

OFFICIAL OPENING REMARKS

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY, SENATOR PAUL DLAMINI, DEPUTY
PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND**

AT THE SADC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' MEETING

15TH MARCH, 2017

**ROYAL SWAZI SUN HOTEL
EZULWINI, KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND**

Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers and Minister of Economic Planning and Development of Swaziland, Prince Hlangusemphi

Honourable Ministers and Members of the SADC Council of Ministers,

Your Excellency, SADC Executive Secretary, Dr Lawrence Tax

Deputy SADC Executive Secretaries

Senior Officials from SADC Member States

Officials from the SADC Secretariat

Our Media Partners

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me at the outset, on behalf of His Majesty's Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland, to welcome you all to the Kingdom and to this all important Meeting of the SADC Council of Ministers. It is my hope that you have had a good and productive stay in the Kingdom of Swaziland since you arrived and that you had a successful SADC Ministerial Task Force on Regional

Economic Integration and the Strategic Session of the Ministerial Retreat on the SADC We Want over the past few days.

It is with great honour and humility for me to be accorded this opportunity to address the Official opening Session of the SADC Council of Ministers meeting being held here in the Kingdom today as we prepare for the Extra-ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government on the Action Plan for SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap (2015-2063). For the Kingdom, hosting such an important meeting of the SADC Council of Ministers' and the Extraordinary Summit is always a privilege of unparalleled proportions and we do not take this for granted.

I am confident that you worked hard in brainstorming on the issues and the interest of SADC at the Retreat. The lead statements by Ministers raised issues that need to be followed up as well as the Research papers by the Experts from the Regional institutions to open our eyes towards the core developmental issues of SADC. These options and resolutions on the future direction need to be taken seriously and implemented to make SADC a better organisation. The Retreat was the best idea for SADC to convene at this point in time of our history as SADC interrogate these

issues at the Ministerial level of how our organisation can improve and deliver on its mandate to the people of the SADC region. This should be done as an effort towards enhancing service delivery of the SADC programmes and ultimately uplifting the quality of lives of our people in the spirit of the Founding Fathers of SADC. It is my hope and I know that it will also please our leaders the Heads of State to know that we have started thinking about the future of SADC post 2020. This step will facilitate the crafting of the forward looking Vision post 2020.

SADC is at the epicentre of our regional and national economic development as well as for ensuring sustainable peace and security. It is with this conviction that the Kingdom guards jealously the SADC organisation, which ushers the hope and aspirations of its citizens. I wish to pay tribute to the Ministers for their presence in the Kingdom, in spite of pressing matters in their capitals. But I know that they will find pleasure in joining hands to craft a strategy and action plans that are meant to take SADC to greater heights.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

As we now prepare for the adoption and approval of the Action Plan for the Industrialisation Strategy by the SADC leaders, let us be focused and ensure that this noble idea of industrialisation of the SADC region is realised to give hope to all our people in terms of the opportunities it will bring about. Industrialisation is at the core of our developmental agenda as espoused by the SADC Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2015 – 2020. It is for this reason that the SADC Chairman and the Heads of State and Government found it fit to convene an Extra-ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government to be held at Mandvulo Grandhall at Lozitha on 18 March, 2017 just to deliberate on the way forward for the Industrialisation of the SADC region and give it the much needed prominence and momentum in the SADC Regional Integration agenda.

I am pleased to note that following the decision of Summit, the Secretariat has been able to finalise the proposed SADC Secretariat Organisational Structure, the Costed Action Plan on Industrialisation, the milestones as well as the Governance

Structure. This is commendable work from our SADC Secretariat and I encourage them to work harder in their coordination role.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

His Majesty, King Mswati III and Chair of SADC remains passionate about scaling up industrialisation across the SADC region as it is clear that we can best utilise our vast natural resources and respond to the urgent need to deepen SADC regional integration. This can be observed from his call on 30 August, 2016 to establish a SADC University of Transformation in which we hope the youth and future leaders of SADC will be trained and continue to develop the region using the best technology available. I wish to point out that SADC as an Intergovernmental organisation, should also recognise the role played by the private sector and appropriately utilise their strength of the private sector in this industrialisation initiative. There is need to ensure that the private sector has to be accorded an appropriate place in the SADC institutional architecture, as it is strategic that we move together with the private sector at each and every step. It is also critical that

we frequently dialogue with the private sector as it constitutes the engine room for growth in our region.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am informed that Costed Action Plan on Industrialisation, is about US\$ 100 million for coordination at the level of the SADC Secretariat and Member States over the fifteen (15) year period extending from 2015 – 2030. The Action Plan simply outlines the actions, policy interventions and the necessary macro-economic environment for industrialisation. I applaud the fact that it has an inbuilt robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism to monitor progress with the industrialisation programme, in particular the agreed milestones.

Following the launch of the SADC Free Trade Area in August 2008, and the launch of the SADC/COMESA/EAC Tripartite Free Trade Area in June 2015, it is pleasing to note that negotiations for the Continental Free Trade Area are about to commence. It is critical that SADC, as a region, continues to exert its influence in these processes.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

Given the pivotal role that food security plays in the well-being of our people, as well as the ongoing programme of industrialisation, in particular agro-processing, it is gratifying to note that the proposed Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) is ready for consideration by the SADC Council and recommend for approval by Summit as a Facility within the SADC Regional Development Fund. The implementation will be a major boost to our food security situation as a region.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I am pleased to advise that His Majesty, King Mswati III feels inspired by the progress the SADC organisation has made and he certainly looks forward to speedy implementation of the agreed frameworks to be tabled before SADC Council and the Extra-Ordinary Summit here in the Kingdom.

I wish to take this opportunity to wish you excellent and fruitful deliberations and look forward to positive outcomes of this

important SADC meeting. It is therefore my privilege to declare the March 2017 SADC Council of Ministers Meeting officially open.

I THANK YOU.

