

KINGDOM OF ESWATINI



SPEECH

BY

**HIS MAJESTY KING MSWATI III
DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 8TH
SUMMIT OF SACU HEADS OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT HELD AT MANDVULO GRAND
HALL – LOZITHA.**

29th JUNE 2023

KING'S OFFICE

YOUR EXCELLENCY CYRIL MATAMELA RAMAPHOSA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA,

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SAMUEL NTSOKOANE
MATEKANE, PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF
LESOTHO,

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER OF THE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, SAARA KUUGONGELWA-
AMADHILA, REPRESENTING HIS EXCELLENCY THE
PRESIDENT,

REPRESENTATIVE OF HIS EXCELLENCY MOKGWEETSI
ERIC KEABETSWE MASISI, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA,

EMAKHOSIKATI,

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESSES,

SACU EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,

CHAIRPERSON OF THE SACU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS,

HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE
SACU COUNCIL,

MEMBERS OF THE SACU COMMISSION AND OTHER
SENIOR OFFICIALS,

DISTINGUISHED INVITED GUESTS,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

**SIYANIVUSELA NONKHE BEKUNENE LAPHA
EMANDVULO**

INTRODUCTION

IT IS WITH GREAT HONOUR THAT WE WELCOME YOU
ALL TO THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE 8TH SUMMIT OF THE SOUTHERN
AFRICAN CUSTOMS UNION (SACU) HEADS OF STATE
AND GOVERNMENT.

ON BEHALF OF ESWATINI, WE ARE PLEASED TO HOST
YOU ALL HERE ONCE AGAIN, FOLLOWING THE 5TH
SACU SUMMIT THAT WAS HELD HERE IN JUNE 2017.

ALLOW ME TO ESPECIALLY WELCOME THE RIGHT
HONOURABLE SAMUEL NTSOKOANE MATEKANE, PRIME
MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO, WHO IS
ATTENDING THE SUMMIT FOR THE FIRST TIME.

IMPORTANCE AND GROWTH OF SACU RECEIPTS

THE IMPORTANCE OF SACU CANNOT BE OVER-EMPHASISED AS IT PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES.

WE ARE PLEASED THAT WE ARE CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COLLECTION OF SACU RECEIPTS, WHICH WILL CONTRIBUTE IMMENSELY TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF OUR COUNTRIES.

AS ESWATINI, WE ARE HAPPY THAT DURING OUR CHAIRMANSHIP ALL MEMBER STATES REALISED A WINDFALL IN OUR SACU RECEIPTS. WE NEED TO MAINTAIN THESE POSITIVE RESULTS AND STANDARDS TO INCREASE THE RETURNS EVEN MORE.

THE COUNTRY'S RECEIPTS INCREASED BY A SIGNIFICANT SHARE OF 102 % WHEN COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR. IT IS THE FIRST TIME SEEING SUCH HIGH RETURNS.

CONTRIBUTING TO THIS POSITIVE GROWTH WAS THE HIGHER THAN PROJECTED OUTTURN OF THE 2021/2022 COMMON REVENUE POOL (CRP), TOGETHER WITH THE 25% INCREASE IN THE PROJECTED SIZE OF THE CRP FOR 2023/2024 COMPARED TO 2022/2023 FINANCIAL YEAR.

THE INCREASE IN ESWATINI'S SHARE OF TOTAL INTRA-SACU IMPORTS FROM 9.6% IN THE REVENUE SHARING FRAMEWORK FOR 2022/2023 TO 10.8% IN 2023/2024, WAS ALSO A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR.

INDEED, THE MEASURES THAT OUR MINISTRY OF FINANCE HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTING IN ORDER TO ENHANCE INTRA-SACU IMPORTS HAVE STARTED PAYING OFF.

THIS HAS COME ABOUT REGARDLESS OF THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY OUR ECONOMIES BROUGHT ABOUT BY GLOBAL CHALLENGES SUCH AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

WE ARE ALSO DELIGHTED TO SEE THE TREMENDOUS WORK THAT HAS BEEN DONE UNDER THE TRADE FACILITATION PROGRAMME WHICH WILL ADVANCE THE SACU REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGENDA.

THE LAUNCH OF THE AUTHORIZED ECONOMIC OPERATORS PROGRAMME IN THE VARIOUS SACU MEMBER STATES MARKS A GREATER MILESTONE.

AS SACU MEMBER STATES WE SHOULD WORK TOWARDS SEAMLESS BORDERS, WHERE GOODS MOVE FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER WITHOUT DELAYS AT OUR POINTS OF ENTRY.

THE PROGRAMME ALSO HELPED TO FAST-TRACK CONTROLS AND REDUCTION IN ADMINISTRATION COSTS FOR CUSTOMS CLEARANCE. WE ANTICIPATE SEEING FEWER DELAYS IN SHIPMENTS, REDUCED THEFT AND LOSSES OF GOODS JUST TO NAME A FEW.

AS ESWATINI, WE ARE VERY PLEASED WITH SUCH DEVELOPMENTS AND THANK ALL THOSE WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR CARRYING OUT THE NEW

ARCHITECTURE OF DECLARING OF GOODS AT THE POINT OF ENTRY.

THIS HAS COME AT AN OPPORTUNE TIME WHEN THE CONTINENT IS WORKING TOWARDS TRADING UNDER ONE UMBRELLA OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AfCFTA).

THE POSITIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS INITIATIVE TO MAKE IT MORE EFFECTIVE, NEEDS PROGRAMMES THAT CAN BE AS SUCCESSFUL AS SACU.

WE DO REALISE THAT THE VEHICLES OF TRADE SUCH AS SACU, WERE NOT BUILT IN ONE DAY, BUT WE TRUST THAT THEY WILL BE DEVELOPED GRADUALLY, LEADING TO A DAY WHEN WE CAN ALL SAY AFRICA IS NOW TRADING EFFECTIVELY.

WE ALSO NEED TO BRING FORTH AND SHARE OTHER SUCCESS STORIES UNDER SACU TO MOTIVATE BEST PRACTICES THAT CAN BE ADOPTED BY THE AfCFTA, TO BOOST INTRA-AFRICA TRADE.

THE SACU SUCCESS STORY FOLLOWS ON THE FOOTSTEPS OF OTHER POSITIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN ESWATINI, WHICH HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE WORLD BANK AS ONE OF THE TOP FIVE GROWING ECONOMIES WITH OUR GDP **GROWTH AT 7.43 PERCENT IN 2021.**

WE HAVE ALSO BEEN RANKED 2ND WHEN IT COMES TO MANUFACTURING VALUE ADDED PER CAPITA IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT, WHILE RANKING 6TH IN THE AFRICA INDUSTRIALIZATION INDEX 2022.

THE KINGDOM IS ALSO PROUD TO HAVE BECOME ONE OF TWO COUNTRIES THAT HAVE SUCCESSFULLY MET THE AIDS GLOBAL TARGETS OF 95-95-95, MARKING OUR COMMITMENT TO ENDING HIV AND AIDS.

SACU SUMMIT

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, WE ARE HERE TO DELIBERATE ON KEY ISSUES CONCERNING SACU, WITH A VIEW TO PROVIDING THE NECESSARY POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC GUIDANCE TO OUR INSTITUTION.

WE HAVE SEEN THIS ORGANIZATION GROW FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH, MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. AS MEMBERS, WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO NATURE THIS CHILD OF OURS AND WHERE THERE ARE CHALLENGES WE NEED TO SIT DOWN AND FIND AMICABLE SOLUTIONS.

THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AT THIS TIME AS SACU WORKS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS RECENTLY APPROVED STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 – 2027, IN THE MIDST OF THE RECENT GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS WHICH ARE HAVING A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON OUR ECONOMIES.

IN OUR LAST SUMMIT, WE REFLECTED ON HOW THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAD DRASTICALLY CHANGED OUR LIVES, THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE HAD STARTED AND WE WERE, AT THAT STAGE, ALREADY EXPERIENCING ITS IMPACT ON OUR ECONOMIES.

WE REMAIN OPTIMISTIC THAT AN AMICABLE SETTLEMENT WILL BE REACHED GIVEN THE NEGATIVE IMPACT AND SPILL-OVER EFFECTS, WHICH CONTINUE TO CONSTRAIN THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC GROWTH PROSPECTS AND THREATEN FOOD SECURITY.

AFRICAN LEADERS' INITIATIVE FOR PEACE

IT IS FOR THESE REASONS THAT WE WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMEND THE AFRICAN LEADERS' INITIATIVE, LED BY SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA, TO BROKER PEACE IN THE RUSSIA – UKRAINE CONFLICT.

AS SACU LEADERS, WE ALIGN OURSELVES WITH THESE EFFORTS AND EXTEND OUR FULL SUPPORT AS WE BELIEVE THAT IT WILL BRING ABOUT MEANINGFUL AND LASTING PEACE.

SACU NEEDS TO REFLECT ON GLOBAL ISSUES

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, IN VIEW OF THE GLOBAL OUTLOOK AND RISKS, SACU AS A REGION NEEDS TO ASSESS AND REFLECT ON THESE RISKS, AND ON HOW BEST TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE AND MITIGATE AGAINST THEM, TO ELICIT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION AND COLLABORATION.

WE WILL ENGAGE AND DELIBERATE FURTHER ON THESE EMERGING GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE SACU ECONOMIES DURING OUR SUMMIT.

IN THE MIDST OF COMPETING REGIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, SACU NEEDS TO STEP FORWARD AND AS ENSHRINED IN THE SACU MISSION TO **“SERVE AS AN ENGINE FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT, INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION, THE EXPANSION OF INTRA-REGIONAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT, AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS.”**

CONCLUSION

IN CONCLUSION, WE URGE ALL DELEGATES TO BE FOCUSED ON THE GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SACU BY FINDING OTHER WAYS OF IMPROVING THIS FACILITY BY PROMOTING INCREASED TRADE.

AS MEMBER COUNTRIES, WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE REGIONAL VALUE CHAINS ACROSS VARIOUS SECTORS SUCH AS IN VEHICLE MANUFACTURING, WHERE THE PRODUCTION OF DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF A VEHICLE CAN BE DISTRIBUTED ACROSS SEVERAL MEMBER COUNTRIES AND ASSEMBLED IN ONE.

THIS WILL ADD IMPETUS TO OUR REGIONAL GOAL OF INTEGRATION WHILE ENHANCING OUR TRADE OUTPUT AND GROWING THE SACU POOL.

LET US USE THE CURRENT MOMENTUM TO DEVELOP SACU AND ENSURE THAT THE POOL GROWS FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR ECONOMIES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. AS MEMBER COUNTRIES, WE ALL NEED TO PLAY OUR PART FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF OUR INSTITUTION.

WE APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT AND COOPERATION THAT HAS BEEN RENDERED TO THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI, DURING OUR TERM AS THE CHAIR OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF SACU.

WE WILL EQUALLY CONTINUE SUPPORTING ALL ITS PLANNED INITIATIVES AFTER OUR TERM ENDS. WE CONGRATULATE THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR ASSUMING HIS NEW POSITION AND WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT HE WILL STEER OUR ORGANIZATION TO GREATER HEIGHTS.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, WE HOPE YOU HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED THE TRUE ESWATINI HOSPITALITY SINCE YOUR ARRIVAL AND ENJOYED YOUR TIME AT THE DIFFERENT PLACES OF TOURISM INTERESTS IN THE KINGDOM.

DECLARATION

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, I NOW HAVE THE SINGULAR HONOUR TO DECLARE THE 8TH SUMMIT OF THE SACU HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALLY OPEN AND WISH YOU SUCCESSFUL AND ENRICHING DELIBERATIONS.

I THANK YOU, MAY THE ALMIGHTY GOD BLESS US ALL!!