



STATEMENT BY

**Mr SINDISO NGWENYA
SECRETARY GENERAL**

**AT THE OPENING OF THE 35th MEETING OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE**

3rd DECEMBER 2015

COMESA SECRETARIAT CONFERENCE HALL

THEME “Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization”

Our Guest of Honor, Honorable Raymond Mpundu, Deputy Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade of the Republic of Zambia

Distinguished Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Delegations

Excellencies Ambassadors and High commissioners and Permanent Representatives to COMESA

Excellencies Ambassadors and Special Representatives to COMESA

My Colleagues, Assistant Secretary General's

Representatives of our Sister Regional Economic Communities

Representatives of our Valued Cooperating Partners

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me at the very outset to thank our Guest of Honor, Honorable Raymond Mpundu for honoring us by his presence to officially open this important meeting of the intergovernmental Committee. Through you, Guest of Honor, on behalf of the Committee and indeed on my own behalf we kindly request you to convey our heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency, Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, the Government and the people of the Republic of Zambia for being gracious host to the COMESA Secretariat and for having provided a bigger piece of land for the construction of the new COMESA Headquarters. This practical support is yet again a confirmation of the indomitable spirit of the people of Zambia and resolute commitment to the realization of the pan African dream of one people, one economy and one Africa.

Guest of Honor

Distinguished Delegates

I would be remiss in my responsibility if I didn't not salute and commend the member States of COMESA through the Distinguished Delegates at this meeting for their individual and collective leadership and commitment to the realization of a prosperous COMESA through the implementation of the provisions of the COMESA Treaty and specific policy organs decisions.

At the continental level through the African Union, COMESA will be instrumental in the realization of Agenda 2063 and the first ten year program .It is heartening to note that the recently adopted United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) are in sync with

the African Union Agenda and by extension with the programs of regional economic communities.

At the sub regional level, COMESA with EAC and SADC achieved a historical milestone on 10 of June, 2015 in Sharma El Sheik, Egypt with the launching of the COMESA, EAC and SADC Tripartite FTA. The Tripartite FTA provides a solid basis for the step by step realization of the African Union Continental Free Trade Area scheduled for 2017.

The achievements made by COMESA would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of our sister regional economic communities under the leadership of the African Union and our cooperating partners whose presence here today is testimony of the existing cordial and mutually beneficial partnerships. In particular, I would like to commend and thank our privileged partner the European Union whose total support to member States under the Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM) and the Technical Cooperation Facility for 2015 is Twelve Million Euros. This brings the total disbursement from 2012 to 2015 to 62 million Euros.

This meeting is taking place at a time when there are strong economic head winds that have yet again exposed the fragility of COMESA economies in particular and Africa in general. It is not a long time ago when academicians, economic commentators of all shades and political leaders were celebrating the narrative of "Africa Rising".

Indeed the hubris and excitement was so strong that it clouded our sober assessment that narrative of Africa Rising was nothing but a carefully crafted and choreographed message which described appearances and not the substance of our economies that are characterized by wrong specialization in the global economy of producing and exporting low value primary commodities with little or no processing as evidence by the abysmally low percentage of the contribution of industry to the national and regional gross domestic product.

That our economies are fragile and structurally weak is widely acknowledged. The question is what is it that should be done to structurally transform economies on a trajectory of inclusive, equitable and sustainable development? The answer is partly the implementation of the COMESA Industrial policy and other provisions of the COMESA

Treaty on infrastructure, energy, agriculture, Natural resource management and environment, science and technology and human resource development to mention but a few.

Guest of Honor

Distinguished Permanent Secretaries

Ladies and Gentlemen

Taking into account that this meeting will be reviewing the status of implementation of not only COMESA approved priority programs, but the Treaty provisions, I would like to appeal that the collective intellect of this meeting be deployed to identify a come up with a paradigm of developmental integration that addresses the structural challenges and systemic risks that the COMESA region faces in a globalizing world whose rules of game are dictated by markets which require smart policies by governments for the attainable of universal development goals.

It is against this brief background on the challenges and opportunities that I implore this meeting in preparing for the Council of Ministers meeting, pursuant to Article 17 of sub paragraph of the Treaty to come with a holistic program that is focused on high impact activities. This will mark a departure from the past whereby we try to do everything with limited resources and achieving very few results.

I thank you for your kind attention.