

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY OF
THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY, MR
WILFRED NGIRWA AT THE OPENING OF THE SADC FOOD
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES MEETING OF
SENIOR OFFICIALS, AT THE GOLDEN TULIP HOTEL, DAR ES
SALAAM, ON 11TH FEBRUARY, 2004**

- Hon Permanent Secretaries for Food Agriculture and Natural Resources of SADC,
- The Chief Director of SADC Secretariat,
- FAO Representative from the Sub- Region Office,
- Distinguished Delegates,
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. On behalf of the Government of The United Republic of Tanzania, and on my own behalf, I warmly welcome you and your delegation to Tanzania. I wish you a pleasant and enjoyable stay in Dar es Salaam.

2. The SADC Summit held in August last year (2003) noted that, although there was an improvement in the regional food security over the years, the region continues to suffer from low and unstable agricultural production and food insecurity.

3. Food shortages continue to persist in most of our countries, and even countries which seem to be food secure, have pockets of their population afflicted by food insecurity.

4. Those who attended the August Summit meeting last year could recall that, the current Chairman of the SADC, H.E.

Benjamin William Mkapa, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania identified three main areas to be given utmost focus during his tenure in office, namely FOOD SECURITY, HIV/AIDS and PEACE and SECURITY. The Chairman's declaration was enormously received and endorsed by the Summit.

5. In order to give a kick start to his vision; the Honourable President has decided to convene an **Extra Ordinary SADC Summit on Agriculture and Food Security in April 2004**. Therefore this meeting has been organised to discuss these areas of concern.

6. **Distinguished Delegates**, it is evident that over 70% of the regions population depend on agriculture for their food, income and employment. On the other hand, high levels of poverty, including food insecurity and high levels of malnutrition are still persistent in the region.

7. Further, agriculture which supports our economies continues to suffer from low investments, inadequate agricultural financing, weak markets and trade links, limited productivity enhancing technology, weak research and extension/information delivery services, limited irrigated agriculture, poor transport infrastructure, environmental degradation and the most threatening problem of HIV/AIDS.

8. Our meeting will discuss these issues in a practical manner, drawing on experiences from our countries so that, at the end we draw prioritised, pragmatic and specific needs towards *Enhancing Agriculture and Food Security for Poverty Reduction in the SADC Region*, which is the theme of our meeting.

9. As we deliberate on issues, we need also to reflect and link with those in the top agenda of NEPAD, particularly the implementation of Comprehensive Africa Agriculture

Development Programme (CAADP) and the region framework of the Regional integrated Strategic Development Plan (RISDP).

10. This is a working meeting, which is expected to come up with an implementable Regional Action Plan and a Declaration by our Heads of State and Governments as their commitment to revamp agriculture.

11. We have all the reasons to enhance our agriculture productivity and expand production. Our countries have significant economic opportunities, including good climate, arable land, water bodies for irrigation and fisheries, reasonable population of livestock, forestry, tourism, and manpower. We need to tap these resources in the region and come out of poverty.