President Mnangagwa Inauguration Speech

Fellow countrymen, I feel deeply humbled by the decision of my Party, Zanu-PF, inviting me to serve our great nation, the Republic of Zimbabwe, in the capacity of President and Commander-in-Chief of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces, with effect from today.

I admit that I hold no particularly unique qualification that sets me apart from the deep pool of able citizens of our Party and land, who otherwise could have been chosen to occupy this onerous office. But even as I make constant reference to my Party, Zanu-PF, I am not oblivious of the many Zimbabweans from across the political, ethnic and racial divide, who have helped make this day and who thus have legitimate expectations from the office I now occupy.

The decision of my Party is merely for purposes of political identification, as I intend, nay, am required to serve our country as the President of all citizens, regardless of colour, creed, region, tribe, totem or political affiliation. Let me at this stage pay special tribute to one of, and the only surviving father of our nation, Cde Robert Gabriel Mugabe.

He led us in our struggle for national independence, and assumed responsibilities of leadership at the formative and very challenging time in the birth of our nation. That is to be lauded and celebrated for all times. Whatever errors of commission or omission that might have occurred during that critical phase in the life of our nation, let us all accept and acknowledge his immense contribution towards the building of our nation.

To me personally, he remains a father, mentor, comrade-in-arms and my leader. We thus say thank you to him and trust that our history will grant him his proper place and accord him his deserved stature as one of the founders and leaders of our nation.

Let me also recognise in a very special way the presence in our midst of senior statesmen of our region and continent, led by His Excellency former President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. He remains the only living member of the foundational Frontline States grouping, which is synonymous with the decolonisation processes in our Southern African region.

We honour him, as indeed we remember all his colleagues now departed. The statesmen who are with us today show a story of succession which speaks well of our continent. It is a narrative that must get bolder and bolder as generations hand over to succeeding ones, all in amity. In acknowledging the honour you have bestowed upon me, I recognise that the urgent tasks that beckon will not be accomplished through speeches, necessary as these may be.

I have to hit the ground running to make sure that I lead in stupendous efforts we all need to summon and unleash in concert, towards taking this great nation beyond where our immediate past President left it.
For close to two decades now, this country went through many developments. While we cannot change the past, there is a lot we can do in the present and future to give our nation a different, positive direction.

As we do so, we should never remain hostages to our past. I thus humbly appeal to all of us that we let bygones be bygones, readily embracing each other in defining a new destiny. The task at hand is that of rebuilding our great country. It principally lies with none but ourselves.

I implore you all to declare that NEVER AGAIN should the circumstances that have put Zimbabwe in an unfavourable position be allowed to recur or overshadow its prospects. We must work together, you, me, all of us who make up this nation.

Ours is a great country, endowed with rich resources and abounding in many opportunities for everyone who considers it home. Whilst I am aware that emotions and expectations might be high and mixed, I have no doubt that over time, we will appreciate the solid foundation laid by my predecessor, against all manner of vicissitudes, towards building an educated, enlightened, skilled and forgiving society.

This is a formidable head-start we draw from our past, a plinth upon which to build developments in the present and to erect hopes for the future. Fellow Zimbabweans, as we chart our way forward, we must accept that our challenges as a nation emanate in part from the manner in which we have managed our politics, both nationally and internationally, leading to circumstances in which our country has undeservedly been perceived or classified as a pariah State.

However, given our historical realities, we wish the rest of the world to understand and appreciate that policies and programmes related to land reform were inevitable. Whilst there is a lot we may need to do by way of outcomes, the principle of repossessing our land cannot be challenged or reversed.

Dispossession of our ancestral land was the fundamental reason for waging the liberation struggle. It would be a betrayal of the brave men and women who sacrificed their lives in our liberation struggle if we were to reverse the gains we have made in reclaiming our land.

Therefore, I exhort beneficiaries of the Land Reform Programme to show their deservedness by demonstrating commitment to the utilisation of the land now available to them for national food security and for the recovery of our economy.

They must take advantage of programmes that my Government shall continue to avail to ensure that all land is utilized optimally. To that end, my Government will capacitate the Land Commission so that the commission is seized with all outstanding issues related to land redistribution.
My Government is committed to compensating those farmers from whom land was taken, in terms of the laws of the land. As we go into the future, complex issues of land tenure will have to be addressed both urgently and definitely, in order to ensure finality and closure to the ownership and management of this key resource, which is central to national stability and to sustained economic recovery. We dare not prevaricate on this key issue.

Events leading to this historic day attest to the fact that we are a unique nation, one which is clear about what it wants as well as what it does not want. Ordinarily, many nations, including those in the developed world, would not have ended with the sort of outcome we celebrate today. Credit goes to every Zimbabwean and my predecessor, who invested a lot towards a peaceful resolution of the challenges of the situation that had risen.

From events preceding this occasion, we stand apart as a unique nation driven by impulses of mutual tolerance, peace and unity which we have displayed in the past few weeks not withstanding our diverse political persuasions. This is a wonder to the world, indeed a proud page we have added to the science of conflict resolution and settlement. That peace and harmony should be characteristic of how we relate to one another before, during and after the 2018 harmonised elections which will be held as scheduled.

Today the Republic of Zimbabwe renews itself. My Government will work towards ensuring that the pillars of the State assuring democracy in our land are strengthened and respected. We fully reaffirm our membership to the family of nations, and express our commitment to playing our part in all regional, continental and international organisations and arrangements in order to make our modest contribution towards a prosperous and peaceful world order.

We subscribe and affirm the principle where all nations of the world are equal and sovereign partners working towards the maintenance of world peace as collectively cherished under the United Nations Charter. Here at home, we must, however, appreciate the fact that over the years, our domestic politics had become poisoned, rancorous and polarising.

My goal is to preside over a polity and run an administration that recognise strength in our diversity as a people, hoping that this position and well-meant stance will be reciprocated and radiated to cover all our groups, organisation and communities. We dare not squander the moment. At the end of the day, whatever we do or chose not to do must be intended to benefit all our people.

Above all, we must always remember and realise that we hold and run this country in trust. It belongs to future generations, whose possibilities must never be foreclose or mortgaged as a result of decisions of expediency we might selfishly make today out of fear of difficult choice and decision that have to be made.

The values of unity and peace cherished by all Zimbabweans are the enduring foundations for the desired goal of development, itself the third pillar of the trinity of Unity, Peace and Development espoused by my Party, ZANU PF.
Our economic policy will be predicated on our agriculture, which is the mainstay, and on creating conditions for an investment-led economic recovery that puts premium on job-creation.

Key choices will have to be made to attract foreign direct investment to tackle high levels of unemployment while transforming our economy towards the tertiary. The many skilled Zimbabweans who have left the country over the years for a variety of reasons must now come into the broad economic calculus designed for our recovery and take off.

Of course, the physical and social infrastructure must be repaired and expanded to position our country in readiness for economic growth, employment creation, equity, freedom and democracy and for the provision of vital social goods, principally health, shelter, clean water, education and other key social services.

Our quest for economic development must be premised on our timeless goal to establish and sustain a just and equitable society firmly based on our historical, cultural and social experience, as well as on our aspirations for better lives for all our people.

Our system of economic organisation and management will incorporate elements of market economy in which enterprise is encouraged, protected and allowed just and merited rewards, while gainfully interacting with strategic public enterprises run professionally and profitably, all to yield a properly run national economy in which there is room and scope for everyone.

The fabulous natural resources we have as a country must now be exploited for national good through mutually gainful partnerships with international investors whose presence in our midst must be valued and secured.

The bottom line is an economy which is back on its feet, and in which a variety of players make choices and fulfil roles without doubts and in an environment shorn of fickle policy shifts and unpredictability. Only that way can we recover this economy, create jobs for our youths and reduce poverty for all our people who must witness real, positive changes in their lives.

In the immediate, the liquidity challenges which have bedevilled the economy must be tackled head on, with real solutions being generated as a matter of urgency. People must be able to access their earnings and savings as and when they need them. As we focus on recovering our economy, we must shed misbehaviours and acts of indiscipline which have characterised the past. Acts of corruption must stop forthwith.

Where these occur swift justice must be served to show each and all that crime and other acts of economic sabotage can only guarantee ruin to perpetrators. We have to aspire to be a clean nation, one sworn to high moral standards and deserved rewards.
On these ideals, my administration declares full commitment, warning that grief awaits those who depart from the path of virtue and clean business. To our civil servants, it cannot be business as usual. You now have to roll up your sleeves in readiness to deliver.

We have an economy to recover, a people to serve. Each and every one of us must now earn their hour, day, week and month at work. Gone are the days of absenteeism and desultory application, days of unduly delaying and forestalling decisions and services in the hope of extorting dirty rewards. That will have to stop.

A new culture must now inform and animate our daily conduct. Our offices must speedily answer questions and generate solutions awaited by our customers, be they our citizens or well-meaning outsiders who want to join in the recovery of our economy.

Flexibility must be built into our operations so the machine of Government does not become one huge, ponderous stumbling block to decisions that must be made and communicated expeditiously. The culture in Government just has to change, unseating those little “gods” idly sitting in public offices, for a busy, empathetic civil service that Zimbabwe surely deserves.

Recognising the pivotal role that exports play in generating the much needed foreign currency, Government will ensure relaxation of export procedures, while vigorously ensuring the reduction of all costs associated with the conduct of international trade.

The establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) will be accelerated in the order to attract investment and generate increased exports. The maintenance of economic stability and confidence amongst the transacting public, the local business community and foreign investors remains key to our reform agenda.

To this end, Government will ensure financial sector viability and stability as well as put in place measures that encourage savings through bank deposit and other appropriate financial instruments which bring fair rewards to depositors. The current banking culture where costs are levied on depositors must come to an end. It contradicts the reasons at the heart of banking as a business.

To reduce the high country risk perception among existing and prospective investors, Government will henceforth ensure that its domestic and external debt obligations are serviced to the satisfaction of its lenders and creditors. This will apply to the whole of Government including Local Authorities and State Owned Enterprises.

In addition, my Government will also pro-actively curb externalisation of foreign currency and smuggling of goods. The country’s border management and control systems will be strengthened.

I intend to approach security issues from a broad human, physical and social perspective. All citizens must feel secure and enjoy a sense of belonging in the Land. All activities that the
national security institutions aim to achieve must be focused on overall human security from disease, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy and extreme poverty.

This shall necessarily entail that we pay equal attention to all these areas over and above enhancing the capabilities of our Security Services so that they are able to deal decisively with any and all threats, whether existing or emerging. These include threats to our vital economic interests and objectives.

Today, the Republic of Zimbabwe enters the second phase of its birth. We emerge to fully affirm our belonging to the family of nations. We harbour no ill and belligerent intentions against any other nation.

The Southern African Development Community, SADC, is our home; we founded it from its beginning we recommit ourselves to furthering its vision and ideals. There can never be any doubt to our intentions to SADC, itself the fount of our foreign policy.

As we journey outward from our SADC house, we fully realise that we belong in the bigger house and family, the African Union. Whilst we were not free at the birth of OAU which championed the total liberation of the entire African continent from colonialism, we were creatures of sterling efforts of the OAU through its Liberation Committee which was based in the sister Republic of Tanzania, and of course through the Frontline States which hosted and coordinated the liberation struggles in Southern Africa, including our own in Zimbabwe.

The African Union, itself the sequel to the OAU, is our natural home and collective resource as Africans. Zimbabwe pledges its untrammelled membership, and declares here and now that it will play its role fully to make a success of the AU and all its programmes.

An important subset of the AU is the COMESA economic group of nations. There we are committed to contributing meaningfully to the realisation of the AU Agenda 2063. Zimbabwe’s journey since independence, has provided us with many lessons, some bigger and others so pleasant.

In particular, some bigger nations have attempted to make us bend to their dictates, working feverishly to confine us to the pariah status. We have successfully maintained good relations with the preponderant majority of the family of nations.

In truth, we never deserved to be maligned and/or economically and politically mistreated. I stand here today, to say that our country is ready for a sturdy re-engagement programme with all the nations of the world.

As we bear no malice towards any nation, we ask those who have punished us in the past to consider their economic and political sanctions against us. Whatever misunderstandings may have subsisted in the past, let these make way to new beginning which sees us relating to one
another in multi-layered, mutually beneficial ways as equal and reciprocally dependent partners.

In this global world, no nation is, can or need be an island, one unto itself. Isolation has never been splendid or viable; solidarity and partnership are and will always be the way. We are ready to embrace each and all, on principles of mutual respect and common humanity. We will take definite steps to re-engage those Nations who have had issues with us in the past.

Equally, we will take measures to ensure that we acknowledge and begin to show commitments towards settling our debts. Of course our resources remain sparse, especially at this stage when we face a myriad of pressures, but we count on the goodwill of those we owe to give us a chance.

We remain committed to honouring the debts and to enter into new relationships. Above all, all foreign investments will be safe in our country and, we will fully abide by the terms of Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements which we have concluded with a number of nations. I ask you to join us in exploiting our potential to make a difference in the lives of our people.

The United Nations is the home of all the nations on this planet. We will contribute to the overall thinking and management of world affairs. Our plain talk arises from our deep convictions and desire to help build world peace. These should never be mistaken for ill-will.

We join the rest of the continent in calling for reforms in the UN system so the world body becomes truly representative and thus commands universal respect. Zimbabwe will continue to contribute to the international peace and security, urging for the granting of full statehood and freedoms to the Palestinian and Saharawi people. Let us together, honestly address the sources of instabilities and terrorism in many parts of the world, all within the framework of, and under the banner of the United Nations.

I wish to thank all of you here and elsewhere, who wished us a peaceful transition, even as this nearly seemed doubtful. For the time that I shall be President of Zimbabwe, I solemnly promise that I shall to the best of my ability serve everyone who calls or considers Zimbabwe as their home.

I encourage all of us to remain peaceful, even as preparations for political contestations for the next year’s harmonised elections gather momentum. The task before us is much bigger than competing for political office. Let us all play our part to rebuild this great country.

May God bless our Land and our Nation.

I thank you.