

Mr Chairman,

Your Excellencies,

Cooperation between the European Union and Africa is not a new phenomenon but this Summit, no doubt, takes it to a new level; a level that must of necessity usher in a greater sense of equality, equity and commitment.

African Union Member States have indeed made enormous progress on a great number of issues in the Strategy as well as the specific themes, which form the basis of our discussions.

Progress in governance, democracy and peace and security are examples in this regard, but progress on governance at political and social levels is inextricably linked to economic governance. If we are not able to satisfy, and seen to be working in the best interest of our business community and the ordinary people on the street, the gains made on socio-political governance would be meaningless.

Namibia supports and subscribes to the partnership as set out in the two documents before us. These two documents can however only have meaning if other ancillary processes and agreements give effect to their noble ideals.

Mr. Chairman,

The very laudable ideals, principles and intentions insofar as they are referenced in the aforementioned documents, need to be measured against the provisions and limitations which the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) process has provided thus far.

I wish to draw attention to a few but very important aspects of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and how we need to translate some statements into practice. At various points in the text of the "Africa EU Strategic Partnership", there is reference to:

- 1) that "as a new approach, we need to forge a new partnership characterized by equality and the pursuit of common objectives";
- 2) "to work towards gradually adapting relevant policies and legal and financial frameworks" etc.;
- 3) and concerning trade, "the development of ... regional integration is key in creating larger and more integrated markets" ....; and
- 4) "one of the priorities of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership will be to help Africa improve its productive capacities, move up the value added scale and become less dependent on raw materials and simple processed products".

Mr Chairman, Your Excellencies

Namibia is particularly concerned that some of the provisions of the Interim EPAs will in fact act against the realization of some of the valuable objectives that I have referred to, and which are contained in the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership.

The controversies regarding trade have furthermore diverted attention away from what should have remained the central focus, namely the developmental component as fully elaborated in the Cotonou Agreement.

For us it seems that the spirit of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership is not reflected in the EPA negotiations and their outcomes. We strongly believe that it was not appropriate to include, in an interim agreement process that was designed to avoid the loss of market access, so many issues with profound policy and strategic implications for a country such as Namibia, under conditions of very limited time, and issues where the EC sought very specific, very restrictive and binding commitments.

Surely a much more beneficial approach would have been to agree to address these subjects in the second negotiating stage. While the negotiations continued for the comprehensive EPA in the second stage, no negative impact would have resulted to the EU by not having included these provisions in the Interim EPA.

These issues include, amongst others the non-negotiable most favoured nation treatment provision sought by the EC; the freezing of export taxes and thus our ability to use such measures as incentives for value addition and manufacturing; inadequate provision made for Infant Industry Protection; the abolition of import restrictions, which poses risks for rural development and food security; the abolition of restrictions on local content in manufactured or processed goods; and the free movement of goods within our group of SADC States in a manner that may not be compatible with our current Southern Africa Customs Union, or would predicate the modalities for a future SADC Customs Union.

Small developing countries were expected to make quick decisions on matters with major policy implications out of fear of risking loss of market access. Surely this approach is contrary to everything that should be characteristic of a development partnership process.

I therefore wish to support the statements made by the Presidents of Senegal and South Africa as well as call upon this meeting of Heads of States and Government of both the European Union and Africa to jointly endorse the need for the comprehensive re-negotiation of all aspects of the Interim EPA Agreement in 2008, so as to more faithfully reflect the attainment of the noble goals of partnership and development of the African continent in cooperation with our European partners, while at the same time providing us access to the European market.