



SPEECH BY MS CANDITH MASHEGO-DLAMINI: DEPUTY MINISTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION ON THE OCCASION OF A WEBINAR ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN SADC INTEGRATION, 20 NOVEMBER 2020, UBUNTU RADIO

Programme Director,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
The CEO of Freedom Park;
The South African Heritage Ambassador;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great privilege for me to host this auspicious event in which we deliberate on the importance of cultural diplomacy in the integration agenda of the SADC region.

This webinar has brought together highly esteemed people who have in one form or another been engaged in diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy has somewhat been relegated to the periphery of diplomacy, while the term cultural diplomacy has only been recently established, it remains an area of interest for researchers, scholars and those in the field of international relations.

Cultural diplomacy has existed as a practice for centuries. There has been a systematic engagement of people in our region through trade, art, and education. This owes its existence, and as such has been the case, during the precolonial period in our region where people were interfacing with each other even before the discovery of minerals. This interaction was further

deepened by the liberation struggle that ensued during the colonial period, where liberation movements were formed by the people of our region.

South Africa's role in the enhancement of cultural diplomacy and integration in our region is yet to be told. There is more work that is yet to be done by researchers and to tell the stories of cultural integration. For example, the role played by the discovery of minerals and mines, and establishment of institutions of higher learning such as Fort Hare University, continues to highlight the role that South Africa has had as a glue in the expression of cultural diplomacy and integration of Southern Africa region.

It is no exaggeration to say that our region has strong historical relations and that we also share common values, cultures and languages. Therefore our regional economic, political and cultural aspirations depend on these shared aspects of culture to be realised in order for us to achieve regional integration and sustainable development.

Aptly described by Milton C. Cummings, Jr. as “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding”, cultural diplomacy has always been at the core of our regional integration programme.

Furthermore, the majority of SADC countries formed part of the front line states, which played a key role in the liberation struggle of South Africa and other neighbouring countries, from colonialism and Apartheid.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Treaty, which came into existence in 1992, remains our beacon of hope and a strong foundation through which SADC member states and citizens in the region act. A critical objective as encapsulated in the SADC Treaty is to strengthen and consolidate the long standing historical, social and cultural affinities and links among the people of the Region.

To supplement the Treaty, SADC adopted in 2001 the Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport to, among others, cooperate in the formulation and harmonisation of cultural policies, create a socio-cultural environment within which regional integration ideals can be realised as well as to develop and promote institutions of cultural heritage, such as libraries, museums and archives.

Currently, even though the concept of culture continues to be amongst the core priorities of the SADC work programme. It constitutes the pillar on which industrialisation is centred. As such there are a number of projects and programmes that are endorsed by the SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government that SADC Secretariat is driving, aimed at enhancing our shared common agenda.

These are:

- **Southern Africa Liberation Day**, celebrated on the 23rd March. The SADC Summit has approved that Southern African Liberation history be included in school syllabi to ensure that the younger generations in the SADC region have an opportunity to learn the history of the liberation struggles.
- **SADC Awards for Media and Secondary Schools Essay Competitions**, is an annual event which contributes towards the promotion and awareness of SADC programmes and success. This initiative seeks to encourage participants from SADC Member States to continue contributing to the promotion and awareness of SADC programmes and success. In 2019 SADC South Africa took the second position in the Media Awards – Television Category. The story that won “Follow the Guns” was a co-production between Carte Blanche and Ms Sasha Maria Schwendenwein.

By way of background, Ms Sasha Maria Schwendenwein is a South African and a producer of television programme Carte Blanche. She is an investigative journalist and television producer who joined Carte Blanche in 2012, and has since won several awards for her human rights, politics and environmental stories.

- **SADC Intra-Regional Sports Tournament** brings together Member States to participate in varying sporting activities with different member states having an opportunity to host the event and, therefore, deepening cultural relations in the region.
- **Mechanism in Honour of the Founders of SADC**, some of the planned activities on this mechanism will include commissioning research leading to publications focusing on all SADC founders, funding scholarships and research grants in honour of the founders

and naming Government buildings and Parliaments offices after the founders of SADC in member states.

Recognising that Kiswahili is one of the widely spoken languages, the SADC Summit held in Tanzania in 2019, adopted Kiswahili as the fourth working language of SADC for gradual implementation, other official SADC languages being English, Portuguese and French. It is one of the greatest milestones to have one of the indigenous languages gaining recognition in terms of the agenda of the Region.

The recent Southern African Development Community (SADC) Summit of Heads of States and Government hosted by the Republic of Mozambique and held virtually on 17 August 2020 approved the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030 and the SADC Vision 2050. This is an important milestone as the RISDP 2020-2030 clearly sets out guidelines and targets on SADC's priorities and policies for our regional integration and developmental agenda.

Culture can, without doubt, be a catalyst for economic development and regional integration for us to achieve the objectives as set out in our Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2020-2030). The SADC Vision 2050 visualises a peaceful, inclusive, competitive, middle to high income industrialised region, where all citizens enjoy sustainable socio-economic well-being, justice and freedom. I am certain that culture has an important role to play in the achievement of this audacious vision as it will put at the disposal of all different Member States the kind of soft power that is needed to navigate through negotiations that are often directed by the politics of hard power.

Driving cultural integration and relations can no longer be regarded as the responsibility of government alone. It requires all our citizens to be involved. Cultural diplomacy can be utilised to build international bridges, networks and be an instrument for reciprocal exchanges between our peoples in the region.

In conclusion, let me state that the importance of cultural diplomacy should not be underestimated as it has been proven world-wide that it continues to be:

- a common denominator that brings people together,

- a catalyst that strengthens friendship and enhance solidarity amongst the different peoples of the world.

I thank you

Kind regards,

Internal Communication



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