



**OPENING REMARKS**

**BY**

**THE SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, H.E. DR.  
STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX**

**AT THE**

**18<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL TASK FORCE ON  
REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION**

**11 MARCH 2017**

**EZULWINI,**

**THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND**

The Chairperson of the Ministerial Taskforce, Hon. Jabulani Mabuza, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade of the Kingdom of Swaziland;

Honourable Ministers

Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Chairperson of the Senior Officials of the Task Force

Senior Officials from Member States

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Ministerial Task Force on Regional Economic Integration. May I take the opportunity to thank the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland for warm welcome and for availing the excellent facilities that have enable the successful convening of this meeting.

Honourable Ministers

Since your last meeting in July 2016, significant progress has been made towards finalising the Action Plan. Member States submitted comments on the draft Action Plan as you had directed. Consultations were also made with private sector to beef up the inputs that were received from Member States. Senior Officials met in November 2016 to consolidate the comments and revise and finalise the draft Action Plan. The revised Action Plan was further circulated to Member States in December 2016 for final comments. These comments have been dully incorporated in the draft in readiness for your meeting today. We are confident that the interactions between the Secretariat, Member States and the private sector have assisted in refining the Action Plan into a document that can now be used as a guide to implement the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap. During this meeting, the final draft action plan will be submitted to you for consideration. It is our expectation that the Ministerial Task Force will adopt and recommend the Costed Action Plan for approval by the Extraordinary Summit.

Honourable Ministers

The SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap is anchored on three Pillars of Industrialization and market integration, Infrastructure Development, Peace and Security and Special Programmes of Regional Integration importance. The Action Plan details key actions and policy interventions required to achieve the goals and objectives of the Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap for each of the pillars.

Specifically, Industrialization will be achieved through, among others, stabilised and regionally converged macroeconomic environment within a developmental state; improved policy environment for industrial development; increased share of diversified production and exports; enhanced capacities and capabilities of SMEs to participate in industrialization and value chains; and improved exploitation of industrial opportunities associated with Natural Resources and the Blue (Ocean) Economy.

On the other hand, competitiveness will be achieved through, among others, improved micro-economic environment for firms and enterprises; strengthened Centres of Excellence and Centres of Specialization for selected priority sectors; improved labour productivity and labour market efficiency; addressing key infrastructural constraints; and establishing regional financing mechanisms for sustainable industrial development.

Lastly, regional integration will be achieved through, among others, compliance with SADC Protocols on regional economic integration; removal of Non-Tariff Barriers; and facilitating trade in services to facilitate industrialization.

In line with the Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap, the Action Plan recognises the importance of participation of women, youth and persons with disability in industrial development. It also recognises that effective communication in support of industrialization, sound governance mechanism for implementation of the Industrialization Strategy and regular monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy and Roadmap, are key.

As part of this meeting you will also review the status of economic integration at the Tripartite and Continental levels. Specifically, you will review the status of implementation of the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement and preparatory work on the commencement of the Continental Free Trade Area negotiations.

Honourable Ministers,

With these few remarks, I would like to thank you for your attention and wish you successful deliberations.

I thank you.