

**Remarks of the Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga, EGH;High
Representative for Infrastructure Development in Africa,
4th PIDA Week 2018
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.**

Eng. Amos Marawa, Permanent Secretary Ministry of
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Executive Secretary Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe

Director-General, Belt and Road Unit, National Development and Reform Commission, the People's Republic of China, Mr. Xiao Weiming;

Carla Montesi of EU;

Dr Amani Abou-Zeid Commissioner Infrastructure and Energy of AU;

Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer, NEPAD.

Mr. Joel Biggie Matiza - Minister of Transport and Infrastructural Development and Transport, Republic of Zimbabwe,

Distinguished guests

Let me begin by thanking my brother Ibrahim and the AU Commission for inviting me to PIDA Week 2018.

This is taking place in one of the World's greatest natural wonders that also showcases Africa's potential– the Victoria Falls in the Republic of Zimbabwe.

As you are aware, a few weeks ago, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat appointed me to a task that few are called upon to perform; that is, to serve our people and our continent, at a time we are pursuing a 50-year transformational agenda of the “AfricaWeWant” in Agenda 2063.

For this recognition and call to duty as a servant of my Continent, I am most humbled, and thankful, to my brother, the Chairperson.

My task as Infrastructure Champion, is to accelerate our transboundary connectivity through infrastructure.

I therefore call all of you present here today to put hands-on-the-Wheels and we all push in the same direction.

If we all commit to this common cause, our efforts will be realized, sooner rather than later.

Realizing our continent's development agenda will require fundamental change in behaviour and mind-sets.

It requires taking transformative decisions and being innovative in the way we approach persistent problems.

With regard to infrastructure, these problems include inadequate road and air connectivity with resulting and trade deficits' which we as a continent, have come to accept as the normal state of affairs.

We live in the digital information age. We must therefore fastrack the unblocking of political bottlenecks for ICT Broadband and Fibre Optic Projects Linking our States.

Africa's children and leadership must be helped to access information at the click of a button or we shall never compete.

In this quest, old habits and old paradigms must give way to well-thoughtout initiatives and I am glad we have embarked on this.

I see such a shift in the creation of the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative (PICI) – and the HR - High

Representative for Infrastructure Development in Africa Initiative.

For these initiatives to yield results, we must overcome another set of old habits; the habit of perpetual feasibility studies and procurement of consultancies.

We are not inventing the wheel. We have tried and proven delivery mechanisms that we could implement with modifications to ensure speedy and smart delivery.

These mechanisms exist within government files. They are also with our private sector partners. They are with our development partners who should be willing to share them with us, hopefully, without conditions or strings attached.

The last thing Africa needs at this point in time is partnership with strings and conditions.

Such smart delivery instruments like Design and Build, Turn-key, Framework Contracting, to name a few, should come in

handy for the Continent and help us get out of the trap of feasibility studies.

In implementing the priority Infrastructure flagship projects - we will need to avoid the traditional and long gestation delivery mechanisms that bogs down our public sectors and resort to the market for efficiency, measured and time-bound delivery.

Over the next two (2) years, we will work closely with key stakeholders which include Member States, Regional

Economic Communities (RECs), AU Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Transport/ Infrastructure, and Development partners to deliver impactful projects identified as low hanging fruits.

These include:

Establishment of Joint Corridor Coordinating Authorities – for the efficient management of vital economic arteries, or corridors, of our continent;

Championing the ratification¹ of Inter-Governmental Agreements (IGAs) for the development of the Trans African Highways, Missing links; and the adoption of the Minimum Technical Norms and Standards by AU member countries, for the development and maintenance of the Trans African Highways;

Championing the establishment of lead National and Regional Agencies on Road Safety, as recommended by the AU-

¹ As approved by the STC on Transport/Infrastructure, November 2018, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Specialized Technical Committee (STC) for Transport and Infrastructure, to give impetus to the realization of the “African Decade Programme on Road Safety (2011-2020)”.

We recognise the need for equitable and balanced development opportunities amongst the Trans African Corridors, in the course of implementing the high level Infrastructure Championing Initiative.

We will therefore include as part of our Projects Selection Criteria for the upgrading of the TAH missing links – “peace dividend project-awards”, to foot-print countries and RECs, along key under-developed² TAH corridors.

Africa’s transformation, as outlined in Agenda 2063 – will require “agents of change”, or projects of monumental scale, to trigger, and give impetus, to the social and economic transformation programme of Agenda 2063.

For instance, given the present global re-positioning economic order, Africa will have to define, and finance its own equivalent of Inter-State and Pan-American Highways or Belt and Road initiative to reinforce the continent's key flagship drivers: African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

We must explore new frontiers of connectivity. The opening of what we call The African Belt Way, that is the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor

project, connecting the eastern and western-central Africa deep-sea ports of Lamu, the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic at Douala in Cameroon, will need to be scoped and tabled for turn-key development.

We will champion the Continental High Speed Freight Railway Project and advance its implementation. This is an important “change-agent”, with positive impact for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

We will pursue high level advocacy with member states to implement the Prioritized Action Plan (2018-2019) with regard to realisation of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

This will help us fast track the full liberalization of the air transport market in Africa in terms of market access, frequency allocation, tariffs, and the granting of traffic “freedom” rights – all geared towards, easing “doing business”, and travelling within, and outside Africa.

In conclusion Ladies and gentlemen, the task at hand is an enormous. I have no illusions about this and I believe none of us have.

What I do know however, is that, it is doable... if all of us push in the same direction.

I therefore count on all of you my fellow Africans, and friends of Africa, to join me - to see the dreams of our founding fathers and aspirations of our children and grandchildren fulfilled, for a better and inclusive Africa.

I thank you for your attention.

Hon. Raila Odinga,

High Representative-Champion for Infrastructure

Development in Africa

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