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Directorate of Information and Communication

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2018 PIDA Week: Connecting dots between good governance and infrastructure development

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, November 26, 2018: Africa needs to unite and work hard to reverse colonial infrastructure systems which promoted the extraction of profitable agricultural and mineral wealth for export at the expense of local communities and the continent,” Zimbabwe’s Transport and Infrastructural Development and Transport Minister, Joel Biggie Matiza said as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) Week opened on Monday in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe buoyed by gathering momentum.

The 4th PIDA Week is being held under the theme; *Realizing Africa’s Integration through Smart Infrastructure and Good Governance*, and it intends to build on the relative achievements and the momentum created in the previous three events to continue to engage stakeholders on the effective delivery of infrastructure on the continent.

Delivering his opening statement, Mr. Matiza said for Africa to fully develop and integrate, there was need for the continent to focus on infrastructure development, in particular transboundary projects, to ensure it was competitive enough to make a difference.

“Historically African countries inherited underdeveloped infrastructure geared towards exports-imports transportation rather than focusing on transforming and improving local production capacity as well as promoting intra-Africa trade. This is reason for us to reverse this legacy and as a continent we have crafted a new trajectory through PIDA, a turning point we should follow to ensure we transform the current state of affairs,” he said.

Mr. Matiza hailed PIDA for its efforts in trying to bridge Africa’s infrastructure deficit. He said PIDA Week offered a valuable opportunity for policymakers, project developers, private sector, civil society, and academia to exchange views and proffer solutions towards the implementation of regional infrastructure projects on the continent.

“PIDA is such a vital initiative, not only to catalyse intra-African trade but perhaps more important to provide a wider platform to encourage investment,” he said.

The African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid said the current low levels of infrastructure on the continent posed one of the biggest

challenges to Africa's industrialization and development agenda, which is having a negative impact on Africa's competitiveness and participation in the global markets.

According to the World Bank, the poor state of infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa in respect of its electricity, water, roads and ICT, reduces national economic growth by 2 percent annually and reduces productivity by as much as 40 percent.

"Meeting Africa's infrastructure needs and developing cost-effective infrastructure services requires significant investments," the Commissioner said, adding the continent should turn its challenges in infrastructure development into an opportunity.

The financing gap in Africa for infrastructure development is estimated at between US\$130 -170 billion per year.

"Despite encouraging investments on infrastructure, both at the domestic and international levels, which averages about US\$75 billion per year, there is a need for significant increase in infrastructure investments on the continent," Dr. Abou-Zeid added.

She added: "There have been remarkable achievements within a short period of time considering the many barriers that exist within the continent. However, the scale of the challenge in infrastructure development on the continent calls for more accelerated implementation and innovative approaches to meet-up with the increasing demand for infrastructure services."

For his part, Chief Executive Officer of the NEPAD Agency, Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, said Africa needs to accelerate the development of transboundary infrastructure projects if it is to fully integrate. He said a lot of progress has been made since African leaders adopted PIDA in 2012.

"We recognise that optimal solutions for continental problems lie in Regional Integration. We are getting there progressively, but we need to accelerate implementation if we want regional integration. It's not a question of lack of financial resources, it is a question of lack of bankable projects and sound rules. So we need to do our homework," said Dr. Mayaki, adding that local, national and regional governance was key to the success Africa seeks in closing its infrastructure deficit.

For his part African Union's High Representative for Infrastructure Development, Honorable Raila Amollo Odinga, said Africa needs to move away from the conference and feasibility study syndrome and move to implement agreed projects if it is to successfully integrate and achieve sustainable development and change the lives of its citizens for the better.

"Transformational decisions have to be taken if we are to move ahead. Africa must deal with political bottlenecks that hamper its development or we shall never compete," said

Mr. Odinga. “We must also overcome the habitual of feasibility study after feasibility study without implementing. We must change.”

Ms. Carla Montesi, European Commission's Director for Planet and Prosperity and a representative of COMESA Secretary General, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, also spoke in the opening session in support of Africa’s desire to invest in infrastructural development that will support Africa’s growth.

Ms. Montesi said the EU will continue to support Africa in its quest for an integrated infrastructure that generates jobs for the youth; helps reduce poverty; and supports regional integration.

Mr. Xiao Weiming, Director-General of the Belt and Road Unit, National Development and Reform Commission, the People's Republic of China, said his country will continue to work with African nations to help build their infrastructure capacity.

He said China will continue to enhance cooperation with Africa through infrastructure development; adding PIDA was a transformative initiative that will change the face of Africa if fully and successfully implemented.

The 2018 PIDA Week welcomed more than 400 participants brought together an impressive line-up of top-level government representatives, influential industry leaders, private sector, leading thinkers from international institutions, government, academia, business and finance.

It aims to provide a platform for stakeholders to engage in accelerating and synergizing their efforts to accelerate projects preparation and implementation; mobilize adequate financial and technical resources for projects; increase private sector participation in PIDA implementation; and mobilize Member States to integrate the PIDA projects into their national development plans.

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