



11th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue

29 – 30 September 2025

Maseru, Lesotho

Outcomes Statement



OUTCOMES STATEMENT

11th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue

Theme: *Water Security, Innovation, and Nexus Action for Regional Economic Corridors*

Dates & Place: 29–30 September 2025, Maseru, Lesotho

1. Preamble

The 11th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue convened 226 participants (203 in-person, 23 virtual) from 12 SADC Member States, including representatives of water, energy, agriculture/food systems, environment and TFCAs, trade and investment, ICT/digitalisation, finance, youth and gender groups, River Basin Organisations (RBOs) and River Basin Authorities (RBAs), regional implementing agencies, international cooperation partners, development finance institutions, academia, utilities and the private sector.

Guided by SADC Vision 2050, the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP: 2020–2030), the Regional Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap (2015–2063), and aligned with the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the Dialogue focused on repositioning water and the Water–Energy–Food–Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus for impactful contribution to the regional economic development corridor agenda, and embedding the WEFE nexus and climate resilience into planning, investment and governance.

2. Core Messages

The core messages that came out of the Dialogue are:

- 2.1. Water is a foundational economic enabler, not a support sector.** Corridor performance (ports, border posts, industrial parks, agro-zones, cities) depends on reliable water quantity and quality, and on risk-informed management of droughts and floods.
- 2.2. Nexus governance must be institutionalised.** RBO, TFCA, utility and corridor mandates require alignment; policy duplication, siloed planning and fragmented data constrain delivery.
- 2.3. Groundwater is underutilized yet pivotal for cities, industries and agriculture along corridors;** managed aquifer recharge and groundwater-sensitive planning are essential.
- 2.4. Digital, data and early warning systems are essential ingredients** for efficiency, loss reduction and climate resilience; data standards and interoperability are needed region-wide for harmonized efforts.

2.5. Inclusive growth matters. Gender, youth and community participation must be embedded to ensure benefits persist beyond construction and across rural and urban divides.

2.6. Green and grey infrastructure integration improves resilience and returns. Pairing nature-based solutions with engineered assets (e.g., catchment restoration, wastewater reuse, water storage and smart operations) raises bankability and climate readiness.

2.7. Finance follows clarity and preparation. Off-taker certainty, tariff realism with affordability protections, robust Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) and de-risking instruments unlock blended finance.

3. Economic Corridor Development and Nexus Linkages

Participants reaffirmed that industrialisation and regional value chain development are catalytic drivers of corridor growth and competitiveness in the SADC region. There was consensus that sustainable industrialisation depends on efficient, reliable, and climate-resilient water and energy systems, embedded within the WEFE Nexus framework.

The Dialogue underscored the need for accelerated agricultural transformation through adoption of water-efficient, renewable-energy-powered, and climate-smart technologies. Strengthening regional value chains will require concerted efforts to reduce water and food losses, improve supply chain efficiency, and promote inclusive, circular, and resilient food systems linked to regional corridor hubs.

The strategic role of water and energy as the backbone of resilient corridors was recognised as critical for regional integration and competitiveness. Delegates noted that regional renewable energy ambitions, including scaling capacity to 300 GW by 2030 and achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050, are essential enablers of corridor transformation and low-carbon growth. The Inga III Hydropower Project and regional interconnections under the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) were highlighted as important pathways for strengthening energy security and ensuring access for key economic nodes.

Participants emphasised that cooperation and synergy, rather than competition, must guide regional efforts. Cross-sectoral collaboration across water, energy, food, transport, and environment was cited as indispensable to building shared prosperity, improving corridor functionality, and ensuring equitable resource access.

Recognising the economic value of water as both a productive asset and an enabler of trade and industry, the Dialogue called for increased investment in the water sector, coupled with integrated approaches to governance, infrastructure, and finance that unlock water's full development potential.

4. Agreed Pillars and Commitments

4.1. Institutional Alignment & Policy Coherence

- Formalise politically the WEFE nexus approach for impactful contribution to smart corridors
- Formalise WEFE Nexus screening in SADC and Member State corridor planning, appraisal and approval processes.
- Progressively ensure policy alignment for increased nexus collaboration in regional corridor development
- Establish corridor compacts with RBOs and TFCAs, together with integrated corridor agreements for both regional and continental integrated corridor development
- Bring together RBOs, TFCAs, corridor/transport authorities, cities/utilities, energy pools, agricultural institutions and private sector and define clear roles, shared Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and protocols.
- Synchronise dam operations across shared basins to optimise regional water and energy security and reduce flood/drought risks affecting corridor nodes.
- Advance progressive policy harmonisation (tariffs, quality standards, Environmental & Social safeguards) to reduce cross-border friction and accelerate infrastructure project preparation-to-finance processes.

4.2. Investment & Finance for Water-Smart Corridors

- Encourage RBOs to enter into agreement with TFCAs, and jointly develop WEFE investment projects
- Develop multi-sector project pipelines anchored in economic clusters along corridors (i.e. logistics hubs, industrial parks, irrigated agro-value chains, border towns).
- Package green and grey infrastructure portfolios: catchment restoration, wetland rehabilitation and sediment management plus bulk water, treatment, reuse, storage and managed aquifer recharge.
- Mobilise blended finance inclusive of sovereign and sub-sovereign budgets, Private public Partnerships (PPPs), climate funds, guarantees and institutional capital, backed by public and development finance-funded project preparation (i.e. prefeasibility and feasibility studies, Environmental & Social Safeguards, offtake structuring, de-risking).
- Develop a regional model for standard tariff setting to attract investment in the Water sector
- Issue regional guidance on cost-reflective yet inclusive tariff models (e.g., tiered structure with lifeline blocks, performance-based Non-Revenue Water (NRW) reduction) to crowd-in private capital while protecting vulnerable users.
- Promote co-revenues (e.g., floating solar on reservoirs, treated effluent sales, Payment for Ecosystem Services) to strengthen cashflows and shorten payback periods.
- Invest in managed aquifer recharge and more innovative water harvesting solutions, which are crucial for regional water security.
- Invest in the maintenance of ecosystems in the region's water tower nations.
- Maximise and integrate flood water harvesting using underground storage, managed aquifer recharge, and other water storage options.
- There is also need to invest outside of corridor boundaries: ecosystems do not follow corridor boundaries.

4.3. Partnerships, Inclusion & Knowledge

- Formalise RBO-TFCA cooperation through MOUs focused on corridor nodes (headwaters, protected areas, border posts, wetlands, deltas).
- Mainstream gender and youth participation in governance, procurement and project teams; ensuring community benefit continuity during and after project construction or implementation.
- Launch a SADC-level Data & Digital initiative to standardise hydromet/quality/asset/Non-Revenue-Water data, scale real-time monitoring and early warning.
- Adopt natural capital accounting to evidence Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and asset impacts.
- Partner with SANWATCE, WaterNet, IWMI, UNESCO and universities to close research and capacity gaps, and to localise innovation (e.g., the urgent need to build capacity for water harvesting portfolios from community to regional scale).

5. Closing Message

The Dialogue reaffirmed that water within a nexus context is an enabler for SADC's regional economic transformation. Water catalyses industrialisation, trade, and resilience when managed through integrated, inclusive, and climate-smart approaches. There was consensus by participants on the need for:

- Institutional alignment and formal adoption of the WEFE approach.
- Development of bankable Nexus-aligned corridor investments.
- Policy and data harmonisation for coordinated regional action.
- Inclusive partnerships and sustainable financing for long-term implementation.

6. Call to Action

Member States, RBOs/RBAs, TFCAs, corridor and transport authorities, cities and utilities, SAPP/energy actors, agri-food institutions, private investors, DFIs and ICPs are called upon to convert this consensus into implementable programmes. By institutionalising Nexus governance, structuring bankable green and grey pipelines, standardising data and digital systems, and ensuring inclusive partnerships, SADC can turn its corridors into resilient, competitive economic systems that create jobs, secure food and energy, and protect ecosystems in a changing climate.

SADC is committed to elevate priority recommendations and the Dialogue Outcomes to the SADC Sectoral and Cluster Ministerial Committees, Council and Summit processes, and relevant continental platforms under AUC, AUDA-NEPAD/PIDA and the AfCFTA.

Adopted in Maseru, Lesotho on 30 September 2025.