

**VOTE OF THANKS BY HONOURABLE PETER SHIVUTE, CHIEF
JUSTICE OF NAMIBIA, AT THE CONFERENCE OF THE
SOUTHERN AFRICAN CHIEF JUSTICES FORUM, KASANE,
BOTSWANA: 7-8 AUGUST 2009**

Your Excellency, President Lt. General Seretse Khama Ian Khama,
President of the Republic of Botswana;

Hon. Chief Justices;

Distinguished Delegates;

Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

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I stand before you with a deep sense of honour, privilege and humility, to express, on behalf of my colleagues, the Chief Justices and other participants in this conference, our profound gratitude to Your Excellency, Mr President, for having taken time off your many responsibilities to join us here today, and to share this occasion with us, and indeed, for having inaugurated our conference.

Your Excellency, your speech has laid due emphasis on the importance of the role played by the Judiciary in any democracy and touched on crucial aspects germane to those aspects. Your speech has laid the foundation and will serve as an inspiration, for our ensuing deliberations.

Let me also express our deep gratitude to Your Excellency, the Government and the entire people of Botswana for having graciously agreed to host this important Conference; in this beautiful town of Kasane.

My Lord Chief Justice Nganunu, the Chief Justice of Botswana, our deep vote of appreciation to you for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us all since our arrival here and the excellent facilities put at our disposal. We have no doubt that this generosity with the attendant discussion that will flow from the floor, will go a long way towards making this Conference a success. When that happens, we would have reciprocated the efforts you have made in bringing about this conference. We know all of us here will leave no stone unturned, to have that aim achieved.

Six years ago eleven Chief Justices from the Southern and Eastern African regions and three senior Judges representing absent Chief Justices met in Benoni, South Africa, to adopt the constitution of

the then Southern African Judges Commission, the forerunner to our now Southern African Chief Justices Forum (SACJF) which I shall for the sake of brevity refer hereafter to as SACJ or the Forum. The SACJF was conceived as an organization representing Chief Justices in the two regions. Some of the main objectives of the Forum are to foster and coordinate contacts and cooperation among the Judiciaries of the countries represented on the Forum in the promotion of human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and the independence of the judiciaries in the region, and to arrange colloquia at which links between courts in the region can be strengthened and matters of common interest discussed. It is in the furtherance of some of these objects that the members of the Forum and invited guests have gathered here in these idyllic settings of Kasane.

In carrying out these and other objects set out in its constitution, the SACJF undoubtedly aims at achieving intertwined needs in our members states which are, in my opinion, socio-economic development, socio-political stability and constitutional

development, that is, in the areas of good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

In this regard, it seems to me clear that in promoting the primary aims of the SACJF, the members of the organization are alive to the true functions of law in developing countries like ours, which are to function as an instrument of social engineering and also for the promotion and maintenance of democracy, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights; all of which are, in their totality, an indispensable condition for the attainment of peace and stability and national development.

Director of Ceremonies

We owe a deep gratitude to the Judiciary of Botswana, under the leadership of the Honourable Chief Justice Nganunu, for having worked tirelessly in organizing this conference.

The holding of this conference has been made possible by the generous moral and financial support and invaluable encouragement by our guest organizations which I would like to single out for special thanks (in no particular order): The Venice Commission, the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the United Nations Commission for Human Rights and the International Commission for Jurists.

Members of the Secretariat of the SACJF were up to the task of ensuring that the conference runs smoothly and successfully. I commend them for the industry they have exerted in the conceptualization and execution of the conference programme.

I would like to thank all our invited guests for having travelled from near and afar to honour us with your presence and to contribute to the discussions that will follow.

In closing, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge and salute the members of the Kazungula Police Station's Zebras Choir for having spiced the occasion with pleasant artistic excellence and to thank the management and staff of Mowana Safari Lodge, and indeed the other establishments at which delegates are accommodated, namely the Chobe Game Lodge and Chobe Marina Lodge and Toro Lodge.

Lastly by not the least,

Your Excellency the President of the Republic, the Government, and the entire people of the Republic of Botswana, for all you have done to ensure that our stay here is as pleasant and memorable as possible, we thank you. We are cognizant that not only the people of Botswana, but the entire SADC region, the Eastern African region and indeed the entire African continent, are wishing that this be a most interesting and informative conference.

I thank you.

