



# THE WEEKEND READER

"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Socio-Economic Justice"

## SADC PEOPLE'S SUMMIT REFLECTIONS ON THE DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE SITUATION IN THE REGION

From the 16th to the 18th of August, Angolan Civil Society Organizations and members of the TCHOTA platform welcomed various social movements from the Southern African Development Community under the banner of the Southern African People's Solidarity Network during the People's Summit in Luanda under the motto ' **Justice, Meaningful Participation and Inclusion**'. As is customary, the annual summit convened in common accord and in one spirit, participants,

- Challenged dominant narratives and discourses and discussed the rights, experiences, and aspirations of those most affected by neoliberal domination and marginalization in the region.
- Committed once again to the inclusion of all women, men, and children of the Southern African Development Community in the decisions taken by Member States, through solidarity and collective action for a more just, peaceful, and prosperous community for all.
- Collectively agreed to engage and influence SADC Heads of State and Government to promote and support the articulated aspirations and hopes of poor and marginalized groups in the region.



*A panel at the People's Summit discusses migration, economic development & the importance of democracy to economic development.*

At a time of great promise and global uncertainty, as representatives of Civil Society Organizations, participants present shared reflections, concerns, and recommendations on the prevailing conditions that affect the men, women, and children of the Region. Below is our reflection on the governance and democracy situation in the region as it specifically pertains to Zimbabwe, Eswatini and Lesotho.

We are concerned by growing authoritarianism, shrinking civic space and militarism in the countries of the region and overall, we implore SADC Member States to uphold open democracies founded on constitutionalism. Silence on domestic political issues can exacerbate economic challenges, leading to unbalanced economic migration. We defend the recognition of the fundamental link between political stability and economic prosperity through the creation of sustainable living conditions for all.

### **ZIMBABWE**

We note the ongoing Harmonized Elections in Zimbabwe in a flawed electoral environment presided over by a partisan election management body that provides unequal access to the media, gerrymandering, draconian laws, a captured judiciary and continued repression of dissenting voices and political opponents.

- We note the imminent possibility of a disputed election with no guarantee of a peaceful transfer of power.
- We urge the leaders of member states to recognize the crisis of governance in Zimbabwe as well as demand meaningful intervention to ensure a peaceful, credible, free and fair election, thereby binding the Government of Zimbabwe to strictly adhere to the SADC principles and guidelines governing elections.
- Furthermore, we urge the heads of member states to compel to release fair and objective reports as seen by observer missions present in the country.

### **KINGDOM of ESWATINI**

Ashamed of the continued failure of leaders of SADC member states to take decisive action to resolve the governance crisis in the country, despite numerous fact-finding missions and commitment to facilitate a process of national dialogue led by SADC in Eswatini in solidarity with the masses, we ask:

- Immediate release of prisoners of conscience
- The repeal of the extinction of political parties;
- The repeal of all repressive laws, including the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act 1938 (SSA) and the Suppression of Terrorism Act 2008;
- The implementation of an inclusive national dialogue process led by SADC with a view to approving a democratic constitution that will enable the holding of free and fair elections under a multi-party dispensation.
- SADC conduct an impartial investigation into the gruesome murder of Thulani Maseko and advocating for justice for victims of political repression in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

## LESOTHO

The People's Summit acknowledged the progress made in Lesotho on reforms. Further, the People's Summit noted with hope the dedication of the incoming administration to completing the first phase of reforms. However, we regret the over politicization of the reforms process by leaders in parliament who should have long passed at least part of the constitutional amendments. Therefore,

- We call upon Civil society to double efforts to ensure that the reform process is realised as resolved at the annual conference of the Lesotho Council of NGOs in 2022.
- We urge political leadership in Lesotho to desist from protracted disagreements ironical to the needs of Basotho and pass reforms.
- We remind SADC of its decision in 2018 to hold those delaying reforms personally and institutionally responsible.

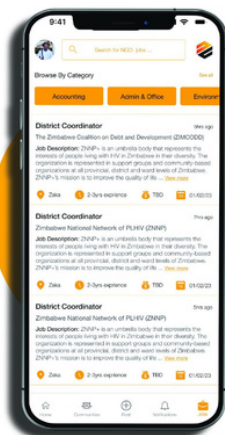
As the situation progresses across the region, it is our hope that SADC fulfills the aspirations of citizens to see an increase in democratic processes and enjoyment of rights as is true to the creed that established the bloc. While Heads of state at their meeting spoke more on economic development and investment, it is key to state that there can be no economic growth without enjoyment of democratic rights. That is the first port of call!

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