

SPEECH BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGH COMMISSIONER

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MAPUTO CORRIDOR LOGISTICS INITIATIVE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & MAPUTO CORRIDOR COMMEMORATIVE

MEETING

Bom Dia

Good morning

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address you here today. I would like to thank Mrs Brenda Horne the CEO of MCLI for inviting me.

Ladies and Gentleman we are gathered here today for the MCLI's Annual General Meeting and also to commemorate ten years of the Maputo Corridor. As I was preparing my speech I went through my documents to see when precisely the MCLI was launched. I came upon a document stating that it was launched in Maputo on 18 February 2004. I thought to myself that this must surely be wrong. I started to go through some more of my documents only to confirm that indeed the MCLI was launched on 18 February 2004. The reason I was doubting this date is because it feels as if the MCLI has always been there and because of the excellent work that it has been doing in making the Maputo Corridor a first choice for all stakeholders. We have now become used to and definitely appreciate the letters and newsflashes that we receive from Ms Brenda Horne regarding developments, challenges and victories concerning the Maputo Corridor. I would like to thank Ms Horne and the MCLI for keeping us updated and for the excellent service they provide to their customers.

Ladies and Gentleman in President Mbeki's State of the Nation Address he talked about South Africa's Age of Hope. He said that this Age of Hope came about due to South Africa's economic policies starting to produce the results that we as South Africans want to see. Our economic growth rate is increasing and we would like to achieve and maintain a growth rate of 6% within the next few years. The economic prosperity of the country is having positive spin offs for South African society is as evident in the latest opinion polls. In a recent survey it showed that South Africans were highly optimistic about their future and the future of our country. In another survey, the Grant Thornton International Business Owners Survey reported that 84% of South Africa's business owners are optimistic about the year ahead, making them the third most optimistic, internationally. What all these figures signify is that our people are firmly convinced that our country has entered its Age of Hope. When looking at Mozambique's economic development and the investments that are taking place, I want to say that Mozambique has also entered into its Age of Hope.

Ladies and Gentleman, our President said that we should make use of the opportunities that exist during the Age of Hope. We must use the economic prosperity and positive attitude of the people to capitalise on the situation or alternatively we could sit back and relax and let this golden opportunity pass us by. Ladies and Gentleman, we must ask ourselves what can we do as government and as private sector to maximise the opportunities that the Maputo Corridor presents to us.

I was reading a document regarding discussions about Nepad programmes and how these programmes are identified. It was quite interesting to note that right at the start of discussions regarding Nepad that the Maputo Corridor was used as an example of a holistic approach

in developing principal corridors for the Nepad programme. It is also stated in the Nepad documentation that we as African countries should improve regional trade by, among others, eliminating barriers to intra-regional trade. We should accelerate physical integration through infrastructure development. Clearly, the private sector has a key role to play in the development of the Corridor. In this regard, public-private partnerships are essential if any Corridor is to succeed.

I am confident that by systematically working together - government, business and civil society - we can increase the operational efficiency of the Maputo Corridor. I am confident that we are on the right path.

Ladies and Gentleman let me however also state that we are aware of various issues that seriously hampers efficiency along the Corridor. Even if I do not address it here I am sure I will be asked about it and I know exactly who will be the first person to ask me the two questions that is on everybody's lips. Am I correct Dr Mathews Phosa. So let me address the two issues.

Firstly let me address the issue of the Ressano Garcia/Lebombo Border post. We are completely aware of the challenges that the infrastructure and operating hours present not only to exporters and importers, but also to normal tourists and visitors. We acknowledge that the border poses a serious challenge. I would however like to assure you that we take notice of your complaints and suggestions regarding the border. I can assure you that our government is aware of the importance of having an efficient and effective border post. As I have mentioned at other gatherings, a committee comprising of all the relevant role-players had been set up to come up with a workable plan that will ensure efficiency in the operation of this vital link in the Corridor transportation

route. It should be kept in mind that decisions taken within this forum must be acceptable to both South Africa and Mozambique. The Heads of State will be meeting within the next few months and a presentation on solutions for the border issue will be made to the two Presidents. In the interim the South African High Commission in Mozambique are having regular meetings with all relevant staff members at the Lebombo border post to discuss ways of solving some of the logistical problems at the border.

The second issue is a bit more sensitive and I would appreciate it if you could respect the fact that I cannot go into too much detail at this moment. Yes, I am aware of the fact that the Ressano Garcia railway line is not yet operational and that this creates great frustration to exporters and importers alike. I would appreciate it if at this stage you would accept my explanation that both the Mozambican and the South African governments are aware of how important it is that the rail line should become operational as soon as possible and that discussions to solve the issue will take place shortly. I would like to assure you that we are completely aware of the fact that Railway and port infrastructures are, without a shadow of doubt, one of the engines of economic and social development. They play a relevant role in the promotion of regional trade and integration in Southern Africa and the two governments definitely take this issue very seriously.

I would however like to encourage members of MCLI to continue to make positive suggestions on how the Maputo Corridor could be improved and also to continue to identify problem areas. As I have mentioned earlier on, Mrs Horne's newsletters are very informative and we do bring it to the attention of our superiors. MCLI gives true expression to the term "private sector participation. MCLI is truly the

mouthpiece for the private sector making use of the Maputo Development Corridor. I am confident that MCLI has already gone a long way towards reaching its goal of making the Maputo Development Corridor the First Choice for all stakeholders.

Ladies and Gentleman this Corridor was conceived to facilitate long-term investment in the region between Gauteng/Mpumalanga in South Africa and the Southern part of Mozambique through specific projects where the public and private sector would be called upon to provide their contribution. We meet here today in the context of the same principles that guided the conception and the creation of the Maputo Development Corridor. Our region's market structure has changed dramatically over the last ten years and this brought about increasing responsibilities in the field of transport and infrastructure. Contributions by the private and public sector had to increase in order to compete as a region in a more and more globalised a world. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the MCLI for stepping forward to meet this challenge and for playing a very important role in making the Maputo Corridor a success. The South African High Commission will continue to support your efforts and would also like to thank you for the wonderful support that you are rendering the Mozambican and South African business community.

I would like to wish you well and I hope that you have a successful annual general meeting.

I thank you.