



**Statement by Edward Kallon,
Resident Coordinator, United Nations in Zimbabwe**

**On the occasion of the National Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) Capacity Building
workshop at Holiday Inn, Harare**

Monday 28 March 2022

Salutations

- Hon. Mr. July Moyo, Minister of Local Government and Public Works
- Ms Bore, Human Resources Director, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare
- Government Officials
- Representatives from Local Authorities
- UN DESA, UN ECA, UN Habitat, IOM and members of the UN family
- Esteemed delegates and presenters
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

I am privileged to give a few opening remarks this morning at this critical event that will strengthen the capacities of the Government to effectively implement, monitor and review progress on achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This event will also strengthen institutional coordination mechanisms for local-level SDG implementation.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Government of Zimbabwe for presenting its first and second Voluntary National Reviews in 2017 and 2021 at the High-Level Political Forum in New York. These Voluntary National Review reports are crucial to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The reports are crucial as they provide data and evidence for assessing progress towards the achievement of the mutually reinforcing agendas of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the AU Agenda 2063.

Furthermore, I would like to congratulate the Harare City Council and Victoria Falls Municipality for being the first two local authorities to conduct Voluntary Local Reviews in Zimbabwe. Based on the success of these efforts the Government has called for the Voluntary Local Reviews initiative to be cascaded across all local authorities, with priority being given to those in rural areas. This demonstrates the commitment by the Government and local authorities to implement and track progress on SDGs at a local level.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The SDGs as you know are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. It is important to note that Member states committed to the implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of these SDGs. However progress in attaining the 17 SDGs has been uneven and the COVID 19 pandemic further disrupted implementation towards many of the SDGs and in some cases turned back decades of progress.

At a global level, the UN Secretary General in his 2021 report on SDGs noted that the global community is at a critical moment in its pursuit of the SDGs . More than a year into the global pandemic, millions of lives have been lost, the human and economic toll has been unprecedented, and recovery efforts so far have been uneven, inequitable and insufficiently geared towards achieving sustainable development. The current crisis is threatening decades of development gains, further delaying the urgent transition to greener, more inclusive economies, and throwing progress on the SDGs even further off track. The Secretary General's report further pointed out that the realisation of the Leave No One Behind agenda has been challenged as the poorest and the most vulnerable people are affected disproportionately by the pandemic, including women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees and informal sector workers.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To quote the UN Secretary General, ***The Sustainable Development Goals are more important now than ever. Now is the time to secure the well-being of people, economies, societies and our planet***'' .

In the UN, we believe that to fully understand the progress on the SDGs and the impact of our interventions and policies on the poorest and marginalised groups, Member States should conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels. In line with the principles of inclusivity and national ownership, the UN places great value on ensuring the participation of all stakeholders including communities and the most vulnerable groups in SDGs implementation and monitoring.

For this reason, the UN attaches particular importance to the localization of the SDGs, to bring their implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation to the level of both urban and rural local authorities and communities. The Voluntary Local Reviews – known as “VLRs” - constitute an effective mechanism for monitoring and tracking progress in SDGs implementation at sub-national level. The VLRs should enable generation of data and evidence that helps the Local Authorities to make evidence based decisions and policies that drive the Leave No One Behind Agenda.

The VLRs also provide important opportunities for participatory approaches to sustainable development and to ensure that the voices of the most marginalized segments of society are heard. This is consistent with the 2030 Agenda’s central promise to “leave no one behind” and to indeed “reach the furthest behind first.” Furthermore, VLRs provides important opportunities for local governments and key stakeholders to identify key development priorities and opportunities going forward.

I therefore encourage the four local authorities (Bulawayo City Council, Zvishavane Town Council, Mutasa Rural District Council and Nkayi Rural District Council) who are engaging in the VLRs process in the year 2022, to prioritise and commit to this exercise. It is my sincere hope that from this workshop these four local authorities will design a roadmap for conducting the VLRs to promote data and evidence generation, evidence-based programming and decision making.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to reassure the Government and the Local Authorities that as the UN, we are jointly, dedicated to supporting the Government in the implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that the transformative recovery from COVID 19 is pursued. The recently signed Zimbabwe United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2022-2026) between the UN and the Government, and the significant alignment between the national priorities outlined in the National Development Strategy (NDS1) and the SDGs demonstrates this commitment.

In the spirit of localising the SDGs and delivering concrete results that ensure inclusive participation and reaching the people typically left the furthest behind, we, the UN are committed to supporting the Voluntary Local Reviews.

I Thank you and I wish you fruitful deliberations.

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