

Southern African Development Community, African Regional Bodies

## Gender and Development: A Declaration by Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

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Southern African Development Community

## **Gender and Development: A Declaration by Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)**

*Published*

**Commenced in full on 8 September 1997**

*[This is the version of this document at 8 September 1997.]*

We, the Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community,

A. *NOTING THAT:*

- i) Member States undertook in the SADC Treaty (Article 6(2)) not to discriminate against any person on the grounds of gender, among others;
- ii) All SADC member states have signed and ratified or acceded to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), or are in the final stages of doing so;

B. *CONVINCED THAT:*

- i) Gender equality is a fundamental human right;
- ii) Gender is an area in which considerable agreement already exists and where there are substantial benefits to be gained from closer regional co-operation and collective action.
- iii) The integration and mainstreaming of gender issues into the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative is key to the sustainable development of the SADC region.

C. *DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT:*

- i) While some SADC member states have made some progress towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming, disparities between women and men still exist in the areas of legal rights, power sharing and decision making, access to and control over productive resources, education and health among others;
- ii) Women constitute the majority of the poor;
- iii) Efforts to integrate gender considerations in SADC sectoral programmes and projects have not sufficiently mainstreamed gender in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.

D. *RECOGNISING THAT:*

- i) The SADC Council of Ministers in 1990 mandated the SADC Secretariat to explore the best ways to incorporate gender issues in the SADC Programme of Work, and approved in 1996 that gender issues at the regional level be coordinated by the Secretariat;
- ii) In execution of this mandate, the SADC Secretariat has developed and maintained working relations with key stakeholders in the area of gender, which resulted in the approval and adoption of the SADC Gender Programme by the SADC Council of Ministers in February 1997;

*WE THEREFORE:*

- E. REAFFIRM our commitment to the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, the Africa Platform of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

F. *ENDORSE the decision of Council on:*

- i) The establishment of a policy framework for mainstreaming gender in all SADC activities, and in strengthening the efforts by member countries to achieve gender equality.
- ii) Putting into place an institutional framework for advancing gender equality consistent with that established for other areas of co-operation, but which ensures that gender is routinely taken into account in all sectors.
- iii) The establishment of a Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for Gender Affairs in the region.
- iv) The adoption of the existing Advisory Committee consisting of one representative from Government and one member from Non Governmental Organisations in each member state whose task is to advise the Standing Committee of Ministers and other Sectoral Committees of Ministers on gender issues.
- v) The establishment of Gender Focal Points whose task would be to ensure that gender is taken into account in all sectoral initiatives, and is placed on the agenda of all ministerial meetings.
- vi) The establishment of a Gender Unit in the SADC Secretariat consisting of at least two officers at a senior level.

G. *RESOLVE THAT:*

As leaders, we should spearhead the implementation of these undertakings and ensure the eradication of all gender inequalities in the region;

*AND*

H. *COMMIT ourselves and our respective countries to, inter alia,*

- i) Placing gender firmly on the agenda of the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative;
- ii) Ensuring the equal representation of women and men in the decision making of member states and SADC structures at all levels, and the achievement of at least thirty percent target of women in political and decision making structures by the year 2005;
- iii) Promoting women's full access to, and control over productive resources such as land, livestock, markets, credit, modern technology, formal employment, and a good quality of life in order to reduce the level of poverty among women;
- iv) Repealing and reforming all laws, amending constitutions and changing social practices which still subject women to discrimination, and enacting empowering gender sensitive laws;
- v) Enhancing access to quality education by women and men, and removing gender stereotyping in the curriculum, career choices and professions;
- vi) Making quality reproductive and other health services more accessible to women and men;
- vii) Protecting and promoting the human rights of women and children;
- viii) Recognising, protecting and promoting the reproductive and sexual rights of women and girl child;
- ix) Taking urgent measures to prevent and deal with the increasing levels of violence against women and children.
- x) Encouraging the mass media to disseminate information and materials in respect of the human rights of women and children.

IN WITNESS WHERE OF, We, the Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community, HAVE SIGNED THIS DECLARATION.

DONE at Blantyre on this 8th day of September 1997, in two original texts, in the English and Portuguese languages, both texts being equally authentic.