

**CLOSING REMARKS BY HONOURABLE PROFESSOR PAUL MAVIMA,
CHAIRPERSON OF THE BUREAU OF THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE AFRICAN
REGIONAL FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 27.02/20**

Honourable Ministers and Senior Government Officials,

Representatives of United Nation agencies here present,

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we conclude our deliberations of the Sixth Session of the African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, I would like to begin by thanking the African Member States for affording Zimbabwe the opportunity to host this auspicious event. It was indeed a great honour for us to welcome you all to Zimbabwe and Victoria Falls in particular.

Zimbabwe is indeed humbled by the fantastic turnout for this event and hope that we met your expectations in our role as the host nation. We reaffirm today our commitment that Zimbabwe will always stand ready to play her part in providing a comfortable and conducive environment for fruitful deliberations on the all-important subject of advancing the development agenda in Africa.

Allow me also to thank the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, and the United Nations system for bringing this event to Zimbabwe. The presence of the Deputy General Secretary of the United Nations: Her Excellency, Ms. Amina Mohamed, the Under Secretary General of the United Nations, Executive Secretary of UNECA Ms. Vera Songwe and other senior Africa Union and United Nations Officials show that the quest to transform Africa has reached another level.

Indeed 2020-2030 should be the Decade to Deliver a Transformed and Prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. We need to recover lost time and accelerate achievement of all 17 SDGs and Agenda 2063.

Distinguished participants, I think we all agree that this Forum has provided a firm launch pad for the decade of action as we seek to accelerate the implementation of programmes towards the attainment of the 2030 agenda and Agenda 2063. The time for action is now and Africa has to unite and work together to achieve this decade of action. The words of the founding Father of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah remain relevant today, that **“We must unite or perish”**.

We note with satisfaction that the Forum engaged in comprehensive and intense deliberations on all 17 SDGs and corresponding Agenda 2063 goals under the 5 sub-themes of People, Peace, Prosperity, Planet and Partnerships. We are proud to be associated with the outcome document the, the Victoria Falls Declaration and its ambitious work plan which we believe should find traction in future Forums for sustainable development.

As the incoming Chair I wish to commit myself to work with the new Bureau and all stakeholders to ensure that we realize the commitments and promises we have made here in Victoria Falls. It is my hope that future generations seeking to follow the development path of Africa will find value in the Victoria Falls Declaration and the outcomes of this Conference.

Some of the key messages from the forum include the call for Member States to adopt social safety nets to reduce poverty and the need to harness local resources in our quest to achieve the two agendas. The mainstreaming of the Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 in the national plans at all levels and the need for disaggregated data to track implementation progress was highlighted. Let us therefore redouble our efforts in making local innovations in the highlighted areas.

This calls for an Inclusive approach to governance to enable people-centered dialogues, and the engagement and involvement of all stakeholders including the youth, women and other marginalised groups in the planning and implementation of socio-economic development programmes. The Victoria Falls Declaration has very clear and succinct recommendations that have come out of this Forum. What is left now is to go full throttle on the implementation while ensuring that no one and no place is left behind. Now is the time to positively change the narrative for Africa. This should start from Victoria Falls and yes we can transform the Continent. Rise Africa, Rise Africa, Rise and shine !

As the host I urge you to fully utilize the remaining time to enjoy the magnificence of the majestic” Mosia-Tunya” and other places of interest around the Victoria Falls. You have my assurances that Zimbabwe can sustainably utilize the dollars that you have brought to this economy.

At this point in time ladies and gentlemen I declare the Sixth Session of the African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development officially closed and wish you safe travel back to your various destinations.

God Bless Africa and blossom Africa, Shine motherland, Shine Africa, Shine

I thank you !