

**Opening Speech by Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda**  
**HASSP – 20 May 2010**

Hon Dr Sam Mundia-Member of the FANRPAN Board of Governors,  
 Representatives of the Swiss Development Cooperation - I recognise with honour Mr Richard Chenevard and Dr Sam Kareithi  
 The Farmers who produce our Food ,  
 Distinguished officials from Government, private sector, the research community  
 Ladies and Gentleman.

Today is a day of celebration. The senior government officials from the SADC region's Ministries of agriculture first met in 1998 to discuss seed harmonization in the region; we meet here to plan for a new era. An era for seed security and freedom from hunger. As a woman and mother of three, I equate this to pregnancy and say that the elephants are having a field day on us as their babies take 22 months in the tummy whilst our seed toils have taken 22 years. Well better late than never! After a laborious and intense 13 years on trying to harmonise our policies, we can now celebrate a day where our farmers can be seed growers, where our farmers can import and export seed, where our farmers can improve productivity because seed, as one close friend of FANRPAN Mr Francois Droz of SDC often says seed is the red line (le ligne rouge). Without seed security, there is no food security.

Many of you who are here today have been midwives to this process. At this juncture, it is most fitting for us all to pay special tribute to our mother body SADC who have worked laboriously for all these years to carry this baby and deliver to us through the Ministers of Agriculture the MOU signed on 5 Feb this year, endorsing the seed harmonisation - a process that brings together policies, laws, regulations and procedures into a unified strategy aimed at making the SADC region seed secure. There are many development partners who contributed during phase one of the process, here it's fitting to pay tribute to SDC who having participated in the first phase, and have once again taken the trophy to be the first to champion the next phase - the domestication of the harmonised regional protocols. The team of three as we have come to refer to them at FANRPAN includes Francois Droz, Richard Chenevard and Dr Sam Kareithi - we are grateful for not only their financial support but also the passion they have for this work to succeed.

Now what is it that we seek to do in domesticating the harmonised protocol. The objectives HASSP are:

- i. To domesticate and implement SADC Harmonised Seed Regulatory System.
- ii. To improve seed testing facilities to ensure sustained production and distribution of high quality seed to farmers.
- iii. To enhance institutional arrangements, human resource and physical capacity in the seed sector.
- iv. To enhance national capacity for improved seed multiplication, production and distribution/marketing.
- v. To enhance adoption of improved seed varieties.
- vi. To establish and strengthen efficient and development oriented seed relief strategies.
- vii. To provide regular information to stakeholders for seed security.
- viii. To support seed science and technology capacity building initiatives.

**Countries of focus**

HASSP is a pilot that will start with 4 countries namely Malawi, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. However we are already in dialogue with other development partners who have made commitments to take up the other countries. COMESA will be here to make their official support pledge and indeed as we dialogue with other partners such as FAO, USAID, AGRA, the CGIARs, I am confident that coverage will soon be 100% in not just the 15 member states but also COMESA-wide across its 19 member states.

The choice of pilots is expected to allow learning for scale up--Zimbabwe, a country that used to be a food basket for the region, presents a window of opportunity to intervene in a quick impact country that is ready for quick turn-around.

Zambia has, for almost 10 years, enjoyed economic prosperity thus setting the stage for a strong programme that could also draw from the capacity already developed and retained in-country. Zambia has a number of institutions that have become regional centers of excellence in capacity building of the seed supply chain. It hosts the SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC) (Gene Bank) and will soon host the new SADC Regional Seed Centre. Both institutions are expected to play key roles in the proposed project.

For Swaziland, Despite having good soils, favorable rainfall pattern and stable political and economic environment, continues to record persistent shortfalls in the staple food supply. The country's staple food production covers less than 35% of national total requirements, leaving much of the food supply to depend on imports.

Malawi is a known success story and creates a great opportunity for technology absorption.

The whole of Southern Africa is vulnerable to governance problems, social economic shocks such as HIV AIDS, rising food prices etc, that negatively impact on the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations and on food security in particular. With the increase of climatic variations, the region now faces regular droughts and flooding. This is increasing the need for humanitarian assistance which is interwoven with development activities so that the two mutually reinforce each other. The region needs both, since it cannot afford only the former. The linking of relief to recovery and more sustainable development solutions is therefore paramount. It is in this respect that HASSP will make a difference by providing an instrument that has both a relief element (grants for improved seed production and distribution) and a development orientation (the strengthening of the local seed supply chain through for example, strengthening capacity of the local agro-dealer network).

The development assistance foreseen under HASSP aims to ensure smooth transition and continuity from humanitarian assistance to market based approaches and at the same time to reinforce the resilience of the population to these increasing shocks.

### **HASSP Target Groups**

The target groups are stakeholders in the seed value chain and they include government departments of agriculture, national agricultural research institutes (NARIs), civil society organizations such as farmer groups, farmers' unions, international seed research organizations and individuals or organizations involved in the marketing of seed. The project will reach players that are directly and indirectly involved in seed policy, research, use, and the supply chain in the region. These stakeholders will be reached directly by the project in the four priority countries ( Malawi, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and indirectly in non-core countries through information exchange and policy dialogue sessions.

### **Project partners**

HASSP will collaborate with other projects and programmes within FANR and other organizations involved in seed issues in the SADC and COMESA regions such as:

- National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) (comprising mainly the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT), International Centre for Research in the Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT),
- International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), IFPRI,

- AGRA
- ACTESA
- Iowa State University Seed Science Centre,
- the SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC),
- early warning systems,
- crop research networks,
- universities,
- seed and farmers associations
- community-based seed projects
- international and regional seed organizations such as the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), and
- the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA).

### **About FANRPAN**

I am sure some of you are hearing about FANRPAN for the first time. I will therefore spend a few minutes explaining who FANRPAN is. FANRPAN is a legally constituted organisation that was registered in 2003. The Network has a clear regional mandate to strengthen capacity for policy analysis, voice and evidence-based policy formulation, having been established in response to a call made at the highest level of policy decision making in the southern African region, the Heads of States and Government. We work in 13 southern African countries and I am happy to report that as of last week the DRC became our 14th country and later this year we will have 16 member states, with the addition of Kenya and Uganda. As a network we bring together farmers, researchers, the private sector and government to engage in the policy discourse using evidence to inform policy development.

Now how does FANRPAN get into this business of seed security? Our core-business is to generate evidence that will make Africa food secure and we do this by informing policies as a sub-regional body. our clients are the national governments at local level and the Regional Economic Communities who deal with policy harmonisation.

Now, what is it that we are here to do? I am sure this meeting has been a great re-union for many friends. We have brought together farmers, and as I said we believe in Farming first - without farmers there is no life because they are the producers of our food. We've brought in representatives from Governments because they are the policy makers and they will need to make sure that the policies are aligned to the regional protocol. We have brought in the private sector who will have to generate the business of multiplying the seed and transporting the seed and making sure it's available at the lowest possible cost. We've brought in the REC's and we've also brought in the non-governmental organisations-the interface between the Government and civil society; and most important we have got a consortium of the CGIAR's. For some of you who are not aware, the CGIAR's have been working as a family of 15 covering a diversity of commodities. In 2008, we celebrated the re-birth of a united family which has 15 children who all worked for a common goal -the reduction of poverty. it is my hope that the CGIARs present here today will incorporate in their mega programs a substantial budget to support this seed harmonization process.

What is it that we expect to get out of this session? We have a four year project that we have to implement and if we have no plan our road will take us anywhere. So I hope we can come out with:

1. A time bound implementation plan for year one.
2. Role players map. We also should be able to map out who is doing what on seed security in our region, within and outside our project.
3. We should also be able to create a governance system that is able to ensure impact at regional level, at national level and at local level
4. We need a communication strategy for both internal and external communication. We should also dwell on how the project will be scaled up.

5. A quantifiable base line on the status quo is a must first step!

This is a four year project and I want to believe that we have elders who have been part of this journey who will be available to steer the process. We also have managers, efficient people who can drive this. We have in the mean time appointed an interim manager and we have a long list of people who are keen to drive this process. It will be up to the steering committee to finalise the appointments for this position, which is a four year position and then in each country there will be a focal person who will be at the centre in coordinating and this will be housed by our national nodes. I am happy today we have representatives from our four member countries and the host nodes.

In terms of communication, it's important that we communicate both internally and externally. Therefore, what we have today is a team of specialists including our friend Michael from Glasshouse Partnership and Busani Bafana - who will help us craft the strategy to help us communicate with the outside world. But we also need to learn because this is a pilot that we need to scale up. So I hope as we deliberate, we'll be able to develop a strategy for learning.

Finally, we need to dwell on the name of the project. The name we could come up with was HASSP which stands for Harmonisation of Seed Security Project. It's up to you, the project is yours and ours is just to facilitate.

I am happy that we are starting a process that will hold us to account if we fail to make our contribution to making Africa greener, to making Africa food secure and driving a real African uniquely African green revolution; it would be sad.

The Chairman of the FANRPAN Board Hon Sindiso Ngwenya is a man of figures and he is passionate about this seed security project as you will later hear from Dr A Daka of ACTESA. The message he has asked me to convey is that n he wishes to live to witness seed security that has quantifiable impacts. He has challenged us to provide indicators that specify the number women farmers will become seed producers; His asks are as follows: How many women farmers will become agro-dealers In each of the 4 countries?; What is the current price of seed and can this project deliver by 2014, a 50% reduction in the price of seed? and a 50% increase in access to improved seed. This is the challenge before us ladies and gentlemen.

I thank you all for your intellect and I am sure we have started with the right team and on the right footing and failure is not going to be an option.

I thank you and I wish you a successful deliberation.

Lindiwe Majele Sibanda