**OPENING REMARKS FOR THE AFCFTA VALIDATION WORKSHOP BY AMBASSADOR J. MANZOU: SECETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE: RAINBOW TOWERS: 2-3 OCTOBER, 2019**

**READ ON BEHALF BY ACTING PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND DIASPORA, MRS PAVELINE. T. MUSAKA**

**HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT HERE PRESENT;**

**SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS;**

**REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE AFRICAN UNION;**

**REPRESENTATIVES FROM UNECA;**

**REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS;**

**CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE;**

**OUR COOPERATING PARTNERS;**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

Allow me to welcome and thank each and every one of you for coming to this workshop. I am aware of your very busy schedules, but it is, indeed, gratifying to note that you found it worthwhile to leave your offices and dedicate the next two days attending this validation workshop.

We all recall that Government, on behalf of you all, our private sector, signed and ratified the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The Agreement entered into force on 30 May 2019, and was launched on 7 July 2019, in Niamey- Niger by the AU Extraordinary Assembly.

**This was done in cognisance of the immense potential envisaged in fully implementing the AfCFTA. We anticipate significant opportunities manifesting themselves, thereby leading to positive transformation of the economic landscape, especially for us here in Zimbabwe. With proper planning we foresee great achievements of higher levels of industrialisation, employment creation, sustained economic growth and development. There is need for undertaking coherent, prioritised and well sequenced actions aimed at revitalising industrial growth. You are here because we in Government consider you as an important cog in Zimbabwe’s dream of realising Vision 2030 where the country hopes to achieve a middle income status. It is time to come together, and agree on a strategy that will propel us forward within the short to medium term. We do not wish to be a dumping ground for the rest of Africa, but to strategically capture African markets where we can supply processed goods. Value addition. Value addition should be our clarion call!**

**The strategy we are gathered here to validate is expected to identify where comparative advantages lie as we seek to industrialise and implement sustainable value chains that will support economic diversification and maximize our trade potential.**

**As Government, we are proud that the processes of developing this Strategy is following a transparent, participatory and inclusive approach which involves all relevant stakeholders, drawn from the public and private sectors, including women, youth, parliamentarians, academia and civil society.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For us to solve a problem we should first identify and agree on the nature of the problem. We then plan on the way forward. The process to come up with a strategy commenced with a Consultative National Forum (CNF) that was held from 19 to 20 June, 2019. The forum identified a number of key challenges limiting the country’s abilities to produce and trade more effectively and efficiently.

After the forum, more consultations were carried out that further identified and interrogated pertinent issues required to enhance implementation of the Agreement, augmenting those identified at the CNF. The deeper consultations were held with key policy makers and implementers, various subsectors drawn from the productive and services sectors, service providers that facilitate trade, representatives of business associations, and other relevant stakeholders.

The information gathered during the consultations has been incorporated in the strategy that will be presented to you for discussions. I implore you to critically look at it, with your industry in mind, and consider if this is a strategy that will propel you forward to increase your exports, and indeed expand your business. As Government, we look forward to growing industries that will employ more, and begin to formalise the informal.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As Government, our dream is to make Vision 2030 a reality. We, therefore, are looking forward to a relevant National Strategy that should be implementable, effectively addressing the multitude of needs, concerns and challenges currently confronting the business community.

I implore the private sector to take ownership of the strategy. You are the people who are going to drive these competitiveness issues, while our role as Government is to create an enabling environment. The public and private sectors should work together to strengthen our relations for the common good of our people as we thrive to develop our economy.

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Government, through the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, recently updated Zimbabwe National Industrial Development Policy, 2019-2023 (ZNIDP), together with its ancillary sub sectorial strategies. This policy, is indeed, our anchor policy to guide the direction and development of industry based on investment-led and innovation led industrialisation. The Policy has a deliberate emphasis on export growth. I encourage you all to be familiar with this vital the document.

As you validate the document that is about to be presented to you, I implore you to ensure that the strategy speaks, as well as being in sync with our other policy documents that seek to improve the plight of the youth, women and our small and medium enterprises. Let us ensure that the strategies we craft also encompass our informal sector, with a view of formalising it. It is, indeed, from such endeavours that vibrant industries will evolve. Let us nature the skills and entrepreneurialship

through training and mentorship, and ensure that tomorrow’s industries and entrepreneurs are a success.

The ZNIDP identifies 11 pillars for industrialisation, as well as broad strategic instruments and policy interventions that will facilitate the growth and development of the industrial sector. This is indeed so that trade can flourish.

If you have not yet read our Industrialisation Policy, which is strategically linked to the yet to be launched Trade Policy and the Export Strategy, I encourage you to read it and to comment on these living documents so that together we continue to move forward.

The ZNIDP was designed to align with other national policies which include : The Transitional Stabilisation Programme October 2018 - December 2020 (TSP), Draft National Trade Policy 2019-2023; National Energy Policy; and National Export Strategy 2019-2023;) Comprehensive Agricultural Policy Framework 2012-2032; National Information and Communications Technology Policy 2016-2020; Second Science, Technology and innovation Policy March 2012. On the regional level it is aligned to the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap (2015 – 2063) and the AU’s Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa (AIDA) and Agenda 2063 at the continental level. It is also aligned to the United Nation’s Vision 2030 aspirations.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**, all these documents are available for you to read and implement. You are the private sector, our engine for growth.

Lastly, the Ministry would like to sincerely thank the cooperating partners, UNECA, and the AU for facilitating these workshops and research for our benefit.

In Conclusion**,**

I wish you fruitful deliberations which, I hope, will result in an implantable strategy by all of us so that **forward we march, backwards, never.**

With these few remarks I declare the workshop open.

Thank You for your kind attention.