



**REMARKS DR. THEMBINKOSI MHLONGO  
SADC DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY –  
REGIONAL INTEGRATION  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF  
THE COMESA-EAC-SADC TRIPARTITE  
FREE TRADE AREA (TFTA) AGREEMENT**

**BY THE**

**GOVERNMENT OF BOTSWANA**

**30 JANUARY 2018**

**GABORONE - BOTSWANA**

**Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry; Honourable Vincent Seretse**

**Secretary General of COMESA, Mr Sindiso Ndema Ngwenya**

**Representatives of EAC**

**Senior Government Officials from the Government of Botswana**

**Captains of Industry and Private Sector representatives**

**The Media**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me pleasure to represent the SADC Secretariat and to witness the signing of the Tripartite FTA Agreement by the Government of Botswana. I wish to commend Botswana for taking this step and joining the Tripartite family in bringing the Tripartite FTA closer to coming into force. Botswana becomes the 22<sup>nd</sup> Tripartite Member/Partner State to sign on to the TFTA Agreement and we look forward to you taking the next step of ratifying the Agreement. Only two Member/Partner States, Egypt and Uganda have so far ratified the Agreement and twelve (12) more countries are required to ratify for the TFTA to come into force.

The Tripartite FTA agreement has the potential to boost trade in Africa and accelerate development by creating a huge single market of about 700 million people with an estimated a gross domestic product of well over \$1.4 trillion. The Tripartite should also not be

viewed in isolation but rather as an integral component of the larger Continental FTA which will soon come into realisation with the signing of the legal CFTA instruments during the planned AU Extra-Ordinary Summit at the end of March 2018. These two processes offer our business operators in SADC the platform for greater market access opportunities covering both trade in goods and services.

Let me also point out that the delay in the conclusion of the Tripartite negotiations on detailed components to the TFTA covering tariff schedules and provisions on product specific rules of origin, has considerably hampered the momentum in the Tripartite process built up after the First (2008), Second (2011) and Third Summits (2015). This has had consequential impact on the envisaged synergy between the Tripartite and Continental FTA negotiations. We therefore look forward to renewed impetus to conclude all outstanding work and commence implementation of the Tripartite FTA Agreement before the end of this year.

Lastly, let me urge Botswana to take a holistic approach to all the FTAs the country is party to, i.e. SADC, Tripartite and the soon to be concluded CFTA, and capitalise on the opportunities these present in various sectors including under the mooted regional value chains we are looking forward to unlock under the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Action Plan. In doing this, I need to underscore the importance of allowing the business and private sector assume the lead role in the process.

In conclusion, I wish to thank and commend the Honourable Minister and his team for successfully driving this process to make the TFTA a reality for Botswana.

I thank you