



# PUBLIC STATEMENT

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SADC Must take decisive action on COVID-19 vaccine access at Summit**

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) region is in the grips of a deadly third wave of COVID-19 infections during which many countries in the Southern African region have reported their highest ever levels of new infections and COVID-19-related deaths.

Already fragile health systems are being stretched to their limits as hospitals struggle to cope with the increase in admissions and many countries are currently suffering oxygen shortages.

Despite this public health crisis, vaccination roll out in the region has been extremely slow. With the exception of Mauritius and Seychelles, most countries in the region having [barely managed to administer](#) even one dose to even 10% of their populations to date.

The SADC should take effective action to address the failure of Member States to act according to their obligations under international law, including under regional and sub-regional agreements.

Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists and Oxfam, in collaboration with local human rights defenders and public health experts thus request that SADC Member States use the opportunity presented by the 41st SADC Summit in Lilongwe, Malawi to adopt a resolution that binds Member States to:

- engage in sub-regional cooperation and, where necessary, seek and provide international and particularly sub-regional assistance, to ensure equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines and related health products and information for all people, across all SADC countries. This includes ensuring that essential medical equipment, including liquid oxygen, oxygen plants, and concentrators are made available to those States that are in critical need of such supplies. This also includes diversifying supply options beyond the COVAX facility which many African countries were relying on but has not delivered as expected.

- Develop, publish and publicize comprehensive national vaccine acquisition and rollout plans and procurement strategies, detailing concrete measures to ensure non-discriminatory access to vaccines to all people consistent with member States international human rights obligations in terms of the [SADC Health Protocol](#), the [African Charter on Human and People's Rights](#) and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#).
- Share information on the type or brand of vaccine and numbers of doses they are procuring and receiving from pharmaceutical companies [as well pricing arrangements] in order to strengthen vaccine coverage monitoring in the Region through the Secretariat, for wider dissemination among Member States.
- Implement the [SADC PF motion taken at the 48th Plenary Assembly Virtual Session 4th To 5th December 2020](#) which urges SADC Member Parliaments to join and support the Conference of Speakers & Heads of African parliaments (CoSAP) and African Speakers Debt Cancellation Campaign Initiative (DCCI).
- Openly endorse international efforts which could increase equitable vaccine access and address supply constraints, such as WHO's [COVID-19 Technology Access Pool](#) (C-TAP) which is currently only supported by three Member States – Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa.
- Share lessons and experiences on the manufacture, distribution and management of vaccines including information on potential investors and donors willing to set up manufacturing plants within the SADC Region.

The Resolution should also bind the Secretariat to:

- Provide clear guidance to the Member States on their human rights obligations pertaining to equitable COVID-19 vaccine access.
- Establish a strong regional collaborative strategy, consistently with the obligation to seek and provide international assistance, which pools resources together and actively facilitates and advances sub-regional COVID-19 vaccine procurement and distribution between the Member States.

Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists and Oxfam have written to SADC Chairperson, his Excellency Lazarus Chakwera, President of Malawi making the same call but have yet to receive a substantive response to our correspondence.

### **Background:**

International Commission of Jurists "The Unvaccinated Equality not Charity in Southern Africa" (May 2021), available [here](#).

Amnesty International "Southern Africa Needs Assistance An Open Call To The Regional And International Community" available [here](#).

Oxfam Vaccines Campaign <https://www.oxfam.org/en/tags/peoples-vaccine>

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