ZIMBABWE STATEMENT AT THE AFRICAN REGIONAL REVIEW IN THE IMPLEMANTATION OF THE ALMATY PROGRAMME OF ACTION (APoA), ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 17 JULY 2013

- Since the Adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2003, Zimbabwean economy was experiencing severe challenges over the decade 1999-2009, reaching crisis proportions in 2007 and 2008. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated to have contracted by a cumulative 50.3 percent which saw the state of our infrastructure deteriorating. The country also faced sanctions from some western countries that culminated in the cessation of funding from the Bretton Woods Institutions. In the past few years, the limited Official Development Assistance has been mainly in the area of humanitarian support.

- As a result, , Zimbabwe has been allocating a greater share of their public investment to transit transport infrastructure with very little support from donors, international financial institutions and development assistance agencies

- Our country has not significantly benefitted from The Programme for Infrastructure Development for Africa (PIDA), the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA), the EU-Africa Infrastructure and Energy Partnership, the Africa-India Partnership and the Africa-China Partnership, among other initiatives that provide a platform to accelerate resource mobilization for financing infrastructure projects on the continent. Most of the infrastructure done after Independence was hugely sponsored from the fiscus.

- As a country, we have benefited from a number of WTO technical assistance missions. However, there is need to move away from generalised seminars which merely aim at increasing awareness of WTO agreements and procedures to implementation of practical issues.

- To reduce the turnaround time at our ports of entry, we have introduced computerized traffic handling mechanisms ,automated customs systems and streamlined border procedures at our border posts through the introduction of world standard ICT's

- Zimbabwe, being a member of COMESA has embraced the Simplified Trade Regime to solve the problems faced by small scale cross border traders such as lack of knowledge and information on the benefits of trading with other COMESA countries, complex documents and complicated processes of filling the current forms, increased clearance costs and delays in the clearing of goods and processing of tax refunds

- We are participating in the current Doha Development Agenda (DDA) round of negotiations with much interest in agriculture, specifically the substantial reduction in domestic support, increase in market access, the phasing out of all forms of export subsidies and effective Special and Differential Treatment (S&D) by developed countries in order to unlock the potential for agriculture in the developing world.. In the Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) negotiations, Zimbabwe is seeking flexibilities in tariff bindings that will provide for policy space to allow for domestic industrial sector development as well as support regional integration activities

- Zimbabwe coming from a decade of economic decline calls upon development partners to provide pure technical assistance and capacity-building support in order to help improve its ability to participate in international trade effectively.

- The Government of Zimbabwe, as part of its mission to address trade and transport facilitation issues embraced the concept of Spatial Development initiatives (SDIs).The country is part to the North South Corridor (NSC) that stretches from Durban in South Africa up to DRC and serves eight countries. Within the NSC are various SDIs which act as tributaries feeding to the NSC which include Beira Development Corridor, Walvis Bay Corridor, Trans-Limpopo Corridor and the Limpopo Development Corridor. We are also implementing other various trade facilitation measures like One Stop Border Post (OSBP) initiatives being implemented at Chirundu and earmarked for Beitbridge, Forbes and Nyamapanda Border Posts. We are also at advanced stages in constructing a dry port at Walvis Bay in Namibia

- As a country, we have made great strides to have greater access to Sea ports of Beira, Maputo(Mozambique), Durban (South Africa) and Walvis Bay

(Namibia) However, we still grapple with poor transport infrastructure(Roads and railways) and missing links like the Lions Den-Kafue Railway Line(Zim to Zambia) which when available could enhance intraregional trade .

- We observe that we run the danger of not benefitting from important international conventions and WTO trade agreements unless capacity building arrangements are made available for us to effectively implement the conventions and agreements.

- In conclusion ,the APoA has brought about wonderful lessons for Zimbabwe. The biggest lesson is that geography is not destiny. It has been argued that being landlocked influences economic, infrastructure and political decisions. With APoA, being geographically landlocked should not be an excuse for poor economic, social and political development. We draw lessons from European landlocked countries such as Switzerland who have learned to exploit their geographical handicap for the benefit of their populace