

WELCOMING REMARKS BY DR NALEDI PANDOR, MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION, DURING VIRTUAL THE PROGRAMME FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA (PIDA) WEEK 2020: 19 JANUARY 2021

Programme Director;

Your Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Compliments of the new season to you all! I would also like to welcome you to PIDA week 2020.

We are brought together today by commitment to our shared vision for a prosperous Africa and a better world. We meet at a time of great distress both for the African continent and the entire world. As PIDA 2020 shows, the Covid-19 global pandemic has at once disrupted and transformed the way we do business and how we interact with one another.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to meet to continue determining plans to help us achieve progress and to avoid further decline in our socio-economic conditions.

Your Excellencies;

The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) was created as a framework for stakeholders in the continent to utilise and develop the infrastructure necessary for tangible growth and to integrate the continent physically, economically and socially, with the objective of boosting trade, creating new jobs for Africa's growing population and improving the overall socio-economic conditions of our people.

PIDA was also designed to mobilise resources to transform our infrastructure as well as modernise it in order to integrate the African continent and the world. Achieving these goals can only be done through our collective effort as Member States effectively using our existing frameworks of regional and continental cooperation.

A great deal of progress is being recorded in PIDA implementation, and AUDA-NEPAD remains pivotal in this exercise we are not at the required level of implementation and governments and the AU need to give greater support to active implementation.

I have no doubt that this gathering will explore ways to fast-track implementation under the current conditions. We all know that the integration agenda has had its fair share of difficulties and reversals, but we should take advantage of the recently launched African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the creation of a Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). We need to become better at moving speedily from framework to action.

Both these initiatives rely heavily on infrastructure development across all four (4) of the PIDA sectors. Focused industrialisation in Africa is critical for promoting economic growth, creating sustainable jobs, raising incomes and fostering a culture of transformative development. It is thus high on Africa's agenda and the high-level deliberations of forums and groupings such as TICAD, the G20, FOCAC etc.

Ladies and gentlemen;

Despite challenges that have beset our continent in the last few years, including the current COVID-19 pandemic, Africa has seen some encouraging developments as well. The Africa Outlook of the Bank projected that Africa's economic growth has stabilized at

3.4 percent in 2019 and will be expected to pick up to 3.9 percent in 2020 and 4.1 percent in 2021 but to remain below historical highs.

Growth fundamentals are also improving, with a gradual shift from private consumption toward investment and exports. For the first time in a decade, investment accounted for more than half the continent's growth, with private consumption accounting for less than one third.

The 2020 Outlook highlights, that growth has been less than inclusive. Only about a third of African countries achieved inclusive growth, reducing both poverty and inequality. We need to find ways of expanding this progress to more countries.

Furthermore, current forecasts and estimates suggest that Africa's infrastructure development requires between US\$130 and 170 billion annually. While Africa grapples with mobilising domestic resources and private sector investments for PIDA projects, it needs to also address issues of good governance, which can affect the quality and delivery of infrastructure.

Large-scale transboundary projects of the sort implemented under PIDA are vulnerable to corruption and mismanagement due to their scale and political and strategic importance. PIDA project owners and stakeholders need to have the capacity, mechanisms and an enabling environment for the practice of good governance.

To put this ambition into practice, we need strong political leadership and ownership. PIDA's complex and long-term strategic planning for Africa's regional infrastructure (2012–40) has been conducted under the coordination of the African Union Commission, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Development Bank and AUDA-NEPAD in cooperation with all African stakeholders.

We would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Regional Economic Communities, Member States and Specialised Agencies for their contributions, without which this result would not have been achieved, and to the Panel of Experts for their independent peer reviews. We would also like to thank the African and International Donor Community, particularly the African Development Fund, the Nigeria Technical Cooperation Fund, the African Water Facility, the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility Special Fund, the European Union, the Islamic Development Bank and the U.K. Department for International Development for their financial contributions.

Implementing PIDA will require solid coordination structures and mobilizing all relevant funding sources, both public and private. PIDA attaches great importance to member states to drive delivery of projects, as well as acknowledging the important role of the Regional Economic Communities and the AUDA-NEPAD. We invite Africa's various development partners and the private sector to consider supporting PIDA's delivery. That support would help realize the African Union's Vision and Strategic Plan for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and being as a dynamic force in the world

Finally the 6th PIDA Week in 2021 will build on previous events to continue to engage stakeholders on the effective delivery of infrastructure on the continent focusing specifically on good governance and how it can specifically help to:

- Enable project preparation and implementation;
- Support resource mobilisation;
- Promote private sector confidence to invest in PIDA projects;
- Encourage integration of PIDA projects into national development plans;

- Maintain macro-economic stability;
- Invest in human capital;
- An efficient tax system and a realistic exchange rate;
- Strong financial system and controls;
- Improve economic policies and economic growth.

Our focus should be on how to improve the lives of our people with the tools we already have at our disposal and how best we can coordinate and execute priority regional and continental projects to promote regional integration towards the accelerated and realisation of Agenda 2063, thereby strengthening the AU Member States and Regional Bodies, and to provide expert advice and support and serve as the technical interface with Africa's development stakeholders and development partners.

Finally the greatest lesson of COVID-19 should be internalised by Africa and the main one is we must build African capacity in independently implementing African responses to crises – we must certainly have global partners but these should be strategic additions and not a dependant collaboration.

Thank you