

**Mrs. Marbeline Goagoses.**

Good afternoon, Your Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen. I had planned a long presentation, but I had to cut it short to stay within the given time frame. In 2017, the ministerial meeting at the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa recommended the development of programs and innovative activities for the active engagement of the youth and the diaspora to make a meaningful contribution to the social and economic development of their home countries, as well as the SADC community. This recommendation was demonstrated during the COVID-19 Pandemic, which started towards the end of 2019. Member states realized the role of the diaspora in providing humanitarian support to stranded migrants within and out of the region. These actions served as a point of departure into a policy-level dialogue about the role of the diaspora in development.

To reshape the migration discourse in the region in 2020, the Southern African Migration Management Project conducted a regional study to examine the existing practices on diaspora engagement and productive use of remittances amongst member states. The study found that while there is currently no regional diaspora policy framework or programs to ensure a comprehensive and coherent engagement of the diaspora in the region, home countries in the region are making individualized efforts to engage the diaspora by setting up diaspora units, such as what Namibia is currently doing.

However, the study pointed out that there are many obstacles to effective diaspora engagement on a large scale, including the lack of trust between public institutions that deal with diaspora and diaspora partners themselves, challenges in maintaining reliable data on individuals and organizations within the diaspora, and an overall lack of capacity to map the diaspora and engage with them in a targeted and meaningful manner.

Regarding Namibia, we are currently busy working on a policy for Namibians in the diaspora. This came about following the adoption of the Decade on African Roots and Diaspora during the 34th assembly of the AU Heads of State and Government in February 2021, in recognition of the role that the diaspora can play in the development of my country. We did desktop research to solicit best practices from the international community, and input was sought from OMAS officers, ministries, and agencies, including all of the Namibian missions and diaspora associations, on issues that should be included in the policy. Additionally, we had virtual consultations on the draft policy with Namibians abroad and the Namibian diaspora on the policy. It is during this engagement that we realized that there is definitely a lot of work that needs to be done to develop and maintain the trust between the Namibian government and our diaspora. We

are looking into changing this, and this is why we are working on this policy.

Recently, in October last year, I had the opportunity to attend the Southern Africa Regional Diaspora Engagement and Investment Forum in Mauritius, organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). During this meeting, the IOM presented a very impressive concept formulated around what they call the three e's, which are to enable, engage, and empower. Each of these pillars involves a range of interventions that will bring together government and other stakeholders for policy advice and programming, and will ultimately lead to strengthening regular consultations with the diaspora.

Finally, I would like to mention what some countries in the southern African region have been doing in terms of their policies. Lesotho has established a migration advisory body, a national consultative committee on migration, which is composed of government ministries, departments, and agencies, academia, and private sectors with a focus on thematic issues related to migration.

In Mauritius, a scheme has been set up to attract the diaspora by offering tax incentives and waivers to those who return to and serve the country. Mozambique has implemented a system for remittance transfers through Standard Bank and Guru Banks in various countries, with partnerships at relatively lower transfer costs to encourage the diaspora to send money home. The second pillar is engagement, and

the Lesotho government conducted a diaspora outreach forum in 2019 in South Africa, which is home to the largest diaspora community. Seychelles has established a dedicated hotline and email address for the diaspora to contact for mapping purposes. In Namibia, we are currently in the process of setting up a diaspora engagement portal that will be virtual and online, providing a platform for our diaspora to interact with us. Lastly, the third pillar is to empower, and we are working with organizations such as IOM and hopefully others that we will meet here to provide our diaspora and nationals with the right platform to set up links and create stronger ways of interacting with each other. Thank you.