



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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

AT

**THE 2025 ZIMTRADE ANNUAL EXPORTERS'
CONFERENCE**

**ZITF-BULAWAYO
20 FEBRUARY 2026**

Director of Ceremonies;

Minister of State for Bulawayo Metropolitan Province,
Hon. J. Ncube;

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade,
Hon. Prof. A. Murwira;

Minister of Industry and Commerce, Hon. M.N.Ndlovu;

Other Honourable Ministers;

Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet,
Dr. M. Rushwaya;

Senior Government Officials;

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Mayor of the City of Bulawayo, His Worship
Councillor. D. Coltart;

Chairperson of the ZimTrade Board, Dr. K. Mlambo;

ZimTrade Chief Executive Officer, Mr. A. T. Majuru;

Our Exporters and Captains of Industry;

Distinguished Guests, Innovators, and Partners;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my distinct honour to address this year's Edition of the **ZimTrade Annual Exporters' Conference**, which is one of the focal events on our national business and trade development calendar. The rich industrial heritage, entrepreneurial resilience, along with the skilled workforce associated with the City of Bulawayo makes this venue a befitting setting.

I extend a special welcome to all international and regional guests. May your stay with us be memorable and participation profitable.

We convene today, against a background of an ever-evolving global and regional environment, characterised by increased requirements of international standards, heightened competition and shifting consumer preferences. It is no longer enough to boast that our country is endowed with a broad array of resources.

The current times demand innovative approaches, through our continuous reflection as stakeholders on structural challenges as well as the numerous opportunities at our door step.

The theme for this year's Conference - **“Rooted Locally, Growing Globally,”** embodies our collective aspiration towards the resurgence of productivity, manufacturing and industrial growth in our beloved motherland Zimbabwe. It further aligns with National Development Strategy 2 goal of economic competitiveness that is anchored on what we grow, produce, value add, beneficiate and process, here at home. This thrust is indeed central to a stronger export-led growth.

The role that you, our exporters play with regards to increasing competitiveness, growing foreign currency earnings and accelerating industrial retooling, is a key cog to the ongoing economic growth trajectory.

Hence, in implementing NDS2, export-oriented production and productivity can not merely be a commercial or business strategy, but must now be a national economic imperative.

Zimbabwe must, therefore, continue to grow by producing and processing more, towards increased export volumes. All of us, including government, regulators and industry players together with consumers, should scale up synergies to broaden and diversify our industrial base, for entry and expansion into global value chains.

The quest to grow local products into global brands must be prioritized. Further, exports must be rooted in our God given resource endowments, skills and enterprise.

Dependence on raw exports is no longer sustainable nor desirable. We must earn more from every tonne, every kilogramme, and every product we export. The situation where jobs, value and industrial opportunities are lost, is untenable.

The value must be created locally and domesticated here in our factories, processing plants, innovation hubs, and within communities.

In the mining sector, our policy is unequivocal. Zimbabwe is no longer satisfied with being a supplier of raw minerals. Under my Administration focus is on local processing, diversifying downstream industries, technology transfer and stronger linkages across the economy.

With regards to the agriculture sector, our tobacco remains a strategic crop and we are now progressively moving from raw leaf exports to a wide range of quality cigarettes and tobacco products.

Equally, the revitalisation of the cotton-to-clothing value chain, strengthening horticulture exports to meet premium market standards, and need to grow livestock production for increased through-put for leather beneficiation are priority areas.

I challenge the relevant players to be more deliberate towards the value addition of our rich forestry resources into high-value furniture, paper and wood-based products.

The goal is clear; our country's processed foods, beverages, engineering products, pharmaceuticals, steel, and manufactured goods should carry the “*Made in Zimbabwe*” insignia into all markets.

Our country's commitment to the Africa Continental Free Trade Area is practical and result-oriented. I urge you all to ensure that Zimbabwean enterprises, especially SMEs, are appropriately structured, supported and capacitated to take advantage of preferential access, rules of origin and regional value chains.

On its part, Government continues to simplify trade processes, reduce the cost of doing business and to modernise border management systems.

A key reform in this regard is the Zimbabwe Electronic Single Window platform which has seen exporters spend less time on paperwork and more on productivity and trade.

Meanwhile the centrality of infrastructure development to the Export Growth Strategy cannot be over-emphasised. The modernisation and rehabilitation of key trade corridors as well as ongoing rail and logistics reforms are not isolated projects. These strategic investments in competitiveness, are designed to ensure that Zimbabwean goods move to regional and global markets efficiently and reliably.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Export competitiveness is only being enabled by trade policy but through a Whole-of-Government Approach.

This has seen the prevailing macro-economic stability, investment facilitation, streamlined incentives, improved access to finance, as well as predictable and investor-friendly environment for exporters.

The implementation of programmes for irrigation development, climate-smart agriculture, mechanisation, land tenure security and water infrastructure, guarantees a consistent supply of exportable agricultural products and raw materials for agro-processing.

Similarly, robust destination marketing, standards enforcement, skills development, and investment promotion in the tourism sector is yielding positive results. Zimbabwe is fast becoming a tourist destination of choice and service-export hub.

It is commendable that the ongoing reforms have also improved policy coherence, especially in the export drive that is anchored on efficient production systems. This is further augmented by competitive services, allowing enterprises to grow, invest and export with confidence.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Under National Development Strategy 2, export growth must be inclusive and help improve the quality of life for our people. Our national development philosophy is **“leaving no one and no place behind”**. As such, opportunities will be extended to the Small and Medium Enterprises sector, cooperatives, youth and women-led enterprises, rural producers, and community-based industries.

Through ZimTrade’s cluster development programmes, communities are being empowered to meaningfully participate in export value chains. This is how exports must translate into jobs, incomes, broad-based economic empowerment and sustainable development.

Innovation, science and technology development as well as research will continue to underpin the ongoing irreversible transformation. There is need for deliberate programmes to improve the use of digital platforms and new technologies to grow our exports.

We must continue to harness the efficacy of e-commerce platforms and use of digital tools to connect exporters to international buyers.

I challenge all Exporters, to serve our national interests during the course of exporting their goods and services. When you export, you strengthen Zimbabwe's sovereignty, stabilise the economy, and create opportunities for future generations.

As Government, our economic diplomacy thrust will remain focused on converting international relations into markets, investments, technology partnerships, and export opportunities. Our Missions and Consulates, therefore, stand ready to act as economic frontlines, supporting Zimbabwean exporters worldwide. Their doors are open to facilitate your entities to broaden market research and access.

I challenge Zim-Trade and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, along with the relevant stakeholders, to accelerate the establishment

of warehousing and logistics facilities in strategic jurisdictions. This will go a long way towards exports penetration into regional markets, the broader Africa Continental Free Trade Area and beyond.

Let us take advantage of the opening up of stronger economies to Africa and the rest of the global south. As Zimbabwe, our export product development, labelling and branding, should incorporate aspects related to quality assurance and the intricate concerns of diverse markets. Export market strategies have to be alive to languages of export destinations.

The Tourism sector and other critical stakeholders such as the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Development should play their part in nurturing market linkages and synergies. All hands must be on deck for us to meet our targets.

Distinguished Delegates;

I would like to specifically address the future of our nation, the youth, more so, as we commemorate the National Youth Day tomorrow the 21st of February, in Mashonaland East Province.

While notable strides are being made by our youth in all sectors of the economy, I call upon the younger entrepreneurs to be producers, innovators and digital traders with focus on the export of value-added Zimbabwean goods and services. Individually and collectively, you have a duty to be more active participants as drivers of the industrialisation, modernisation and economic growth agenda.

I urge established exporters and corporates to help mentor, integrate and support youth participation across export value chains.

Together, in unity, let us translate the ongoing economic reforms into shipments; partnerships into premium prices; and strategy into shared prosperity.

Sector by sector, province by province, we all have the capacity to build a value-added, diversified and competitive export economy under National Development Strategy 2. We must shoulder and drive our economic development and transformation agenda. As exporters, continue to play your part, which has positively contributed to the realisation of the overall national economic success, recorded to date.

Nyika inovakwa, inotongwa, inonamatirwa nevene vayo. Ilizwe lakhiwa, libuswe, *li-khu-le-ke-lwe* ngabanikazi balo.

With these remarks, it is now my honour and privilege to declare this year's ZimTrade Annual Exporters' Conference, officially open. I wish us fruitful deliberations and a successful Conference.

God bless you all.

God bless Zimbabwe.

I thank you.