

YOUR EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT JACOB ZUMA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA,
HONOURABLE MOKGWEETSI ERIC KEABETSWE
MASISI, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA,
YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESSES,
THE PRIME MINISTER,
CHAIRPERSON OF THE SACU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
AND MINISTERS,
THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SACU AND SACU
SECRETARIAT,
EXCELLENCIES, MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC
CORPS,
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

**SIYANIVUSELA NONKHE BEKUNENE LAPHA
EMANDVULO GRAND HALL.**

INTRODUCTION

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT I WELCOME YOU, YOUR EXCELLENCIES, TO THE KINGDOM OF E-SWATINI AND TO THE 5TH SACU SUMMIT WHICH IS GOING TO CONSIDER SOME OF THE CRITICAL ISSUES OF OUR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS A REGION.

WE WELCOME YOU ALL WITH OPEN ARMS OF FRIENDSHIP AND BROTHERHOOD TO OUR SHORES.

I HOPE YOU HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED THE TRUE HOSPITALITY OF ESWATINI SINCE YOUR ARRIVAL IN THE KINGDOM.

WE ARE A NATION WITH WARM AND BIG HEARTS AND ALWAYS READY TO EMBRACE OUR VISITORS WITH LOVE AND KINDNESS.

IT IS MY HOPE THAT THE ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR THE SUMMIT AND THE FACILITIES PROVIDED TO YOUR EXCELLENCIES AND DELEGATIONS, WOULD MEET YOUR REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS.

CONGRATULATE THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

ON BEHALF OF THE SACU FAMILY, I WISH TO CONGRATULATE HIS MAJESTY KING LETSIE III, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO, FOR THE PEACEFUL AND SUCCESSFUL ELECTIONS HELD RECENTLY. WE WISH THE KINGDOM CONTINUED SUCCESS AND PROSPERITY.

IN THE SAME VEIN, WE CONGRATULATE THOMAS THABANE, THE NEW PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO, ON HIS APPOINTMENT. WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO WORKING WITH HIM AND THE GOVERNMENT IN ADVANCING THE SACU AGENDA.

2002 SACU TREATY

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,

THE 2002 SACU TREATY WAS UNDERPINNED BY THE DESIRE TO TRANSFORM AND POSITION ITSELF AT THE CENTRE FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND TO DELIVER THE DEVELOPMENTAL AGENDA FOR OUR ECONOMIES.

TO THIS END AND DESPITE MANY CHALLENGES FACING THE ORGANISATION, SACU HAS SUCCESSFULLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR ECONOMIES AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO.

AS WE MOVE FORWARD WITH OUR INTEGRATION AGENDA, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER AS ONE FAMILY AND TO ENSURE THAT SACU IS MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TO ALL THE MEMBER STATES.

ITS OPERATIONS ARE TRANSPARENT, ACCEPTED BY ALL MEMBER STATES AND HAVE AN EQUAL VOICE AS PARTNERS.

FURTHER, IT WOULD BE FUNDAMENTAL TO CONTINUE TO PURSUE COMMON APPROACHES IN TRADE POLICIES AND TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, IN THE AREAS OF INDUSTRIAL POLICIES.

COMMON APPROACHES ARE CRITICAL IN THE FACE OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES. IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THIS CONSIDERATION THAT WE CONCLUDED THE SACU TREATY IN 2002.

WE SHOULD REFLECT ON HOW BEST TO STRENGTHEN SACU AND ELIMINATE THE CHALLENGES WE HAVE BEEN FACING. WE ARE COGNISANT OF THE NEED TO CONSOLIDATE AND IMPLEMENT OUR COMMITMENTS.

OF IMPORTANCE TO NOTE IS THAT WE ARE YET TO ESTABLISH ALL INSTITUTIONS AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE SACU AGREEMENT SUCH AS THE TARIFF BOARD AND THE TRIBUNAL. WE MUST UPHOLD OUR COMMITMENTS, PARTICULARLY TO UNDERTAKE AND NEGOTIATE AS A BLOCK.

THIS IS IMPORTANT IN LIGHT OF GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS THAT IMPACT OUR REGION.

THE PERSISTENT SLOW GROWTH FOR THE SACU ECONOMIES, PRESENTS POTENTIAL RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE SACU REGION'S OVERALL ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE.

THIS REQUIRES THAT THE REGION CONTINUES TO PURSUE PRUDENT NATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICIES TO ENSURE THAT OUR REGION REMAINS RESILIENT AND IS ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF THE ECONOMIC RECESSION.

IT IS ALSO CRITICAL TO CONTINUE WITH EFFORTS AIMED AT DIVERSIFYING OUR ECONOMIES AWAY FROM DEPENDENCE ON A FEW PRODUCTS AND ENSURE INTEGRATION IN BOTH THE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS.

IN THIS REGARD, THE COORDINATION OF POLICIES AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL, INCLUDING ADDRESSING ISSUES OF INFRASTRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS JOINTLY, COULD YIELD BENEFICIAL RESULTS IN AREAS OF MUTUAL INTEREST.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROADMAP

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,

REGARDING THE AGENDA OF THE SUMMIT, THE MAIN FOCUS FOR DISCUSSION TODAY IS TO CONSIDER THE PROGRESS MADE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROADMAP TO STRENGTHEN THE SACU WORK PROGRAMME THAT WE AGREED TO AT OUR LAST SPECIAL MEETING HELD IN NOVEMBER 2015, IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA.

YOU WILL RECALL THAT THE ROADMAP TO INVIGORATE THE SACU WORK PROGRAMME COMPRISES SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES. THE PROGRAMME HAD LARGELY STALLED SINCE 2013, SAVE FOR FEW PROGRAMMES SUCH AS TRADE NEGOTIATIONS AND TRADE FACILITATION.

CONSEQUENTLY, THE DISCUSSIONS AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL HAVE TAKEN PLACE INCLUDING THE HOLDING OF A MINISTERIAL RETREAT IN JUNE 2016, TO REFLECT ON ALL ISSUES.

THESE INCLUDED REFLECTIONS ON INDUSTRIAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN SACU AND A REVIEW OF THE REVENUE SHARING ARRANGEMENT, AMONG OTHERS.

SUMMIT IS LOOKING FORWARD TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER A PROGRESS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COUNCIL ON THIS MATTER AND TO CHART A WAY FORWARD.

I AM WELL AWARE OF THE CHALLENGES FACED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SACU WORK PROGRAMME, PARTICULARLY THE FACT THAT THE COUNCIL WAS NOT ABLE TO CONVENE ITS MEETINGS ON A QUARTERLY BASIS TO JOINTLY INTERROGATE ISSUES.

THIS HAS LED TO THE DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL TO BE MADE ON A ROUND ROBIN BASIS, WHICH IN TURN DELAYS THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SACU AGENDA THEREOF.

WE WELCOME THE COMMITMENT BY THE COUNCIL TO RESUME ITS REGULAR QUARTERLY MEETINGS TO ENSURE AND FACILITATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME.

WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE AGREED WORK PROGRAMME WILL CREATE THE DESIRED MOMENTUM TO MOVE THE SACU AGENDA FORWARD. IN THIS REGARD, I WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EFFORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY AND THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SACU COUNCIL FOR THE CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

YOU SHOULD CONTINUE WORKING TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT THE SACU WORK PROGRAMME IS IMPLEMENTED WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY.

THE SACU HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT REMAIN AVAILABLE TO PROVIDE THE POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC GUIDANCE ON ANY ISSUES THAT ARE REFERRED TO THE SUMMIT BY THE COUNCIL.

AS OUR TERM AS CHAIR OF SACU COMES TO AN END NEXT MONTH, WE ARE GRATEFUL AND HUMBLLED BY THE TRUST MEMBER STATES BESTOWED UPON US TO CARRY THIS ENORMOUS RESPONSIBILITY OF STEERING OUR CUSTOM UNION TO THIS FAR.

I WISH TO THANK MY FELLOW HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT, SACU SECRETARIAT AND THE COUNCIL FOR THEIR UNWAVERING SUPPORT DURING OUR TERM. I AM SATISFIED THAT WE HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS AS A REGION.

THE FACT THAT WE NOW HAVE A CLEAR WORK PROGRAMME TO MOVE OUR REGIONAL AGENDA FORWARD, CANNOT BE OVEREMPHASISED.

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE INCOMING CHAIR IS TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING TO ENSURE TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION.

IN THIS REGARD, WE WISH THE INCOMING CHAIR, THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA, GREAT SUCCESS AND WE REMAIN AVAILABLE TO GIVE THEM EVERY SUPPORT THAT THEY MIGHT REQUIRE FROM US.

COMMENDABLE WORK OF SACU SECRETARIAT

ALLOW ME TO ALSO COMMEND THE SECRETARIAT UNDER THE ABLE LEADERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, FOR ITS UNTIRING EFFORTS IN COORDINATING THE WORK OF THE SACU INSTITUTIONS AND PROVIDING THE REQUIRED SUPPORT.

MY RECENT VISIT TO THE SACU HEADQUARTERS GAVE ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO APPRECIATE THE COMMENDABLE WORK THE SECRETARIAT IS DOING. I HOPE WE SHALL ALL GIVE IT THE NECESSARY SUPPORT AS IT CARRIES OUT THIS MAMMOTH TASK OF FULFILLING THE SACU MANDATE.

THEIR WORK IS CRUCIAL BECAUSE THEY HAVE A KEY ROLE TO PLAY IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OF OUR REGION.

CONCLUSION

THE SACU VISION OF *"AN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY WITH EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, DEDICATED TO THE WELFARES OF ITS PEOPLE FOR A COMMON FUTURE"*, REMAINS RELEVANT.

THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS NOBLE VISION, REQUIRES US TO JOIN HANDS AND DOUBLE OUR EFFORTS AND DEDICATION.

I HOPE WE SHALL HAVE A SUCCESSFUL SUMMIT THAT WILL BRING HANDSOME DIVIDENDS TO OUR PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY BY CHANGING THE LIVING LANDSCAPE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS FOR OUR PEOPLE.

WE TRUST THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO ENJOY YOUR STAY IN THE KINGDOM AND HOPEFULLY GET AN OPPORTUNITY FROM YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE TO VISIT OUR HERITAGE AND TOURISM SITES. THE KINGDOM IS BLESSED WITH FLORA AND FAUNA, UNDULATING LANDSCAPES AND MOUNTAINS.

I THANK YOU - MAY THE ALMIGHTY GOD, BLESS US ALL.