ZIMBABWE

ADDRESS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE, DR E. D. MNANGAGWA

AT THE

20TH EDITION OF SADC LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT

ELEPHANT HILLS RESORT VICTORIA FALLS

ZIMBABWE

9 AUGUST 2019
Director of Ceremonies;
The Chief Justice of Zimbabwe, Justice Luke Malaba;
Minister of State for Matabeleland North Provincial Affairs, Hon. R. Moyo;
Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Hon. Z. Ziyambi (MP);
Other Honourable Ministers here present;
The Attorney General of Zimbabwe, Advocate P. Machaya;
The Prosecutor General of Zimbabwe, Mr K. Hodzi;
President of the SADC Lawyers Association, Mr. M Boqwana;
Honourable Members of Parliament;
President of the Law Society of Zimbabwe, Mr. T Masiye-Moyo;
Senior Government Officials;
Our esteemed international delegates and visitors;
Members from the Legal Fraternity here present;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;
I am honoured to address this 20th Edition of SADC Lawyers Association Annual Conference and General Meeting, which is being held under the theme, "Supporting strong institutions for equal access to justice for all."

On behalf of the Government and people of Zimbabwe and indeed on my own behalf, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all to our beautiful country. We are humbled that the Regional Bar Association, representatives of Member States and the Law Society of Zimbabwe chose our country as the venue for this illustrious event.

It is most opportune that this important Conference and General Meeting is being held a few days before the 2019 SADC Summit and a month before the United Nations General Assembly. I congratulate you for your theme which resonates with the aspiration of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 which advocates for "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions."
As SADC Member States, our ties are based not only on a common history, but shared hopes and aspirations. These are anchored on a better and more prosperous tomorrow. We share a common destiny in the economic, political, legal, social, cultural and religious spheres; our fates are interlinked. I am therefore confident that the deliberations and recommendations of this Conference will further the developmental course of our SADC region and the aspirations of the United Nations.

**Distinguished Delegates;**
The region is facing diverse socio-economic development opportunities and challenges which should give us greater impetus for closer cooperation and integration across all spheres, the legal sector included. It is my humble view that law and development are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Hence, the relationship between the two is both essential and fundamental for sustainable development.
It is therefore imperative that we make use of the law as a universal instrument of development. Indeed good and functional laws and institutions ensure that all sectors of our economies and societies grow and thrive.

As such, I exhort you, the legal professionals to go beyond ensuring the entrenchment of constitutionalism, the rule of law and other democratic tenets within our respective jurisdictions. You must use the law to propel the modernization, industrialization and integration of our economies.

It is further incumbent on you to ensure that the law facilitates the empowerment of the generality of our people to administer and manage the abundant natural resources within our countries. This is over and above facilitating our people’s increased involvement in matters related to their political, scientific, cultural and social affairs.
On our part as the present SADC leadership, we have strong political will to continue to entrench a democratic culture which we fought for, within our respective jurisdictions for the interest, benefit and protection of our citizens. We shall therefore, accelerate our efforts to strengthen both national and regional legal institutions, for sustainable socio-economic development.

**Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Unity, peace and harmony are indispensable ingredients for a just and prosperous society. Under the Second Republic, my administration recognizes that weak institutions and restricted access to justice will deprive opportunities to our people and undermine the delivery of public services and economic development.

Thus, my Government is accelerating efforts to consolidate constitutionalism, the rule of law as well as strengthening institutions that support democracy.
We shall with greater resolve, protect constitutionally enshrined rights, fully cognizant however, of the fact that the enjoyment of such rights is not absolute.

In addition, increased investment and fiscal support towards guaranteeing strong national institutions which guide society towards prosperity, is ongoing. The need to intricately balance between an open economy and the rights of all citizens to access quality public services and economic development, remain a priority to my Government.

In the case of Zimbabwe, lawyers have the weighty obligation to effectively assist in the national economic building and reconstruction. You must therefore diligently support national institutions in the execution of their mandates. You must also once again consecrate the realm of justice, sanctifying the values of integrity and honesty. Together, we must put our judicial system back on the high pedestal it belongs.
While you as practitioners of the law have a unique responsibility; the rest of us must together demonstrate a new and reinvigorated commitment to achieving justice. Sadly, however corruption, being an antithesis of justice has left a stain on our post-independence legacy. As a result, too many opportunities have been squandered, lives ruined and our development potential stunted.

We must now collectively return our country to an era of transparency and openness, no matter how tough the journey may feel, progress must be made. Corruption and mismanagement in our institutions and systems cannot be white washed. It is incumbent upon all of us to reform and rebuild every facet of our society from the foundations, up. The age of impunity must be behind us.

I acknowledge that no righteous path is ever easy and no virtuous vision is handed on a silver platter.
My Government shall however never shy away from doing the right thing. Equally, the bad crops in our judicial system must be weeded out. The bureaucratic bottlenecks and frustrating foot-dragging officials must be dealt with without fear or favour. Because corrupt officials do not only enrich themselves, they also impoverish the many.

**Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

It is pleasing to note that the SADC region enjoys peace and stability. Without peace, justice, inclusivity and strong institutions, the attainment of the United Nations SDGs will prove difficult. Our collective efforts must be towards ensuring legal frameworks that accelerate the elimination of poverty, mitigation of climate change, enhancement of food security and facilitation of quality medical health care and other social services.
Our learned profession must now be more transformative and development oriented for the good of our people. Therein lies the realisation of true human rights.

I urge you to work more closely with your respective Governments to build effective and strong institutions for enforcement of all rights and obligations. Our efforts must contribute towards the protection of vulnerable groups in our societies such as the disadvantaged, women and children. Societal ills which include various forms of abuse and violence against women and children have no place in our society, and must be condemned and brought to an end.

The harmonisation of laws and policies in order to standardise the Lucofone, Francophone and Anglophone legal systems, must be pursued with vigour.
These legal frameworks must aid in the preservation, promotion and protection of the rights and realization of sustainable socio-economic development.

**Distinguished Delegates:**

The ever changing societies and global dynamics, with its attendant intricate nuances require the legal professionals to work closely with Governments, more so in our developing countries.

Hence, lawyers should never be aloof to issues related to international trade, finance and investment. It is incumbent upon you to situate present legal narratives within the context of the economic priorities of SADC, the African Continental Free Trade and the need for our goods and services to gain access into global value chains.

The growing desire by our Governments in the SADC Region to beneficiate and value add our natural resources; develop a sustainable wildlife economy; ensure free movement within our region;
integrate our infrastructure and improve agriculture productivity, undoubtedly have far reaching implications. These must be anticipated and interrogated by us, in this profession.

I further challenge you to utilise your skills and knowledge to fight contemporary national and cross border crimes and security threats in order for our region and respective countries to realise our hopes and aspirations.

In this quest however, issues of affordable and accessible justice delivery must remain foremost as you set your tariffs. You too must play your part towards equal access to justice for all.

On our part as Governments, we will continue to support the legal systems in our region, by ensuring policy coherence and coordination at all levels. We will further endeavour to develop effective linkages between policy planning and budgeting.
Similarly, the Doctrine of the Separation of Powers shall be respected by Governments. These are key and fundamental conditions in our quest to transform, industrialise, modernise and integrate our nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Holy Book says in Proverbs; “where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety”. As we, in Zimbabwe, journey towards the attainment of upper middle income economy status by 2030, my Government remains committed to increase collaboration with various stakeholders at both national and regional levels.

I call upon the legal fraternity to be more proactive in their interaction with my administration. As legal practitioners, we must be instruments of peace building, social cohesion, beacons of equity and advocates of economic justice. The task of rebuilding our great nation is ours together.
Furthermore, in our quest to establish an open economy, I appeal to legal practitioners to give appropriate opinions to Government with regards regional and global best practice; in the context, however, of national interest and realities.

We must therefore, as lawyers apply our minds to develop effective, accountable, responsive and transparent institutions at all levels. These are fundamental in the formulation of achievable and vibrant socio-economic policies to guide national programmes.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen;

In conclusion, I once again commend the SADC Lawyers Association and the Law Society of Zimbabwe for successfully hosting this Conference and exhort you all to keep your eyes on the holy goals of justice, integrity and honesty.
I encourage you to take some time off your busy schedules to sample Zimbabwe’s warm hospitality by visiting our spectacular and majestic Victoria Falls as well as the nearby Hwange National Park.

With these remarks, I wish you all successful deliberations and declare the 20th Edition of the SADC Lawyers Association Annual Conference and General Meeting officially opened.

God bless you all.

I thank you.