



# 2025 SADC PEOPLE'S SUMMIT

15-17 August 2025 in Antsirabe, Madagascar

**COMMUNIQUE**

“Decolonizing our Future: Reclaiming People's Power and Sovereignty, Defending Human Rights and the Rights of Nature, Advancing People-centered and Sustainable Transformation of Economic Systems and Regional Integration in the SADC”

As SADC Heads of State and Government are convening for their 45th Ordinary Summit in Antananarivo, Madagascar on 17 August 2025, social movements, rural farmers, trade unions, women's groups, youth, civil society organizations and frontline communities across the SADC region, gathered in Antsirabe, Madagascar from 15 to 17 August 2025, organized by the Southern Africa People's Solidarity Network and hosted by the Research and Support Center for Development Alternatives – Indian Ocean (RSCDA-IO) for the annual SADC People's Summit. The People's Summit was convened under the theme: "Reclaiming Our Future: Building Sovereign Economies, Advancing Debt Justice and Amplifying People's Power in the Face of Climate Injustice and Neocolonialism." The SADC People's Summit is not merely a parallel gathering, it is a critical platform for a collective movement channeling people-driven policy demands and solutions to SADC institutions, building on a historical legacy of people-driven advocacy and struggles across the SADC region. It is grounded in the urgent need to challenge and transform the dominant development narrative and economic model that continues to reproduce poverty, inequality, ecological destruction and neocolonial dependency in our region. This communique is our collective voice and call to action, directed to the SADC Heads of State and Government, who are convening in Antananarivo for the 45th SADC Summit.

## Background

The SADC People's Summit has critically interrogated SADC leadership's 2025 agenda on "*Advancing Industrialization, Agricultural Transformation and Energy Transition for a Resilient SADC*". While this agenda is framed as a response to the region's complex crises, it dangerously reinforces a toxic, extractivist model (which includes mining, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, oil, gas, and our other commons.) that serves the elite and corporate interests, entrenches inequality, and displaces communities especially women, youth and indigenous peoples from their lands, livelihoods and dignity.

In Antsirabe, people's voices have exposed the foundations of the SADC development agenda as a false solution as it is a continuation of the same predatory, patriarchal, and neoliberal systems that have failed our region and our peoples for decades. We have come together to demand a radical transformation, rooted in a decolonial feminist, ecological and redistributive justice approach that centers people over profit, planet over plunder, and sovereignty over subjugation.

The People's Summit has amplified the lived realities and collective struggles of Southern Africa's people against worsening debt burdens, illicit financial flows (IFFs), structural inequality, political and ecological crises, and the erosion of democratic space. We are deeply concerned as this threatens to bring about regional democratic backsliding, including restrictions on press freedom, censorship, harassment of journalists and the suppression of critical voices. We are alarmed by the shrinking civic space across the region, especially in Zimbabwe, Eswatini, Madagascar, Mozambique, the DRC, Tanzania, Comoros, and Zambia, where repression, surveillance and restrictions on civil liberties are normalized. We reject the use of militarization and legal manipulation to silence dissent and protect exploitative state-corporate alliances.

The conjunction of high indebtedness and IFFs forces austerity and crowds out critical public social service delivery for meeting the basic needs of SADC peoples, whereas the SADC territories are exploited to meet the demands of the Global North. We reaffirm that climate justice is inseparable from economic justice. The ecological crisis and the climate catastrophes, cyclones, droughts, and floods wreaking havoc across the region are not natural disasters, but the result of centuries of imperialist, colonial plunder and on-going capitalist greed. Communities in the Indian Ocean and SADC coastal regions are bearing the brunt of a crisis they did not cause, while their lands and waters are being targeted for new waves of extractivism in the name of the "green energy transition." A profound ecological crisis is affecting both climate justice and food sovereignty for more than 135 million people living in the SADC coastal communities and islands of the Western Indian Ocean, especially women and children.

We denounce the new scramble for "critical minerals" as defined by imperial powers, driven by the Global North's rush for decarbonization, digitalization, and weapons production which is already fueling land grabs, displacement, and militarization in the region. This extractivist "transition" is not a solution, it is a new form of green colonialism and privatization of the commons. We demand a just transition centered on community and workers' rights, locally-based economies, ecological sovereignty and intergenerational justice. The 2025 SADC People's Summit has advanced a clear alternative: a vision of people-centered regional integration that upholds economic sovereignty, redistributive justice, climate reparations and the rights of nature, and freedom of movement for peoples, while dismantling systemic patriarchy, racism, neocolonialism and corporate impunity. We assert that true resilience cannot be built on debt dependency, elite accumulation or false solutions, but on solidarity, equity, participation, and reparative justice.

As delegates of the 2025 People's Summit, we, therefore, reject any development model that excludes communities, workers and trade unions, criminalizes human and environmental defenders, and commodifies nature. We call for an end to the financial and policy capture of our states by corrupt national elites, transnational corporations and global financial institutions. We call for the cancellation of illegitimate and odious debts, the dismantling of current financial architecture, the return of stolen wealth, and the implementation of progressive, feminist and climate-responsive tax and trade just policies.

## **WE RAISE OUR VOICES ON THE FOLLOWING CRITICAL REGIONAL ISSUES:**

### **I. The Debt and Economic Crisis: Who Really Owes Who?**

#### **Our Demands:**

- Immediate and unconditional cancellation of all illegitimate and odious external debts.
  - Climate and reparative justice through unconditional grants-based climate finance, not loans
- Reparations for enslavement and indentured labour.

- Establishment of transparent and democratic alternatives to colonial-era debt systems.
- Rejection of IMF/World Bank, and Africa Development Bank austerity policies and neoliberal conditionalities.
- Participatory public finance systems that ensure transparency, accountability, and citizen-led budget monitoring and determination;

## 2. Climate justice and Ecological Sovereignty

### Our Demands:

- Full compensation for the ecological debt owed by the Global North, including for historical emissions and resource extraction.
- Support and financing for agro-ecology, local seed and food sovereignty in the region.
- Feminist and just climate financing that prioritizes community-led adaptation, loss and damage, and resilient public infrastructure.
- An immediate moratorium on new fossil fuel projects and redirection of investment toward a just, low carbon industrialization strategy.
- Legal recognition of the Rights of Nature across all SADC member states.

## 3. Feminist Economic Justice & Reimagining Development

### Our Demands:

- Gender-transformative economic policies that institutionalize women's leadership and redistribute power and resources.
- Full inclusion of women in decision-making processes at all levels.
- Guaranteed access to land, finance, digital tools, and markets for women and girls.
- State recognition and remuneration of unpaid care work, through public services and social protection.
- State allocation of resources to fight the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide in the region.
- Protection and promotion of women-led agro-ecological farming and food sovereignty.
- Institutional mainstreaming of feminist economic indicators beyond GDP, measuring wellbeing, equity, and sustainability.

## 4. The Right to Say No: Resisting Neocolonialism and Corporate Capture

### Our Demands:

- A regional protocol affirming the Right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and the Right to Say No.
- Urgent review and cancellation of predatory Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) and trade deals that undermine people's sovereignty.

- End the criminalization of activism and repeal laws used to suppress dissent in frontline communities.
- Protection of human rights defenders, environmental activists, journalists, and Indigenous leaders.
- SADC Heads of States to adopt the UNDROP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Rural Peoples) as a regional policy.
- Legislative reforms to enshrine community land rights and environmental justice.

## 5. Protecting the Future: Ending Child Marriage and Gender-Based Violence

### Our Demands:

- Harmonization of laws to set eighteen (18) as the absolute minimum age of marriage with no exceptions.
- Full ratification and domestication of the Maputo Protocol and SADC Model Law on Child Marriage.
- Publicly funded shelters, psychosocial support, and legal aid for survivors of GBV.
- Prosecution of perpetrators, including those operating under religious or traditional authority.
- Investment in comprehensive SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights) services, menstrual health products, and safe spaces for girls.

## 6. Building Sovereign, Democratic and People-Centered Economies

### Our Demands:

- Establish ecological protectionism based on a carbon tax for imports from the Global North and major trading blocs into the SADC.
- Unite and negotiate as a bloc with the Global North and other trading blocs, particularly in relation to the exploitation and trading of critical minerals.
- Address the challenges and constraints in relation to the integration of the SADC countries into the AFCTA;
- Introduction of a SADC Low-carbon Industrialization Standards integrating justice, equity and environmental performance.
- Investment in regional public infrastructure, including people-owned renewable energy grids and railways.
- Call on SADC to harmonize regional economic strategies and challenge imposition of unjust tariffs.
- Implementation of standardized taxes on finance, wealth, carbon, and corporate profits to ensure just redistribution of wealth and prevent undermining of national fiscal space.
- Protect and advance public ownership and cooperatives in key sectors like energy, water and health.

## 7. Tackling Inequality: Building Just and Inclusive Societies

### Our Demands:

- SADC must adopt an ambitious Regional Inequality Reduction Plan anchored in public participation and demands.
- Unemployment and under-employment in the region, especially amongst youth, requires urgent and effective action.

- We demand the taxation of wealth, capital gains, and luxury assets; an end to corporate tax dodging; and the elimination of harmful tax exemptions.
- Investment in equity requires expanding free, quality public services, including health, education, housing, and social protection, targeted at the most marginalized, while strengthening integrity and accountability systems.
- SADC governments must fight wage injustice, by raising minimum wages to living wages, guaranteeing labour rights, and protecting informal and care workers, especially women and youth.
- SADC to implement a universal basic income grant across the SADC countries.
- Illegitimate and odious debt must be cancelled, with resources redirected from debt repayment to social justice initiatives and public investment.

## **Our Call to SADC Heads of State and Government**

As you gather in Antananarivo for the 45th Ordinary Summit, we urge you to listen not only to your peers, but to the people who bear the brunt of your decisions. The voices from Antsirabe are clear. We want SADC Heads of State and Government to

- Reclaim our economies from the chains of debt, neocolonialism and corporate capture.
- Protect our people from austerity, extractivism, violence, and ecological collapse.
- Deliver justice through reparations, feminist economic policies, and democratic governance.
- Stand with us in building a just, sovereign, and united Southern Africa grounded in people power, regional solidarity and ecological sustainability.

From Antsirabe, we recommit ourselves to building cross-border movements and campaigns that defend the common people, protect democratic space, and reclaim people's power. We leave this Summit with renewed determination to organize, mobilize, and act locally, regionally and globally until a just, decolonized, and feminist future becomes not only possible, but inevitable.

Reclaiming our future is not a slogan. It is a demand, a commitment, and a collective struggle. We will not remain silent. We will not be invisible, and we will not be sidelined.

ENDS...///

For SAPSN,

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