

***Hon. Prof. Kitila Mkumbo (MP), Minister of State, President's Office Planning and Investment;***

***Mr. Philemon Luhanjo, Chairperson of the ESRF Board of Trustees, and former Chief Secretary;***

***Dr. Tausi Mbaga Kida, Permanent Secretary, President's Office Planning and Investment;***

***Dr. Mursali Milanzi, Acting Executive Secretary, National Planning Commission;***

***Prof. Fortunata Makene, Executive Director, ESRF;***

***Prof. Samuel Wangwe, Founder & First Executive Director of ESRF;***

***Dr. Hoseana Lunogelo, Former Executive Director of ESRF;***

***Mr. Juma H. Reli, Director of the Zanzibar Research Centre for Socio-Economic and Policy Analysis (ZRCF);***

***Development Partners and Members of the Diplomatic corps;***

***Distinguished Keynote Speakers & Panellists;***

***Members of the Media Fraternity;***

***Invited Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen.***

***Good morning!***

It is an honour for me to stand in for H.E. Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, to officiate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ESRF. This event is not just a testament to the longevity of the Foundation, but also a celebration of the remarkable journey of achievements and vibrant intellectual, academic and professional community built by ESRF. I commend the Board of Trustees, under the able leadership of Mr. Philemon Luhanjo, as well as ESRF staff led by the Executive Director Prof. Fortunata Makene for steering ESRF and making this event a success. I am also delighted to meet the pioneers of ESRF, particularly, Prof. Samuel Wangwe, the Founder and First Executive Director of ESRF, who has been a torch-bearer and a beacon of economic research and policy analysis in Tanzania. I also commend Dr. Hoseana Lunogelo, Dr. Tausi Mbaga Kida and the late Prof. Haidari Amani (RIP), who led the ESRF at different times. We indeed, value and cherish their commitment and contributions in bringing ESRF to a fully-fledged research institution.

### **Distinguished Participants,**

Since ESRF started its operations in 1994, it has immensely contributed to national development. In my view, ESRF has been and continues to execute its mandate fairly well, with notable contributions to policy research and analysis, as well as advice to the Government and the private sector. The institution has also made significant contributions towards capacity building including, though not limited to, producing Post Graduate Diploma holders in Policy and Impact Evaluation Analysis, as well as development of digital data platforms and agriculture market intelligence systems. As a result of ESRF work, many analysts and associates have worked with ESRF in various capacities and subsequently moved to serve in the government, international organizations, private sector and other institutions.

On behalf of the Government, I would like to register our appreciation to ESRF for its invaluable inputs into our country's development policy making and discourse over the past 30 years. Some of the most important inputs into national planning by ESRF include,

a review of implementation of the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 undertaken in 2010 in partnership with the Planning Commission; preparation of the long-term perspective plan (2015/16 – 2025/26) and its constituent first, second and third five-year development plans as well as sectoral policies. As of now, some analysts from ESRF are also participating in undertaking background work to feed into the preparation of the Tanzania Development Vision 2050.

Looking ahead, we in Government perceive that the role of ESRF will remain to be even more relevant, given that the development landscape is continuously changing (rapidly), thus bringing up new policy questions and puzzles that will need to be addressed, informed by robust analytic work. The Government expects that ESRF will continue to provide the much-needed high quality research, policy analysis and hands-on advice to take Tanzania to the next level in this digital age.

### **Distinguished Participants,**

Let me reiterate that the sixth phase government is committed to continue working and supporting economic research and policy analysis work undertaken by ESRF and other local think tanks. Our ambition is to scale up research funding and investment in research supportive infrastructure. The Government shall also continue to urge Ministry Department and Agencies to use services rendered by ESRF to inform the development of sectoral policies and strategies. Equally, the Government will continue to encourage the private sector, CSOs, Development partners and other players (local and international) to work with or partner with ESRF. With regard to the challenge of growing competition from consulting firms, the key weapon at ESRF's disposal, is in my view, to ensure quality research output and for ESRF to maintain excellence, it will need to invest and attract the best research and analytical brains as well as pay them well. In other words, for ESRF to command a fair share of the research and policy analysis market, it must observe meritocracy in staff recruitment. Besides, it is a fact that fair competition is healthy in so far as it guarantees the best product.

### **Distinguished Participants,**

I would like to throw on the table for your consideration some research ideas for ESRF after 30 years of its existence. **First**, socio-economic researchers around the world are currently focusing on addressing global risks in a fragmented world. The most severe risks include: rapid technological change; economic uncertainty and building resilience; a warming planet; and lethal conflicts cum political tensions. As such, Tanzania socio-economic researchers must continue to explore and analyse the destabilizing consequences of the foregoing severe global risks as they impact on our country's socio-economic fabric; **Second**, Africa is now the world's youngest continent with 70% of sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 70 and the Median age is 19. Tanzania too, has 77.2% of a youthful population below 35 years. In spite of this stock of labour, Tanzania like other countries in sub-Saharan Africa has not been able to realise the demographic dividend i.e. economic growth created when the share of the working-age population exceeds the non-

working-age population. It is estimated that the stock of economically active university and college graduates<sup>1</sup> is between 800,000 and 1,000,000. However, on average only 30,000 and 90,000 vacancies are available in the public and private labour markets respectively. Apparently, the quality of graduands does not match the skills sets required in the formal job market. Although a number of efforts have been initiated to address the unemployment challenge, most of the unemployed youth find traditional agriculture which is the main stay of the economy, to be unattractive. Instead, young people prefer job opportunities that pay reasonably well within a short period of time. They also prefer occupations which use improved technology tools as opposed to manual labour. They are mostly attracted by opportunities in the creative industry (entertainment/music/sports) and ICT. I would like to suggest that ESRF beyond 30 years, undertakes research to better understand the evolving labour market dynamics and how the youth can better fit in. Research institutions should also venture into analysing the available sustainable financing options for youth preferred programs and projects in line with national priorities;

**Third**, with all the mineral endowments that our country has, we need to raise the level of mining profitability through better management of mineral wealth especially strategic and rare earth elements. We should not only extract and export raw minerals but also add value domestically. Research institutions ought to identify economic growth niches and strategies to harness mining sector opportunities which can be exploited to propel Tanzania to an Upper Income Country status by 2050; **Fourth**, is research to inform resolution of land use conflicts sustainably. The conflicts include needs of man vs wildlife; smallholder farmers vs pastoralists; smallholder farmers and pastoralists vs conserved areas and forests; urban settlements vs farmlands; and beaches vs urban settlements; **Fifth**, is research aiming at transforming semi-arid regions of Tanzania into opportunities or new growth areas. We have hitherto, been brought to believe that semi-arid areas are unproductive or waste land. However, experiences from other parts of the world like Israel, UAE and the US, prove beyond doubt that they have the potential to be very productive, for cultivation of new crops other than the traditional crops grown in semi-arid areas and deserts, if substantive research is undertaken. Research geared towards agriculture development by tapping underground water or aquifers and rain water harvesting among others, could usher in an agricultural transformation in these areas. Besides, in the case of Tanzania some of the semi-arid regions like Dodoma, Singida, Shinyanga also hold substantial mineral wealth including strategic minerals and rare earth elements, which form the basis of high-tech industries. Mineral exploration and exploitation of such resources, including mineral beneficiation, could turn these areas into new growth poles. Transformation of the so-called marginal land, has also the potential to help reduce conflicts around land use. Furthermore, rain water harvesting in these areas can increase their potential for modern livestock farming.

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<sup>1</sup> Each year a total of 140,000 graduates from Universities and Colleges enter labour market.

**Lastly**, as I observe our society today, I realise that there has evolved a culture that is not conducive to rapid development, in a number of areas. They include: an entrenched behaviour of not valuing time as an important resource. As such, lack of punctuality at workplaces, meetings and other occasions is very common; Dishonesty and unfaithfulness at workplaces continues to persist. Hard work and diligence have been eroded and are being replaced by unscrupulous means to earn a living. A large number of our youth in urban areas are idle and spend most of their time hanging out (vijiweni) or gambling. Furthermore, there are widespread beliefs that irrespective of one's qualifications and experience one cannot secure a job in the formal sector unless you know someone influential. Employment on merit is considered to be rare. It is also worrisome that a growing number of our young men are entering into marital relationships with older women "Shangazi" who are better off, as an easy way to make ends meet. There is also an entrenched habit of discarding empty bottles/plastics and other waste materials irresponsibly, even in places where there are designated dustbins, in spite of mass education and calls from environmentalists and political leaders to stop that behaviour; Similarly, careless burning of grassland and forests on the pretext of giving room for fresh animal grazing land or clearance of farmland, continues unabated. Collaborative and cooperative behaviour are now seemingly less preferred to individualistic behaviour, unlike the oriental culture which promotes the 'prosper thy neighbour' philosophy. There is also an apparent preference to luxurious spending and less on savings. For example, our people tend to contribute generously to ceremonies (weddings, religious festivals and funerals) and not as much for shouldering educational costs of children from low-income families or medical expenses. Self-help schemes and local contributions to community development projects seem to have lost tempo on the assumption that the Government will always come in; and, the dependency syndrome which remains with us with a good number of our people continuing to depend on handouts and grants from relatively better-off family relatives or friends. As if these are not enough, witchcraft and violence against women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities (like albinos) are still prevalent.

It is my humble view that we, as a country, need a cultural revolution to reverse such behaviours and practices, underpinned by down-to-earth socio-economic research and strategies. It is my honest request to ESRF and other think tanks in our country to focus on such areas going forward in order to inform our collective endeavours to engineer a radical shift from such practices for a better and prosperous Tanzania.

### **Distinguished Participants,**

With these remarks, it is my singular honour and privilege to declare, on behalf of Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, that the commemoration of the ESRF's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and its 8<sup>th</sup> National Conference is now officially opened.

**I THANK YOU.**