

Opening Remarks at the National Launching Workshop for the project “Strengthening National Capacities for Enhancing Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (MSME) Resilience and Building Forward Better to Accelerate the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Zimbabwe”

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Mrs. Vaidah Mashangwa, Director, Strategic Policy, Planning, M&E, representing Mr. Moses Mhike, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Women Affairs, Community and Small and Medium Enterprises Development,

Mr. Edward Kallon, United Nations Resident Coordinator,

Senior government officials,

Members of the UN Country Team,

Representatives of the MSME sector in Zimbabwe,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you today at this national workshop to launch two UNDESA funded projects on “Strengthening National Capacities for Enhancing Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Resilience and Building Forward Better to Accelerate the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Zimbabwe” and on “Strengthened Resilience of MSMEs in Africa and Asia”.

First of all, please allow me to start by thanking the presence of senior officials from the government and the UN system in Zimbabwe. Your presence demonstrates the high-level commitment to the critical issue of expanding contributions of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe’s national development aspirations as encapsulated in the NDS1. To get back on track and recover from the social dislocations and economic contraction caused by the COVID-19

pandemic, it is imperative that countries focus on rebuilding better and stronger by pursuing policy choices that enhance sustained, inclusive and equitable growth. These policy choices have to equally focus on MSMEs.

MSMEs play critical roles in the economic growth and structural transformation of Africa, including that of Zimbabwe. Representing the majority of business entities, they are engines of job growth, are critical to empowering women and youth, and to sustaining livelihoods, particularly for the poor and groups in vulnerable situations. Despite their important roles, MSMEs are vulnerable to various shocks. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, MSMEs, especially those owned by women, youth and people in vulnerable situations, are often left with few avenues to access business development services, market opportunities and financial resources. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing challenges and further threatened to overwhelm MSMEs' coping capacities, through limited credit options, fewer cash reserves, interrupted supply chains, reduced demands and delayed payments. Compared to large and formalized enterprises, MSMEs are less able to tap into emergency credit and economic stimulus programmes launched to support business viability during crisis situations.

It is therefore critical to ensure that sustained policy support is tailor-made and targets the diverse demands of the MSME sector. Such support will enhance MSME resilience, contributing to their pursuit for innovations, opportunities and the transition to sustainable business models, including pursuing green growth opportunities. With MSMEs still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic as well as rising inflation, the workshop today gives us a timely opportunity to strategize by exploring evidence-based policy recommendations that are vital to enhance the coherence of MSME supporting policies and maximize the contribution of MSMEs to inclusive and sustainable recovery in Zimbabwe.

At this moment, I would like to sincerely thank the support of the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community and SME Development during the conceptualization of both MSME projects. We are therefore pleased to inform the Permanent Secretary and the MSME stakeholders gathered here that the project on “Strengthening national capacities for enhancing MSME resilience and building forward better to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in developing countries” has been approved by the United Nations Peace and Development Fund. The project

will be implemented in Zimbabwe together with eight other developing countries in Africa and Asia, from 2022 to 2024.

I would also like to announce that a second UNDESA project on “Strengthened resilience of MSMEs in Africa and Asia” was also approved by the United Nations Development Account. The project will be implemented from 2022 to 2025 in four developing countries in Africa and Asia. Zimbabwe is a pilot country of this project as well. Both projects will complement each other and jointly contribute to building capacities of MSMEs and policymakers in Zimbabwe that is needed to strengthen MSME resilience and ensure that MSMEs in Zimbabwe both survive from the pandemic and thrive by better positioning themselves to capture high-value market opportunities. More importantly, these two projects will be implemented under the “Prosperity” pillar of the Zimbabwe UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2022-2026).

Taking into account global and national sustainable development visions, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), AU Agenda 2063, Vision 2030: Towards a Prosperous and Empowered Upper Middle-Income Society by 2030, both projects are conceptualized through close consultations with government counterparts, the UN Country Team and other relevant stakeholders. It is worth noting that both projects are built on the successful collaboration between the Division for Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DSDG/DESA), the MWACSMED and the RCO/United Nations Country Team in Zimbabwe. Through this collaboration, DSDG/DESA has supported the Ministry formulating the Zimbabwe MSME Monitoring Framework that will strengthen informed policymaking processes and the effectiveness of MSME supporting policies.

To this end, I would like to underline the importance of this workshop, which is not only to launch the MSME projects. It also aims to facilitate inclusive stakeholder dialogue, exchange and take stock of good practices contributing to MSME resilience, formalization and growth. Key messages distilled from discussions at the workshop will be translated into concrete actions and inform the project workplans in Zimbabwe for unlocking the full potential of MSMEs in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ladies and gentlemen, we look forward to continuing our cooperation with the Government of the Zimbabwe and the UN Country Team. It is imperative that we work together

to strengthen the resilience of MSMEs as well as to fully leverage their potential for sustainable development if we are committed to rebuild better and stronger in this Decade of Action to deliver Sustainable Development Goals.

I thank you for your attention and I look forward to productive discussions at the workshop.
