

**OFFICIAL OPENING SPEECH
BY THE
ZIMBABWE MINISTER OF PUBLIC SERVICE,
LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE,
HONOURABLE PRISCAH MUPFUMIRA (SEN.)
AT THE FIRST SESSION OF THE
AFRICAN UNION SPECIALISED TECHNICAL
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT**

**23 APRIL 2015
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

- **Your Excellency, the Commissioner of Social Affairs, Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko**
- **Members of the Outgoing Bureau**
- **Honourable Ministers here-present**
- **Ambassadors and Excellencies here-present**
- **Distinguished Representatives of Employers here-present**
- **Distinguished Representatives of Workers here-present**
- **Representatives of the United Nations here present**
- **Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society Organisations**
- **Senior Government Officials here-present**
- **Invited Guests;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Allow me, at the outset, to express my Government's gratitude for the privilege accorded to it as the Vice Chair of the outgoing Bureau for the last two years. In this position my Government had the honour to Chair some of the important meetings of the predecessor African Union Labour and Social Affairs Commission.

My Government is also highly appreciative of the expertise and high level of cooperation availed to

it by the AU Secretariat in implementing our collective decisions since 2013.

The other members of the outgoing Bureau also requested me, Dear Colleagues, to humbly ask you to accept their gratitude for the support you rendered to all of us and for the hard work you invested for the betterment of our peoples.

The last two years were indeed challenging for the Bureau and indeed for all of us. You are aware that the scourges of unemployment, war and disease have especially continued to undermine the full realisation of our goals. In this context, the cost of these ills should be mitigated through our various policies, programmes and activities. I say this because it is our responsibility to ensure that our people, the millions of men and women, the fathers, the mothers, the sons and daughters, who look up to us, do not fall into poverty. Accordingly dear colleagues, we need to be mindful of the immense responsibilities which fall on the new Specialised Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment and Bureau.

Dear Colleagues, I am pleased to single out two successes during the outgoing Bureau's tenure.

First is the adoption by Heads of State and Government of the Revised Ouagadougou Declaration on Employment and Poverty Eradication during the Ordinary session of the AU Summit in January 2015.

You are aware Colleague Ministers, distinguished delegates that we could not meet in Burkina Faso as planned in September 2014 to share further perspectives on the draft Revised Declaration due to the Ebola outbreak in some parts of West Africa. Allow me at this juncture to say our hearts pour out to the families and friends that were affected by this outbreak. We wish to express our deepest condolences to the bereaved and to reassure you all that Africa continues to stand united in this fight.

Nonetheless, we are glad that our Principals were satisfied with the quality of work we had already put into the revised Declaration and that they shared the sense of urgency to have them passed for immediate implementation. It is therefore fitting for me to underscore the need for us, in our different capacities to prioritise the implementation of the revised Declaration.

The second issue that I wish to flag is the work of the African members of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office. As you know, the Government of Zimbabwe assumed the Coordinatorship role of the African Group of the ILO in June 2014. Again, let me thank all the African Governments for the incredible support that has continued to be availed to my government within this body.

In the course of this meeting, I am sure you will be apprised of the work of the Governing Body. Without pre-empting that discussion, I just wish to inform you that the interventions of the African Group were pivotal in the elaboration of the solution so far realised by the Governing Body on the issues concerning ILO Convention no. 87 and the right to strike. With this, I wish to congratulate all African Governments for their contribution towards the work of the ILO and indeed, the work of the African Group.

It is my sincere hope that we will continue to work together within the ILO for the realisation of the Decent Work Agenda. In this same vein, I wish to thank the ILO for the capacity development support that has been extended to us in the form of

the workshop to be held back to back with this Committee meeting.

With these few words, Dear Colleagues, it is fitting for me to wish all of us successful deliberations at this meeting, with the hope that our engagement will yield positive outcomes.

I thank you.