

Opening Remarks

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Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on the Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (MSME) Monitoring Framework in Zimbabwe

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Mr. Mamvura Mabika, Acting Director, SME and Cooperative Development, Ministry of Women
Affairs, Community and SME Development,
Representatives of the RCO/UN Country Team in Zimbabwe,
Senior government officials,
Representatives of the MSME sector in Zimbabwe,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you today at the opening session of the “Stakeholder Consultation
Workshop on the Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (MSME) Monitoring Framework
in Zimbabwe”.

Please allow me to start by thanking the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community and SME
Development, and to you all for being here at this critical workshop to review and validate the first
draft of the Zimbabwe MSME monitoring framework. In response to the request from the Ministry,
this monitoring framework is formulated to provide regular and real-time information for
evidenced based programming and policymaking process that expand MSME contributions to the
achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs as well as the
National Development Strategy 1 (NDS 1, 2021-2025) in Zimbabwe. The framework is of high
priority for the Government as it seeks to strengthen policy support to MSMEs in the context of
rebuilding back better and stronger from the Covid-19 pandemic and the various shocks the
country is dealing with, including droughts, cyclones and rising inflation.

MSMEs comprise the economic backbone in Zimbabwe. Accounting for over seventy per cent of all business entities in the country, MSMEs are crucial engines for economic growth and employment creation. Unfortunately, MSMEs, especially those led by women and youth, are disproportionately affected by the negative socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the majority of MSMEs in the country operating as informal business entities, they are less able to tap into emergency relief and stimulus packages launched to support them weather economic shocks. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, MSMEs around the world faced compounding challenges. A 2020 study undertaken by IMF found a large impact on business failures and employment under COVID-19, absent government support. With the collapse of MSMEs, the level of unemployment has soared, threatening livelihoods of the working poor and groups in vulnerable situations.

Facing the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations System has acted swiftly to marshal much needed support to MSMEs, together with state and non-state actors. Supporting MSMEs to tackle the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is prioritized in the Secretary-General's report on 'Shared responsibility, global solidarity: responding to the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic'. Supporting MSMEs, protecting jobs and the informal sector have also become one of the five pillars of the United Nations Framework for the Immediate Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19.

In the case of Zimbabwe, supporting MSMEs and elevating their contributions to economic growth are prioritized in the National Development Strategy 1. It is also underlined in the National MSME Policy 2020-2024 and the MSME Recovery Plan in response to the devastating effect of COVID-19 pandemic. It is in this context that the Zimbabwe MSME monitoring framework is formulated. The framework will timely capture the demands and challenges of MSMEs in critical areas, including access to finance, formalization, resilience, and contribution to inclusive and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Data and information collected by the monitoring framework will not only strengthen evidence-based policymaking tailor-made to the dynamic and rapid changes in the MSME sector. More importantly, it will provide policymakers with a useful roadmap to maximize the potential of MSMEs in achieving the NDS 1 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Zimbabwe as well as enable the participation of local MSMEs in the African Continental Free Trade Area that came into effect at the start of 2021.

I am pleased to note that, based on extensive desktop research, stakeholder interviews and fieldwork in Bulawayo, Gweru, Harare and Mutare, an initial draft of the Zimbabwe MSME Monitoring Framework is now ready. It will be presented at this consultation workshop for the review and validation of all participating stakeholders.

Ladies and gentlemen, as the world is gradually recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic with uncertainties looming ahead, the MSME monitoring framework will provide useful evidence on demands and challenges MSMEs are facing. It will also be a useful tool to capture and disseminate good practices initiated by MSME entrepreneurs to adapt and stay resilient to uncertainties. I believe the framework will become a useful policy toolkit strengthening MSME entrepreneurial capacities in the country and motivating their initiatives to capture high-value market opportunities from the growth of intra-Africa trade and regional integration as spelt out in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and SADC Industrial Development policy Framework. I would like to encourage the active engagement of all during the two-day workshop. Your insights and knowledge on the MSME sector in Zimbabwe are critical to validate and improve the relevance and effectiveness of the monitoring framework in leveraging roles of MSMEs in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is committed to support capacity building and the formulation of coherent policy environment maximizing MSME contributions to rebuilding better and stronger in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, where MSMEs are crucial not only as engines of job creation, but also as agents accelerating inclusive growth and environmental sustainability and the empowerment of women, youth, persons with disabilities and other groups in vulnerable situations.

Going forward, we should remain convinced that international cooperation and partnerships make significant contributions to realizing the aspirations of MSMEs. In that regard, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs looks forward to continuing our successful cooperation and partnerships with the Government of Zimbabwe, the UN Resident Coordinator Office, the UN Country Team and Zimbabwe's development partners such as the African Development Bank and the World Bank. It is imperative that we continue to work together

to enhance the resilience of MSMEs and leverage potentials of MSMEs as the first responders to protect jobs, sustain livelihoods and build back better and stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic in this Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals

I thank you for your attention and look forward to the fruitful discussion with you all.
