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PRESIDENT MUSEVENI AND KING MSWATI III CALL FOR A UNIFIED AFRICAN MARKET AND POLITICAL FEDERATION

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Maama Janet Museveni have today welcomed the King of Eswatini, His Majesty, Mswati III at Entebbe International Airport.

His Majesty, Mswati III who is in Uganda for a three-day State Visit at the invitation of President Museveni was accompanied by his wife, Queen Inkhosikati Make Lamashwama and other high-level delegates.

At Entebbe International Airport, President Museveni was flanked by Ministers and service chiefs.

Upon arrival, the visiting King was accorded a 21-gun salute and inspected a guard of honour mounted by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

President Museveni later received his guest at State House Entebbe and held discussions focusing on enhancement of bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

In their discussions, President Museveni emphasised a clear vision for African prosperity, rooted in his experience as a student activist in the 1960s, a liberation leader, and now as a head of state.

“If Africans want prosperity, it comes from producing goods or services and selling them,” President Museveni stated.

He underscored the need for African nations to access larger markets to maximise economic benefits, highlighting Uganda’s internal market of 46 million people as insufficient on its own.

“The fragmentation of the African market is a big disaster,” President Museveni warned.

He compared the continent’s potential with that of Latin America, which, despite abundant natural resources, struggles with poverty due to its fragmented markets.

“I always tell my Ugandans here that if you want to be like Latin America, you are welcome because if you look at them, despite their wealth in natural resources, they still run to the USA for prosperity to get medical care, education, and other benefits,” he said.

The President argued that Africa’s success lies in integrating markets across the continent, similar to how the United States operates with a vast and unified market.

He called for a model where African nations not only produce but also own and share in the benefits of their resources, rather than relying on foreign investments that often exploit the continent’s wealth.

The President highlighted the need for African countries to collaborate on capital-intensive projects.

He also gave the example of Uganda's petroleum sector, where East African nations are invited to co-invest in infrastructure such as pipelines and refineries.

"It's not common sense that I produce, and you only buy. You can't say that to a brother," President Museveni remarked, emphasising the importance of shared ownership.

President Museveni lauded the East African Community (EAC)'s progress in rebuilding and expanding to include eight member states, addressing both economic and political integration.

Beyond economic integration, President Museveni stressed the need for political federation in East Africa, which he views as crucial for establishing a strong military defence for the continent.

He highlighted the disparity in military capabilities between African nations and global powers like the United States, which boasts superior land, air, sea, and space forces.

"Africa must have the capacity to defend itself from all threats," President Museveni asserted.

He called for a united African defence strategy as part of the broader vision for political federation.

His Majesty King Mswati III called for an enhanced cooperation between African nations, emphasising the need for unity in driving the continent's development.

He also expressed gratitude for the warm reception and hospitality extended to him and his delegation.

He highlighted the longstanding relationship between Uganda and Eswatini, noting that it had been years since their last meeting at a Commonwealth event.

“Your Excellency, I convey greetings from the Queen Mother, the government, and the people of Eswatini, and I wish to inform you that we are ready to strengthen ties between the two nations,” the King stated.

King Mswati went on to propose that Uganda and Eswatini establish regular communication channels to avoid neglecting the friendships and agreements already in place.

He stressed that African countries must work together to achieve progress in key areas such as poverty alleviation, job creation, education, and technological advancement.

“If we work together, there is much we can achieve. But if one country moves on its own, it cannot go far,” he said.

King Mswati III pointed out that Africa possesses abundant natural resources, yet the continent has struggled to produce efficiently due to the exploitation of these resources by foreign entities.

He advocated for African nations to share expertise and technology, citing Uganda’s achievements in areas such as crude oil development as an example of successful collaboration.

“Now that we have mastered a lot of technology and expertise, we must take advantage of our resources,” the King stated.

The King further emphasised the need to promote entrepreneurship and knowledge exchange between Uganda and Eswatini, suggesting the establishment of distribution centres and routes to facilitate trade.

He also proposed increased cooperation between the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the East African Community, expressing hope for a stronger economic partnership.

In terms of cultural ties, King Mswati III highlighted the similarities between the cultures of Uganda and Eswatini.

He proposed the organisation of cultural festivals to showcase these connections and attract tourists from around the world.

“We should promote our unique cultures, which are similar in many ways to support tourism and strengthen our bonds,” he added.

The King called for the opening of direct flight routes between Eswatini and Uganda to boost tourism and cargo trade.

He noted the potential for increased tourism, particularly given Uganda’s rich natural attractions such as the Nile River and mountains.

“Let us work together to promote tourism by making travel between our countries easier and more accessible,” he urged.

King Mswati III also expressed support for Uganda’s leadership in hosting the African Union’s Humanitarian Agency and congratulated President Museveni on Uganda's chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement and the G77+China group.

He reiterated his country's willingness to cooperate with Uganda in various sectors, including the export and assembly of electric cars.

In Transport and Infrastructure, the two Heads of State also called for an expedition of cooperation processes regarding the creation of a hub by the Kingdom of Eswatini for marketing Kiira Motors Corporation's "Kayoola EVS" electric buses to the SADC region, using the advantage of the Maputo harbour area.

In conclusion, King Mswati III extended an invitation to President Museveni for a State Visit to Eswatini, emphasising the importance of continued collaboration between the two nations.

"Africa needs to work together to achieve economic independence, and our partnership with Uganda is a step in that direction," he concluded.

Strengthening Bilateral Ties:

During the visit, Uganda and Eswatini further solidified their relationship through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

The agreement was signed by Uganda's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Oryem Henry Okello, and Eswatini's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hon. Senator Pholile Shakantu.

Additionally, the two countries' agriculture Ministers discussed enhancing cooperation in the agricultural sector.

Eswatini, officially the Kingdom of Eswatini and also known by its former official name Swaziland and formerly the Kingdom of

Swaziland, is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It is bordered by Mozambique to its northeast and South Africa to its north, west, south, and southeast.

The Eswatini delegation included high-level officials such as HRH Princess Lindiwe and Hon. Manqoba Khumalo, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Trade, among others.

On the Ugandan side, key ministers such as Hon. Babirye Milly Babalanda, Minister for the Presidency, Dr. Monica Musenero, Minister for Science, Technology, and Innovation, Hon. Mwebesa Francis, the Minister of Trade Industry and Cooperatives, and Hon. Katumba Wamala, the Minister of Works and Transport were also in attendance.

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