

**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 38<sup>TH</sup>  
SADC SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

**AUGUST 17, 2018**

**WINDHOEK**

**Your Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa and Chairperson of SADC;**

**Your Excellency João Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and Chairperson of the Organ;**

**Your Excellency Paul Kagame, Chairperson of the African Union;**

**Your Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission;**

**Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government;**

**Your Excellency Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia; Esteemed First Spouses;**

**Your Excellencies Former Heads of State and Government;**

**Right Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia;**

**Her Excellency Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, Executive Secretary of SADC; Honourable Ministers;**

**Honourable Speakers of the Parliaments of Angola and South Africa;**

**Honourable Members of Parliament;**

**Distinguished Delegates;**

**Esteemed Invited Guests;**

**Media Fraternity;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Namibia, I am delighted to accept the Chairmanship of SADC at a time when a New Africa, The Africa We Want, is on the rise. Africa is on the march, driven by unity of purpose, the pursuit of common objectives and an unwavering determination to bring about shared prosperity.**

**I have accepted this responsibility knowing well that the leaders of the SADC nations have bestowed full confidence in Namibia to steer the work of this esteemed organisation to greater heights.**

**We are privileged to host the 38<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Summit here in Windhoek, the birthplace of SADC, where the SADC Treaty was adopted in 1992.**

**Permit me to commend the outgoing Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, for the sterling leadership he has provided to our organisation since assuming the Chairmanship. I further wish to thank the outgoing Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Excellency João Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, for providing steady leadership in the promotion of peace and security across our region.**

**My appreciation also goes to the Executive Secretary and her dedicated staff, for the effective manner in which they continue to manage the affairs of the SADC Secretariat.**

**Your Excellencies**

**The Theme for this Summit, *"Promoting Infrastructure Development and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development,"* attests to SADC's commitment in taking the agenda of infrastructural development forward, and the need for the youth to be at the center of what we do. The theme is a continuation of the industrialization trajectory of the last four Summits, starting with Zimbabwe in 2014, Botswana in 2015, The Kingdom of Eswatini in 2016 and South Africa in 2017. The theme guides us towards the attainment of the goals and aspirations of the Region, as espoused in the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2015-2020 and the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap, 2015-2063. Infrastructural development is a catalyst for youth empowerment and job creation. It is one of the avenues through which we can address the issue of youth unemployment in the region.**

**It would be remiss of me, at this stage, not to mention the important role that our women are playing and must continue to play in pursuit of SADC objectives and integration agenda. Namibia has a fervent commitment to Gender Equality, which is evident in the important role women play in politics. They are well represented in our Executive and Legislature. The participation of women at the highest levels of governance has been consolidated when the ruling SWAPO Party took a principled decision at the 1997 Congress to increase the proportion of female delegates to the Party's congress up to 50 percent. This was the genesis of the now constitutionally mandated SWAPO Party, Zebra style 50/50 policy.**

**Due to our significant progress in the area of Gender Equality, Namibia was awarded the prize for being the top performing country in Africa by the African Gender Forum, within the context of the Gender Is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC). I had the pleasure to receive this award on behalf of our country, from Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of the Republic of Liberia.**

**During its Chairmanship, Namibia intends to accelerate progress in terms of the empowerment of women. Namibia shall encourage the harmonization of gender responsive legislation, policies and programmes and projects, as outlined in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.**

**Your Excellencies**

**We are all aware that our aspirations of industrialization and subsequent sustainable development cannot be pursued without the existence of robust governance architectures within our respective countries. It is imperative that we build on the significant progress made in our region by adopting a**

**modern approach to Governance, characterized by robust processes, systems and institutions and no longer centered on personalities.**

**This approach is also part and parcel of the '*The Africa We Want*', which is characterized by fair and transparent Processes; Systems and the ethos of Institutions that are beyond reproach. Processes, systems and institutions are indispensable in buttressing democracy and effective governance.**

**I am confident that we will continue to make significant progress in the area of governance, especially given the outstanding work of the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) in entrenching democracy in the region. During its chairmanship, Namibia promises to intensify discussions on the establishment of a SADC Parliament.**

**We believe that the SADC Parliament will not only help buttress the governance architecture of the region, but will also be a key driver of our integration and development efforts.**

**We are pleased to note that in SADC, we have a legacy of peaceful transition of power. Following our successes against the forces of colonial occupation, many of our countries were ushered into the era of independence by extraordinary personalities.**

**We are proud to have in our midst, some of those extraordinary personalities. We therefore acknowledge the presence of Comrade Sam Nujoma, the First President and Founding Father of the Republic of Namibia;**

**Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba, Second President of Namibia and His Excellency Joaquim Chissano, Second President of Mozambique.**

**Their presence here today is testament to the legacy of peaceful transition of leadership within SADC.**

**In the SADC Treaty, which I should remind was adopted here in Windhoek; we committed “to ensure, through common action, the progress and well-being of the people of Southern Africa”. I want to reassure this summit that during my Chairmanship, Namibia will ensure that SADC pulls together in the same direction, and works harder in order to succeed in its agenda of development, economic cooperation and regional integration. We will continue to promote the SADC Agenda in order to realize sustainable development, poverty eradication, food security, peace, youth and gender empowerment. And additionally, a conducive environment for economic development, shared prosperity and enhancing the quality of life of the people of this region is a mandate we should fulfill.**

**Your Excellencies**

**This year, we are celebrating the centenary of Nelson Mandela, a great statesman of our region and the world at large. Nelson Mandela had the ability to inspire. He reminded us, “There is no passion to be found playing small – in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.” As a people of this region, we should draw inspiration from these words, from the wise Madiba. We can no longer play small.**

**Our vision of a common future driven by a conviction that the people of this region will no longer settle for a life that is less than the one they are all capable of living.**

**Even when we encounter difficulties, we should persevere and remain committed to the lofty goals of regional integration.**

**Integration is a sine qua non condition for the economic advancement of our region. Today, we stand at the crossroads as a region and as a continent. It is time for us to take a great leap forward by harnessing the opportunities provided by regional value chains and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.**

**At a time when artificial intelligence and robotics are defining the way we live and work, we must ensure that we collectively utilize these technologies as a means to catalyze our development agenda.**

**Your Excellencies**

**I wish to underscore the importance of unity in our pursuit to enhance the living standards and wellbeing of our people. When we move forward as a united force and as a coordinated team, we will overcome challenges and accomplish our goals of ensuring that the citizens of SADC, and of Africa in general, realize the benefits of socio-economic and political integration.**

**At this juncture, I wish to express my appreciation for the progress made so far in ensuring that intra-Africa trade and investment, which has the greatest potential for building sustainable economic development and integration in Africa, is at the core of our discussions.**

**One of the objectives of SADC, as stated in Article 5 of the SADC Treaty, is to promote self-sustaining development on the basis of collective self-reliance, and the inter-dependence of Member States. To spur inter-dependence and**

**intra-Africa trade, some SADC Member States signed the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) Agreement. The main objective of the TFTA Agreement is to strengthen and deepen economic integration of the southern and eastern Africa regions, and to harmonise policies and programmes across the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the areas of trade, customs and infrastructure development and movement of goods and people.**

**It is disheartening to learn that some citizens are encountering difficulties moving across borders within our region.**

**South Africans, who should benefit from the five flights a day that take place between Johannesburg and Windhoek, are hindered by the fact that they are required to apply for an entry Visa for every single visit. This is a barrier to business and ultimately, our aspirations of integration. This is why we have taken a decision that Africans carrying diplomatic passports can come to Namibia without visa requirements. Eventually we plan to do away with visa requirements for all passports. Only then, will we walk the talk.**

**Staying on the topic of integration, I note that SADC countries have signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is a flagship project of Agenda 2063, where goods and services will move freely among member states of the African Union (AU), with the objective of boosting intra-African trade.**

**The Agreement, which will bring together a market of 1.2 billion people with a combined GDP of over \$2.5 trillion, reinforces our commitment to the multilateral trading system.**

**During my tenure as Chairperson, I will strive to ensure that SADC remains focused on the promotion of intra-Africa trade. I plan to work closely with**

**my peers to ensure that our economic growth and industrialisation agendas are supported by infrastructure development. The aim is to foster the consolidation of synergies that will result in the effective implementation of the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap. We should not falter in our pursuit of industrialization. As a Regional Economic Community we have contributed meaningfully to the African Union Institutional Reform process. And we shall continue to make our voice heard.**

**The decision for all African Union Member States to implement a 0.2% levy on eligible imports to finance the African Union is understandable, since Africa should finance its own institution. Its embarrassing when we ask the very people we condemn, to fund our own organization. We therefore support the decision to ensure that African countries should be responsible for funding the AU. We also welcome the flexibility allowed with regards to remittance of Member States' financial contributions, and the linkage of the 0.2% Levy to the assessed contributions. However, in SADC, most of our countries are net importers of finished products including food. We are import dependent countries. Furthermore, some of our countries are classified as upper-middle income, using the World Bank method of dividing GDP by the population. Namibia and Swaziland among others are classified as Upper-Middle Income countries, notwithstanding the fact that we still face many challenges at the socio-economic level.**

**I am sure that over the course of this summit, we shall interrogate some of these matters. We therefore thank His Excellency Paul Kagame for the leadership and exemplary work ethic displayed in spearheading the AU Institutional Reform Process.**

**Your Excellencies**

**Without peace and stability, economic growth and development will remain nothing but a dream on the horizon. So far, the SADC Region is currently one of the most stable and secure regions in Africa.**

**The political and security situation in the region remains relatively calm and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency Emerson Mnagagwa and the people of Zimbabwe, for having organized the Harmonized General Elections on July 30, 2018.**

**We are aware that the matter regarding the outcome of those elections is in the courts, and we are confident that whatever the result of the case, peace will prevail.**

**I note with satisfaction progress made in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of Madagascar, following interventions and mediation efforts by SADC and international partners. I would like to thank His Excellency Joseph Kabila Kabange for having carried out the groundwork for elections to take place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as scheduled in December 2018.**

**Your Excellencies**

**Colonialism represents a serious violation of national sovereignty and is in breach of international law. While colonialism has ended in the large majority of Africa, there is still one area that is outstanding. It is only fitting for the people of SADC to reaffirm their unwavering support and solidarity with the people of Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in their struggle to achieve their inalienable rights to self-determination.**

**In this regard, I wish to commend the Republic of South Africa for offering to host the SADC Solidarity Conference with the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic before the end of this year.**

**Your Excellencies**

**When the SADC Treaty came into force in 1992, our leaders made a commitment on behalf of the people of our region. That commitment was, "Underdevelopment, exploitation, deprivation and backwardness in Southern Africa will only be overcome only through economic cooperation and integration."**

**Namibia's chairmanship of SADC will reaffirm this core commitment. Under our chairmanship, we shall leave no stone unturned in working with all of you in promoting economic cooperation and integration within SADC. For we believe in a SADC without underdevelopment, a SADC without exploitation, a SADC without deprivation and a SADC without backwardness.**

**With that being said, I wish the Summit successful deliberations.**

**I thank you**