



Southern Africa Students' Union  
Union des Etudiants Sud African  
Unioan de Estudantes da Africa Austral

8 Hillside Rd, Johanessburg, South Africa  
6 Bates Ave, Milton Park, Harare  
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## **INDUCTION STATEMENT**

### **ISSUED BY THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN STUDENT UNION (SASU)**

*“The education provided must therefore encourage the development in each citizen of three things; an inquiring mind; and ability to learn from what others do, and reject or adapt it to his own needs; and a basic confidence in his own position as a free and equal member of the society, who values others and is valued by them for what he does and not for what he obtains. Julius Nyerere”*

### **Fostering Academic Freedom, Innovation, and the Decolonization of Education: A Call for Regional Solidarity and Action**

The Southern African Student Union (SASU), as the premier regional student organization representing the interests of students across all 16 member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), convened its 5th Regional Executive Committee (NEC) meeting from 17 to 21 February 2025 in Centurion, South Africa. Under the theme, “***Fostering Academic Freedom, Innovation, and the Decolonization of Education: Shaping the Future of Regional Development***,”. The meeting brought together the regional executive committee to strategize on a path forward for the revival and strengthening of SASU as a regional force for student advocacy.

### **THE STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE SADC REGION**

The SADC region is home to millions of young people who aspire to access quality education as a means of achieving personal and collective development. The meeting highlighted on the systemic challenges that threaten the quality and access to education in the SADC region. The following key issues were identified during the NEC meeting:



1. **Underfunding of Education:** some SADC countries allocate insufficient resources to education resulting in lack of essential learning, inadequate infrastructure and overcrowded classrooms. This undermines the quality of education and limits opportunities for example students in Zambia whose government sponsorship is approximately about a third of the national university enrolment rate at a rate of 25%, 50%, 75% AND 100% for student individuals, thus creating an arbitrary hierarchy of sponsorship which negatively impacts on students to end up taking their lives.
2. **Commercialization of Education:** The commercialization of education in the SADC region reflects a shift from viewing education as a public good to a market driven commodity. This trend is driven by reduced government funding, rising demand for higher education and economic challenges, leading to increased tuition fees, student debt crises, reliance on private funding, growth of private institutions, and inequitable access. In countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa, higher education has been commodified, making it inaccessible to less privileged students. In South Africa, government funding for universities dropped from 49% in 2000 to 40% in 2018, forcing institutions to depend on student fees. Furthermore, the increase in annual tuition averaged 8% pre-2015, sparking the #FeesMust Fall protests till date. By 2017, student debt exceeded R10 billion. In Zimbabwe, hyper inflation and dollarization of fees which excluded low-income students exacerbated inequality as some public universities like the University of Zimbabwe charge from 500 USD per semester, which is unaffordable to many as most civil servants earn around 200-250 USD or less per month before they deduct their expenses leading to a drop in enrollments by 30% between 2010 and 2020. Currently over 60% of university students rely on parallel (fee-paying) programs. The meeting also noted the high fees of universities in south Africa and the ongoing accommodation crisis. SAUS has noted the appointment and calls for the urgent focus on the accommodation crisis and delay of appeals that hinder registrations.
3. **Gender Inequality and Discrimination:** While gender disparities in education often narrow at tertiary level in some SADC countries significant inequalities persist in others, exacerbated by cultural norms, economic barriers, and institutional discrimination therefore limiting educational opportunities and perpetuating cycles of inequality. Female students often face systemic barriers, including gender-based violence, sexual harassment and cultural biases that hinder



their access to education. In South Africa, according to Higher Health Report of 2022, 62% of female students report experiencing Gender based violence in university campuses.

4. **Unemployment and Underemployment:** Graduates across the region face significant challenges of unemployment and underemployment driven by skills mismatch, weak economic growth, lack of job opportunities, nepotism, corruption and educational factors. Slow GDP growth and reliance on informal or low skilled sectors limit formal opportunities, for example in South Africa the unemployment rate is 34.9%, with youth unemployment at 60.7% according to Q3 2023 and Stats SA. Furthermore, graduates often lack job ready skills due to curricula misaligned with labor market needs as there is an over supply of humanities or social sciences graduates as compared to the demand for STEM or technical schools. In Zimbabwe the rate of underemployment is high as 70% of graduates work in informal sector and 90% of youths are unemployed due to lack of job opportunities.
5. **Political Interference and Repression:** In countries like Swaziland and Zimbabwe, student unions face repression from authoritarian regimes, limiting their ability to advocate for students' rights. Political interference in student governance has also led to factionalism and internal strife within unions. Currently in Zimbabwe five ZINASU leaders at Midlands State University (MSU)- Tanaka. J. Sibanda, Nester Moyo, Keegan Mathe, Takunda Mhuka and Fanuel Gona were unjustly suspended without a hearing for wearing a ZINASU T-shirt and recruiting members. Also in Swaziland, fellow comrades Bongeka 'Mavundla' Bhembe and Bongi'nkosi 'Bongo' Nkhambule were summoned to appear at the Mbabane High Court on March 2025 after months without trial for participating in the 2022 SNUS scholarship and jobs for all March.
6. **Poor Infrastructure and Social Amenities:** Students across the region face challenges such as inadequate accommodation, poor learning conditions, free access to Wi-Fi, access to digital devices (laptops, computers) and a lack of clean water and sanitation facilities. In Namibia there are more than 11 000 registered students and only 1080 rooms with quads at NR 2400 per month. This is too costly for the majority of students thus only 12% of the university students have access to accommodation. The



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### **Key Outcomes of the REC Meeting**

**The REC meeting reaffirmed SASU's commitment to advancing the interests of students in the SADC region. Key outcomes of the meeting include:**

1. **Re-engagement of Francophone and Portuguese languages to SASU:** The executive resolved to actively re-engage francophone and Portuguese communities within SASU to foster inclusivity, strengthen regional unity, and reflect the multi-lingual heritage of southern Africa.
2. **Adoption of a Regional Agenda:** The meeting adopted a regional agenda focused on promoting academic freedom, innovation, and the decolonization of education. This includes advocating for free education, the abolition of study visas for students within the SADC region, and the establishment of a SADC regional university.
3. **Strengthening Student Unions:** The meeting emphasised the need to strengthen student unions across the region by addressing internal challenges such as factionalism, corruption, and political interference. The executive committed to building organizational capacity and fostering unity among student leaders.
4. **Advocacy for Policy Change:** SASU will engage with governments, regional bodies, and international organisations to advocate for policies that promote accessible and quality education. This includes calling for increased funding for education, the provision of grants for poor students, and the alignment of the curriculum with labor market needs.
5. **Regional Solidarity:** The meeting underscored the importance of regional solidarity in addressing common challenges. SASU will work to build a cross-regional network of student unions to amplify the voices of students and drive collective action.

### **Program of Action**

**SASU calls upon the following stakeholders to take urgent and decisive action to address the challenges facing students in the SADC region:**



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## **1. SADC Governments:**

- Increase budgetary allocations to education to ensure adequate funding for infrastructure, teacher training, and learning materials.
- Implement policies that promote gender equality and protect students from discrimination and violence.
- Strengthen partnerships with the private sector to create internship and job opportunities for graduates.

## **2. The Diplomatic Community**

- Support SADC countries in mobilizing resources to address the education crisis.
- Advocate for international cooperation to mitigate the impact of climate change on education.
- Facilitate student exchange programs and scholarships to promote cross-border learning and collaboration.

## **3. Regional and International Organizations:**

- Provide technical and financial assistance to SADC countries to improve education systems.
- Support research and innovation in education to address the skills gap and promote sustainable development.

## **4. Students:**

- Must continue to advocate for their rights and hold leaders accountable for delivering on their promises.
- Foster unity and solidarity across borders to amplify their voices and drive change.

## **Organizational strengthening**

The following appointments have been made in aid to assist the SGO with administrative work

Ms A Moyo as info and admi officer and Mr B Thobela as Reginal Director on executing the technical functions and support



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As a deliberate process to improving the abilities of the organization and to enhance new knowledge in order to achieve goals the following sub committee appointments have been made

***NB\* the SG will act as scribe to all sub committees***

<b>1 POLITICAL EDUCATION SUB COMMITTEE</b>	<b>2.ORGANIZATIONAL RENEWAL AND CAPACITY BUILDING SUB COMMITTEE</b>	<b>3.COMMUNICATIONS SUB COMMITTEE</b>	<b>4INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SUB COMMITTEE</b>
<b>CONVENOR</b> PRESIDENT DENNIS CHIPLI  <b>DEPUTY CONVENOR</b> GABSILE AND PASSABLE  1. KEFENTSE MUKHARI 2. SALOMO KAMBANDA 3. BILLY MALOTANE 4. NONTETHELELO NKAMBULE 5. MAWELELA DALITSO 6. TOPO KWENA	<b>DEPUTY CONVENOR</b> VP DORTHEA IYABOO NANGOLO  <b>DEPUTY CONVENOR</b> MCONDISI MSIBI  1. LINDOKUHLE SITSHAKA 2. GIDEON CHITANGA 3. TSHEPO SHOGOLE 4. ALISTAR PFUNYE 5. DOUGLAS MAFIFI 6. MANKO MAKUTOANE	<b>CONVENOR</b> SAARA EDWARD  <b>DEPUTY CONVENOR</b> LUYANDO MAKWAZA  1. SIMPHIWE SILWANA 2. EMMANUEL NYAKUDYA 3. LUCKSON MALUGA 4. BONGANI MANYATSI 5. SINCOBILE DLAMINI 6. LETHU NYADENI	<b>CONVENOR</b> THEO MONAGENG  <b>DEPUTY CONVENOR</b> QUEEN MANAMELA  1. LWAZI SOMYA 2. SIMLINDZE MASINGA 3. NHLAKANIPHO MARLO 4. SESILA AMBUDA 5. ESTER SIKAALE 6. EMMANUEL SITIMA (TG)

## **GEO GLOBAL POLITICS**

**President: Dennis Chipili, DP: Dorthea Nangolo, SG: Julia Mtsweni, DSG: Gabisile Ndukuya, TG: Emmanuel Sitima**



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## **CHINA RELATIONS**

The Southern African Students Union (SASU) fully upholds the One China Policy, recognizing the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the sole legitimate government of China, including Taiwan. As an organization committed to regional and global cooperation, SASU values the strong ties between Southern Africa and China, particularly in education, development, and youth empowerment. We support diplomatic and economic partnerships that advance the interests of students and young people across the region. SASU also emphasizes respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity in international relations, aligning with the broader position of the SADC and other African nations on this matter.

China and the Southern African Development Community have developed a growing partnership focused on economic cooperation, trade, and infrastructure development. China has become a significant trading partner for SADC countries, exporting machinery, electronics, and textiles while importing minerals, agricultural products, and raw materials. Chinese investments in SADC nations are evident in various sectors, including mining, energy, and telecommunications. Large infrastructure projects, such as roads, railways, and power plants, are often undertaken with Chinese financial support. China has provided development assistance and technical support to SADC nations in areas like agriculture, health, and education. As SASU we support the relation and call for the relation to assist in the skills training of the youth and academic provision of students

## **NORWAY RELATIONS**

Norway has provided support for various SADC development initiatives, including governance, climate change, and sustainable development projects. There is a commitment to engage in political dialogue to promote peace, security, and stability in the SADC region. Norway has continuously been involved in mediation efforts and supports regional conflict resolution initiatives. Given Norway's focus on environmental sustainability, there is collaboration on issues related to climate change, wildlife conservation, and sustainable resource management. Norway has provided technical expertise and resources





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to help SADC countries implement policies and programs aimed at regional integration and economic development. SASU promotes the ongoing relation and calls for further attention on the education sector

## **GERMANY RELATIONS**

The Southern African Development Community and Germany maintain a partnership characterized by cooperation in various sectors, especially in development assistance, trade, and investment. Here are some key aspects of SADC-German relations. Germany provides significant development aid to SADC countries, focusing on poverty reduction, sustainable development, and good governance. Key areas include health, education, and infrastructure. Germany is one of the largest economic partners for SADC countries in Europe. Efforts are made to enhance trade relations and investment opportunities, particularly in renewable energy, technology, and manufacturing. There are initiatives to promote cultural exchanges and educational programs, enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation between the people of Germany and the SADC region. We welcome the election outcomes and wish the people of Germany a peaceful and suitable coalition for the will of the people and welcome the German support in the SADC

## **VENEZUELA RELATIONS**

SASU had a progressive biliteral with the Venezuelan embassy Ambassador with his excellency Carlos Feo Acedvedo on cooperation and scholarships and forged a way forward to voice out against the sanctions imposed. The economic and political challenges faced by Venezuela, particularly under sanctions, have limited its engagement and influence in the SADC region due to the he sanctions. SASU has established a well relation as SASU president was present at the inauguration of President Nicolas Maduro. SASU has minted its support for the people of Venezuela. The struggle against fascism in Venezuela has been marked by significant political and social conflicts. The country has experienced various movements over the years, particularly during the Bolivarian Revolution, initiated by Hugo Chávez in the late 1990s, which aimed to combat neoliberalism and perceived imperialist influences. Proponents of the Chávez government viewed their efforts as a fight





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against a form of fascism represented by the wealthy elite and foreign entities that sought to undermine the country's sovereignty. As SASU we call against the sanctions and call for the freedom of self determination for the people of Venezuela

## **UN RESOULTION ON THE DRC WAR**

The United Nations has passed several resolutions addressing the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and its relationship with Rwanda, particularly focusing on peacekeeping, human rights, and regional stability. A notable resolution is UNSC Resolution 1304, adopted in 2000, which emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach to the conflict, addressing both humanitarian and political aspects. Since then, various other resolutions have discussed the involvement of Rwandan forces, the need for disarmament of militia groups, and support for peace processes in the DRC. SASU supports the resolution as the war has displaced so many students and hindered the right to learn

## **PALESTINE, THE DRC, AND WESTERN SAHARA**

SASU's stance on Palestine, the DRC, and Western Sahara is characterized by a commitment to human rights, self-determination, and active engagement in international diplomacy to support these causes. These positions draw heavily on the region's own historical struggles against colonialism and its commitment to justice and equality. SASU strongly supports the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and statehood. The land is viewed as being under occupation, and SASU will advocate for an end to Israeli occupation. SASU will play a proactive role in promoting stability, peace, and democratic governance in the DRC. SASU's supports the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and independence from Moroccan rule. We recognize the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people. SASU will further raise the issue of Western Sahara in international platforms, advocating for a peaceful resolution and adherence to international law regarding the status of Western Sahara.



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SASU offers deep condolences to the government and people of the Republic of Namibia on the passing of Founding President His Excellency Dr Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma. President Sam Nujoma inspired the Namibian people to pride and resistance that belied the size of the population

We pay tribute to one of the towering figures who contributed immensely in the life of the student movement both SASCO as a domestic student movement of South Africa and the establishment of SASU as the SADC Regional Union. We pay tribute to Comrade Thamsanqa “Thami” Ncokwane former Deputy Secretary General of SASCO. And instilled faith and hope in the people of Namibia.

### **SASU's Commitment**

In the meeting it was therefore agreed that (SASU) as the representative body of students in the SADC region, it remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing the interests of students. It will continue to:

- Engage with governments, regional bodies, and international organizations to advocate for policies that promote accessible and quality education.
- Mobilise students to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- Foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among students to address the challenges of unemployment and underemployment.
- SASU held a successful induction and extended its gratitude to the various speakers who took their time to participate in the induction



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## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion the meeting noted that challenges facing students in the SADC region are not intractable thus with collective action and unwavering commitment, SASU can build an education system that empowers young people to realize their full potential and contribute to the development of the SADC region.

SASU calls on all stakeholders to join us in this endeavor. Together, we can create a brighter future for the students of Southern Africa and ensure that no one is left behind.

For further inquiries, please contact

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