



VOTE OF THANKS

BY

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MINISTER OF INDUSTRY-MALAWI

AT THE 4TH MINISTERIAL MEETING ON INDUSTRY

27 MAY 2021, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA.

Honourable Ministers

Secretary General

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we come to the conclusion of this 4th Meeting of the COMESA Committee of Ministers of Industry, is it not fitting, dear fellow Ministers, Secretary General, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, that we express our profound gratitude and compliments to our hosts, the Zambian Government.

Heart-felt gratitude are due to you fellow Ministers for taking time off your many responsibilities to participate in this meeting.

To you our cooperating partners and international organisations , we owe you a huge debt of gratitude not only for joining us in this regional meeting, but for the continued support rendered to our regional integration agenda.

I would like to also express sincere thanks to the COMESA Secretariat through the Secretary General Her Excellency Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe for putting together this important meeting amidst the unprecedented challenges that COVID 19 has brought up to host such meetings.

I thank you all participants for giving generously your time to this meeting and for contributing to the deliberations.

Honourable Ministers

COVID 19 has brought about new ways of doing things. We need to adjust to the '*new normal*'. We are happy that even without physically meeting, we were able to meet and constructively discuss issues to drive the industrialization agenda of the COMESA region and indeed the African continent.

Honourable Ministers

Time has come that Africa take responsibility for its own future; and to deal with its own challenges including creating jobs for our youths. Agenda 2063 aspires a *‘Prosperous Africa, based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development’*, the role of industrialization to achieve this aspiration can therefore not be overemphasized. The COMESA Industrial Strategy and Action Plan that we adopted in Lusaka and Nairobi in 2017 and 2019, respectively, provide a very clear guide on how our member states can harness opportunities available in the region to drive the industrialization agenda.

Furthermore, we have in this meeting endorsed the requisite regional sectoral frameworks for the implementation of the Industrial Strategy and Action Plan.

Thus, the meeting today, apart from getting an update on the implementation of Council Decisions from the 3rd Meeting of this Committee, also considered three sectoral frameworks namely the Implementation Strategy of the COMESA Local Content Policy Framework; the Framework of managing Special Economic Zones and Industrial Parks and the COMESA Guidelines on Increasing Sustainable and Inclusive Industrial Production during and after COVID 19.

There is no better time like now for the Secretariat to develop these frameworks when the COVID 19 pandemic has disrupted the national, regional, and global industrial production and supply chains for the goods and services, leading to their scarcity and increased prices.

There is no better time than now when coming into effect of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) promises to offer an even greater opportunity for countries to widen their access to global supply chains and export higher value goods and services. Increasing African intra-trade through Regional Value Chains (RVCs) provides African manufacturing firms economies of scale and linkages to value chains connected to the global market.

Honourable Ministers

Distinguished delegates

The development of joint industrialization programme being piloted by the Governments of Zambia and Zimbabwe, if successfully implemented, will provide a

learning ground for the rest of our Member States to harness comparative advantage from the diverse natural resources and synergies in resource utilization, improve competitiveness and reap benefits of economies of scale . As the saying goes “ *if you want to walk fast, walk alone but if you want to walk far, walk together*”

Let me conclude this brief intervention by reiterating Minister’s speech this morning that political will and commitment is key for COMESA to drive this industrialization agenda. Our adoption of the sectoral frameworks and indeed the Declaration of this meeting should translate in their domestication and implementation of the Decisions therein, respectively.

A clear Monitoring and Evaluation is also critical if we have to benchmark ourselves in our resolve to implement the Industrial Strategy and Action Plan.

I sincerely thank you for the opportunity to move this Vote of Thanks. May God Almighty bless each one of us and each of our nations. I Thank You.

