| image**STATEMENT BY** **HER EXCELLENCY CHILESHE MPUNDU KAPWEPWE, COMESA****SECRETARY GENERAL TO THE 22ND COMESA SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT****8TH JUNE 2023****LUSAKA, ZAMBIA**Theme:Economic Integration for a thriving COMESA, Anchored on Green Investment, Value Addition and tourism |
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**YOUR EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT HAKAINDE HICHILEMA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA, CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMESA AUTHORITY AND OUR GRACIOUS HOST.**

**YOUR EXCELLENCY, ABDEL FATTAH EL-SISI, PRESIDENT OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT AND OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMESA AUTHORITY**

**EXCELLENCIES, PRESIDENTS, AND MEMBERS OF THE INCOMING AND OUTGOING BUREAU OF THE COMESA AUTHORITY**

**EXCELLENCIES, HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

**REPRESENTATIVE OF THECHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**HONOURABLE MINISTERS.**

**YOUR EXCELLENCIES MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS.**

**YOUR EXCELLENCIES HEADS OF REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.**

**REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR INSTITUTIONS.**

**DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES.**

**INVITED GUESTS.**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

**ALL PROTOCOL OBSERSERVED**

ALLOW ME FIRST AND FOREMOST TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO THE 22ND COMESA SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT IN THE CAPITAL CITY OF LUSAKA, ZAMBIA, WHICH ALSO HAPPENS TO BE THE HOST OF THE COMESA HEADQUARTERS. I AM VERY HAPPY TO WELCOME THE COMESA HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT, THEIR REPRESENTATIVES AND DELEGATIONS. YOUR SOLIDARITY, SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT TO THE REGIONAL INTERGRATION AGENDA IS HIGHLY APPRECIATED.

I ALSO WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE THE NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU OF THE AUTHORITY, HIS EXCELLENCY, MR HAKAINDE HICHILEMA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND CHAIRPERSON; HIS EXCELLENCY, EVARISTE NDAYISHIMIYE, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI AND VICE CHAIRPERSON AND HIS EXCELLENCY ABDEL FATTAH EL-SISI, PRESIDENT OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT AND RAPPORTEUR. YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGENDA OF COMESA IS WELL KNOWN AND I LOOK FORWARD TO WORK UNDER YOUR GUIDANCE AND LEADERSHIP TO TAKE THE COMMON MARKET TO NEW HEIGHTS OF EXCELLENCE AND PERFORMANCE AS WE CONTINUE TO IMPROVE DELIVER OUR MANDATE.

YOUR EXCELLENCY, MR HAKAINDE HICHILEMA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE BUREAU OF THE AUTHORITY, I WISH TO PAY A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO YOU, YOUR GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF ZAMBIA. YOUR ELECTION AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE AUTHORITY, YOUR EXCELLENCY, IS INDEED A CLEAR TESIMONY OF CONFIDENCE AND AN ENDORSEMENT OF ZAMBIA’S COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT TO THE REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGENDA OF COMESA. TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF ZAMBIA, THE ELECTION OF HIS EXCELLENCY HAKAINDE HICHILIMA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, IS A RECOGNITION OF HIS READINESS TO ALWAYS SUPPORT AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE DREAMS, IDEALS AND OBJECTIVES OF PAN AFRICAN AND GLOBAL COOPERATION. INDEED, THE HOSTING THIS 22ND SUMMIT OF COMESA DEMONTRATES THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT’S COMMITMENT TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION AND UPLIFTING OF THE LIVING STANDARDS OF OUR PEOPLE.

I ALSO WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE THAT I HAVE BENEFITTED FROM THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN OF THE COMESA AUTHORITY, HIS EXCELLENCY, ABDEL FATTAH EL-SISI, HIS GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE. THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT HAS BEEN AT THE HELM OF COMESA DURING THE PAST NINETEEN MONTHS AND, YOUR EXCELLENCY, IT IS DURING YOUR CHAIRMANSHIP THAT COMESA STRENGTHENED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRIPARTITE GUIDELINES ON TRADE AND TRANSPORT FACILITATION FOR THE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS, GOODS AND SERVICES. IT IS ALSO THE PERIOD WHERE THE 2021-2025 COMESA MEDIUM TERM STRATEGIC PLAN WAS LAUNCHED. IN ADDITION, IT HAS BEEN A PERIOD OF CONTINUOUS GROWTH OF COMESA INSTITUTIONS.TO THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN OF THE COMESA AUTHORITY, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THANK YOU FOR YOUR VISIONARY LEADERSHIP.

I WISH TO ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THE GUIDANCE PROVIDED TO THE COMMON MARKET BY HIS EXCELLENCY, ANDRY RAJOELINA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR AS THE OUTGOING RAPPORTEUR. HIS GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF MADAGASCAR HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VERY COMMITTED TO THE PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES OF COMESA.

**YOUR EXCELLENCIES**

**HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT,**

**HONOURABLE MINISTERS,**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

AS ONE OF THE 8 RECOGNISED REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES OF THE AFRICAN UNION, COMESA CONTINUES TO PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN SUPPORTING CONTINENTAL INTEGRATION EFFORTS THROUGH ITS VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS. THIS HAS BEEN POSSIBLE BY THE SUPPORT OF VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMTED TO THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION, THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, AND OFFICER OF AFREXIM BANK, THE AFRICA CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA SECRETARIAT ,REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES, THE EUROPEAN UNION COMMISSION AND THE WORLD BANK, AND OTHER CONTINENTAL AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES. ALL THESE STAKEHOLDERS AND OTHERS, PLAYED PIVOTAL ROLES IN SUPPORT OF OUR SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WITH OUR CONTINUED COLLABARATION WE SHALL CONTINUE TO PROPEL THE COMMON MARKET TO GREATER HEIGHTS.

THE THEME OF THIS YEAR’S SUMMIT “***ECONOMIC INTEGRATION FOR A THRIVING COMESA, ANCHORED ON GREEN INVESTMENT, VALUE ADDITION AND TOURISM***” COMES AT A RIGHT TIME AFTER A PERIOD OF TURBULENCE CAUSED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC, CONFLICT IN EUROPE AND EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE. OUR EFFORTS TO CREATE A SEAMLESS MARKET WITH REDUCED COSTS OF DOING BUSINESS CONTINUE THROUGH OUR VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES. I SHALL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THE IMPACTS OF THESE PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES IN MY STATE OF INTEGRATION REPORT.

**YOUR EXCELLENCIES**

**HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT,**

**HONORABLE MINISTERS,**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

WELCOME ONCE AGAIN AND I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION