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STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER OF GENDER EQUALITY & CHILD WELFARE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**ON BEHALF OF
THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNITY (SADC)**

**AT THE
55TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)**

**New York
22 February 2011**

**Chairperson,
Honorable Ministers
Dear Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen**

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). At the outset, allow me to extend, on behalf of the Group, our warmest congratulations to you and other members of the Bureau on the excellent manner in which you are steering the proceedings of the 55th session of the Commission for the Status of Women which serves as the main United Nations forum for an intensified global dialogue on gender and advancement of women issues. SADC aligns itself with the statement made by Argentina on behalf of the group of 77 and China and the statement made by Mozambique on behalf of the African Group. The SADC Group wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation towards a successful conclusion of our meeting.

We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted under the priority theme: **'Access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work** which will certainly enrich our discussions.

Chairperson,

SADC recognizes that science, technology and innovation can be a tool with which to accelerate the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Technology can, for instance, facilitate efforts to eradicate poverty, achieve food security, fight diseases, improve education and respond to the challenges of climate change. We also believe that policymakers have a key role to play in integrating a gender perspective in science, technology and innovation. To harness the full potential of science and technology for development, women must have equal access to science and technology knowledge and skills, that equip them to participate equally in developing and applying knowledge. Indeed research content and technology development and deployment, should respond to the needs of both women and men.

Chairperson

The main objective of our Community is to improve economic growth and development, alleviate poverty, enhance the quality of life of the people of the Region, support its socially disadvantaged areas through productive systems,

deeper cooperation and integration, so that the region emerges as a competitive and effective player in international trade and world economy. In seeking to meet both its social and economic aspirations, SADC recognises the important role and contribution of human resource development in political, economic and social development, as well as in facilitating regional integration and competitiveness.

In this regard, SADC has identified education as the most important tool for equipping our people with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to be able to drive and achieve the vision for the region. It is also the tool for laying the foundation for scientific research and innovation necessary, to facilitate technological advancement of the region. The region recognised that no SADC Member State can alone offer the necessary investment in higher education to offer the full range of world quality education and training programmes at affordable cost and on a sustainable basis. Hence, SADC agreed to include education and training as one of the areas for regional cooperation and integration and entered into a policy and legal framework for cooperation in education and training, through the SADC Protocol on Education and Training which entered into force in 2000.

Chairperson

In its development programmes SADC has identified science and technology as a key driver of socio-economic development and that the achievements of most of the objectives of the SADC Common Agenda maybe facilitated by scientific and technological solutions. The overall goal of the region's intervention in Science and Technology is to develop and strengthen national systems of innovation in order to drive sustained socio-economic development and the rapid achievement of the goals of the SADC Common Agenda including poverty reduction with eradication as its ultimate aim.

Chairperson

Today there is an accelerating trend towards qualification frameworks as an instrument to develop, classify and recognise formal learning across the African continent. At present, a number of SADC Member States are actively engaged in qualifications framework development, aimed at enhancing the skills of our human resources to the requirements of the market, while at the same time enhancing gender balance in skills development. SADC agreed to the concept of developing a regional qualifications framework to fulfill the mandate of facilitating mobility and portability of qualification as early as 2001 when the Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) developed its strategic plan, which was adopted by Ministers of Education and Training. The idea of a SADC Regional

Qualifications Framework (RQF) has become embedded in a host of regional policy directives and strategies.

While there is no doubt that the SADC region faces several challenges, including the diversity amongst education systems in members states, its Member States agree that it is high time to promote and accelerate the development and implementation of the regional qualifications framework. The TCCA developed a road-map towards the development of the RQF which was adopted in March 2010. To that end, we can say our region is heading in the right direction in enhancing our human resources as well as 'access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.'

Chairperson

Our region faces a number of challenges in improving access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology; chief among them being perennial problems related to poverty, food insecurity, insufficient supplies of energy, water, communications infrastructure and human resource development. Nevertheless, SADC is aware that the way forward will require scientific and technological solutions, gender equality and advancement of women as well as consistent and predictable funding of educational programmes.

We hereby reaffirm the view that while gender equality and the advancement of women constitute a national responsibility, these cannot be successfully achieved without the collective commitment and efforts of the international community. Therefore, international cooperation must be enhanced, including fulfillment of commitment of internationally agreed official development assistance, debt relief, market access, capacity-building and technical support.

Chairperson

In conclusion, SADC looks forward to having a successful session with a productive outcome that contributes to achieving the goal of achieving better standards of living for women and girls, and the society at large.

I thank you.

