CSOs, will:

- i. Accelerate public investment in teacher training; protect and strengthen partnerships for education financing such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and ensuring high budget execution of allocated funds.
- ii. It will be necessary to take advantage of modern technologies in learning, including school connectivity,
- iii. Governments will need to address the problems of early school leaving/dropping out of basic education through enhanced monitoring and improving the learning environment,
- iv. Finally, It is imperative to remove financial barriers for families with children through employment support or targeted social protection interventions.

**Second, universal health coverage and programmes to combat child malnutrition must be accelerated.** Although countries such as Angola, South Africa and Mauritius have improved maternal health in recent years, the maternal mortality rate remains too high: **445 per 100,000 live births in Madagascar, 478 in Lesotho, and 427 in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).** In addition, under-five mortality and child malnutrition remain major challenges in many SADC countries. To achieve health development ambitions and universal health coverage, SADC States will:

- Significantly increase domestic resources allocated to the health sector. This can only be done if innovative financing options such as Matching Funds, blended finance and public-private partnerships are mobilised. It will also be necessary to encourage the establishment of community health insurance to compensate for the lack of mutual insurance at the national level and the inability of a large part of society to subscribe to private insurance.
- The SADC States will also have to strengthen the quality of human resources and develop its civil servants, they will be able to initiate transnational, transregional and continental academic partnerships as it is the case in some member states.



- As the alarming regional indicators show, it will of course be necessary to continue to invest massively in nutrition and immunization, which are the sine qua non conditions for any human development.

**The next point is to support vulnerable households through social safety nets and livelihood supports to build community resilience to the natural, social, health and economic shocks that are strongly affecting Southern Africa.**

Evidence shows the relevance of social protection interventions, including cash transfers and cash-plus programs, in mitigating the effects of poverty and social and economic shocks on vulnerable households. By combining financial support and complementary services, these programmes generate lasting effects on the well-being of children, women and social cohesion.

However, most SADC member states invest less than 1.5% of their GDP in social protection, while this averaged **26% of GDP** in the 27 EU countries in 2023. This increases inequality and puts the poor and vulnerable at greater risk. To strengthen social safety net interventions, SADC governments and SADC states should:

- Establish **autonomous budget lines** for social protection in their finance laws and **protect** social protection budgets to avoid cuts in times of budgetary consolidation,
- Strengthen data systems for effective and appropriate targeting of beneficiaries of safety net programmes.

**What strategic positioning of UNICEF within SADC, you may ask?**

The United Nations, and UNICEF in particular, reaffirms its commitment to SADC Vision 2050. Several elements demonstrate the relevance of our partnership:

- **We share the idea of a development that is particularly attentive to children and young people.**

Indeed, children must be at the heart of policies and programmes. In SADC, they represent



the majority demographic—in Madagascar, 70% of the population is under the age of 30: a tremendous potential, or a real risk if we do not invest in their future.

- **An influence on social policies.** Through our regional and national presence and partnerships with almost all ministries, we support governments in developing inclusive policies, as evidenced by the adoption of an early childhood policy in Lesotho, the reform of child protection legislation in Malawi, and the implementation of universal cash transfers for children under 15 in Madagascar.
- **We play a key role in the generation and use of evidence.** UNICEF supports statistical institutes and social ministries to strengthen data systems. In Madagascar, we have been supporting the MICS survey for more than 10 years, a central tool for monitoring child and maternal health indicators and contributing to the monitoring of the SDGs for children in the region.
- **In terms of resource mobilization and partnership building, by aligning national, regional and global priorities, we are mobilizing additional financing for education, health, WASH and child protection, while promoting better policy coherence.**
- **On strengthening resilience and social protection,** we are working to strengthen education and health systems to withstand climate and economic shocks, and to support the development of robust social safety nets to reduce household vulnerability.
- **But one of the important goals we set for ourselves is to build links between civil society and governments**

"The SADC we want" is not the sole choice of heads of state and their governments, the great business captains and diplomats of this world. SADC must represent the interests of the people and their constituents, and can only do so if it gives them a voice. This can only be done through the involvement of a strong and diverse civil society. Indeed:

The role of **civil society** in defining and steering regional strategies is increasingly recognized as



essential, particularly in terms of governance, accountability and legitimacy of public policies.

The main roles it must play are:

### **Our civil society must take part in the co-construction of policies**

- Associations, NGOs, trade unions, citizens' groups and community organisations must be able to ensure that the **voice of the people is systematically taken into account** in the definition of regional priorities.
- CSOs must make it possible to report concrete needs on the ground and play a mediating role between decision-makers and communities if necessary.
- It helps to **balance the balance of power** vis-à-vis public and private actors.
- Through advocacy, it can and should influence the allocation of resources and the choice of strategic priorities.
- Civil society actors regularly participate in the **implementation of regional strategies**, particularly in remote areas where the State is less present and experiments with innovative approaches that are then integrated into public policies.
- As we know, they make a strong contribution to the role of guarantor of democracies, whether by taking part in the **monitoring of regional policies, budgetary** monitoring, or by alerting citizens to the excesses or shortcomings of their representatives.

The participation of civil society in steering gives **greater legitimacy** to regional strategies. This strengthens **citizen buy-in**, which is essential for the sustainable implementation of SADC policies.

**In summary:** civil society must not only be a partner in the implementation of the 2050 vision, but must become a **key actor in regional governance**, ensuring that strategies are relevant, inclusive and sustainable.

Thus, the operationalization of the SADC-Non-State Actors mechanism represents, I am convinced, a



strategic opportunity that should allow for better consideration of the orientations of CSOs in the deliberations of the Council of Ministers of the member governments and the Summit, and that they are reflected in national plans, budgets and, consequently, in measurable results.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the "SADC we want" cannot be achieved if more than a third of children in Member States continue to be excluded from primary school in their first decade of life.

Nor will it be possible if hundreds of mothers continue to die each year while giving birth.

It will not be achievable if nearly half of our children are malnourished; and it will not be possible if the priority sectors for children and youth are not sufficiently funded by national budgets.

It is therefore imperative to put in place a strong and well-thought-out framework for collaboration between governments and non-state actors to ensure the harmonization and complementarity of interventions for the development of children, youth and other minority and/or vulnerable populations in SADC.

I reiterate that UNICEF remains fully committed, alongside each and every one of you, to making this aspiration a reality.

Thank you, thank you, obrigado

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**2. Appendix B – Remarks by Mr Simao Tila – Board President of the Southern African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SAF-CNGO)**

**1. Honourable Paubert Mahatante Tsimanaorate – The Minister of Fisheries and the Blue Economy, Republic of Madagascar**

**2. Monsieur Gilles Chevallier - Deputy Representative & Acting Representative UNICEF Madagascar**

**3. Mr Lebogang Kenneth Mabotho – Executive Director of the Southern African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SAf-CNGO) also known as the SADC-CNGO**

**4. Ms. Mavis Koogotsitse – Executive Secretary of the Southern African Trade Unions Coordinating Council (SATUCC)**

**5. Mandlenkosi Hadebe – Executive Director – Federation of Christian Councils in Southern Africa**

**6. Co-Convening Partners and Development Partners here present,**

**7. Miss Elisa Marie Alberte – Leader of the PFNOSCM - National Platform of Civil Society Organizations of Madagascar**

**8. Leaders of National Platforms of Civil Society from across the region,**

**9. Distinguished guests.....Friends...Colleagues...**

It is my honour, on behalf of the Southern African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations, to



welcome you to the 2025 Civil Society Forum. We gather here in the warm heart of Antananarivo with a purpose both urgent and historic.

This Forum is not just another event in the annual calendar, it is the foremost people-centred platform in the SADC region where we, the civil society family, come together to take stock, to challenge ourselves, to speak truth to power, and to chart a course for the future.

Our theme, *Revitalizing the SADC We Want*, reminds us that our region's integration journey must never be an elite conversation. It must be a living, breathing, people-driven project. It is about communities. It is about ordinary Southern Africans whose aspirations are for dignity, opportunity, security, and justice.

We recognise the significant advances made in recent years: the transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a regional parliament, albeit with no legislative powers yet; the adoption of strategies on Gender-Based Violence and Women, Peace and Security; and the approval of the SADC Mechanism for Engagement with Non-State Actors. These are milestones that civil society has long demanded.

But alongside this progress, we must confront hard truths. Our region remains one of the most unequal in the world. Over 40% of Southern Africans live in poverty. Youth unemployment is at crisis levels. Democratic backsliding is a reality in some member states, with shrinking civic space, weakened checks and balances, and violations of human rights, sometimes under the pretext of security or stability.

Climate change continues to batter our communities, from floods in Malawi and Mozambique to droughts in Namibia and Angola. Energy transitions are underway, but too often without protecting the rights and livelihoods of affected communities.

Globally, we see a shifting geopolitical landscape. We speak of renewed focus on equitable energy transitions and global debt reform, issues with direct implications for our region. Civil society voices from around the world continue to call for fairer trade, climate justice, and strengthened multilateralism, echoing our own struggles here in the SADC region.

Closer to home, we continue to advocate for structured, inclusive platforms to address national crises. We speak in the face of glaring the fragilities of trust between governments and the governed. This trust deficit is a challenge we must address together, governments, civil society, and regional institutions alike.

Our Vision 2050 and RISDP 2020-2030 call for a peaceful, inclusive, competitive, middle- to high-income SADC, built on three pillars:

- **Industrial Development and Market Integration.** We must ensure that the African Continental Free Trade Area delivers for the informal trader in Bulawayo as much as for the exporter in Durban. Trade justice means tackling illicit financial flows and ensuring fair taxation.
- **Infrastructure Development in Support of Regional Integration.** From roads to digital infrastructure, investment must be inclusive and climate-resilient.
- **Social and Human Capital Development.** This demands quality, equitable education, universal access to health care, gender justice, and child protection at the heart of every policy.



Across all pillars, the cross-cutting themes of gender, youth empowerment, climate resilience, and governance reform must be embedded, not as add-ons but as central drivers.

Friends, our strength lies in our solidarity. The challenges we face, poverty, inequality, governance deficits, are too big for any one sector or country. We must strengthen strategic alliances, not just among ourselves, but with progressive forces in governments, the private sector, academia, and the media.

We must move from parallel processes to institutionalised engagement. The operationalisation of the SADC-NSA Mechanism is our opening, let us keep pushing for its full operationalization to ensure civil society's inputs are not only heard but acted upon at the Council of Ministers and Heads of State level.

The SADC We Want is one where:

- The ballot is stronger than the bullet.
- A child in rural Lesotho has the same right to quality education as one in Gaborone.
- Climate adaptation funds reach the frontline communities.
- Women and youth are not tokens in leadership, but equal shapers of policy.
- Civil society is seen not as a threat, but as an indispensable partner in building a prosperous, inclusive, and peaceful region.
- And the rights of every citizen of SADC are respected

Let us use this Forum to speak boldly, to listen deeply, and to act collectively. Let our communicate be more than words on paper, let it be a contract with the peoples of Southern Africa. We do this work not for ourselves, but for the millions whose voices are too often excluded from decision-making rooms. The SADC we want is the SADC they deserve. I thank you, *Merci, Ke a leboga, Ndiyabulela, Tatenda* (Shona), *Ngiyabonga, Misaotra betsaka, Obrigado, Asante sana!*

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### 3. Appendix – Remarks by Mr Mandlenkosi Hadebe - FOCCISA

#### Civil Society Forum 2025 – Revitalising the SADC We Want Economic Justice Network of FOCCISA, Mandlenkosi Hadebe Madagascar, 18–22 August 2025

#### Opening

Excellencies, distinguished policymakers, fellow civil society leaders, grassroots activists, partners, and friends...It is an honour to stand before you today, in this beautiful land of Madagascar, for the Civil Society Forum 2025. We gather under the bold theme: “*Revitalising the SADC We Want.*” We come together at a time when poverty and inequality are widening due to political crises, debt, extractivism, climate change and growing changes in geopolitics, which threaten the very foundations of our societies. Yet we are also living in a moment of possibility – a moment where civil society, churches, women, and young people are rising to insist on a new vision for Southern Africa. As Allan Boesak, the South African liberation theologian, once said: “*Hope is the ability to hear the music of the future. Faith is the courage to dance to it today.*” We are here because we believe another Southern Africa is possible – and we are willing to dance to that future today.

#### Who We Are – The Work of EJV

The **Economic Justice Network of FOCCISA** has, for more than two decades, been a prophetic voice in this region. Our mission is simple but profound: **to ensure that the economy serves people, not the other way around.**

We work in four interconnected areas:

1. **Trade Justice** – ensuring trade agreements lift farmers and workers, not only corporations.
  - Example: When the SADC-EU Economic Partnership Agreement was signed, EJV worked with smallholder farmers in Malawi and Lesotho to highlight how subsidised European imports were destroying local markets. We helped them bring their stories directly to policymakers, ensuring their realities shaped the debate.
2. **Tax Justice** – fighting illicit financial flows and unfair taxation.
  - Africa loses about **\$88 billion every year** through illicit financial flows. That is money stolen from schools, hospitals, and jobs. In Zambia, one copper company was found to have shifted profits abroad while the local community lacked running water. EJV mobilised faith leaders and activists to demand fairer taxation, reminding governments that revenue justice is people’s justice.
3. **Extractives and Climate Justice** – challenging the “resource curse.”



- In South Africa's Mpumalanga province, women are organising against coal mining that pollutes their water and destroys their health. One grandmother told us: “We bury our husbands from the mines, and we bury our children from hunger. When will the land give life again?” EJN supports such communities, demanding a just energy transition that does not sacrifice the poor for profit.
4. **Food Security and Sovereignty** – building resilient community-led food systems.
- Across SADC, **over 60% of people depend on agriculture**. In Madagascar itself, cyclones have wiped out crops, forcing families to depend on aid. But in Lesotho, women's cooperatives supported by EJN are proving that small-scale, sustainable farming can feed families, send girls to school, and build dignity.

When we speak of *revitalising SADC*, we must be honest. Too often, our governments gather in grand summits, yet the farmer in Malawi, the fisher in Mozambique, the domestic worker in Johannesburg, and the young girl in a rural village see little change in their lives.

The SADC we want must be one where **ordinary people feel the benefits of integration**.

That means:

- **Trade that serves the people:** Intra-SADC trade is still below **20%**, meaning we trade more with Europe and China than with each other. Revitalisation means building regional value chains that create jobs for our youth.
- **Tax justice that funds public services:** Women and girls suffer most when health clinics close or when schools lack resources. A girl in Zambia misses class because there are no sanitary pads; a young mother in Mozambique walks 20 km to a clinic without access to medicine. These are the costs of tax injustice.
- **A just energy transition:** Across the region, women carry the heaviest burden when water sources dry up or when floods destroy crops. Yet women remain excluded from decision-making in climate policy. Revitalising SADC means putting women at the centre of climate and energy justice.
- **Food sovereignty:** A SADC where no child goes to bed hungry, and where women farmers – who make up **over 60% of the agricultural labour force** – have secure land, access to finance, and fair markets.

As Jean-Marc Ela, the theologian from Cameroon, said: “*Theology that does not listen to the cries of the poor is a theology of death.*” Likewise, integration that does not respond to the cries of women, youth, and the marginalised is integration without life.

Stories of Struggle, Stories of Hope

Let me share just three brief stories from our region:

- **In Mozambique**, after Cyclone Idai, women in displaced communities told us: “We lost our homes, but we did not lose our voices.” A 34-year-old woman, Luisa Alberto, interviewed by TRT Afrika said, “We ran from the war, then the storm took whatever little we had left.” The women organised cooperatives to rebuild livelihoods – showing that resilience is born from solidarity.
- **In Lesotho**, young women in textile factories have lost their jobs as factories closed due to the 50% tariffs imposed by the US on Lesotho in April 2025. In an interview by Kate Bartlett in Maseru, July 2025- Maqajela Hlaatsane, 54, has been working in Maseru's garment industry for decades - a job that's allowed her to raise her children on her own. Like many, she's a single mother who has been empowered by joining the workforce. She says, “I am

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here looking for a job, my family cannot survive alone on water. "Listen to the interviews on NPR News <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/20/nx-s1-5468516/lesotho-tariffs-africa>

- **In South Africa, the Stilfontein disaster claimed approximately 90 informal Artisanal small-scale Miners, due to Operation Vala Umgodi initiated by the SAPS, sealing off mine shafts and cutting off food and water supplies to miners. This has become a flashpoint for broader debates about governance, human rights and economic justice. The affected communities together with civil society organisations spotlighted the impacts of the Stilfontein disaster on the media, Portfolio Committees in Parliament, on the 18 March 2025, the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) attended and has kindly allowed New Agenda to publish [the meeting summary](#) and through networks such as the Alternative Mining Indaba<sup>1</sup> held annually in South Africa.**

These are not just stories of pain – they are stories of hope, resistance, and possibility.

## The Role of Civil Society

Civil society is the heartbeat of this region. Without us, SADC becomes a club of elites. With us, SADC becomes a community of people.

### Revitalising civil society means:

- Reclaiming policy spaces from which communities are excluded.
- Strengthening solidarity across borders – so that the struggle of a fisherwoman in Madagascar is linked to that of a farmworker in Namibia, mine workers in Kenya.
- Holding governments accountable – for every promise signed in the SADC Treaty, Agenda 2063, or the SDGs.
- Ensuring women and youth are not mere tokens but central actors in shaping policies.

### Closing: A Call to Action

Friends, revitalising the SADC we want is not a task for governments alone. It is our collective mission. The Ghanaian theologian **Mercy Amba Oduyoye** reminds us: "The measure of justice is the dignity of women and the survival of children." So let us measure SADC not by GDP growth, but by whether a girl in rural Zimbabwe can stay in school, whether a mother in Angola can feed her child, whether a worker in Eswatini can earn a living wage, and whether a farmer in Madagascar can plant without fear of losing her crops to the next cyclone.

### The SADC we want is:

- A SADC of justice.
- A SADC of dignity.
- A SADC of hope.

Let us leave Madagascar not just with words, but with commitments to act – to build a SADC where women, youth, and communities are at the centre. **Another Southern Africa is not only possible – it is within our reach. Together, we will build it.** Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://altminingindaba.ejn.org.za/>



#### 4. Appendix D – Remarks by Ms Mavis Koogotsitse - Executive Secretary of the Southern African Trade Unions Coordinating Council (SATUCC)

On behalf of the Southern African Trade Union Coordination Council (SATUCC), it is my privilege to welcome you to this important Civil Society Forum under the theme "Revitalizing the SADC We Want." Before proceeding, let me extend our deepest gratitude: To UNICEF and Southern Africa Trust for their invaluable partnership and support in making this forum possible. To our gracious hosts in Madagascar for welcoming us to your beautiful country. To all APEX Alliance partners for your collaboration in organizing this crucial dialogue. This gathering presents an important opportunity for us as workers, civil society, and social justice advocates—to reflect on the state of our region and to collectively shape a Southern Africa that is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was founded on principles of regional integration, shared prosperity, and people-centered development. Yet, today, our region faces pressing challenges that demand our urgent attention: In order for us to revitalize and talk about The SADC We Want we need to acknowledge these challenges of which top on list is Peace and security are fundamental pillars in achieving the SADC we envision. Our region has faced various challenges, including political instability, conflict, and social unrest, which hinder our progress towards sustainable development. For instance, the ongoing tensions in Mozambique due to insurgency in the northern region not only threaten the safety of citizens but also disrupt livelihoods and economic activities. In addition, we have witnessed the impact of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where conflicts have caused humanitarian crises and displacements. To address these issues, we must prioritize peacebuilding initiatives, promote dialogue, and strengthen regional cooperation for conflict resolution.

#### Unemployment & Precarious Work

Despite economic growth, youth unemployment remains alarmingly high, and informal labor continues to expand, leaving workers without social protection. We must push for decent work, fair wages, and stronger labor rights across SADC. Decent Work and

#### Economic Justice

Address youth unemployment exceeding 50% in some SADC states  
Combat precarious informal/gig work through labor protections  
Centering Youth and Children in SADC's Future

With 60% of Africa's population under the age of 25, we must advocate for:

- Universal child-sensitive social protection systems that encompass nutrition, healthcare, and education.
- Quality education aligned with the demands of 21st-century economies.
- Youth employment guarantees that offer living wages and social security.

We cannot claim prosperity while millions of children lack basic needs.

#### Inequality & Poverty

Southern Africa remains one of the most unequal regions in the world, with wealth concentrated in the hands of a few while millions struggle with poverty.

We need progressive taxation, social protection floors, and equitable resource distribution.



## Trade, Regional Integration & the AfCFTA

While the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presents significant opportunities for economic growth, we must ensure that it benefits workers and local industries, not just multinational corporations. Non-tariff barriers, poor infrastructure, and unequal trade policies still hinder proper regional integration. We call for fair trade policies, industrialization that creates jobs, and safeguards for local economies to prevent exploitation.

## Climate Justice & Just Transition with Intergenerational Equity

The climate crisis disproportionately affects our region through droughts, cyclones, and food insecurity. Workers in mining, agriculture, and energy sectors need a just transition that ensures green jobs and sustainable livelihoods. Protect workers in climate-vulnerable industries (mining, agriculture)  
Amplify youth voices in climate policymaking

## Democratic Governance & Civic Space

Shrinking democratic space, restrictions on protests, and attacks on trade unionists threaten our collective voice. We must defend freedom of association, for unions and civil society, and the right to collective bargaining. Democratic Space for All. Empower youth leadership in governance structures

## Gender Equality & Women's Rights

Women workers still face discrimination, wage gaps, and gender-based violence in workplaces. We demand ratification and enforcement of ILO Convention 190 on ending violence and harassment at work.

## A Call to Action

As civil society, we must hold SADC governments accountable to their commitments. This forum must produce:

- ✓ A unified civil society declaration with actionable demands
  - ✓ Policy frameworks for SADC governments on:
    - ✓ Youth employment
    - ✓ Just transition
  - ✓ Solidarity pledges across borders and sectors
  - ✓ Stronger regional labor laws that protect migrant and informal workers.
  - ✓ People-centered economic policies, not just profit-driven investments.
  - ✓ Fair and inclusive trade policies under AfCFTA that prioritize decent jobs and local development.
  - ✓ We call for the inclusion of civil society in peace processes and the establishment of mechanisms that ensure the protection of human rights and social justice, as enduring peace can only be achieved when all communities feel secure and valued. A united civil society voice and transnational solidarity to push for progressive reforms. To our partners: Your support fuels this movement.
- To all delegates: History will judge us by what we achieve here.

Let us leave Madagascar with concrete commitments, not just resolutions; Stronger alliances, not just discussions; Renewed determination to build the SADC our people deserve. SATUCC reaffirms its unwavering commitment to these struggles. Let us use this forum to build solidarity, share strategies, and demand the SADC we truly want one that works for all its people, not just the powerful few. Together, we will revitalize our region—for our youth, our workers, and future generations.

Thank you.

