

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES



**A Critical Look
at the SADC Summit
and the Relevance
of the SADC People's
Summit.**

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WELCOME REMARKS

By Joy Mabenge,

ActionAid Zimbabwe

Country Director



Dear Readers,

As we present this July-August edition of our newsletter, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your continued commitment to advancing social justice in our region. This edition comes at a pivotal moment, following the recently concluded SADC Summit—a gathering that held the promise of addressing the urgent needs and concerns of our people, yet fell short in many critical areas.

The theme of this newsletter, “Missed Opportunities: A Critical Look at the SADC Summit and the Relevance of the SADC People’s Summit,” reflects our collective disappointment and our unwavering determination to demand better from our leaders. The SADC Summit was a moment for bold action, a chance to listen to the voices of the marginalized, particularly women, girls, and young people, who continue to bear the brunt of crises in our region. Unfortunately, from where I sit, this opportunity was not fully realized.

In this edition, we critically examine the relevance of the SADC People’s Summit, a platform that has long been the voice of civil society. We ask hard questions: Is this summit still a powerful tool for representing the people’s voices, or has it become merely a symbolic gesture?

We also delve into the pressing issues that were overlooked by the SADC leadership, from gender inequities in the industrialization agenda to the deep-rooted patriarchal and colonial structures exacerbating the climate crisis.

Our articles are not just critiques; they are calls to action. We propose ways to reinvigorate the SADC People’s Summit, integrate gender considerations into policy-making, and unlock the potential of our youth—the very future of our region. We also explore the role of civil society in holding SADC accountable and the urgent need for a visionary leadership that truly understands and prioritizes the needs of all citizens.

As we reflect on the missed opportunities of the recent SADC Summit, I call upon each and everyone of you to recommit ourselves to the fight for a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for all. The work ahead is challenging, but with your support and the collective strength of our communities, we can turn these critiques into meaningful change.

Thank you for standing with us in this journey.

In solidarity,

Joy Mabenge



Why SADC should prioritise gender in its Industrialisation Plans for Sustainable Economic Development

By Rumbidzai Makoni

As the Southern African Development Community (SADC) pursues its aspiration to industrialize to foster economic growth and integration through the SADC INDUSTRIALIZATION STRATEGY AND ROADMAP 2015-2063, a critical element that is often understated and largely forgotten is gender. The industrialization strategy is an ambitious plan that is guided by economic, technological and infrastructure development. This strategy neglects the social dimensions with gender being no exception. Whether the absence is intentional or an “oversight” is not only a mistake but constitutes a fundamental risk to the lasting sustainability and inclusiveness of growth in the region. Ensuring that gender is at the centre of its industrialisation agenda and not marginalised to the periphery by mechanically sprinkling the words gender, women and girls to beautify the document will allow SADC’s full possibilities to be realised. A thorough gender analysis followed by equal financial investment will ensure that gender is not only a “by-the-way” but it is an intentional inclusion that will propel the industrialization agenda leaving no one behind.

The Industrialization Strategy promises economic growth, job creation, and technological advancements. This will have inevitable effects on labour markets, how communities are organized and how women experience the effects of industrialization. For example, the strategy acknowledges agriculture and food processing as key pillars in industrialization. Women account for most small holder farmers who are currently occupying agricultural and food processing spaces, women are playing leading roles in feeding our nations through indigenous knowledge systems and community seedbanks. Industrialization is crowding out women in this space by stimulating commercial agriculture (which is largely occupied by men). We have seen in Zimbabwe the drive to mechanize agriculture, investing in monocropping large pieces of land requiring hefty machinery. This process has already started showing signs of further trapping women smallholder farmers in traditional roles with little opportunity or access to the skills and resources they need to participate at this mega level and earn a living wage. Without a gender lens, these inequalities are reinforced by the continued presence of gender-based discrimination, unequal access to resources and services and underestimation of women’s labour. This omission is not only a moral shortcoming but an essential economic blunder.

The exclusion of women from the processes of industrialization robs SADC of untapped potential to utilize women’s talent, creativity and economic contribution for the progression of the block. Studies have proved repeatedly that gender equality is not just a human rights imperative but an economic one. Not integrating gender into industrialization strategies will only reinforce existing disparities, not to mention poverty.

From a macro standpoint, gender inequality in industrialization leads to lost productivity and innovation. A workforce that does not include or underutilizes half its population is less competitive. SADC aims to be globally competitive, something that can only come into reality if they fully utilize and fairly remunerate the labor force available which is impossible without giving equal participation in all respects of industrial economy for women.

The industrialization strategy is just in its 9th year of implementation hence there is still room to centre gender in its implementation to create a truly gender-responsive industrialization strategy. The three fundamental components to implementing a successful gender-responsive industrialization strategy are political will, strategic investments, and the reimagining of industrial policies. SADC should pursue the following strategies to bring to life this ambitious dream:

- 1. Prioritize Gender in Policy and Planning:** For the Industrialization strategy to reflect gender-responsiveness, it should be supported by policies that are deliberately gender-sensitive. This means having deep intersectional analysis that unearths the barriers of women and girls' access to education training and resources and addressing those pain points to allow for meaningful participation of women in key industries such as agriculture, STEM and overall decision making. SADC member states should invest in participatory intersectional analysis and gender impact assessments.
- 2. Invest in Women:** Women in SADC are already leading in popular (informal) economies, especially in smallholder farming, small-scale manufacturing, and retail. Targeted support-access to finance through the capitalization of financial institutions that are women focused, access to markets and capacity building programs that are aimed at improving women's participation in the industrialization agenda will unlock the regional block's economic potential in sustainable industries such as agriculture and green energy.
- 3. Promote Gender Equality in the Workforce:** For the industrial strategy to be truly gender-responsive, SADC member states should enforce labor standards that protect women in the workplace as member states industrialize. This includes establishing safe working conditions, fair compensation, and job security. It is crucial to address gender-based violence in the workplace by implementing strict policies and providing support services. Additionally, women must be given a greater voice in labor unions and decision-making processes to combat their marginalization and ensure their concerns and needs are represented and addressed.
- 4. Recognize, Reduce, Redistribute and Remunerate Care Work:** Care work is that “invisible hand that makes economies tick—caring for and feeding children, the elderly, and the sick. Without including government funded affordable childcare, healthcare, and social protection measures that free up women's time, women's participation in the industrialization agenda remains a pipe dream.

While it is necessary for SADC to industrialize, it is important to learn from mistakes made by those who industrialized before us. The focus on profit of the industrialization strategy and the rigor with which governments are implementing macroeconomic policies to support this industrial growth has seen a neglect of social reproductive work (where the majority of women are found). A feminist analysis to the implementation of the strategy could yield progressive results that would focus on inclusion and addressing the root causes of women's under performance in industrialization, open and honest conversations around the financial handicap of women, societal norms that put women as second class citizens.



Patriarchy and Colonialism: The Biggest Threats to the Climate Crisis

By Sydney Chisi

The call for climate justice globally has been as a result of noted unfairness in the manner in which climate actions are formulated and implemented. Strongly it has also been informed by historical obligations as outlined in Paris Agreement especially on emission reduction and the quest to decarbonize economies. At the center of these conversations has been how the world can in solidarity, ensure that the world doesn't warm beyond the 1.5 degrees Celsius target of the pre industrial era temperatures. Global economic architecture and its authors have played a key role in climate, response, conversations and negotiations. This has shaped how funding must flow from major donors such as the Annex 1 and 2 countries to global South countries so as to enhance their adaptation and mitigation capacities.

The three hundred years of industrialization, was set by a simultaneous process of economic development (resources accumulation) and political consolidation through colonization. As colonizers moved into virgin lands to set up their colonies their key primary economic drivers were agriculture or mining where they got most of the much needed raw materials for industrial growth. Colonization was motivated by the promise of plundering the environment and subjugating the populations. There is evidence today of how neocolonialism using the neoliberal agenda has made it far more challenging to address the current climate crisis and implement solutions given that biggest emitters are the key climate negotiators or lobbyists.

At the centre of colonization was a system that set up a strong patriarchy (male dominated) that saw men owning most of the acquired natural resources, power, means of production and wealth in the new colonies. The efforts to acquire all this meant that the environment became the primary victim whose plundering boomeranged as climate crisis in this day.

Most of the pre-colonial indigenous communities had very strong matriarchies either as chiefs, spirit mediums or household drivers. However, the new colonial structure erased this and elevated men using law, religion that resulted in resource ownership, control and paid work benefiting men. This left many women without power to own any resources regardless of them managing household economies and at the centre of climate change effects. Together with environmental plundering, unmitigated Green House Gas (GHG) emissions due to industrialization, colonization and patriarchy. The world today thus has seen increased temperatures, heat waves, extended and prolonged droughts, rise level rising threatening islands, cyclones or unpredictable rainfalls affecting women more than men. It has also witnessed former colonizers in the global North being more prepared in the face of climate crisis. The global South that houses most of the former colonies is worst affected by climate change yet they emit less.

¹ Annex 1: Include industrialized countries that were members of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) in 19192, plus countries with economies in transition (EIT), including Russia, the Baltic States and several Central and Eastern European States

² Consists of the OECD members of Annex 1, but not the EIT Parties who are required to provide financial resources to enable developing countries to undertake emissions reduction activities under the UNFCCC and to help them adapt to adverse effects of climate change

³ State of the Planet: How colonialism spawned and continue to exacerbate the climate crisis.

Climate justice demands the correction of past actions by former colonizers through climate finance, climate debt relief, just transition frameworks that are just and promote equality, equity and gender inclusiveness. Today the global South is drowning in climate debt yet they are not responsible for the climate crisis. Article 9 of the Paris Agreement stipulates that developed country Parties shall provide financial resources to those less endowed and more vulnerable to ensure the implementation of the UNFCCC. A \$100 Billion per year pledge was set in 2015 towards global South Parties and no meaningful disbursements have been done. This has increased community vulnerability through loss and damage leaving women more exposed to the post climate disasters trauma making countries to borrow more money for its recovery and climate resilience building.

The make up of global climate conversations and negotiations favour men more than women as seen by some of the text in many of UNFCCC frameworks where words such as gender are not easily accepted. The political space lead by heads of States at COP is male dominated and the outcomes and resolutions of their discussion are more politically heavy than social had there been a balanced gender presence. This has resulted in issues relating to women being treated as cross-cutting issues and not at the top of any climate agenda items. Men and boys should therefore provide a transformative leadership approach on the impact that climate change has on women so as to challenge climate policies their formulation and responsiveness that are not eco-feminist.

For as long as climate actions are centred on promoting and protection of colonial hegemonies, patriarchy will become a local fragment that exacerbate inequality and injustice. Climate change has become part of us and it can only get worse if no meaningful advocacy is done to undo inherited pillars of colonialism and wash out existing sources of patriarchy.

Sydney Chisi is a climate justice and policy expert based in Harare. He is the Executive Director of Reyna Trust. He write in his own personal opinion.

People Over Profits

By Selokela Molamodi

(ActionAid South Africa)

The SADC Summit is an opportunity is always an opportunity for SADC heads of state to meet and engage on issues affecting the region. Zimbabwe hosted this year's summit in Harare where presidents convened on 17 August 2024. The 44th SADC summit's theme was **"Promoting innovation to unlock opportunities for sustained economic growth and development towards an industrialized SADC"**, zoning in on the state of the SADC region's economy and economic framework.

Ahead of the summit, youth and stakeholders alike gathered for various discussions to unpack the Industrialisation Agenda, a strategic policy on intensifying industrialization and enhancing competitiveness to increase manufactured goods and exports. Young Urban Women's notable contribution manifested itself in the form of the panel discussion participation in the Southern African Youth Forum and the People's Summit, respectively.

In a breakaway session on the second day of the SAYoF, the Young Urban Women network led a conversation where they unpacked "A Feminist Analysis of SADC's Industrialisation Agenda:

How are Young Women Impacted and Is There an Alternative?" with the audience. The discussion was moderated by Selokela Molamodi and the speakers on the panel were Mamiki Masilo (YUW SA), Thando Gwinji (YUW Zimbabwe), and Precious Kadwala (YUW Malawi). Although the discussion was off to a slow start, the vibrance of the young women in the room kept the fire of insights and exchange exciting. The discussions started with perspectives from the different SADC countries represented. Issues such as rife youth unemployment stood out in the South African perspective while natural disasters and extreme climate change stood out in Malawi. Zimbabwe also highlights a lack of recognition for the popular (informal) sector as a factor on the industrialization agenda. "Statistics show that there are people who have never worked in their lives, as in ever, in South Africa," Mamiki said.

On the 15th of August, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches hosted the SADC People's Summit outside the Kennedy Hotel in Harare. Once again, the Young Urban Women network led an impactful session where they unpacked a feminist lens on the industrialization agenda and solutions. The panel was made up of the same young women as before. This time, Rumbidzayi joined and Jessica Madanda participated in the discussion virtually. Various meaningful contributions came from the audiences, including equality, solidarity, environmental justice, and feminist alternatives. Hearing from the young and old men in the audience was also refreshing. "I challenge the young women on the panel and those watching to take this conversation further and take up space in leadership roles. In that way, they will not be ignored," a young man in the audience said. Another young man added that a feminist economy must strive for inclusion so that the boy child is not left outside of the equation.

On both occasions, panelists highlighted critical issues such as environmental and social impacts, unemployment and skills development, privatization of public services. One of the outcomes of was to establish an Informal Sector Desk at a SADC region to help informal cross-border traders contribute significantly to SADC urban economies through intra- and inter-trading among member states. Another outcome was the recommendation to localise climate change, climate justice and debt including austerity measures, develop manual to be used for Advocacy and trainings on climate justice, tax justice. The solutions were consolidated and formed part of a the people's declaration which was handed to representatives who were set to attend the SADC Summit. It was resolved in the respective discussions that the work would continue.

The Role of Civil Society in Holding SADC Accountable

By Vivid Gwede

Introduction

As the global community continues to face increasingly complex challenges difficult for individual states to solve, transnational and international organizations gain more influence.

Thus, regional blocs such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) assume an even more crucial position in ordinary people's lives.

Two examples illustrate this point in SADC.

Firstly, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Southern Africa is projected to face climate-induced regional migration of between 39 million to 86 million migrants by 2050.

This is an issue one state cannot solve alone.



Secondly, because of the asymmetrical power between citizens and the state owing to the state's monopoly over instruments of violence, citizens confronting authoritarianism need international support.

Citizens in one country cannot solve undemocratic rule alone.

Neither can regional blocs solve these complex problems without the input of non-state actors such as civil society, especially in demanding accountability.

Double-edged sword of regional organisations for citizens

As in all institutions where the power to decide the fate of societies lies, that power if unmonitored and unchecked can be abused or misused.

For instance, undemocratic governments can hide in the shadow of regional organizations shielding themselves from accountability and mobilising peer diplomatic support for their undemocratic actions.

This necessitates civil society to mobilise 'people power' to subject these institutions to democratic accountability.

Such civil society acts at the regional level will crucially influence contemporary and future democratic governance.

Moreso, regional organisations such as SADC have an elitist genesis, lacking an ethos of popular participation and inclusion, formed with a state-centric focus.

Nothing exhibits this top-down logic than the SADC regional bloc's constitutive documents.

The SADC Treaty and Declaration's preambles start by saying, "We the Heads of State and Government" instead of the more democratic "We the people of SADC," emphasizing the primacy of the states as represented by their political heads over the people.

In this paradigm, the sovereignty of the states is privileged over the sovereignty and supremacy of the people, hence commentators have characterised SADC as "a club of the regimes" or "club of dictators."

Realizing this is important as it explains how the regional bloc values the states' claims to sovereignty over accountability to the people, or defending their fundamental rights and freedoms, where these two imperatives clash.

A typical case is a situation where SADC has to enforce its commitments to free and fair elections in the SADC Principles and Guidelines, versus an intransigent state conducting undemocratic elections, but insisting on its

sovereign monopoly and non-answerability over domestic affairs.

So what is the role of civil society?

In this dilemma, which regional bodies such as SADC often face, whether to enforce their norms or maintain an uneasy and unprincipled regional unity, a third voice and player is warranted.

Civil society becomes that bottom-up voice and defender of the common man in the Southern Africa region, policing the guardians of regional institutions.

Civil society should check the tendencies of the regional leaders to pursue their interests, usually centered on power retention or capturing rents from public office for themselves and their associates.

Civil society needs to mobilize and organize, ensuring regional commitments do not gather dust in the SADC bloc's headquarters in Gaborone.

Civil society should challenge governments against habitually disrespecting regional norms and bullying everyone into acquiescing to devaluing those commitments through wilful violation.

Through building transnational solidarity, civil society should reject the containerization of citizens in the undemocratic boundaries of states.

Utilizing digital spaces and technology, civil society must build communities of solidarity.

Where platforms of solidarity exist such as the SADC People's Summit, they must be activated as everyday platforms of solidaristic and advocacy actions.

In the process of critiquing regional policies, civil society must use its wide research and ideational networks linking activists and academic institutions to propose policy alternatives in fashioning pro-poor regional integration.

Tripod on which to rest civil society accountability actions

There are three most important domains on which to hold SADC leaders accountable. First, the creation of a more democratic and inclusive regional society.

This is one of the explicit commitments of the regional bloc.

This includes ensuring free and fair elections, protection of human rights, freedoms of association and assembly, and resisting authoritarian consolidation.

Specifically, civil society needs to defend the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

Second, the creation of a more economically prosperous and inclusive society.

This is a key goal of regional integration.

For this shared prosperity to materialize, a need exists to increase intra-regional trade, industrialisation and create employment, and allow citizens free movement to engage in business and commerce.

Third, the creation of spaces and frameworks for consulting civil society in designing regional policies that reflect the broad-based interest of SADC society.

Specifically, institutions such as the proposed SADC parliament must be linked to the people. With the example of the European Parliament, SADC parliamentarians could be elected by direct vote of regional citizens, serving as a channel of popular accountability.

How to achieve this vision?

Given SADC's state-centric logic and design, civil society needs to propose and advocate for reforms that widen spaces for public participation in SADC.

While SADC frameworks provide for civil society consultative forums such as the SADC-CNGO, annual SADC Civil Society Forum, and the SADC National Committees (SNC), commentators have pointed out their inadequacy.

Heads of States and Government rarely take the proposals from the SADC-CNGO and Civil Society Forum seriously, and some members states have not operationalised the SNC.

Civil society must strengthen transnational networks for consulting and mobilizing regional citizens.

To overcome the barriers posed by distances and lack of resources, civil society must utilize 'civic tech' that allows the building of digital spaces of mobilisation and engagement.

Beyond blanket engagements of the regional bloc, civil society must actively seek an audience with individual regional governments.

Using their research networks, linking activists and academics, SADC civil society must propose alternative regional policies that reflect the broad-based interests of regional citizens for adoption.

Conclusion

This submission has affirmed that regional integration is assuming greater importance in facing contemporary global challenges.

This requires citizens to play a more active role in regional institutions such as SADC.

However, the current modes and frameworks for regional integration in SADC have limited prospects for democratic accountability by design and regional practice.

This calls for civil society accountability actions targeting to advance a democratic and economically inclusive regional society with vibrant spaces for broader participation in designing regional policies.

To achieve this, civil society needs to build people power, transnational solidarity and advocacy actions beyond its annual meetings on the sidelines of the Heads of State and Government Summit.



SADC and the ever-changing faces of Authoritarianism in Africa

By Rawlings Magede

Modern day SADC continues to face unpredictable threats owing to the ever-changing landscape within Africa's fragile democracy. When the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC as it was called then), was created in 1980 in Lusaka, it had one clear objective; to support the anti-apartheid struggle and the liberation of countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Once this objective was achieved, first with the Lancaster House Agreements, which brought about the end of Southern Rhodesia and the birth of a new Zimbabwe, led by Robert Mugabe, and then with the end of apartheid (1994) in South Africa, the organisation began a difficult journey of redefining its identity and programme which even today does not seem to have been achieved.

At the time its transformed from SADCC to SADC (Southern African Development Community) in 1992, the new organisation faced a myriad of security challenges among member states. One real test was in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1998 when Laurent Kabila defeated Mobutu Seseseko in 1997. Following this victory, Kabila's relations with neighbouring countries such as Rwanda and Uganda deteriorated. In July 1998, Kabila ordered all officials and troops from

Rwanda and Uganda to leave the country. Instead on August 2, 1998, those troops began supporting rebels who were intent on overthrowing Kabila. At the time, SADC had launched the SADC Organ of Politics, Defence and Security on 28 June 1996. Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe had been elected the Chairman of the Organ. The organ wasted no time in restoring peace again in DRC during the 1998 civil war by deploying troops and also helped in returning democracy and rule of law in Mauritius after there was a coup in the country. These two examples stand out as key instances where SADC flexed muscle and restored peace during armed conflicts. Since then, SADC strategy has been that of quiet diplomacy that proffers piecemeal and unsustainable solutions as has been the case in several SADC countries including Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

The problem with SADC

One challenge facing SADC relates to what many scholars have termed the "Brotherhood syndrome" where liberation movements such as the ANC in South Africa, ZANU PF in Zimbabwe, Frelimo in Mozambique, SWAPO in Namibia and the MPLA in Angola tend to shield one another from interference or criticism. This approach has reversed previous gains made by SADC in the past such as strengthening rule of law and democracy. For example, after the conclusion of the harmonised 2023 elections in Zimbabwe, following release of an Electoral Observer Mission report by SADC, the regional body was exposed for its lack of decisiveness and double standards. The report among other issues noted that the electoral body, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) failed to provide a voters' role for inspection ahead of the election, no consultations were done to make the process of procurement and designing of ballot papers more transparent to instil public confidence, failure to implement requisite legal reforms and laws regulating postal voting to introduce means of monitoring and observation of the process to guarantee the secrecy of the ballot. The report concluded by noting that nomination fees were prohibitive. The report divided opinion within SADC as more leaders avoided debates around the elections in Zimbabwe.

The Head of the SADC Observation Mission, Nevers Mumba received back lash by trolls and some senior Zanu pf leaders after the first preliminary report was released.

Although SADC released a statement condemning the attack on Mumba, the message had already been delivered and helped strengthen more the debate that SADC when confronted with real threats falters. The question that continues to linger and divide opinion with SADC countries relates to the capacity of SADC to improve electoral democracy among its members. The regional organisation has in the past observed elections that have produced disputed outcomes such as those in DRC, Zimbabwe, Malawi among other countries. SADC Observer Missions have made recommendations in all these countries but to date, very little has been done by member states to improve electoral democracy. Key Provisions on SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections have been violated by member states and no penalties or sanctions have been effected.

In the absence of punitive measures against member states violating SADC conventions and statutes, key questions have emerged. Why are member states reluctant to act upon recommendations from SADC? Is it because member states do not take the regional body serious? Another challenge relates to the structure of election observation missions, which are often made up of government officials with little civil society participation. This alone continues to undermine the credibility of these missions. This is often the only time citizens actually see SADC at work in their own countries – when vehicles with the SADC logo and officials with flap jackets do the rounds at election time. Incidents such as those in the previous Malawi elections and the many controversial statements by SADC on elections in Zimbabwe have not ingratiated SADC with the people of those countries, or the opposition. Finally, the fact that many resolutions that are adopted are not implemented also undermines people's faith in SADC.

SADC and the lack of citizen representation

The continent is going through a wave of military coups that have become generally accepted by citizens across the continent. West Africa particularly Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Guinea have all experienced incessant military coups in recent years. The regional body, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been found wanting as it failed to restore democratic transitions in these countries. More recently, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso announced that they had quit ECOWAS and justified their decision by highlighting that it was their “sovereign decision” to do so. This has left the regional body weaker given that citizens in these countries have embraced military coups as a panacea to dictatorship.

Regional bodies such as SADC and ECOWAS often struggle with the issues to do with sovereignty and non-interference. The fear of losing sovereignty stems from the political weakness of states and from the lack of common values, mutual trust and a shared vision. In the case of a country voluntarily, withdrawing membership, these bodies do not have mechanisms to deal with such eventualities. The absence of common values creates divisions among member states who subscribe either to democratic or authoritarian orientations. Absence of common values has prevented these organisations from addressing violence and insecurity generated by authoritarianism and repression in some member countries.

More importantly, SADC does not have proper institutions that properly represent citizens. Platforms such as the SADC Non-State Actors (NSA) have been criticized for being too elite and excluding critical voices especially from civil society. For example, citizens in SADC cannot turn to a tribunal when they feel violated by their own governments. The SADC tribunal was dissolved in 2012 following pressure from former Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe. In other jurisdictions such as West Africa, citizens can turn to the ECOWAS court of Justice. Having such a mechanism offers a chance to build citizen trust in institutions and help keep excesses of governments in check.

In the final analysis, it is important to underscore the need for a reflection on the effectiveness of SADC in the face of violent conflict. The conflict in Mozambique (Cabo Delgado) exposed a gap within the regional organisation. It should be recalled that shortly before the arrival of the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), the active regional peace keeping mission in Cabo Delgado Province, the Rwandan army arrived in earlier which caused another diplomatic incident between Mozambique and SADC. In their defence, the Mozambican authorities reiterated that it was its right to choose its partners freely, and again it helped expose a clear lack of a common spirit on “Sadcnness”. Going forward, it will be key to reflect on the preparedness of SADC in the event that the wave of coups that has hit West Africa spreads to Southern Africa. Does SADC have the necessary mechanism to respond? Does SADC still have the will power to respond swiftly to civil wars as was the case in the DRC during the late 1990s? All these questions highlight the need for serious reform and restructuring of SADC. There is need to reform the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security to match possible eventualities.

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