

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEBATE ON
THE THEME OF THE SUMMIT.**

29 January 2012

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Check Against Delivery.*

Mr Chairperson,

Thank you for giving me the floor to contribute to this important debate on the theme of our Summit.

Mr Chairperson, the promotion of intra-African trade remains central to our development efforts, sustainable economic growth, job creation, especially for the youth and poverty eradication. Thus, the theme for this Summit, *Boosting Intra-African Trade*, is both appropriate and cannot be over-emphasized. Let us use this opportunity to re-focus our attention on the promotion of trade amongst African countries, especially at the time of the prevailing economic crisis.

Mr Chairperson, the Organization of African Unity, the predecessor of the AU, built a strong foundation for the promotion of intra-African trade. Indeed, 31 years ago, the OAU adopted the *Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa*, which called for Africa's economic self-reliance and the economic integration of Africa.

Likewise, the Abuja Treaty, which was adopted 21 years ago, called for the elimination of trade barriers and the ultimate establishment of the common African market. Despite the foresight of the leaders, however, these seminal Declarations remain largely unimplemented. Statistics indicate that intra-African trade stands only at 11 percent of overall trade. This is low when compared to African trade with other regions of the world such as North America and Europe, which stands at 40 and 50 percent, respectively.

In their 6th Ordinary Session, held at Kigali in November 2010, AU Ministers of Trade recommended the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area. This recommendation was endorsed by the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in Addis Ababa.

Mr Chairperson, during the Assembly Session held in Malabo, in June 2011, we expressed concern about the slow, and in some cases lack of implementation of the Decisions of AU Summits.

This retards the achievement of our common objectives and erodes the credibility of our organization. I would, therefore, like to call for the full implementation of the Declaration on Boosting Intra-African Trade. I would also like to propose that the AU Commission submits regular reports to future Summits on the implementation of the Declaration.

Mr Chairperson, some of the essential conditions for the successful implementation of the declaration are: the development of infrastructure in line with the NEPAD Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative; capacity building and skills development as well as technological innovations. This will help us realize the objective of *Boosting Intra-African Trade*, building on the foundation established by the Lagos Plan of Action and the Abuja Treaty.

I thank you for your attention.