

Development, Peace and Security: Major Southern African Conference Event (SADC) in Zimbabwe Address Regional Imperatives

Economic integration, peacekeeping and a burgeoning public health crisis takes center stage in deliberations

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Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

President Emmerson Mnangagwa of the Republic of Zimbabwe has emerged as the regional chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) 44th Annual Summit which was held in Harare on August 17.

SADC is a 16-member regional organization composed of states and their affiliates extending from the Republic of South Africa to the Seychelles and as far north as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Since 1980 when its predecessor organization, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), was founded in Lusaka, Zambia which later transitioning towards SADC in Windhoek, Republic of Namibia in 1992 to the present era, the mission of the grouping is to foster economic cooperation, peacekeeping operations and solidarity with other oppressed and exploited people in Africa and around the globe.

[On its website the organization states:](#)

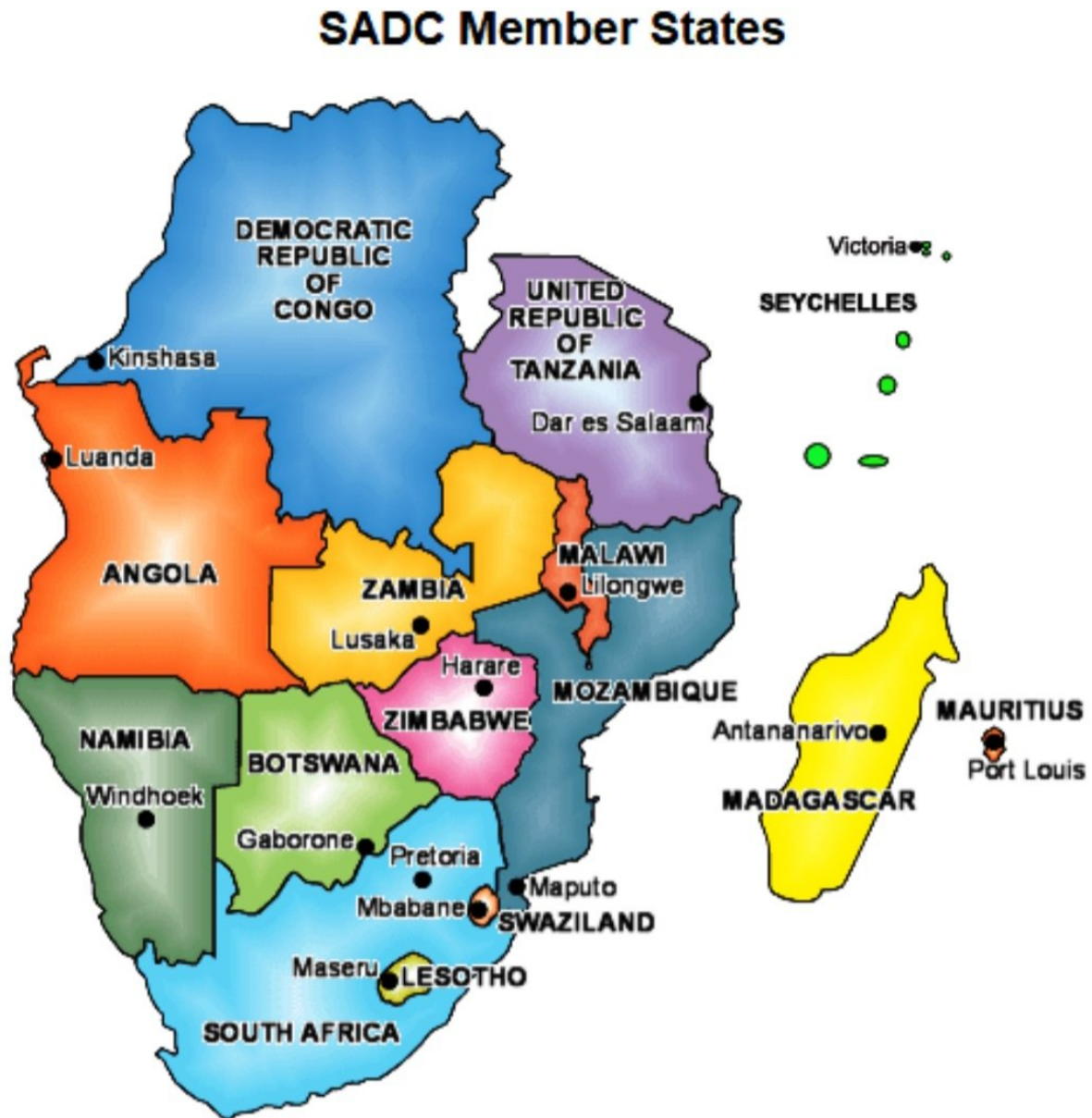
“The main objectives of SADC are to achieve development, peace and security, and economic growth, to alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa, and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration, built on democratic principles and equitable and sustainable development.”

Nonetheless, after decades of struggles for the total liberation of Southern Africa and efforts to realize progress towards its “Vision 2050”, obstacles to regional and continental integration remain intertwined with international divisions of economic power and relations of production. With the 44th Annual SADC Summit being held in the capital of Zimbabwe where the western imperialist states such as the United States and the United Kingdom are continuing to impose draconian sanctions on the host country, illustrated the dimensions of 21st century neo-colonialism. (See [this](#))

Among its resolutions embodied in the final declaration calls for the lifting of sanctions against Zimbabwe, a call that has been echoed throughout the years among SADC countries along with the entire 55-member states of the African Union (AU). As a key regional and continental player in the affairs of Africa, the Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) continues to attract the attention of peoples throughout the continent and

the world.

Having sustained the people and maintained social stability, this has been an ongoing challenge in Zimbabwe as well as other regional states. The Republic of South Africa has been subjected to numerous destabilization efforts over the last three years.



SADC map of region (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

The Republic of Mozambique along with SADC stabilization troops have fought rebel forces seeking to disrupt the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. Of course, the conflict within the resource-rich eastern Democratic of Republic of Congo (DRC) has been the most disruptive and deadly.

These are just a few of the most prominent factors that test the operational capacity of SADC and its representative governments. Other issues including the negative impacts of climate change, economic development and integration as well as foreign policy were addressed in Harare on August 17.

Severe Drought and Flooding

In several key sub-regions of SADC, there are recurrent problems of inconsistent rainfall prompting severe drought and flooding. Cyclones have also struck Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Development projects are frequently setback with the consequent environmental destruction, human displacement, injuries and loss of life.

As early as 2011, [a SADC document was published](#) discussing the necessity of water management within the region saying:

The Strategy notes the current situation in Southern Africa, in which climate change is already intensifying threats to the region's water stability. To ease this stress, the Strategy advocates the region adopt water governance, infrastructure development, and water management measures. These measures intend to institute the necessary political, economic, administrative, and infrastructure systems necessary for the region to deal with the uncertainty caused by climate change. As well, the Strategy sets out an implementation plan and a system for monitoring and evaluating projects to ensure that adaptation measures remain effective."

These outcomes from the impact of climate change must be addressed on a regional and continental level. However, any methods aimed at improving the conditions for the majority of working people, farmers and youth are contingent upon the restructuring of the world economic system which continues to be dominated by the imperialist centers of Washington, Wall Street, London, Paris, Frankfurt and Brussels, among others.

Regional Economic Development and Integration

A major point of discussion at all SADC Annual Summits is the imperatives of economic and structural integration. As an economic unit, the 16-member states encompass a diverse source of agricultural, minerals and water resources along with an enormous productive labor force dominated by youth.



These attributes are assets which if unleashed could result in rapid qualitative growth enhancing the quality of life of the masses of the people throughout the SADC region. As with the challenges of climate change, the economic development and integration of the regional states are being impeded by the imperialists through not only their sanctions as is the case in Zimbabwe other states as well are subject to the external influence within their internal affairs.

Zambia is undergoing a process of neoliberal reforms guided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) due to its financial debt service obligations to the banks. South Africa has been threatened with a downgrading of relations with the U.S. after being accused of siding with Moscow in its Special Military Operation in neighboring Ukraine. The government of President Cyril Ramaphosa has filed a lawsuit with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against the State of Israel charging violations of the Genocide Convention in the Gaza Strip of Occupied Palestine. The White House declared that the lawsuit brought before the highest legal organ of the United Nations has “no merit.”

All of these variables impact the ability of implementing development projects and plans aimed at joint economic planning. To overcome these imperialist policies there must be unity and the willingness to break with the western capitalist system.

The Need for an Independent Foreign Policy

The Republic of Namibia has supported the efforts by South Africa within the international arena to assist the Palestinian people in their struggle to end the occupation and genocide while seeking to achieve an independent and united homeland. [In a summation](#) of its resolutions and statements, the SADC website said of the 44th Annual Summit in regard to Palestine:

“The 44th Ordinary Summit of the Southern African Community (SADC) Heads of State and Government has noted with concern, the ongoing attacks on civilians in Palestine. The Summit noted with concern the relentless attacks on civilians in Palestine (Gaza) which has resulted in the loss of lives, destruction of property, and deteriorating humanitarian conditions and called for an immediate cease-fire, the release of all hostages, and the commencement of talks to bring a lasting solution to the conflict.”

Five years ago, SADC convened an international conference in South Africa in solidarity with the people of the Western Sahara, also known as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) which remains under the colonial domination of the Kingdom of Morocco with the approval and facilitation of the U.S., France and the former imperialist power of Spain. In recent years there have been numerous initiatives to undermine the question of independence for the SADR which is a member of the AU.

In the closing resolution of the 2019 solidarity conference, [it notes](#):

“In support of the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people, consistent with the United Nations (UN) Charter and the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) held a Solidarity Conference with Western Sahara on 25 and 26 March 2019, in Pretoria, Republic of South Africa. Participants at the Conference included Heads of State and Government of SADC

Member States, and invited Heads of State and Government from the African Continent, Latin America, Europe and Asia, and Former Heads of State and Government; Leaders of former Liberation Movements and Governing Parties in the SADC Region; and Civil Society Organizations.”

At the 44th Annual Summit the recent declaration by the World Health Organization (WHO) of a mpox global threat directly impacts the DRC where there have been thousands of cases reported. SADC and other regional groupings are concerned that the western imperialist states will handle this public health crisis in similar ways as what transpired during the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in the early months of 2020 where vaccines and other treatments were hoarded in favor of their own populations.

In regard to Mpox, [the resolution read](#):

“Summit extended solidarity and support to Member States affected by Mpox and further requested the World Health Organization, Africa CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and other Partners to avail resources towards the Mpox response in the region. Summit directed the Secretariat to convene an urgent meeting of the Ministers of Health to assess the impact of Mpox and facilitate coordinated regional response to control the spread of the disease.”

Much attention within the western media and its allied news agencies was focused on the assertions of suppression of opposition forces in Zimbabwe. However, these opposition parties and civil society organizations funded by the imperialist states have continued to advocate for the maintenance of sanctions against Harare and the removal of the ZANU-PF government.

Despite these efforts, the summit was considered a success by the participants and demonstrated the determination to further unify the SADC region. All of the member-states expressed their commitments to move forward towards the overall objectives of the organization.

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Featured image: SADC group photo of heads of state at 44th summit in Harare (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

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