



**VOTE OF THANKS**

**BY**

**THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SAMUEL NTSOKOANE MATEKANE**

**PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

**CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 8<sup>TH</sup> SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE**

**AND GOVERNMENT**

**29 June 2023**

**LOZITHA, ESWATINI**

***Your Majesty King Mswati the Third and Chairperson of SACU;***

***Your Excellency Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa;***

***The Right Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia - representing His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob;***

***The Right Honourable Cleopas Sipho Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini;***

***Your Excellency Themba Masuku, Deputy Prime Minister of Eswatini;***

***Honourable Mmusi Khafela, Minister of Trade of the Republic of Botswana, representing His Excellency President Mokgweetsi Masisi;***

***Honourable Neal Rijkenberg, Chairperson of the SACU Council of Ministers;***

***Honourable Ministers and Members of the SACU Council;***

***Executive Secretary of SACU, Mr. Thabo David Khasipe;***

***Members of the SACU Commission and other Senior Officials;***

***Distinguished Guests;***

***Officials of the SACU Secretariat;***

***Ladies and Gentlemen;***

It is with a great sense of appreciation and humility that I deliver this Vote of Thanks, on behalf of the SACU Heads of States and Government and indeed, on my own behalf, on this occasion, of my maiden SACU Summit. Our deliberations, engagement and commitment displayed by all the participants at this Summit, have assured me that SACU is indeed destined to grow and benefit our beloved countries for generations to come.

I can only assure you that as the new Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, who is receiving the gauntlet from His Majesty King Mswati III today, my fidelity to the principles underpinning SACU and commitment to contributing to the growth of our Union shall be without reproach.

Allow me to take this opportunity to convey our gratitude and appreciation to **His Majesty, King Mswati, The Third**, and His Government, as well as the people of the Kingdom of Eswatini, for their usual warm hospitality and

excellent facilities availed to us including the exceptional arrangements made for this Summit.

In the same token, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate the new Executive Secretary of SACU, Mr. Thabo Khasipe, on his recent appointment to steer the affairs of our Customs Union. As the SACU Leadership, we assure you, Mr. Executive Secretary, of our support as you take our organisation to greater heights.

We are also deeply thankful to our Ministers, who dedicated their time to have a Retreat and engage on strategic issues and risks that face SACU. The Retreat and Council engagement paved the way for the fruitful and strategic discussions that took place today. In particular, we are pleased that we were also able to reflect on where we are coming from, key limitations and factors that have paralysed our institution.

Furthermore, We considered the opportunities we have, and most importantly, decided on which bolts and nuts to

tighten. This will help us sail through and achieve the goals that we have defined for ourselves.

*Your Majesty,*

*Your Excellencies,*

It is our strong belief that building effective institutions in SACU and continuously reflecting on the Strategic and Governance Risks are, among others, critical ingredients to realising the SACU vision to be **“an economic community with equitable and sustainable development, dedicated to the welfare of its people for a common future”**.

We welcome the progress made to date towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2027. We expect that much more will be achieved within a shorter period, when decisions reached today are implemented in a well-coordinated fashion. There is a saying in my language that, **“*Tlou ha e hloloe ke moroalo*”**, literally translated as **“an elephant is never defeated by its**

load”. I, therefore, believe that as SACU, we have what it takes to succeed.

When our forebearers created this customs union over 100 years ago in 1910, they did so with a strong conviction to build an organization that would last for countless generations. Being the oldest Customs Union in the world, SACU has stood the test of time and has proved to be tenacious. Where we need reforms, let us be bold enough to do so in unity and with a sense of common purpose. We must not let this organisation disintegrate on our watch. Let us shun tendencies that sow seeds of discord among us, and remain united with a common goal to make SACU an epitome of all.

Let me also turn to the Senior Officials, the Executive Secretary and his Team in the Secretariat. We greatly appreciate the groundwork done, which is necessary for the critical engagement we had. I also wish to thank the facilitators for the Ministerial Retreat, all the staff of His

Majesty's Government and everyone for making this Summit a success.

*Your Excellencies,*

**His Majesty King Mswati III**, has ably facilitated our discussions today and provided excellent leadership to our organisation during Eswatini's tenure as the Chair of SACU. We thank him for the wisdom and guidance that has enabled us to reach the key milestones reported to the Summit today and setting out a good outlook for the future.

On our part, as the incoming Chair of SACU, we pledge that the Kingdom of Lesotho will carry the baton diligently to build on the momentum of these achievements as we move with speed to implement our Strategic Plan.

Allow me once again to thank You, Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Senior Officials and the Executive Secretary and his Team at the SACU

Secretariat, for all the work undertaken in ensuring the success of the 8<sup>th</sup> SACU Summit. We come out of this Summit with renewed determination and vigour to build a more united and resilient SACU that will benefit its peoples.

*Your Majesty*

*Your Excellencies,*

On behalf of the Government and people of the Kingdom of Lesotho, I am pleased to extend an invitation to His Majesty and Your Excellencies, to the 9<sup>th</sup> SACU Summit to be held in Lesotho in June, 2024.

In concluding my brief remarks, allow me, to express in my language, a wish of our great forefathers, for continued peace, rain and prosperity for our nations and for our continent - “*Khotso, Pula, Nala!*”.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**