



REMARKS

By the

HONOURABLE FELIX. T. MHONA (MP)

**MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

At the occasion of the

**SADC HIGH LEVEL MINISTERIAL ROUND TABLE DIALOGUE
(INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT THE NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR
(NSC))**

HARARE

27 FEBRUARY 2025

DIRECTOR OF CEREMONIES - MR. LETSO MPHO;

HONOURABLE MINISTERS FROM THE SADC MEMBER STATES;

SADC SECRETARIAT;

**HEADS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER REGIONAL ECONOMIC
COMMUNITIES HERE PRESENT;**

**HEADS AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE TRANSPORT, ICT,
INFORMATION, METEOROLOGY AND CORRIDOR INSTITUTIONS
HERE PRESENT;**

REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE MEDIA HOUSES;

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES;

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning to you all.

It is my great honour and privilege, to welcome you Honourable Ministers and your eminent delegations to the sunshine city of Harare.

I am indeed thrilled to partake in this *SADC High Level Ministerial Round Table Dialogue on Infrastructure to support the North-South Corridor (NSC)*.

Allow me at the outset, to express my profound gratitude to the organisers of this meeting, in particular the SADC Secretariat, who have worked in conjunction with Senior and Technical Officials from the Governments of our gallant nations, to make it an outstanding success that it has been.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Occasions of this nature provide us with a wonderful opportunity to share experiences with colleagues from our beloved Regional Economic Community, the SADC, as we reaffirm our solidarity towards transformational transport infrastructural projects that seek to empower our societies.

Cooperation of our great countries is not new. It is the kind of cooperation anchored on historical and strong foundations, with most of us having shared the same trenches in the struggle for independence against colonialism. That alone is testament of our enduring legacy of regional cooperation, towards mutually beneficial and developmental programmes for our people.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I have no doubt that this Roundtable Discussion will enrich our aspirations, and of course strengthen our resolve for an interconnected Southern African region, within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AcFTA), the largest free trade area in the world, which seeks to leverage on a massive regime of transport and logistics. Collaborative efforts enable us to tap into the Annual flows of Foreign-Direct Investment (FDI) from the International Financial Institutions and other sources of development finance to fund infrastructure. Africa's population is growing faster than that of any other continents, and our citizens are on the move faster than people elsewhere. These trends will drive demand and create opportunities for fast mobilities, massive logistical arrangements and connectivity, in a manner that has never been witnessed before.

Investments in infrastructures such as roads and railways are crucial to the development of our region. With the current boom in exports of chrome ore, ferrochrome, granite, lithium, iron ore, coal and many bulky minerals and inbound movement of containers, grains, fertilisers and containerised traffic, it is high time we should up our game and collaborate more.

Honourable Ministers; Ladies and Gentlemen;

The North-South Corridor typifies the essence of joint transport development corridors which are key for SDAC integration. Unified economic development of the SADC dovetails with the Pan-African initiative, which commenced in 1963 through the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). This was later to be reinforced in July of 2002 when the OAU rebranded into the African Union (AU).

Honourable Ministers; Ladies and Gentlemen;

The North-South Corridor initiative should not remain a pipe dream. It is high time we should dismantle barriers along this corridor. The economic corridor-based approach reduces costs of cross-border trade in Sub-Saharan Africa. It also enables producers and traders to be more competitive, thereby creating higher levels of economic growth, employment creation and reduce poverty.

As Zimbabwe, we are playing our part. On 31 August 2022, we launched the **Beitbridge Border Post Upgrading and Modernisation Project**. This border lies on a very strategic location along the North – South corridor. Indeed, the importance of the Beitbridge Border Post to the country and the region as a whole cannot be over emphasised. It is the busiest regional transit link in Southern and Eastern Africa, connecting South Africa and Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Malawi and Tanzania. As a result of this upgradation, the border’s handling capacity has increased exponentially over the years, handling thousands of trucks and buses, and tens of thousands of people travelling on light vehicles.

Honourable Ministers; Ladies and Gentlemen;

We have also poured local resources in rehabilitating, widening and modernising the 600 km Beitbridge-Harare Road, a crucial artery of the North-South Corridor. We are determined to complete the remaining 350 km stretch from Harare to Chirundu at our boarder with Zambia. Along the Beitbridge Chirundu Road, we are modernising bridges into state-of-the-art interchanges to ensure seamless transit facilitation, as the corridor passes through cities. Solid plans are afoot to also link the railway line between Kafue in Zambia and Lion’s Den in Zimbabwe, in order to complete the North-South Railway Corridor.

Honourable Ministers; Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am aware that great works are taking place along the North-South Corridor, but indeed, we have to do more. We need to scale up our collaboration efforts and dismantle silos. We need to revisit and outline the critical underpinnings for rolling out the various projects and programmes that constitute the North-South Corridor.

In terms of way forward, let us revisit the aspirations of the High-Level Conference on the North-South Corridor held in Lusaka in April 2009, where strong undertakings were made towards the following action points:

1. High- level political commitment at the national level in order to spearhead and monitor implementation of agreed policy reforms to deepen regional integration;
2. Generating strong financial and technical support for the North South Corridor to upgrade road, rail, ports and energy infrastructures and to support implementation of trade facilitation instruments.;
3. Greater commitment to the identified projects and programmes by both providing counterpart funding and implementing and harmonising supporting policies and regulations so as to trigger additional and sustained funding from development partners;
4. Establishing institutional arrangements to: manage the North-South Corridor Programme; put in place a mechanism to access and disburse the committed funds; identify funding gaps; propose a sequence of implementation; prepare bankable projects; seek ways in which the private sector can come on board and complement public sector investment and financing for implementation of infrastructure projects; and
5. Many more undertakings.

Hourabe Ministers; Ladies and Gentlemen;

I call upon you brothers and sisters that it should not be business as usual. Let us take stock of the record, with the view to recognise and acknowledge the weak nexus between regional and national project planning, so that we quickly align national and regional priorities.

We should immediately implement the North-South Corridor Model initiative, through strengthening collaborative frameworks for the alignment and harmonisation of programmes and procedures of external development partners as well as deepen the regional integration process.

Hourabe Ministers; Ladies and Gentlemen;

The time is now for us to build more and better roads, bridges, airports, railway networks and border crossing facilities. But we cannot do it in silos. We need each other in every stride of our journey. Let us as Governments be proactive and be at the fore-front of the North-South corridor initiatives. Non-State actors are crucial, but they can only do much where we demonstrate political will and commitment to collaborate

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Let us work together as partners in progress. Let us share knowledge and expertise and forge new pathways towards sustainable infrastructure development. Let us envision a Southern Africa where infrastructure is not a barrier, but a bridge connecting people, ideas, and opportunities. The need for improved transportation systems and access to digital connectivity promotes a region where investments in infrastructure are aligned with our sustainable development goals, ensuring that no

one is left behind. These elements are critical to enhancing the quality of life for our citizens, enabling businesses to flourish, and ensuring our economies thrive.

I urge each of you to approach today's discussions with an open mind and a spirit of cooperation and we must break down silos and work together across borders, sectors, and disciplines. Let us engage in constructive dialogue, listen to diverse perspectives, and seek common ground on which to build consensus. Together, we can identify innovative solutions, mobilize resources, and implement transformative projects that will benefit our region for generations to come.

Infrastructure requires a multi-stakeholder approach that brings together governments, private sector actors, civil society, and international partners.

Energy and ICT are critical cross-cutting elements for us to achieve our goal. We need to leverage on technology and harness the power of public-private partnerships (PPPs), to unlock our region's digital potential. Digital infrastructure is as vital as physical infrastructure in today's economy. Expanding broadband and regional ICT connectivity is crucial for enhancing trade, communication, and service delivery across Southern Africa. Strengthening internet access, investing in fibre optic networks, and improving mobile connectivity will drive economic transformation and ensure digital inclusion.

A more connected region will foster innovation, facilitate e-commerce, and enhance access to critical services such as education and healthcare.

I THANK YOU.