



3rd Pan-African Capacity Development Forum

“Developing Capacity for Africa’s Economic and Social Transformation”

May 5, 2016
Harare International Conference Centre
Harare, Zimbabwe

Welcoming remarks – Anniversary

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*Representative of the Chair,
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Honourable, Phelekezela Mphoko, Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe;
Honorable Ministers here present;
Distinguished Members of the ACBF Board of Governors & Executive Board;
Prof Emmanuel Nnadozie, Executive Secretary of ACBF and the ACBF family here-gathered;
Senior Government officials from Zimbabwe;
Senior Government officials from other countries;
Members of the Diplomatic Corp;
Representatives of development partners;
Distinguished panelists and experts;
Distinguished participants;
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning everyone, and thank you for being here. It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the African Capacity Building Foundation 25th Anniversary Celebration.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Zimbabwean authorities for their cooperation and hospitality in accommodating our 25th Anniversary Celebration here. It is also an honor for us to welcome Honorable Phelekezela Mphoko, Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe. Thank you for gracing us with your presence this morning Sir.

Your Excellences, Honorable Ministers, distinguished ladies and gentlemen: it is both gratifying and truly humbling for the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) to witness this overwhelming support exemplified by your presence today.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

This 25th Anniversary Celebration marks a historic year for the ACBF. At a time of continued global economic and financial vulnerability, combined with the specific context when Africa is implementing the Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030, ACBF has yet again proven its leadership in and commitment to the progress of the African countries:

- It has continued to support the diversified capacity building needs across countries and across sectors;
- It has continued to intensify its technical assistance and policy dialogue with the African Union, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), national governments and relevant stakeholders; and
- It has continued to place capacity development at the center of Africa's development agenda via policy dialogue, knowledge production and investment in capacity building.

A lot has been achieved but you will agree with me that today we have new dynamics and new development contexts. African countries are now rallying around implementing a transformative agenda embedded in Agenda 2063, RECs' development plans, countries' development strategies as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this

connection, Africa faces the key challenge of implementing development priorities and achieving development results.

Let me focus on the issues of implementation. In Africa, we have the best policies and strategies on paper but their effective implementation is a serious challenge. Implementation of national development plans has been a recurrent challenge for most African countries. This is well-highlighted in the various Africa Capacity Reports, ACBF's flagship publications, which have shown that the *delivery of development results* and *capacity development outcomes* remain the most pressing issue over the years (2011-2015). In fact, the Africa Capacity Report 2015 submits that among countries in the *capacity development outcomes* cluster, 91 percent rank in the Low or Very Low brackets. As reported in the Africa Capacity Report 2014, capacity development outcomes are difficult to achieve because many of the surveyed countries hardly allocate budget for capacity development.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

It is now time to be more pragmatic by focusing on tackling the implementation capacity gaps together with the remaining capacity challenges. They do indeed exist. In fact, our continent faces the key challenge of implementing development priorities and achieving development results, namely with respect to the AU Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the RECs' development strategies and the countries' development strategies. Moreover, Africa also faces the task of addressing critical challenges facing the continent such as unsustainable and non-inclusive growth, youth unemployment, climate change, worsening security, and excessive reliance on primary commodity exports.

You will agree with me that in order to meet the continent's development priorities, capacity has been the missing link. Capacity development is hence central. Serious effort in capacity building at various levels (continental, regional and country) and dimensions (soft and hard capacity) is required where it does not exist and strengthening it where found weak.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

To build and/or strengthen the capacities in Africa, ACBF was created and has been mandated to do so. ACBF's 25 years' experience in building capacity has shown that there is need to craft strategies that will go beyond just building capacities. There is need to develop strategies for retaining, harmonizing and utilizing such capacities on the continent. This calls for building strong partnerships by various stakeholders for sustainability of such efforts.

ACBF is the right institution to coordinate and support capacity building initiatives in Africa not only because it is an institution exclusively created for that purpose but because over the past 25 years, ACBF has made tremendous strides in capacity development through empowering professionals and leaders, as well as strengthening capacities of governments, parliaments, civil society, private and higher learning institutions.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

Martin Luther King once said: ***“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.”*** We at ACBF have done large consultations to ensure that the capacity needs of countries, key sectors and stakeholders are well-taken into account in our next Strategic Plan 2017-2021. We will be therefore, as always, be tackling ‘things that matter’ for our continent.

Beyond what we have been doing so well in the past 25 years, in the next five years, ACBF will:

- Respond to its member states’ needs and demands and ensure that they benefit from return on their investment into the Foundation;
- Deepen its alliance with well established and emerging policy institutes and think tanks as primary allies in promoting reforms, piloting innovations and drawing lessons for up-scaling;
- Be a reliable partner to pan-African organizations in promoting regional integration across all levels;
- Be a clearing house and helpdesk on knowledge and expertise around capacity building;
- Continue to mobilize resources for capacity development in Africa and match supplies with needs;
- Continue to effectively and efficiently manage funds and retail grants; and be a competent substantive advisor on capacity development, policy impact, and transformation; and
- Bring transformational intelligence even to highly technical policy processes.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

On this final note, I would like to urge and call upon all African governments, bilateral and multilateral partners, practitioners within the capacity development industry, locally and internationally, to ‘step forward’, contribute and be a part of the ACBF Family. We look forward to your political and financial support as we move towards the implementation of the 2017-2021 ACBF Strategic Plan.

You are certainly aware that demands on ACBF resources and technical support are rising more than ever before. With the need to boldly support African countries to successfully implement the Agenda 2063 and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), I wish to ask for your strong political and financial support for the Foundation.

ACBF is finalizing development of its Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2021 which will squarely address the capacity development required in implementing the continent’s development goals as defined in Agenda 2063 and SDGs. We are hence planning for a pledging conference in June in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. ACBF looks forward to welcoming you there.

Thank you very much and remember that ACBF is your ACBF.

Dr Shehu Misheu

*Representative of the Chair
ACBF Executive Board
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