



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HON. LUCIA IIPUMBU, MP

MINISTER OF INDUSTRIALISATION AND TRADE

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE
TRADE AREA (AfCFTA)**

WINDHOEK COUNTRY CLUB RESORTS

MONDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2022

Director of Ceremony,

Hon. Verna Sinimbo: Deputy Minister of Industrialisation and Trade

Mr. Seng Pang: UN Resident Coordinator, UN

Mr. Sikongo Haihambo: Executive Director of MIT

Mr. Melaku Desta: Coordinator ATPC – UNECA

Ms. Inge Zaamuani – Presidential Advisor

Ms. Olanyika Bandele: Chief Inclusive Industrialisation Section, UNECA

Ms. Charity Mwiya: CEO, Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Private Sector Representative and Business Community

Government Officials, Ministry Agencies

Distinguished invited participants

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

1. It gives me great pleasure to address you this morning at this important event of the launch of the National Strategy for the implementation of the Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA). Your presence here today speaks to the relevance of the role and mandate of the AfCFTA Agreement. It stands as testimony to the high expectations that you have on the AfCFTA, and which Namibia certainly is striving to fulfil. Allow me to thank you all for finding time to attend the launch of the Namibian AfCFTA National Implementation Strategy, despite your very busy schedules especially at this time of the year.
2. I would also like to recognize the presence and to extend a special welcome to our guests from AfCFTA Secretariat, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and United Nations (UN) Namibia who are here today. Let me express my most sincere thanks for your continuous technical assistance and support which contributed tremendously to this invaluable achievement.

3. I am pleased to inform you that the government of the Republic of Namibia through the Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade (MIT) has negotiated, signed and ratified the Agreement Establishing the AfCFTA. The AfCFTA negotiations started in February 2016, and following several rounds of negotiations the AfCFTA agreement was signed on March 21, 2018 during the 18th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of AU Heads of State and Governments in Kigali, Rwanda. The Agreement entered into force on 30 May 2019, and the start of trade commenced in January 2021. The Agreement is aimed at integrating Africa's markets by creating a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments. The overarching objective behind the AfCFTA is the elimination or reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers amongst the 55 Countries.
4. We believe and anticipate significant opportunities will emanate from the implementation of the AfCFTA and this will lead to positive transformation of many economies on the continent. As you know, Namibia was one of the first to ratify the AfCFTA Agreement and we are therefore preparing to take full advantage of the opportunities that the Continental Free Trade Area will bring. These include, larger market access, improved competitiveness, and enhanced investment in the country, improved production capacities, improved living standard and employment creation.
5. The previous speakers have all touched on the rationale of the AfCFTA, its objectives, evolution and state play. For African leaders that are building on the work of our visionaries, the status quo cannot remain, where Africa continues to be a consumer of finished and high value goods, while continuing to export commodities in the form of raw materials. Our motive underpinning the AfCFTA is the development of the continent and her people. This means, adding value to our own products, creating and establishing regional value chains that will

enhance opportunities for jobs through manufacturing. We want to give certainty to investors both local and international and improve the ease of doing business. No Good Samaritan will do this except ourselves as a continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen

6. To fast-track the implementation of the AfCFTA, the development of an implementation strategy is critical as it leverages deeper integration within the framework of AfCFTA to facilitate an expansion of Namibia's trade and investment in Africa. In this regard, the Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade has developed her National AfCFTA Implementation Strategies and Action Plans. The national strategy has identified key value addition and trade opportunities and constraints, measures and capacities required for it to take full advantage of national, regional and global markets within the context of the AfCFTA.

7. Therefore, the objective of our gathering here today is to launch the Strategy for the Implementation of the AfCFTA. The Strategy is informed by Namibia's broader national development policy framework, consistent with Vision 2030, the Fifth National Development Plan (NDP5), the 2012 National Industrial Policy and its execution Growth at Home Strategy, the Harambee Prosperity Plans (HPPs) and building on progress achieved through participation in regional integration initiatives, mainly the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). The strategy sets in motion the process of identifying and catalysing key value addition and trade opportunities based on the country's comparative and competitive advantage.

8. It further recognizes the importance of promoting access of women, youth and small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to AfCFTA opportunities through the provision of critical entry points into regional and continental markets, skills development, access to finance and market information, and building export readiness and Competitiveness. To this end, the Strategy will enable Namibia, particularly traders, investors and economic operators, to tap into the opportunities provided by the Agreement through its effective implementation, focusing on regulatory adaptation, institutional coordination and capacity building; as well as addressing critical trade and supply-side constraints.

9. Besides the implementation plan, allow me to highlight some of the initiatives that are underway in order for Namibia to optimise the opportunities presented by the AfCFTA.
 - Finalisation of the trade policy framework which includes both trade in goods and services.
 - Finalisation of Namibia Investment and Promotion Act to give certainty and a framework for both domestic and international investors.
 - Enhancing the effectiveness and strengthening of our trade institutional capabilities such as the standards body, competition authority and intellectual property authorities.
 - Finalisation of the Informal Economy Policy especially in light of the fact that women are a predominant demographic.
 - For trade facilitation, rolling out of the logistics master plan and the national single window initiative.
 - The finalisation of the Special Economic Zone law and accompanying incentives following the completion of the policy.
 - Finally, the revision of the industrial policy to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

Allow me lastly to encourage the business sector to use this immense opportunity and take advantage of the huge African market while appealing further for our close collaboration between the public and the private sector. Government is committed and will continue to streamline policies and legislations to ease trade and grow our economy for the benefit of all our citizens.

With these remarks ladies and gentlemen, it is now my distinct honour to officially launch the Strategy for the Implementation of the AfCFTA and wish you all successful Trading under the AfCFTA, which is an incredible milestone for our continent.

I thank you