



**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY TSWELOPELE MOREMI
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SACU ON THE LAUNCH OF THE
SACU CENTENARY COMMEMORATION
THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2010,
WINDHOEK, REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

Your Excellency Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia

Your Majesty King Mswati III of the Kingdom of Swaziland

Your Excellency Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, President of the Republic of Botswana

Your Excellency Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa

Your Excellency, Mr. Festus Mogae Former President of the Republic of Botswana

The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili - Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Right Honourable Nahas Angula, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia

Honourable Marco Hausiku Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia

Honourable Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia

Honourable Asser Kapere, Chairman of National Council of Namibia

Your Honour Peter Shivute, Chief Justice of the Republic of Namibia

Honourable Ministers

Honourable Members of Parliament

Honourable Governor of Khomas Region

Your Worship the Mayor of the City of Windhoek

Your Excellencies, Representatives of the Regional Organizations

Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am greatly honoured to address this august gathering on the occasion of the first meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the launch of the SACU Centenary commemoration. It is my privilege and honour to welcome you all most sincerely on behalf of the SACU Secretariat to this joyous occasion.

At the outset, I would like to thank His Excellency President Hifikepunye Pohamba, the Government and the people of the Republic of Namibia for hosting this historic meeting and the launch of the celebrations of the 100th Anniversary of SACU. Since 2004, with the entry into force of the new Agreement, the Government of Namibia has generously supported the work to establish the new SACU Secretariat here in Windhoek. The hosting of today's meeting and the donation of this site for the construction of a Headquarters building for SACU is a further demonstration of the commitment of the Republic of Namibia to the ideals that this Organization stands for. I would like to express our gratitude for this act of generosity.

Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers

We are today celebrating the centenary of the SACU, the oldest Customs Union in the world. This is a remarkable achievement and we are grateful to be able to commemorate what is, by any standard, an extraordinary milestone. However, we are at the same time acutely aware of the challenges facing us. It is for that reason too that we have adopted a Theme for the centenary celebrations which is meant to inspire us to remain focussed on the tasks ahead of us. We have to work towards achieving these tasks. Attaining our objectives will require committed leadership, a shared vision and dedication by all role players.

The theme ***“Implementing a Common Agenda Towards Regional Integration in Southern Africa”***, points towards the challenges facing SACU and the resolve required to deal with them. It points towards the need for the collective action to address these challenges and to ensure SACU's continued adaptation to emerging regional and global integration imperatives. Allow me therefore to share with you my views as what is required from SACU and its Member States in order to be successful in our endeavours.

Firstly, we have to focus on **Renewal** and the **Consolidation** of the Union. When the Members States embarked on the road towards a new SACU based on a renegotiated Agreement, they did so in order to bring about a fresh start. The Member States were also desirous to deepen their integration into the global economy through

common policies and common democratic institutions. At technical level the adoption of the 2002 Agreement was inspired by a desire for an Organization which could promote the interests of the Member States through a Customs Union suitable for the conditions of the 21st century and aligned with the obligations of the Member States under WTO. This implied a new *modus operandi* within SACU.

One can conclude that by observing that the adoption of the 2002 Agreement demonstrated a realisation that renewal was needed. However, the formal renewal of an existing institution is not sufficient. There should be evidence of new achievements and the temptation to go along with **“business as usual”** has to be resisted.

Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Invited Guests,

Well-functioning institutions are a prerequisite for the efficient operations of any Organisation. Therefore, SACU cannot fulfil the functions provided for in the 2002 Agreement without proper institutions and the necessary mandates. Failure to do this will result in a fragmented operation of the Union. It is therefore imperative that high priority is given to the full establishment of all institutions as provided for in the 2002 SACU Agreement.

The second point I would like to make is that we have to strive for **Excellence** in operations of the Customs Union. This requires a new approach towards the way we do business. In this regard, while the Secretariat has grown in terms of our technical capacity and ability to assist our Member States, a lot still needs to be done. It is gratifying to note that the SACU Council of Ministers recognises that in order to meet the current and new challenges, the Secretariat needs to be further strengthened. Without technical skill and resources, this Organization will not be able to operate at the level of excellence required to meet the challenges we face. We must strengthen the institutions of the Union and provide them with the required capacity and mandate to promote SACU’s collective interests and to assist Member States and SACU Institutions when confronted with particular technical issues.

Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers,

The final point I would like to raise is the importance of **Visionary Leadership**. Today we have witnessed a historic occasion. For the first time since the adoption of the 2002 Agreement a Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the SACU Member States has taken place. This development has the potential to bring a new

vitality to the Organization and its operations. If we are to overcome these challenges, we need visionary and committed leadership at all levels of our Union.

The evolution of the Union over time and through the various Agreements has been underscored by the desire by the Member States to modernise and deepen the integration arrangement. It also forged a new set of values and new institutional arrangements among the Member States. Therefore as we celebrate SACU Centenary today, it is appropriate that we pause to remind ourselves of the vision which inspired the adoption of the 2002 SACU agreement. We should ask ourselves whether we are succeeding in implementing it.

Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Invited Guest,

The adaptability and responsiveness of the Organisation to both external and internal political and economic realities represent some of the greatest strengths and successes of SACU. It bears testimony to the ability of the Member States to implement reform measures when required in order to serve the interests of all Member States, the people and the region.

SACU has made significant progress in promoting both regional integration and the integration of Member States into the global economy. Regionally, SACU is the only fully functioning Customs Unions, with free movement of goods between Members, Common External Tariff etc.

The deeper regional integration process that the region has embarked upon is another matter that poses specific challenges to our traditional approaches and our way of doing business. That is one of the reasons for this Summit; to find answers to these problems and to move our Organization forward. I am confident that the meeting of the Heads of State and Government that took place will provide answers to some of these issues.

Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, Heads of States and Government, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

One can ask what should inspire this process and how should the contemporary challenges be tackled? I would like to offer the following for your consideration:

- Having evolved out of colonial arrangements hundred years ago, SACU adapted to new needs and conditions over time and remained able to offer an effective mechanism of intergovernmental cooperation. The continuation of

regional stability in the SACU region should be a paramount guiding principle in whatever is decided.

- All the Member States have close relationships based on a common history, and a common legal and administrative tradition. These are important features of our cooperation in SACU and should facilitate our endeavour to find solutions to practical problems, while continuing to cooperate and work together.
- Democratic governance is an important part of the 2002 Agreement and should be strengthened.
- We still have to fulfil the promise and expectations contained in the 2002 SACU Agreement. Our people, the business community and the international community are aware of these aspects and require from us to work diligently to achieve our aims and objectives.
- Finally, we should not lose sight of the fact that SACU is not an end in itself. It is an instrument for advancing economic development and growth, and for promoting deeper regional integration. Ultimately it is about the improvement of the lives of the people of the five Member States. Therefore, SACU's success or failure should be measured by the extent to which the Member States succeeds in utilizing this Organization as an instrument for achieving these objectives.

In conclusion,

Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers,

It is my sincere belief that this Summit will go down in history as an occasion signifying the recommitment of the political leadership to define SACU's future role and a collective determination to move the Union forward. It is in this spirit that I appeal to you for your guidance.

I thank you for this opportunity and trust you will enjoy these celebrations.