Programme Director,
Ladies and Gentlemen

They often say, ‘there is no hurry in Africa’.

There is a little need for me to begin my speech here today with the usual lines, repeating what we already know about the African continent, its natural endowment or under-development, I also need not state what you already know as logistics industry practitioners.

So allow me to welcome you to the beautiful KwaZulu Natal for this very important conference whose aim is to work together as a continent and the world to connect Africa to the world but importantly to connect Africa to herself in a sustainable and people first economics trajectory.

South Africa is ready to host the World Maritime Day Parallel Event and we aim to showcase South Africa’s and the entire continent’s maritime capabilities and interests and a total transport multi-modal value chain during the October Transport Month of the year twenty, twenty (2020). The event will be here in the warm city of eThekwini and I wish to extend an invitation to all IMO Member States and all stakeholders.

Despite its vast market potential, Africa does not trade with itself. Experiences from other parts of the world, particularly the European Union with harder terrain and natures disadvantages intra-trade accounts for over 80% of their trade with the rest of the world, SADC barely makes 15% intra-trade.

We know all this. We have come here before and shared statistics with you. The question before us now is what is to be done about it. What is to be done about the many great ideas that conferences like this one generate for our governments and private sector?

Allow me to refer to some of these great ideas –

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement:

African Heads of State and Government reached a historical agreement to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area, which was signed in 2018.

The aim of the Free Trade Area is to promote economic integration and liberalize African
markets. For this to happen we need to connect out people in roads, rail and water and air ports. The Transport Sector therefore is without a doubt a cornerstone of this connectivity.

Despite its significance, the potential of the transport sector to contribute more towards full integration of the region is constrained by serious operational and infrastructure inefficiencies.

How do we infuse industry into unlocking these barriers?

With 54 countries in Africa has 54 and over 109 international boundaries, and 350 border crossings it is indeed a tall ask to coordinate and have uniform standards but a tall ask is not an unachievable matter.

We must deal with operational delays and congestion at the border crossings, which add to the inefficiencies of the cross border transport system in general.

We must move faster to establishing a regional regulatory authority to enforce agreed harmonized standards.

In this regard I am pleased that the SADC region is at an advanced stage of establishing the Regional Rail Safety Regulator (RRSR), with the support of the support of the South African Rail Safety Regulator.

What rail experiences so are port inefficiencies? There is an urgent need to mobilize regional resources to modernize our ports so that turnaround times could be improved - there are serious infrastructure backlogs that hinder efficient cross border transportation systems.

These manifest in the many missing links on continental rail corridors and poor port infrastructure.

With the investment and maintenance of infrastructure at low levels in Africa, the African Development Bank estimates that the continent has lost approximately 25% in potential economic growth over a period of 20 years. It could be argued that the losses are possibly worse when the forgone opportunities for job creation and other multipliers are taken into account.

Inefficiencies are also reflected in the high costs of berthing due to longer dwell times, by international standards. There is also a need for us to look at our tariff regimes carefully to make ease of doing business improvements continent-wide.

The South African National Ports Regulator has done a lot in tariff redress in line with what our President Cyril Ramaphosa had directed. The NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee elected South Africa to coordinate the acceleration of regional infrastructure development on the continent of specific cross-border infrastructure projects.

The NEPAD priority programmes and projects are outlined in the AU/NEPAD African Action Plan. The NEPAD High-Level Sub-Committee on Infrastructure (8 Heads of State and Government) comprising: South Africa (as chair), Algeria, Benin, Egypt, Nigeria,
Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Senegal. The Sub-Committee is specifically tasked with prioritising and consolidating infrastructure projects for high impact and results.

I encourage all of us, especially the private sector to pay attention to these low hanging fruits that require public private partnerships.

The African Union designated South Africa as the manufacturing hub for locomotives thereby underscoring the commitment of African leaders to increase the level of intra-Africa trade. We are well on our way in this regard.

The Head of State of South Africa was also assigned the responsibility of championing the North South Corridor (NSC), which is a multi-modal transport corridor, connecting the continent from north down to the south.

This is arguably an important intervention which brings to life the vision of our forebears of creating a Trans-African-Highway which comprises a network of transport infrastructure and services from Cape to Cairo.

Therefore, mobilizing private sector funding to deliver on the twin mandates of developing cross boundary infrastructure and creating sustainable jobs is going to be one of the major tasks of the championing initiative.

A call for the private sector is to realize Africa’s potential and a call for our governments is to seek partnerships with the private sector in a win-win situation placing our people and the environment first.

For us to achieve grab these low hanging fruits we need to start accepting that the way we have been working is not working – we must together grow Africa’s economy and remove all the barriers on connecting our regional economies fast. Time is against us.

We must begin to say, there is hurry in Africa, the hurry of the Serengeti, the hurry of our rhythm and drum beat, the hurry of Eliud Kipchoge.

I wish you all the best in your deliberations over the next three days, as you decipher the various mechanisms required to scale up investment and financing of cross border rail and port infrastructure.

I look forward to the outcomes of this important conference, outcomes that will directly acknowledge that – the way we have been working isn’t working and that there is hurry in Africa.

Let us Grow Africa Together.

I Thank You