

**WELCOMING NOTES FOR DEDEAT HON. MEC MLUNGISI MVOKO
AT THE SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL EXPORTERS AWARDS
2022, BOARDWALK HOTEL AND CONVENTION CENTRE,
GQEBERHA**

26 July 2022

Greetings to:

U.S Consulate General in South Africa Mr. Todd Haskell;

USAID Southern Africa Mission Director Mr. Andy Karas;

**Deputy Minister for the Department of Trade, Industry and
Competition Ms. Gina;**

The Eastern Cape Honourable Premier Mr. Mabuyane;

**Provincial Director-General Mr. Sogoni and other senior government
officials;**

**Executive Mayor of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Municipality Cllr.
Johnson and her team;**

**First Secretary for Economic / Trade in the Zambia High Commission
Mr. Mande Kauseni;**

Namibia Consul General Ms. Selma Nghinamundova;

**Government and Business representation of the nine participating
countries**

All the USAID Southern Africa and USAID Trade Hub teams;

**The Chief Executive Officer of the ECDC Mr. Wakaba and your
management team;**

**Consul General of Mozambique in Western Cape, Eastern Cape and
in the Northern Cape Mr. Sergio Macamo;**

Members of the Media;

The members of the Eastern Cape Community at large,

Good evening.

I humbly stand before all of you this evening to welcome you at these prestigious Awards, the 2nd Edition of the Southern Africa Regional Exports Awards.

But before I elaborate on my welcome address, allow me to thank the United States for the trust they continuously show in the partnership with the Eastern Cape. It has without a shadow of a doubt reinforced our efforts to host these awards once again, where nine countries are participating. Let us give the partnership we have with US a round of applause.

Programme Director, we are gathered today as countries are recovering from the economic devastation left by the COVID-19 pandemic and other economic shocks that include the invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, a situation that has severely affected the state of our economy. The force of these two unfortunate events and other must be matched with a strong response, and this we will do by remaining central to our economic rehabilitation and recovery agenda. That agenda should recognise the robust and strategic collaborations we have with all the countries participating today.

I wish to particularly welcome the delegation from Angola, the delegation from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, and those that are coming from the hosting country, South Africa.

We are all here because we share a common goal of advancing economic development, while allowing participation of small, medium, micro

enterprises as effective drivers of an inclusive economic growth, through the trade relations we have amongst each other, and also with the United States government.

The crisis that is plaguing our economies requires a shift towards implanting fiscal austerity measures. Our economic development priorities include to:

1. Develop strategic economic infrastructure for employment-led growth and development,
2. Re-industrialise to support the growth of labour-intensive industries
3. Building an innovative knowledge-based economy to drive competitiveness,
4. Strengthen green economy intervention to support sustainable economic growth, and development,
5. Create decent sustainable employment and the one that we are gathered by
6. Increase Trade and investment activities in the province.

We invite you to work with our provincial government in realising these priorities while we collaborate with you on those set by the economic development institutions in the respective countries you represent today.

As we work through the agenda of advancing global trade with the U.S government through these Awards that allows regional exporters to increase their trade activities with the United States, trade finance becomes a key aspect to look at. Africa's trade growth has over the years been lagging from the other continents, and this has been attributed to many factors including falling commodity prices, competition, regulatory challenges and access to trade finance.

With the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Trade Finance is slowly beginning to shore-up especially where it is most needed to allow the Southern Africa SMMEs to better participate and grow.

The AfCFTA provides us all with an opportunity to diversify our economies, scale production capacity and widen the range of products that are made in Africa. Partnership with the countries participating here today provides us with an avenue for creating competitiveness through domestic market expansion and that in turn will promote the Southern African region for foreign investment, especially from the U.S through this partnership we have with the USAID Southern Africa and USAID Trade Hub.

In the coming years, I would like to see participation of the five other countries within the Southern African region and partnerships with the African Development Bank taking this gathering to new heights. The need for reenergizing and reducing the finance gap in the Southern Africa's trade is of most importance and needs our continued efforts and collaboration. The SMMEs that are going to win here this evening and those that won last year must come back with even bigger stories to tell each time we gather, firstly for us to celebrate their excellence, but secondly, to inspire others to emulate their journey to success.

Without delay, allow me to welcome you all to the Southern African Regional Exporter Awards 2022. Beyond the awards, we look forward to hosting you so you can experience our beautiful province, the Home of Legends.

The Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency has interesting and beautiful packages that are set up and allowing you to explore and have an adventure in this beautiful province. Visit their website and social media pages to help you in exploring the Eastern Cape.

I welcome you all.

Thank you very much Programme Director.