



SPEECH

BY

**THE PRESIDENT, HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR. E. D. MNANGAGWA**

AT

**THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE
FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE
ZIMBABWE CRICKET STADIUM IN THE
MASUWE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE FOR
TOURISM**

VICTORIA FALLS

23 MAY 2024

Director of Ceremonies;

Vice President, Hon. Gen. (Rtd) Dr C. G. D. N
Chiwenga;

Vice President, Hon. Col. (Rtd) K. C. D. Mohadi;

Minister of Defence and Chairman of ZANU PF,
Hon. O. C. Z. Muchinguri-Kashiri;

Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution,
Matabeleland North Province, Hon. R. Moyo;

Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry,
Hon. B. Rwodzi;

Minister of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture,
Hon. K. Coventry;

Other Honourable Ministers here present;

Our Traditional Leaders;

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

Senior Government Officials;

The Mayor of the City of Victoria Falls, His Worship,
Councillor T. D. Moyo;

Board Chairman of Mosi-a-Tunya Development Company, Mr. S. H. Sidambe and Staff;

Zimbabwe Cricket Board and Management;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my great honour to officiate at this special occasion to lay the foundation stone for the Zimbabwe Cricket multi-purpose sporting infrastructure, anchored by an International Cricket Stadium, among other facilities.

The project dovetails with my Administration's quest to comprehensively broaden the tourism products and integrate the development of the Masuwe Special Economic Zone through promoting sports tourism within our premium resort City of Victoria Falls.

I commend the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry, the Ministry of Sports, Arts, and Recreation as well as Zimbabwe Cricket for the initiative to construct a cricket stadium as well as other related sporting and

tourism facilities. The laying of the foundation stone marks the much-awaited first phase of the Masuwe Tourism Special Economic Zone. **Well done, Congratulations, Makorokoto.**

This development, here in Matabeleland North, is in line with our devolution agenda to bring about multi-pronged development initiatives that leave no one and no place behind.

This project, here in Victoria Falls, is most welcome as it will enhance the rich natural heritage associated with our premier resort City.

The location for the envisaged facility at this Special Economic Zone will undoubtedly contribute to the speedy attainment of tourism sector targets towards our national development aspirations as outlined in the National Development Strategy and Vision 2030.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Zimbabwe is honoured and remains ready to proudly co-host the 2027 Cricket World Cup, together with our sister republics of South Africa and Namibia. To this end, the proposed cricket stadium is one of the priority projects that will be pursued with a greater sense of urgency as we develop, improve and expand our national integrated infrastructure.

In the spirit of collaboration and development of synergies under the “Whole of Government and Society” approach, land was availed by my Government for the construction of the proposed stadium.

The unity of purpose and team work demonstrated by the stakeholders in this project must see the speedy completion of the construction of the Cricket Stadium. I call upon the Ministry of Sports, Arts and Recreation, as well as that of Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Zimbabwe Cricket and contractors, among other stakeholders, to uphold the Second Republic’s work

ethic of working in unison for the timely completion of this high-priority project.

Meanwhile, it is commendable that the Joint Management Committee constituted by Victoria Falls City Council and Hwange Rural District Council, among other stakeholders, is facilitating the take-off of this project. **Well done.**

Taking a leaf from this project, I challenge other local authorities to ensure greater effectiveness in local government administration towards entrenching the ease of doing business systems to attract private sector players, more investments and capital into respective localities. This and other initiatives at this Masuwe Special Economic Zone, must result in increased competitiveness of the Victoria Falls in our domestic, regional and international economic matrix.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The tourism and hospitality industry remains one of the strategic and key contributors to the national GDP, occupying third place after Agriculture and Mining. In this regard, my Government has adopted a comprehensive Tourism and Hospitality Industry Growth Strategy that organises the tourism and hospitality sector into clusters. This approach focuses on enhancing targeted tourism development, promotion as well as diversification.

The construction of the international cricket stadium and associated facilities under the Sports Tourism Cluster is a major step towards driving the development of new tourism products and facilities, while leap-frogging the attainment of a US\$5 billion tourism sector economy by 2025. The project is further set to generate foreign exchange revenue, facilitate technological and skills spill-overs, create employment opportunities as well as propel various economic downstream and upstream linkages.

The Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry is directed to revisit the set sector target, more so given the tourism sector's potential for growth.

We must be more innovative as we believe in our inherent potential. Across all sectors, including in the tourism sector, we are ready to chart our own development path. No one, under whatever guise, must ever take away this preserve from us. Hence, more Economic Zones of this nature shall be designated to support and propel innovation, diverse industries, products, services and general economic growth for the good of our country and people. This is what it means that, **'Nyika inovakwa, inotongwa, inonamatigwa nevene vayo/ Ilizwe lakhiwa, libuswe, likhulekelwe ngabanikazi balo'**.

Going forward and leveraging on the diverse functions and scope of Special Economic Zones, I expect the scale and quality of both domestic and global investments to

increase. This is more so as the City of Victoria Falls already has a thriving tourism and hospitality industry ecosystem, as well as a budding and promising financial service trading platform.

Therefore, as the tourism and sports industry, you have an important responsibility to develop linkages and blend the envisaged facility with the short, medium and long-term developments that will take place in the Masuwe Special Economic Zone and broader economic activities.

On its part, my Government will continue to implement well-structured programmes that support a highly trained and efficient workforce, as well as our robust legal and financial system to sustain the prevailing enabling business operating environment.

Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a policy imperative under the Second Republic to ensure that local communities remain both drivers and

beneficiaries of the growth of our economy. The Tourism and Hospitality Industry must, therefore, facilitate the participation of local communities across the tourism and hospitality value chain. All of us, the private sector, Government and communities, should benefit from developments and investments in our country. Together we prosper.

In this spirit, I commend stakeholders for guaranteeing that the cricket infrastructure and associated facilities being constructed here will involve local communities, the youth and women at every stage, through the creation of employment and training opportunities.

I am further, informed that an Integrated Tourism Resort will be developed around this place to include a central business district, medical tourism facility, golf estate, tourism school and conference facilities, among other aspects.

In keeping with the United Nations Tourism Agenda and the precepts of sound Environmental Governance, let us remain alive to the need to strike an intricate balance that protects our natural habitat, biodiversity and wildlife. Architectural designs and the built environment within the Masuwe Special Economic Zone and across the City of Victoria Falls, should seamlessly blend with the natural environment, towards promoting sustainable tourism and socio-economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The modernisation and societal evolving trends and patterns in the sports and recreation sector across the world should not be ignored as we develop sports, recreation and tourism industries. As we focus on the construction of the Zimbabwe Cricket Stadium, here in Victoria Falls, the rehabilitation, upgrading and modernisation of other sporting facilities across the country should equally be given appropriate attention. This includes the construction of new community sports facilities, introduction of bucket seats at our stadiums

across the country, as well as adoption of e-enabled aspects of sporting activities, which facilitate pre-match bookings and e-ticketing, among other aspects.

Such interventions should nurture talent across various sporting codes, including the development of sporting academies, and result in greater convenience for our sport-loving nation, while more efficient systems must see our clubs being professionally run and sustainably financed.

In conclusion, I want to emphasise that success stories, milestones and achievements are always a result of unity, focus, hard work and concerted collective efforts. I am, therefore, confident that the collaboration and synergies of Ministries, Departments and Agencies, along with other stakeholders that have led to today, will be followed through until the completion of the Zimbabwe Cricket Stadium in record time. I look forward to commissioning the facility in due course.

With these remarks, it is now my honour and privilege to officially declare commencement of the construction phase of the international cricket stadium by Zimbabwe Cricket in the Masuwe Special Economic Zone for Tourism, here in the City of Victoria Falls.

God bless you all.

God bless Zimbabwe.

I thank you.