



11th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue

29–30 September 2025
Maseru, Lesotho

CONCEPT NOTE





Water Security, Innovation, and Nexus Action

Watering and Enabling
Regional Economic
Development Corridors for
Transformation in SADC



1. Background of the SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue

The SADC Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue is a biennial event convened by the SADC Secretariat. While largely driven by the Water Sector, the Dialogue has, over the years, evolved to embrace the broader Water-Energy-Food (WEF) Nexus approach. It provides a platform for dialogue between water practitioners, policymakers, and other influencing sectors to address issues critical to regional integration, industrialisation, and poverty eradication in the SADC region. The Multi-stakeholder Dialogue provides a platform for the region to ensure that the implementation of the approach is aligned to the regional imperatives; and works towards delivering tangible benefits on the ground. The focus for the year 2025 is building on the theme of the 44th SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government, titled ***“Advancing Industrialisation, Agricultural Transformation, and Energy Transition for a Resilient SADC”***.

As the region seeks to deepen economic integration and industrial transformation, the SADC Secretariat has initiated processes to develop and promote a regional economic corridor development approach. This integrative framework is grounded in key regional strategies, including:

- SADC Vision 2050
- Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020–2030
- SADC Regional Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap (2015–2063)
- SADC Disaster Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2030)

This approach is also in alignment with the continental vision under the African Union’s Agenda 2063 of an integrated corridor approach for the development of “inclusive, sustainable and world class Infrastructure” for inclusive and sustainable growth and development, especially as the continent pushes forward with the Africa Continental Free Trade Areas (AfCFTAs) initiative.

The SADC regional economic corridor development approach therefore aims to contribute to this goal by stimulating regional value chains, attracting investment, and improving connectivity through infrastructure and services in energy, water, ICT, agriculture, and trade. By building on the core transport and trade facilitation initiatives, SADC’s regional economic development corridors are positioned as a central vehicle for inclusive and sustainable industrialisation.

The 11th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue is supported by the German Government through the SADC Transboundary Water Management (TWM) project, implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The Dialogue is convened by the SADC Secretariat with technical support from GIZ and the Global Water Partnership Southern Africa (GWPSA). GWPSA has been facilitating this process on behalf of the SADC Secretariat Water Division since 2007.



2. Rationale and overview of the 11th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue

The concept of regional economic development corridors is inherently integrative and multi-sectoral, aligning well with the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus approach already adopted in the region. Both approaches adopt systems thinking, recognizing that siloed planning leads to inefficiencies, both seek to maximize benefits while minimizing trade-offs, both require cross-sectoral policy coordination and institutional collaboration - often at multiple governance levels - to be effective.

Water is indispensable to the regional value chain development - whether in upstream input provision, side-stream processing, or downstream distribution and consumption. In recognition of this centrality, the 11th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue will initiate a focused regional discussion on the strategic role of the water sector in supporting regional economic development corridors within the regional WEFE framework context. This includes aligning institutional arrangements, strategies, and investments to:

- Support a strategic water security lens systematically integrating resilient, water-smart infrastructure and services across corridors;
- Enable RBO-Southern African Power Pool coordination to identify synergies and trade-offs with the water sector in corridor development;
- Promote RBO-TFCA collaboration for sustainable transboundary watershed management and ecosystem resilience;
- Promote collaboration of regional water and agrifood systems planning for sustainable agriculture production, agri-logistics, and food security systems in economic corridors; and,
- Foster climate-resilient, inclusive and strategic partnerships, including enhanced transboundary cooperation on regional projects for corridor-linked development.

The Dialogue will provide an opportunity for SADC Member States and WEF stakeholders (including Ministries of Water, Energy, Agriculture, Environment/Tourism, Finance and relevant public and private institutions) to co-develop a shared understanding, define roles and responsibilities, and propose strategies and mechanisms to ensure that water-related institutions and programmes contribute effectively to a corridor development agenda that results in economic corridors that are not just highways of commerce but lifelines of resilience, food security, and climate-smart growth.

3. Proposed objectives and expected outcomes of the dialogue

Overall Objective

To explore and define the strategic **role and value** of the water sector in enabling smart, integrated, and climate-resilient regional economic development corridors through inclusive and adaptive WEFE Nexus approaches.

The following are the specific objectives of the dialogue:

- I. **Institutional Alignment:** Identify the institutional, planning, and strategic interventions required to align the SADC water sector with the regional economic corridor development agenda within a WEFE Nexus framework approach.
- II. **Partnership Promotion:** Promote cross-sectoral partnerships and linkages between regional, transboundary and national water institutions and other sectors such as TFCAs, energy, agriculture, ICT, and transport to driver corridor-linked Nexus action to enable regional value chain development.
- III. **Innovation and Resilience:** Identify innovative, climate-resilient, and inclusive water governance models, financing instruments, and technical solutions to support corridor-linked development and service delivery.

Expected outcomes

- I. **Shared Vision:** A common understanding among Member States and stakeholders on the contribution of the water sector within a WEFE Nexus framework context to regional economic corridor development.
- II. **Institutional Roadmap:** Clear identification of water-related institutions, their roles, and frameworks for alignment with WEFE corridor initiatives—including cooperation and multi-sector governance frameworks among RBOs, TFCAs and regional Agricultural and Energy Institutions.
- III. **Policy and Investment Proposals:** Recommendations for policy reform, institutional collaboration, and joint investment opportunities around water infrastructure and services to support corridor resilience, resource security, sustainability, and equity.



Sub-Themes

SUB-THEME 1

Re-positioning and re-aligning the WEFE Nexus for impactful contribution to the regional economic development corridor agenda

The focus will be on multi-sectoral institutional collaboration, policy coherence, and regional planning. The focus will also be on identifying governance frameworks needed to enhance development in economic corridors.

SUB-THEME 2

Innovative climate resilient water infrastructure solutions towards trade, and regional value chains

The emphasis will be on innovation, investment, and climate-resilient water investments to power regional economic development corridors.

SUB-THEME 3

Partnerships for inclusive and sustainable regional economic corridor growth

This theme will explore collaborations between RBOs, RBAs, SADC Regional Implementing Agencies and Partners, TFCAs, governments (focusing on ministries and departments related to water and its financing- Ministries of Water, Energy, Agriculture, Finance, Tourism, etc), and private sector (including water utilities) to drive water-supported regional integration and development.



4. Involvement of regional partners in the organisation of the dialogue

Key partners will be identified to share their perspectives and experiences on accelerating investments through the WEFE Nexus approach. These partners include:

- Partners implementing WEFE Nexus approaches
- SADC Secretariat (Infrastructure Services Directorate; SADC Policy and Planning and Resources Mobilisation (PPRM) Directorate; and Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Directorate), Disaster Risk Reduction Unit, Climate Services Centre)
- Regional and Pan-African institutions (incl. Southern Africa Power Pool, AUDA-NEPAD)

5. Participants

- Senior officials from water, energy, food, natural resources management, disaster risk reduction and conservation sectors from SADC Member States
- RBOs, RBAs, TFCAs, and SADC Implementing Agencies
- Regional & Pan-African institutions, youth representatives, women groups, civil society organisations, local & international private sector, International Cooperation Partners (WSRG and other financing partners)

Government Ministries responsible for economic planning (selected representative member states), and selected utilities from water, energy and food sectors, as well as regional agencies will also be invited.



The SADC Secretariat is grateful to all the funders and partners whose financial and in-kind contributions made the 11th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue a success.

