SPEECH BY MINISTER MITCY LARUE
AT THE OPENING OF THE TECHNICAL MEETING OF THE
MEDICINES REGULATORS FORUM ON 27th July 2016

Salutation:

Dr. Sina Selelo - Head of the Drug Regulatory Unit, Botswana and Chairperson of the SADC Medicines Regulators

Mr. Joseph Mthetwa - Senior Programme Officer for Health and Pharmaceuticals, SADC Secretariat

Mr. Apollo Muhairwe - Senior Operations Officer, Africa Region, Health, Nutrition and Population

Dr. Luther Gwaza - Consultant World Bank/SADC/NEPAD AMRH Project
Mr. Paul K. Tanui - Senior Programme Officer, Technical Support – African Medicines Regulatory Harmonization (AMRH) Programme, NEPAD Agency

Distinguished Heads of National Medicines Regulatory Agencies/Departments/Authorities/Councils/Units

Distinguished Directors of Pharmaceuticals and Chief Pharmacists

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Distinguished Officials of the NEPAD Agency

Distinguished Officials of the SADC Secretariat

It is indeed a pleasure and an honour for me to welcome you to Seychelles as you begin your highly technical meeting to review and evaluate the performance of the African Medicines Regulatory Harmonization initiative and to develop a robust work plan.
I would like to particularly thank the sponsors of the meeting, i.e. the World Bank, the NEPAD Agency, the World Health Organization and, of course, the SADC Secretariat, for bringing this important dialogue to Seychelles.

We are always happy to host such regional meetings on our shores because such meetings provide us with yet another opportunity to learn from your vast experience. I am sure that the holding of your meeting in Seychelles will also provide you with an equal opportunity to learn from Seychelles’ particular experience, as a special small island country, with relatively good performance indicators in all areas of health.

The backdrop for this meeting is the SADC Protocol on Health and the expressed desires of our countries to achieve regional integration in health. Article 29 of the SADC Protocol obliges our countries to cooperate and help each other in the harmonization of procedures, quality assurance and registration of pharmaceuticals.

It is a well-known fact that implementation of our common desires, as expressed in the Protocol on Health, have not always been as smooth or as rapid as they should have been. There have been many challenges. But the good news is that all challenges can be successfully overcome....We now know that mechanisms and institutional arrangements for enforcement of regulatory systems should be
developed and outlined in detail, including the specific roles of those to be involved. We now know that the SADC secretariat must play a leading role in monitoring compliance and monitoring of reporting to the enforcement structures of the region.

Hence in trying to begin to overcome some of these challenges, this meeting needs to achieve at least the following goals.

i) Establish a structured platform for the discussion and adoption of recommendations in relation to constitutional, legislative and institutional issues relating to the harmonization of Registration of Medicines in SADC region.

ii) Discuss ways and means for the institutionalization of reporting mechanisms and adopt recommendations thereof. It is expected that Member States will submit periodic reports on measures being undertaken at the national level to implement the obligations arising from the Protocol and suggest effective ways to address specific implementation difficulties that they might be facing.

iii) Discuss ways and means for the development of one common system for monitoring the implementation of SADC Medicines Harmonization Procedures for Regulation of Medicines in close collaboration with the
SADC National Health Committees (SNCs) and adopt recommendations thereof. It is hoped that a uniform system will facilitate verification of compliance with regional policies and help identify specific problems, including resource and capacity constraints, which Member States might be facing in their Medicines Regulatory Policy implementation efforts.

If you achieve these goals, your meeting will already have been well on its way to a success.

Ladies and gentlemen, Seychelles believes that as a country, we can indeed, make a significant contribution to the SADC region in the area of Quality Control of Pharmaceuticals. Our quality control laboratory was created way back in 2001. Today, after fifteen years of existence, after a wealth of experience and endowed with a staff of five dedicated professionals, some of whom are highly qualified in pharmaceutical analysis, we are ready to assume the challenge of regional quality control of pharmaceuticals. Seychelles is therefore, aspiring to “pre-qualification status” from WHO. When we achieve that status, our Quality Control Laboratory will be transformed into a recognized Centre of Excellence and we will, indeed, provide world class services in the quality control of medicine and medicinal products.

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen, I am confident that, enlightened by the sunshine of Seychelles and invigorated by your own passion for the topic at
hand, you will have fruitful deliberations and your meeting will be a resounding success.

I and my colleagues, the Honorable Ministers of Health and Ministers Responsible for HIV and AIDS of the SADC region, look forward to the conclusions and recommendations of your meeting. We look forward to reviewing them in detail when we meet in November, 2016 in the Kingdom of Swaziland.

I wish you all a very successful meeting and an enjoyable stay in Seychelles.

I thank you.