

**SADC Statement at the Sub-regional Workshop on
Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) in Aquaculture, Protea Hotel
Edward, Durban, South Africa, 26-28 November 2019**

- **Programme Director;**
- **Representative of the South African Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Dr Mike Modisane, Chief Director Animal Production and Health and OIE Delegate for SA;**
- **OIE Sub-regional Representative for Southern Africa, Dr Moetapele Letshwenyo;**
- **Representative of the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);**
- **Representative of the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO);**
- **Delegates and the Resource Persons;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen ...Good morning...**

My name is Motseki Hlatshwayo, Technical Advisor for Fisheries at the SADC Secretariat based in Gaborone and I am standing here representing the Executive Secretary of SADC Secretariat, Her Excellency Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax.

The Executive Secretary sends her apologies and best regards for the meeting, as she is currently attending to other pressing commitments, including elections in Namibia. On that note, we wish the Government and the people of the Republic of Namibia well for their milestone elections.

We would like to send our sympathies and heartfelt condolences to the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the people of Kwazulu-Natal in particular, who lost their lives and livelihoods opportunities during last week's climatic events, I believe you will all have heard of the tornado that ravished through parts of the province, and the City of eThekweni. SADC region stands in solidarity with the people of South Africa and Kwazulu-Natal in particular.

Fisheries and aquaculture are of critical importance for the economic development and food security of the SADC region, as prioritised in the Revised SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap to 2063, and the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (RAP).

The fisheries and aquaculture sector employs a total of about 2.3 million people, which is equivalent of about 1 % of the SADC population, and accounts for an estimated 3.5% of the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 11% of the region's agriculture GDP. The region currently consumes about 12.5kg per capita of fish, up from 11.3kg in 2016.

More than 95% of fish production comes from a diversified capture fisheries sub-sector, which had been stagnating in the last 10 years at around 2.3 million tonnes annually, but has recently increased to 2.4 million annually. A small but rapidly growing percentage of fish comes from an emerging aquaculture sub-sector which has recently increased from 69,851 metric tonnes (2015) to 92,773 metric tonnes (2018) of fish and 121,130 metric tonnes of aquatic plants.

Along with the general trend of intensification in aquaculture for higher productivity and economic efficiency, an increasing occurrence and severity of cultured animal diseases have become a major threat in culture operations. The SADC aquaculture sector is diverse, with about 87% of food fish coming from freshwater operations (tilapia, common carp, rainbow trout), and 13% from marine operations (6% from prawns, 5% from bivalves and gastropods, and 2% from marine finfish). This diversity and trade activity that involves import of juvenile and ovum stages and export of mature fish and their products, poses a serious threat to introduction of pathogens in the region.

In recent years, SADC region was severely affected by outbreaks of two major OIE-listed diseases, the Epizootic Ulcerative Syndrome (EUS) and the White Spot Disease (WSD). The EUS continues to cause challenges in countries like South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, threatening the development of the tilapia farming in those countries, whereas WSD has already brought down shrimp farming in Mozambique, and continue to cause serious challenges in Madagascar. Recently a new disease, viral hemorrhagic septicemia commonly known as Tilapia Lake Virus (TiLV) has been reported in some parts of the continent, and the virus is posing serious threats to tilapia farming in the SADC region.

Challenges with aquatic animal diseases have been addressed through different approaches, including the use of antimicrobials. The use of antimicrobials has recently caused increasing public concern over issues

related to environment and human health, particularly antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

The spread of AMR has been classified by WHO as one of the major threats facing the human population this century. It could become the leading cause of death, exceeding cancer, and result in as many as 10 million mostly premature deaths a year by 2050. The development of AMR limits the effectiveness of antibiotic treatments of bacterial infections in humans and species produced in aquaculture.

Largely due to food safety concerns in the trade of cultured aquatic animals, there has been significant improvements in the control of using antimicrobials in aquaculture production in the world, including an increasingly long list of banned or restricted use antibiotics for aquaculture. However, their overuse or unnecessary use still impose a significant risk of AMR to human and environmental health.

As part of its efforts to implement its action plan on AMR, OIE has been working with several partners like FAO and WHO to implement global and regional initiatives to address AMR in fisheries and aquaculture. The OIE Sub-regional Office for Southern Africa engaged with SADC Secretariat in 2018 to strengthen collaboration in aquatic animal health and biosecurity for SADC countries. This led to identifying capacity strengthening in AMR as one of the key engagements, as well as creating advocacy around AMR in the region.

SADC Secretariat is committed to this partnership and we hope it will continue to strengthen implementation of the SADC Aquatic Animal Health Strategy in line with the OIE Codes and standards.

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of SADC Secretariat, I will like to thank the Government of the Republic of South Africa for working with OIE to co-host this meeting in this beautiful part of the country. Our gratitude goes to the OIE for supporting all participants who are here today. We will also like to thank FAO for their continued support to the region. Finally, we thank all participants for heeding the call from OIE and coming in numbers.

Wishing you all a very fruitful workshop...I thank you...