



Republic of Botswana

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

BY

HONOURABLE VINCENT T. SERETSE

AT THE

**16TH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL TASK FORCE
ON REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION**

Date: 13th March, 2016

Venue: GICC



Honourable Ministers,

Ambassadors and Representatives of Diplomatic Corps here present;

Your Excellency Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax, Executive Secretary of SADC,

SADC Deputy Executive Secretaries,

Senior Officials,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

1. Welcome to Gaborone and to the 16th Meeting of the Ministerial Task Force on Regional Economic Integration. It is indeed a pleasure for us to host you, Honorable Ministers, in a series of meetings that will culminate in the Meeting of Council starting tomorrow.
2. Allow me to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to you, for having responded positively to the call to attend this meeting. I warmly welcome the opportunity to meet you once again since our last meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe in April

2015, where we recorded a milestone achievement when the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap was approved by the Extra-Ordinary Summit. This is therefore the first opportunity we have to review progress in implementation of the decisions we took at the time and the regional integration agenda in general and give guidance to both the Secretariat and the Senior Officials.

3. Honorable Ministers, I need not remind you that when we adopted the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap, we adopted a visionary agenda with a purpose, the purpose being to transform our economies, enhance economic growth and create empowerment, leveraging on the region's diverse resources. The Strategy sets out a pathway for the SADC region to rise up and increase its contribution to global trade. Its significance requires visionary leadership, and compels us to remain seized with the process to ensure implementation for results.
4. Summit in its wisdom, expanded the Ministerial Task Force to include Ministers responsible for infrastructure. This responds favourably to the implementation requirements of the Strategy given the importance of infrastructure to industrial development. It therefore goes without saying that fast-tracking implementation of the Regional Infrastructure

Development Master Plan is very vital. Furthermore, effective coordination among ourselves, and indeed with other key stakeholders remain central to successful implementation of the Strategy. Our agenda today is a reflection of the necessity to coordinate and work hand in hand, not only at the regional level, but also in our national structures.

5. While at this point Honorable Ministers, let me also caution that the SADC region needs to be proactive in addressing the water and energy crisis that our region is faced with, which challenges may frustrate our efforts towards industrialization. It is in this regard that the Chair of SADC has directed SADC Secretariat to organize a workshop bringing together our Governments and key stakeholders to brainstorm on possible solutions to these challenges. It is also of great importance, to strengthen science, technology and innovation institutions in order to develop skills and competencies in those fields of particular interest to the region to support industrialization.
6. Our trading environment should equally respond to the demands of the Industrialization Strategy. We should for instance begin to look at how our trade and trade related laws support industrialization. Therefore, finalization of the Comprehensive Trade Facilitation Programme cannot be

overemphasized, as it will facilitate and ease movement of goods within the region.

7. Honorable Ministers, without much ado, let me express my appreciation to my colleague, Minister Mathambo, the Minister of Finance and Development Planning in Botswana, and his team for the excellent arrangements they made for this meeting. I trust that you will find the arrangements comfortable and hospitable.
8. In conclusion, let me once again welcome you to this meeting and wish you fruitful deliberations.

I thank you.

Pula! Pula! Pula! Pula!