

**Speech by Honourable Zou Kota-Fredericks (MP), Minister for the Department of Human Settlements in South Africa on the occasion of the 2016 All Africa Public Sector Innovation Awards (AAPSIA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 9 December 2016**

**Good Evening ladies and gentleman...**

On this occasion of the 2016 All Africa Public Sector Innovation Awards (AAPSIA) Ceremony, let me start my address by conveying our warmest greetings to all of you gathered here. From myself, and on behalf of the entire nation of the Republic of South Africa, let me express our humility and honour for being part of this very important initiative, the All Africa Public Sector Innovation Awards (AAPSIA).

Before I start, I would like to pay homage to one of the greatest revolutionaries of our time Comrade President Fidel Castro Ruz and acknowledge his role in building the Africa we want. It is not only the liberation of Angola, Namibia and South Africa that was decisively determined through the military support of Cuba, but every day Cuban medical and engineering professionals, or professionals trained in Cuba are working towards improving the quality of life of citizens of this continent.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is of uppermost importance that all African nations lay claim to this powerful Africa-wide initiative. AAPSIA was launched in 2005, here, during the erstwhile 5th Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public/Civil Service and championed by Mauritius. Now, 11 years later we are celebrating the latest edition of AAPSIA, in Addis Ababa. Today marks a milestone in the work of STC 08 which has AAPSIA as one of its key deliverables.

The sustained support of member states attests to the authenticity of AAPSIA as a home-grown African initiative by Africans for Africans. AAPSIA unifies all African nations to showcase innovative solutions from our continent. Africa is rising to take its destiny into its own hands and be the masters of our own future.

Honourable guests, for a long time now ours has always been a picture that has been bleak, of abject and grinding poverty, of pandemics, famine and malnutrition and subsequent irreversible mental, physical disabilities and diseases. Lack of proper education and the subsequent low human development rates ensure that we remain caught up in this vicious cycle. By committing to the global Sustainable Development Goals and more specifically setting the Agenda for The Africa We want, Agenda 2063, we as African governments have galvanised our efforts to break away from these vicious cycles and, with "united voices, are painting the picture of what we desire for ourselves, for future generations and for the continent". Through initiatives such as AAPSIA, we can work together to make our aspirations practical in our own governments. We can learn from each other on how to innovatively push for good governance, clean and effective

administrations and how to increase productivity and performance in order to expedite the achievement of the Agenda 2063. AAPSIA therefore cultivates an enabling environment and a fertile ground for innovative ideas and initiatives that hold the key to Africa's shining future.

In the words of her excellency, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini - Zuma: "Ending hunger and malnutrition is about investing in Africa's most important asset – its people – through health, education, science, technology, research and innovation, and meeting basic needs such as food security, clean water and sanitation." It is my belief that innovation holds the key to Africa's future economic prosperity and quality of life. It fosters entrepreneurship to raise productivity, foster competitiveness, meet the challenges of globalisation in order to thrive as a nation within our environmental, geographic and demographic limits.

AAPSIA is in a sense, our way of showing our acknowledgement of the value of innovation and innovative thinking and its liberating ability to break away from *business as usual* and using the little that we have at our disposal innovatively to achieve more.

Excellencies, over the years AAPSIA has served as a breeding ground for numerous high-level entries of projects and solutions from across the continent. AAPSIA has given recognition and rewarded major achievements and the Programme continues to provide opportunities for information sharing, lesson learning, partnerships and the possible replication of successful initiatives across the continent.

We are looking forward to see, how through popularising Article 25 of the *African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration*, member states will localise public sector innovation.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the 2016 AAPSIA finalists. Personally I am particularly humbled by the high quality projects that were entered in this year's competition. The quality of your work, in terms of its innovative nature as well as its replicability and sustainability is impeccably unparalleled hence your presence here. But above all else, I salute you for touching another life elsewhere on our continent.

In conclusion, allow me honourable guests to use this opportunity, although we are stepping down as Champion, to reaffirm our pledge and commitment and unwavering support to the new Champion of AAPSIA as this is strategic initiative that has to be sustained as a fountain for purely African solutions, by Africans themselves, for typically African challenges.

Thank you