

COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

WELCOMING REMARKS (Sue Mbaya, Director, SARNP)

Good morning Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Sue Mbaya. I am the Director of the Southern Africa Regional Poverty Network, SARNP, the organiser of this conference. On behalf of SARNP, I would like to welcome you all to the Southern Africa regional civil society consultation conference on the Commission for Africa.

The Commission for Africa was set up by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to consider afresh how the international community can do more to support Africa's development. It has been described as *an opportunity for all those committed to development in Africa – governments, civil society and business in Africa and internationally – to come together to address the challenge of accelerating Africa's development*. Accordingly, a range of consultation initiatives are being held, including regional consultations across Africa in order to ascertain the views of people. This meeting represents the consultation event for the Southern Africa region. Its outcomes will feed into the report of the Commission for Africa secretariat. May I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Commission for Africa for its financial support which has made this conference possible. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Economics Association of Zambia for its support with respect to local logistics.

This event affords several opportunities to Southern African civil society.

- First and foremost, this is an opportunity for us to engage the Commission for Africa.
- Secondly, this is an opportunity for us to reflect on our own efforts towards the development of our nations and our region. It is my hope that through reflection we will gain better self understanding and that from a better self-understanding, improve effectiveness.
- Thirdly, the plan of work arranged for this meeting affords us the opportunity to strategise for improved impact in our respective programmes.
- Finally, this gathering is a rare opportunity for us to network across national boundaries and across sectors. Participants have been drawn from Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and of course from our hosting nation, Zambia. These participants represent civil society entities working in a wide range of fields.

Let us examine more close the first opportunity which is the reason this meeting has been convened. The establishment of the Commission for Africa has attracted a great deal of interest and comment. Participants here will no doubt add their voices regarding their views on the establishment of the Commission for Africa as well as on its process – the organisers of this conference welcome these views. However, in order to be deemed a success, this meeting must answer the question, ‘**what action is required** (both from within Africa and from the international community’ in **order to support and enhance Africa’s development**. Colleagues, this will mean that we will be required to focus, **not so much on the issues**, but rather ideas and proposals for actions and strategies.

N.B. As we prepare to begin these discussions, I would like to remind all those present, including members of the Press, that Chatham Rules do apply. This means that reports of these proceedings may highlight what was said but without singling out specific individuals.

I am honoured to present to you esteemed persons whose remarks will open this significant conference. They represent, firstly the Government of Zambia, secondly the African Union and finally the Commission for Africa.

Colleagues, the process of selecting a venue for a meeting such as this one is always a challenging one. For several reasons, the organisers of this meeting selected Zambia. This turns out to have been a strategic decision. To my knowledge, the Government of Zambia subsequently became the only government in the region which convened a national consultation forum on the Commission for Africa. It is therefore my pleasure to invite the Honourable Geoffrey Samukonga, Deputy Minister for Trade and Commerce, to give welcoming remarks on behalf of the Zambian government.

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Colleagues, we meet here today as Africans with a shared vision to see our continent become more prosperous. As such, it is fitting that we are addressed at this point by the African union, which, together with its programme, NEPAD, is working to build a shared identity and shared development goals for the nations of Africa. I am honoured to introduce and to invite to the podium, Mr. Foday Bojang, the Senior Policy officer for Rural Economy and Agriculture. Mr. Bojang is here representing the Director for Rural Economy and Agriculture, Dr. Ahmadou Babagana.

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Finally colleagues, it is my pleasure to invite His Excellency the British High Commissioner to Zambia, Tim David, to make his welcoming remarks on behalf of the Commission for Africa. His address will be followed by a brief presentation from the Commission for Africa secretariat.