



OPENING ADDRESS

BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
ZIMBABWE, HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR. E. D. MNANGAGWA**

AT THE

**OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SIXTH (6TH)
EDITION OF THE TRANSFORM AFRICA
SUMMIT,**

VICTORIA FALLS

26TH - 28TH APRIL 2023

Your Majesty, King Mswati III of the Kingdom of Eswatini;

Your Excellency, President Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda and Chairperson of the Smart Africa Board;

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;

Your Excellency, Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure, Energy and Digitilisation;

Honourable Ministers here present;

Mrs Doreen Bogdad-Martin, Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union;

Mr. Wamkele Mene, Secretary General of the African Continental Free Trade Area;

Distinguished participants;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my singular honour to welcome you all to this magnificent resort City of Victoria Falls, known locally as *Mosi-oa-Tunya* - The Smoke that Thunders, on this occasion of the Sixth Edition of the Transform Africa Summit.

On behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Zimbabwe, I express our profound gratitude to the Conveners of this Summit for affording our country the privilege to host this very important event. I trust that you have found the arrangements suitable. I equally welcome those delegates who are joining us on various digital platforms.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Delegates;

The modernisation and industrialisation of our great Continent urgently requires the adoption of science, technology and innovation.

The theme of this Summit: *Innovate-Connect-Transform*, provides an apt synopsis of three critical elements, for Africa's successful adaptation to the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Partnerships are essential for Africa to leap forward and build capabilities in science and technology. Equally, we must seamlessly integrate the frontier of science and technology with the unique needs and strategic socio-economic development goals of the Continent and our respective nations. The numerous innovations and start ups by our talented youthful population require the support not only of our governments but also, from global capital. It is, therefore, pleasing that this Summit has a broad array of participants from both the public and private sector, extending beyond the African Continent.

Collectively, let us leverage on this noble Transform Africa initiative to accelerate the achievement of Africa's Agenda 2063, ICT aspirations and

the Sustainable Development Goals, leaving no one and no place behind.

Distinguished Delegates;

This Summit is being held at a time when lessons from the COVID 19 pandemic give impetus for Africa to develop its own capabilities, across the social, economic and industrial spectrum. To realise our vision of Transforming Africa through ICT, the young African innovators are challenged to deploy our Continent's abundant raw materials for the production of ICT related hardware and gadgets. Our institutions of higher education and techno-preneurs should also be supported to design relevant software solutions that speak to the intricacies of African economies and communities.

It is a misnomer that we continue to rely on generic off-the shelf software packages availed to us at exorbitant prices. The Smart Africa membership comprising renowned global technology firms must be leveraged to catapult our capabilities.

More must be done in this respect. In our case as Zimbabwe, an assembly factory has enhanced the availability of ICT devices at affordable prices, especially for the youth.

Similarly, the African Diaspora is urged to use existing networks and knowledge platforms to advance Continental aspirations for cutting edge inventions, innovations and viable start ups.

In the case of Zimbabwe, the meeting is convening against a backdrop of notable achievements stemming from the adoption of the Education 5.0 philosophy among other policy interventions.

Science and technology are becoming intertwined with our country's social and economic development while innovative products and services are transforming the economy, meeting major national needs and improving people's quality of life.

Particularly, Zimbabwe continues taking deliberate steps towards food security and food sovereignty riding on the rapid innovations in science, communication and digital technologies. These are encapsulated under our country's SMART Zimbabwe 2030 Master Plan, with emphasis on developing home grown solutions.

Under the Smart Africa Alliance and Smart Agriculture Flagship programme, Zimbabwe is privileged to be spearheading the development of the AgriTech Blueprint for Africa. This has seen my Government adopting an Agritech Strategy and implementing an Integrated Agriculture Information Management System towards increasing agriculture productivity and value chain development as well as efficient land use and environmental management practices.

Overall, we are determined to boost agriculture and rural development through improved access to valuable ICT based information that enable agriculture stakeholders to make best decisions.

Enabling policies that support and strengthen the AgriTech ecosystem are being continually improved.

These relate to ICT infrastructure, food production and processing, irrigation and water management, disaster management, telecommunication, transportation and financing, among others.

The roll out of our Education 5.0 philosophy saw the broadened learning and deployment of science, technology and innovation. This has led to numerous start ups, which are creating new products and services for use by our fast growing economy and society in general.

Notable among these is the launch of our maiden satellite code named “ZIMSAT-1”, in November 2022, by the Zimbabwe National Geospatial and Space Agency. This satellite will enable a wide range of solutions in agriculture, energy, meteorology, civil protection, communication and technological outreach.

In addition, the innovation hubs, established within tertiary institutions and universities have led to other solutions presently used by local authorities as well as the energy and financial services sectors.

To enhance efficiency and effectiveness in Public Service delivery, my Government continues to adopt smart solutions to bring public services closer to the citizenry. These include the e-Passport, e-VISA and Integrated Case Management Systems. Community Information Centers have improved access to digital platforms for our people at the grassroots level.

Growth in innovation and the envisaged transformation of our Continent through expanded industrial enterprises will undoubtedly translate to increased trade under the single digital market and AfCTA.

As such, capacity building around e-Commerce as well as development of the appropriate infrastructure and relevant policy frameworks for the envisaged electronic-payments system for Africa, remains critical.

Esteemed Delegates;

As we scale up the use of ICT in all facets of our respective economies, it is equally necessary to deliberately popularise and boost scientific literacy across our societies, both in rural and urban areas. Stakeholders in both the public and private sectors are thus urged to put in place requisite platforms to disseminate scientific knowledge and showcase technological possibilities with regard lifting our people out of poverty and into prosperity. Our young boys and girls should also be encouraged to use ICTs from elementary, right up to higher education level.

In view of the ravishing impact of climate change to the peoples of Africa, it is integral for us all to give due attention to innovations related to clean-energy and green technologies. Ultimately, renewable energy remains a sustainable source of power for increased ICT penetration and use. Let us challenge our youthful population to push the ICT boundaries to leap-forward our great Continent.

As I conclude, I once again invite you to take time off your busy schedule to visit the Victoria Falls, which is one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World as well as undertake other activities on the mighty Zambezi River.

With these remarks, I once again welcome you to this Sixth Edition of the Smart Africa Summit and wish you all, fruitful deliberations.

I thank you.