

28 August 2026

PRESS STATEMENT

SAMIN RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE 46TH ORDINARY SUMMIT OF SADC HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

Held in Durban, Republic of South Africa, August 2026

The Southern Africa Migration Network (SAMIN) has read, with mounting concern and, frankly, disbelief, the Communiqué issued at the conclusion of the 46th Ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government held in Durban on 17 August 2026.

SAMIN does not take issue with the Summit's convening, nor with the goodwill of the Heads of State who attended. Our concern is with the substance, or rather the absence of substance, in a document that had every opportunity to respond meaningfully to over a year of documented displacement, conflict-induced migration, and anti-migrant mobilisation in South Africa, with consequences across the region, and instead chose the language of diplomatic non-commitment.

We issue this statement in context of the thousands of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and border communities across the SADC region whose lived realities this Communiqué was supposed to speak to, and largely fails to.

Below, SAMIN outlines its key observations on the Communiqué's shortcomings:

1. Migration Is Reduced to a Single, Toothless Paragraph

Of the Communiqué's 38 numbered paragraphs, only Paragraph 16 addresses migration governance as such; Paragraph 30 addresses mobility only in the limited context of the proposed Tourism UNIVISA. Paragraph 16 reads, in full, that *"Summit received an update from the Republic of South Africa on migration governance and called for the coordinated and multidimensional dialogue at regional level to address the underlying drivers of migration and develop comprehensive, sustainable, and effective responses."*

SAMIN asks SADC Heads of State plainly: what does this sentence commit any Member State to doing? There is no reference to the 2005 SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons. More than two decades after its adoption, only seven of the 16 Member States had ratified it by July 2026, while eleven ratifications are required for entry into force.

No reference to regularisation pathways, to the documentation crises facing migrant workers and their children, to universal birth registration for children born to migrants, including

undocumented migrants, or to the nationality safeguards required to prevent childhood statelessness. No reference to the conditions in immigration detention facilities across the region, or to the rights of asylum seekers awaiting status determination for years at a time. The Communiqué does not use the words "refugee," "displaced persons," or "Afrophobia," nor does it frame these matters as refugee protection or forced displacement. This omission is especially striking in a Communiqué issued from South Africa, where coordinated anti-migrant mobilisation and vigilante action have resulted in deaths and displacement and, alongside intensified immigration enforcement and widespread fear, contributed to large-scale departures and repatriations.

"Coordinated and multidimensional dialogue" is not a policy. It is a placeholder for one. SAMIN has heard comparable language repeatedly. Although the Regional Programme on Forced Displacement, Fragility Mitigation and Climate Resilience was endorsed in June 2025, this Communiqué does not report on its implementation, financing, or measurable protection outcomes. More than two decades after adoption of the Facilitation of Movement Protocol, the region still lacks an operative binding framework for facilitated movement.

2. The Communiqué Ignores Migration's Presence Throughout Its Own Text

What makes Paragraph 16 particularly indefensible is that migration is not, in fact, absent from the rest of the Communiqué, it is simply never named as such. Consider:

- Paragraph 8 reaffirms solidarity with the people of the DRC amid conflict that has displaced millions internally and across borders into Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa and beyond, yet says nothing about the cross-border protection, reception, or asylum obligations this displacement creates for neighbouring SADC states. Furthermore, the DRC (SADC Member State), continues to face territorial incursion and displacement driven by an externally-backed insurgency. Successive UN Group of Experts reports have documented the Rwanda Defence Force's direct military presence and command role alongside the M23 rebel alliance in eastern DRC, notwithstanding Kigali's initial denials, and this externally-fuelled conflict has displaced millions of Congolese internally and driven hundreds of thousands more into refuge across neighbouring states. This conflict has notably been regarded as the deadliest since World War II. Although Paragraph 8 calls for the protection of civilians and stronger humanitarian and public-health responses, it does not address forced displacement, cross-border reception, asylum, non-refoulement, or regional responsibility-sharing. This omission speaks precisely to the gap SAMIN is raising.
- Paragraph 11 commends Mozambique's inclusive national dialogue and its counter-terrorism efforts in Cabo Delgado without acknowledging that, in 2026, more than half a million people remained internally displaced by conflict, predominantly in Cabo Delgado and other parts of northern Mozambique.
- Paragraph 24 urges preparedness for anticipated El Niño-related climate shocks, including drought preparedness and climate-smart agriculture, but does not connect the

displacement and mobility consequences of such shocks to the migration governance discussion in Paragraph 16.

A Communiqué that discusses conflict, political upheaval, and climate shocks in separate paragraphs, and never draws the connection to the region's migration governance and protection obligations, has not merely overlooked migration. It has actively declined to name it.

3. A Pattern, Not an Anomaly

This weakness is not confined to Paragraph 16. It runs through the entire Communiqué. Across all 38 numbered paragraphs, the language rarely moves beyond "noting," "commending," "urging," "welcoming," and "reaffirming." Gender-based violence (Paragraph 21), youth unemployment (Paragraph 22), and agricultural trade barriers (Paragraph 23) all receive the same treatment of words without resources, and without anyone responsible for delivering them.

4. What SAMIN Calls On SADC Heads of State to Do

SAMIN calls on the Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, the Incoming Chairperson, the President of the Republic of Zambia, and all Heads of State and Government to, ahead of the 47th Summit in Zambia:

1. Publish and operationalise the Regional Programme on Forced Displacement, Fragility Mitigation and Climate Resilience endorsed in June 2025, including its costed action plan, named institutional leads, timelines, and biennial progress reports, and integrate it into a broader regional migration governance framework.
2. Report publicly on the ratification and domestication status of the SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons, Member State by Member State, noting that, as of July 2026, only seven of the 16 Member States had ratified it and eleven ratifications are required for entry into force, and agree a clear, time-bound roadmap towards its entry into force.
3. Move beyond acknowledgement to action. SADC must respond, with concrete measures and real accountability for those fuelling displacement, to the migration and protection fallout of the conflicts and climate shocks running through this Communiqué: the DRC conflict, the Cabo Delgado conflict in northern Mozambique, and the recurrent climate shocks, including El Niño, affecting Mozambique and the wider region. These are not isolated national or humanitarian footnotes, and SADC must hold to account the actors, state and non-state, driving displacement in the region.
4. Commission and publish a regional assessment of conditions, legal safeguards, and independent oversight in immigration detention and reception facilities, informed by civil society and affected communities, and adopt a regional framework making immigration detention a measure of last resort, prioritising community-based alternatives to detention, and prohibiting the immigration detention of children.

5. Adopt regional minimum standards guaranteeing the prompt, free, and universal birth registration and certification of every child born in a Member State, irrespective of the child's or parents' migration status, with safeguards preventing civil-registration data from being used for immigration enforcement and nationality guarantees for children who would otherwise be stateless.
6. Expand safe, regular, and accessible migration pathways and establish cross-border referral, victim-identification, and protection mechanisms, alongside coordinated regional action against trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.
7. Name and act on xenophobic violence and anti-migrant mobilisation, particularly where domestic incidents produce cross-border protection and repatriation consequences, as a regional peace and security concern falling within the mandate of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, rather than treating it solely as a domestic policing matter for individual Member States.
8. Establish a formal, resourced consultative mechanism between SADC and regional migration civil society networks, including SAMIN, ahead of the 47th Summit in Zambia, so that the people directly affected by migration policy have a route into the process that produces it, not merely a Communiqué to react to after the fact.

Closing

SADC's own Vision 2050, invoked with pride in Paragraph 35 of this Communiqué, speaks of "solidarity, equality and shared prosperity" for the peoples of this region. SAMIN would ask the Heads of State and Government gathered in Durban: which people? Solidarity that stops at a Member State's own citizens is not regional solidarity. A shared prosperity that cannot account for the migrant worker, the refugee, the stateless child, or the displaced farmer is not shared.

We do not release this statement to obstruct. We release it because SAMIN's member organisations will still be at the border posts, the reception centres, and the detention facilities long after this Communiqué has been filed away, and the people we serve deserve a Summit that names their reality rather than one that manages around it. We remain, as ever, ready to engage constructively and substantively with SADC and its Member States to build the migration governance framework this region actually needs.

Issued by the SAMIN Secretariat

On behalf of the Southern Africa Migration Network (SAMIN).