

**HANDING OVER OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF SADC ELS - STATEMENT BY THE
HONOURABLE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT, MR. REFILOE
MOSES MASEMENE AT THE SADC EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR SECTOR
MEETING HELD IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA ON THE 2 APRIL, 2009.**

**Your Excellency Guest O f Honour, and the Acting President of the Republic of
South Africa, Madame Baleka Mbete**

Honourable Ministers,

Ambassadors,

Principal/Permanent Secretaries/Directors General,

Distinguished Social Partners,

Representative of the ILO Regional Office,

Director ARLAC,

Distinguished Delegates,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my distinct honour and special privilege to once again address this august body of the SADC ELS, this time around as the outgoing Chairperson. My delegation and I bring the warm greetings from The Mountain Kingdom, as Lesotho is affectionately known. Allow me to thank the Guest of Honour, and the Acting President of the Republic of South Africa, Her Excellency Madame Baleka Mbete for finding time for her busy schedule to be with us during the Official Opening of the SADC ELS meeting of Ministers and Social Partners.

I must from the onset thank the Honourable Ministers for the support that they rendered to me during my tenure of Office. As a result of that unwavering support from you Colleagues, we were able to achieve some of the outcomes that we had set up for ourselves. I wish to point out that the following were achieved;

1. The operationalisation of the task force that has been guiding the SADC ELS programmes. I wish to commend the governments who made this possible by sacrificing their already tight budget for the Officials to attend the Meetings. Had it not been for your commitment surely the Task Team would have not achieved much let alone its demise and the demise of the SADC ELS.
2. The Senior Programme Officer dedicated to Employment and Labour issues has been recruited and is in office. It is therefore my sincere hope that we will see a much improved service to the Employment and Labour Sector. I also wish to congratulate the Senior Programme Officer who is with us today, Mr. Arnold Chitambo. I wish honourable Ministers and Social Partners to join me in wishing him well in his new, but not so new position.

Allow me also to thank the Zambian Government for making available the services of Mr. Chitambo voluntarily in the last 3 years. I would also like to pay a special tribute to the ILO for funding the position, whilst still awaiting its creation. We therefore urge the ILO to continue its support to the SADC ELS in other spheres of interest. I further urge Honourable Ministers and Social Partners to consider increasing the number of

Officials manning the Employment and Labour Sector of the SADC from one to the number that the Honourable Ministers may feel sufficient. It is difficult for one person to run the office effectively because of the workload and other matters which you are all aware of.

3. We have been able to re-establish two tripartite Sub-committees, namely a Sub-committee on Social Protection, and a Sub-committee on Employment and Labour. With the establishment of these sub-committees and other structures, implementation of the SADC ELS Programmes is near. However, I wish to urge member states who are serving in various committees to commit both human and financial resources in order for the Committees to be effective.

The Chairmanship of South Africa to the SADC ELS comes at a very challenging time in terms of the world economy. You are all aware that as a result of the economic down turn, those affected most are the employers and workers. Employers are feeling the brunt because of the low buying power which in turn compromises the profits. On the same vein, the workers are facing retrenchments because of the recession.

The current economic crisis further compounds the already existing problem of unemployment in the Region. It is therefore incumbent upon us to devise methods which will mitigate this impact. I therefore urge our Cooperating Partners, in particular the ILO to convene a Regional Meeting where we will be

able to come up with a common position to counter the effects of the economic down turn.

To conclude, I wish to thank the Government and the people of the Republic of South Africa for the hospitality they have accorded us since our arrival to the beautiful city of Cape Town. We are indeed honoured.

With these few remarks, I am therefore handing over the Chairmanship of the SADC ELS to the Honourable Minister of Labour of the Republic of South Africa, Minister Membathisi Mdladlana, who with his experience and exceptional leadership skills, I am sure he is the right candidate to stir the ship in this challenging and stormy weather.