



**REMARKS BY**

**HER EXCELLENCY, DR STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX  
SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**AT THE**

**OFFICIAL COMMISSIONING OF THE KAZUNGULA BRIDGE**

**KAZUNGULA, BOTSWANA**

**10 MAY 2021**

**Your Excellency, Mr. Felix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Chairperson of the African Union and Guest of Honour,**

**Your Excellency, Mr Filipe Jacinto Nyusi President of the Republic of Mozambique, and Chairperson of SADC,**

**Your Excellency, Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana, and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation,**

**Your Excellency, Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia,**

**Your Excellency, Dr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe,**

**Your Excellency Dr. Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia,**

**Senator Themba N. Masuku, Acting Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini,**

**Honourable Ministers of Transport and Communications of Botswana and Zambia,**

**Honourable Ministers here present from Botswana and Zambia,**

**Your Excellences, Heads of International Organizations, and Heads of Diplomatic Missions, and Representatives,**

**Senior Government Officials,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Our partners from the Media,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am greatly honoured to take part in this momentous occasion of Commissioning the Kazungula Bridge and One Stop Border Post (OSBP).

This occasion is gratifying as it marks the completion of construction, and the beginning of operations of the North-South Corridor multi-national project. Kazungula Bridge and OSBP is a Southern African Development Community (SADC) flagship project, under the Regional Infrastructure Development Master

Plan (RIDMP). The project is expected to facilitate physical transport and logistical linkages between, and among Member States, movement of persons, goods and services in our region, and thus, contribute to the region's desire to industrialize, create wealth and jobs for SADC citizens.

The traditional two stop border posts have been upgraded to a one stop border, whereby border transactions have been re-engineered, re-modelled and recalibrated, to improve regional connectivity and efficiency of transit traffic, and in doing so, to enhance competitiveness, reduce transaction costs, increase SADC intra-trade, and contribute to SADC regional integration and development. The specific expected outcomes include:

- reduced border transit time;
- improved procedures on trade facilitation;
- improved border management operations;
- increased traffic throughput; and
- reduced time-based transport and trade cost.

Together with the economic benefits, this magnificent bridge, that links Botswana and Zambia over the Zambezi River, is a state of the art, and complex project that replaces old technology, which was prone to disasters and accidents, with modern infrastructure and facilities. Indeed, this iconic bridge and the OSBP symbolise our unity of purpose, as we move ***“Towards a Common Future”***, as per motto of SADC.

### **Your Excellencies,**

The Kazungula Bridge Project is a regional infrastructure project worth emulating. Whilst the feasibility and design studies were coordinated by the SADC Secretariat, detailed designs and construction were jointly led and coordinated by Governments of Botswana and Zambia, and funded by the two Governments, supported by the African Development Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). I am confident that SADC Member States will take forward this noble practice of working together for common goal, and expedite the construction of the other regional gateways, including Beitbridge and Kasumbalesa. Addressing the remaining hotspots will unleash the great potential that the North South Corridor has, as a catalyst for spatial development and facilitating industrialization and regional trade and commerce.

### **Your Excellencies,**

Objectives of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) and Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) of increased intra-regional trade, economic growth, and jobs for our population, especially the youth, among others, cannot be achieved without improving transport and trade facilitation by lowering transport and trade related costs. According to World Bank studies, it is estimated that on average, it costs US\$

400 per day for an idle truck at a border post, making our imports more expensive and our exports less competitive. These costs are to be avoided for the region to facilitate regional value chains, industrialise, and create the needed jobs, especially noting that the region has a number of Member States with no direct access to seaports, which serve as international gateways. In the past, such countries were referred to as landlocked countries, but through regional cooperation, they have become land linked. Construction of the missing links and adoption of One Stop Border Post approach, is therefore, not a matter of choice, but a necessity, if we are to realize the objective of SADC of promoting sustainable and equitable growth and socio-economic development to alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa through Regional Integration.

### **Your Excellencies,**

The COVID-19 pandemic remains a global challenge and a great impediment to our socio-economic aspirations. This notwithstanding, SADC Members States continue to put in place measures to contain its spread, and to mitigate the associated socio-economic hardships. May I on behalf of the SADC region thank and commend SADC leaders, Your Excellencies, for the various response measures put in place. May I also thank SADC citizens for observing the measures put in place and cooperating in the fight against this deadly invisible enemy. May I encourage all to continue complying, it is only through consented efforts by all of us that we can contain the pandemic. May I also express condolences to families of our citizens whose loved ones succumbed to COVID-19, and pay tribute to our frontline workers who continued to perform their duties and tasks under the very trying circumstances especially, public health workers, border officials, cross-border traders, and cross border transport workers.

In conclusion, allow me to extend our gratitude to our leaders, specifically the Presidents of Botswana and Zambia, for remaining steadfast and ensuring the realization of the Kazungula Bridge and One Stop Border Post (OSBP). May I also thank Government Officials and SADC Secretariat staff, who in one way or the other, contributed during conceptualization, designing, and construction of the Kazungula Bridge and One Stop Border Post. Allow me to also thank our Cooperating Partners, specifically, the African Development Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for their technical and financial support.

Pula!!

Tiende pamodzi!!

Towards a Common Future!!

**THANK YOU**