



## Southern African People's Solidarity Network

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### COMMUNIQUE OF THE SADC PEOPLE'S SUMMIT

#### ***Reclaiming SADC for peoples solidarity and development: Let the People Speak - LUSAKA, ZAMBIA, 15-16 AUGUST 2007***

*August 16, 2007*

**We**, members of Civil Society Organisations, trade unions, faith based organizations, student bodies and economic justice networks from the SADC region met in Lusaka, Zambia on August 15-16, under the auspices of the Southern Africa Peoples' Solidarity Network (SAPSN), to constitute the SADC People's Summit held parallel to the 27<sup>th</sup> Heads of State Summit.

We exchanged views on some common trends and issues of concern in the region including the appalling state of governance, democracy and human rights, youth unemployment levels, HI/AIDS trends, poor health service delivery, gender discrimination, land problems, the debt burden, Economic Partnership Agreements and the Zimbabwe Situation.

We noted with concern that years after the adoption of the SADC protocol on human rights, governments in the region continue to violate the rights of their citizens using draconian laws, harassment and torture of opposition leaders and civic society activists, ban on political rallies, intolerance to dissenting views as well as denial of freedom of expression and association.

We deplore attempts by governments, through introducing NGO bills across the region, to silence the civic organisations' calls for public transparency and accountability.

We categorically condemn the deportation of over 40 Zimbabweans headed for the SADC People's Summit on August 14 by the Zambia government and call on the immigration officials in the region to desist from such repressive acts in the future. Further, we deplore the inability of the SADC to act decisively in solving the Zimbabwe crisis and we support the calls for a national constitutional conference to solve the country's situation.

We observe the lack of true democracy in Swaziland and we support the calls for a new constitutional dispensation in the country.

We are disappointed with the little progress made so far in improving the health sector in the region as we underscore the need for urgent actioning by governments towards meeting the Abuja Declaration of 15 percent allocation of the national budgets to the provision of essential drugs including the Anti-Retroviral Drugs. We call on other governments in the region to emulate the government of Botswana which has met the Abuja target in its budgeting process.

We note the importance of land to the livelihoods of the communities and we deplore the unscrupulous evictions of people from their ancestral land, land privatization, and capitalization of land.

We are concerned that debt repayments continue to deprive the peoples of the region essential services and to hamper sustainable development in the region. Despite the debt relief programs undertaken in some of the countries in the region, SADC governments continue to reel under a chronic debt crisis exacerbated by 'vulture funds'- the so-called predator companies from rich governments which purchase debts owed by poor countries and litigate against the debtor countries with huge costs.

We condemn the legislative and institutional gaps in our countries for addressing internal mechanisms for the debt problems and we call on parliaments in the region to enact legislations around the loan contraction processes and the establishment of institutions that are necessary for effective debt management.

We note with concern the divisive effects of the Economic Partnership Agreements on the region and the neoliberal nature of their content as the December deadline for signing those approaches. We believe that the EPA negotiations are between unequal partners and that the SADC region stands to lose much more than the promised gains in the process.

We deplore the continued marginalization of women and the youth in decision-making processes across the region as we note the reluctance and piece-meal inclusion of women by governments of the region in political, economic and social arenas. We emphasize that women's equal participation form an integral part of any meaningful strategy towards sustainable development in the region and beyond.

**On the basis of the above factors we demand:**

- 1. All SADC governments to adopt and ratify the SADC protocol on human rights and gender; uphold regional integration as a participatory, people-driven and democratically negotiated process; respect the rule of law; allow free and fair elections; and make all constitutional reforms a consultative process.**
- 2. All SADC governments and peoples to accept duty to de-stigmatise HIV/AIDS, uphold the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and empower them to live positively.**
- 3. Governments in the region to prioritize the sustainable livelihoods of the rural communities, and equity in the land reform processes.**
- 4. Total and Unconditional debt cancellation for all the SADC countries.**
- 5. Governments of SADC to Stop EPAS!**

We commit ourselves to continue mobilizing the peoples of the SADC in solidarity with other regions of the continent to contribute to sustainable solutions to the region's social, economic, and political problems; to engage governments at national levels on regional integration, the Zimbabwe problem, Economic Partnership Agreements, adoption of gender sensitive policies, adequate resources for HIV/AIDS, unemployment for the youth and better working conditions for workers; and to forge active partnership with other actors across the region.

**ANOTHER SADC IS POSSIBLE!**