



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF SPORT, YOUTH AND NATIONAL SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SENIOR OFFICIALS AND STAKEHOLDERS MEETING

20 – 22 May 2019

IN PREPARATION FOR THE

SADC YOUTH MINISTERS MEETING

23 – 24 MAY 2019

WELCOMING REMARKS

BY

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MINISTRY OF SPORT, YOUTH AND NATIONAL SERVICE

- Hon. Ministers responsible for Youth in the SADC region and all Hon Ministers, this would include the delegated representatives of the Hon. Ministers who could not make it to Namibia.
- Deputy Ministers
- His Worship Muesee Kazapua, Mayor of the City of Windhoek
- Dr. Thembinkosi Mhlongo, Deputy Executive Secretary: Regional Integration, SADC Secretariat
- Ms Denia Gayle UNFPA Country Representative
- Members of the Diplomatic Corpse present
- Representatives of the UN Agencies present
- Mr. Mandela Kapere, Executive Chairperson of the National Youth Council and Board members
- Ms Daisry Mathias, Presidential Advisor on Youth Matters and Entrepreneurship Development in the Office of the President
- Ms. Esther McLeod, Acting Commissioner for the National Youth Service
- All Senior SADC Government officials present
- Our developmental stakeholders present here as observers: AU, NYDA, MIET-Africa, Child Rights

Network for Southern Africa, ILO, Heads of the UN Agencies;

- Members of the Press
- Ladies and Gentleman

I greet and welcome you all to the Land of the Brave.

It's indeed an honour and a privilege to **welcome** you at this very important meeting of SADC Ministers responsible for Youth. We are delighted to host this meeting that brings together Ministers and Senior Government officials in the region. I would like to extend a special welcome. Dear Hon. Ministers, your presence here today is not only just a testimony to the region's commitment to Youth development and empowerment in the SADC Region, but also serves as a reminder to us all of the integral value youth in any society as key agents for achieving economic transformation and social changes required for sustainable development

I have no doubt that this platform offers a rewarding experience where we will share best practice towards youth empowerment, as youth constitute a significant percentage of the population in the region.

It is evident that the region places Youth matter at center stage. This is further cemented in the 38th SADC theme that of **“promoting infrastructure and youth empowerment for sustainable development.”** Hence it is within our interest to safeguard that our youth, who will be the leaders of the envisaged industrialized SADC, are equipped with the essential tools required to lead industrialized nations. You will agree with me that this meeting comes at the right time as we deliberate and take stock on the operationalisation of the theme.

Youth empowerment in Africa is further espoused in AU Developmental Agenda 2063 An Africa we want ASPIRATION 6: An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.

Ladies and Gentlemen you will agree with me that the challenges faced by the youth has become complex. Not only do we face challenges in youth unemployment but challenges in areas of Technology, Demographic changes and Climate Changes. This calls for paradigm shift in order to meet the

aspirations and needs of the youth. I am happy to inform you Honorable Ministers that for the past 3 days Senior Government Officials engaged in robust discussions and made recommendations that will propel youth development in the region. According to the Assessment and analysis of the situation of youth innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership produced by SADC secretariat: The population of SADC is mostly composed of youth and the number is growing rapidly. In 2015, 226 million youth age 15-24 years lived in Africa, accounting for 19% of the global youth population.¹ There was a total of 107 million youth in 2015, from 100.09 million in 2010. The SADC region population (313.5 million) comprises 34% youth.² Africa will account for 80% of the projected 4 billion increases in the global population by 2100. The accompanying increase in its working age population creates a window of opportunity, which if properly harnessed, can translate into higher growth and yield a demographic dividend. Therefore, there is urgent need for the Government and all other stakeholders in Region's socio-economic development journey to act with urgency and implement

¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs- Population Development (2015) Population Facts.

² United Nations Population Division (2017) World Population Prospects

game-changer interventions that will enable us to take full advantage of the demographic dividend.

The big question is what can we do to position ourselves to maximise what is left of our first demographic dividend. I would like to pause and reflect at this point what are doing about it. This Honorable Ministers is a question we need to interrogate. In our case Namibia is already deep within the window period to harness its first demographic dividend.

We therefore believe that Investing in youth is not only moral imperative but a prerequisite for building a sustainable future. It is a high priority that targeted interventions be put in place.

It is our sincere hope that the deliberations over the next two days will grant us a chance to a strategic policy dialogue and this is an opportune moment to look at *Policy Development and Harmonisation* as well as strengthening institutional arrangements. As leaders, lets arouse the spirit of unity in purpose and make adoptions that will positively impact on the Africa we want.

I would like to conclude with a quote from Kailash Satyarthi, an Indian author by profession and an activist once said: “*The power of youth is the common wealth for the entire world. The faces of young people are the faces of our past, our present and our future. No segment in the society can match with the power, idealism, enthusiasm and courage of the young people*”.

I want to once again welcome you all to Namibia.

I thank you.