



**STATEMENT FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL  
OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM  
ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY  
8<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024**

Dear Colleagues/partners,

It is with immense pleasure that I release this statement to the Forum's august Member Parliaments and partners in view of celebrating the International Women's Day on this 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

On this day, it is fundamental to pay tribute to the pivotal roles portrayed by women in society: as mothers, daughters, active workers, entrepreneurs, homemakers and much more. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, gender stereotypes which tend to ascribe the weaker roles to women are quickly being defenestrated in the face of strong-willed women who have demonstrated that the female gender can aspire to emulate all men-led positions in society, be it as political leaders, stateswomen, astronauts, scientists, truck drivers or even builders, and be as successful at the job as men are. Yet, despite the innate potential of women demonstrated through determination and prowess, the majority of women are still lagging behind to integrate the development agenda of Southern Africa.

According to the Global Gender Gap Index (2023) released by the World Economic Forum, Gender parity in Sub-Saharan Africa stands at 68.2% which is less than the global average and much less than North America and Europe which exceeds 75%. Failing to close the gender divide will entail that the region may equally fail to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 since gender intersects with all factions of the development chart and has a bearing on tackling climate change, disaster recovery as well as education and employment.

In this respect, the Forum fully associates itself with the UN theme for International Women's Day 2024 which is **"Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress"** bearing in mind that an additional USD 360 Billions are required per year to achieve gender equality globally, the investment being more urgent in developing countries where the gender divide is widening due to poverty, extreme weather events, conflicts leading to mass displacements of vulnerable communities, and other unforeseen circumstances. The Forum, through its SADC Model Law on Public Financial Management (PFM), also advocates for consistent gender mainstreaming by Parliaments through the yearly budget to trigger a rethinking on how gender considerations are to be factored in when each budget item is formulated by the Executive for adoption.

Progress in gender advancement should not have an anticlimactic ending, instead progress should steadily lift the region towards the promised objectives where men and women are treated equally by law and are conferred the same opportunities by the state. We shall continue to work stalwartly together to achieve this noble outcome.

Happy International Women's Day 2024!

Yours sincerely,

**Boemo M. SEKGOMA (Ms)**  
**SECRETARY GENERAL**  
**SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**