

**PRESENTATION BY ZIMBABWE AT THE 2022 HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM: SIDE EVENT ON VNR/VLR LAB ON LOCALIZING SDGS: INTEGRATING VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEWS INTO VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW PROCESSES: 13 JULY 2022**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

At the outset, let me express my appreciation to the organizers of this important event, UNDESA, OECD and UCLD, for inviting Zimbabwe to exchange notes on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the VNR process and to share our experience on the conduct of Voluntary Local Reviews.

Zimbabwe is fully committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has been mainstreamed into our national development plans. The Agenda is fully aligned with our economic blueprint, the National Development Strategy 1 (2021-2025), which will be succeeded by the NDS 2 (2026-2030).

The Government of Zimbabwe launched Vision 2030, as its commitment to improving the lives of our people and sustainably manage our environment while leaving no one behind. Vision 2030 seeks to transform Zimbabwe into an empowered and prosperous upper middle-income society by the year 2030.

Zimbabwe continues to strengthen the institutional framework for the implementation of the SDGs, and has established a dedicated SDGs Secretariat to co-ordinate SDGs implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Further improvements on the institutional architecture include the alignment of NDS1 to SDGs as well as the coordination and information sharing within NDS1 and SDGs implementation Clusters. The NDS 1 monitoring and evaluation is being tracked through an e-enabled Whole of Government Performance Management System.

**Voluntary National Reviews**

Zimbabwe has presented 2 VNRs, the first in 2017, and the second at the 2021 HLPF. Building on the SDGs implementation and co-ordination framework presented in the 2017 VNR, Government further strengthening the institutional framework to advance implementation efforts.

As part of the preparations for the second VNR, Zimbabwe launched its Devolution and Decentralization Policy to assist acceleration of the localisation of national development programmes as well implementation of SDGs at local level.

**Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)**

The Devolution and Decentralization Policy gave birth to Zimbabwe's first Voluntary Local Reviews, piloted in the capital Harare, and in the majestic Victoria Falls Municipality, with assistance from UN Economic Commission for Africa.

The VLRs have helped raise awareness of the SDGs at the local level, setting the stage for multi-stakeholder/sectoral deliberations and involvement, and prioritizing sustainable development through strong leadership and integrated governance mechanisms.

The two Local Authorities have since developed their local SDGs monitoring and evaluation systems that will be used to track the progress of implementation and achievement of SDGs.

The success of the two VLRs led Cabinet to direct that the VLRs be cascaded to all local authorities. The Government is currently working with UN Country Team, UNDESA, CSOs and other stakeholders to conduct 4 VLRs (2 urban and 2 rural) for Mutasa Rural District Council, Bikita Rural District Council, Zvishavane Town and Bulawayo in 2022.

Continuous capacity building is being conducted for the four selected local authorities.

The same model of capacitating local authorities to undertake VLRs on their own will be used for the all-other local authorities. The aim is to eventually cascaded the VLRs to all local authorities in Zimbabwe.

### **Challenges this to come before lessons learnt**

While the VLRs have largely been successful, the following challenges were encountered and efforts continue to be made to mitigate the impacts:

- Covid-19 pandemic reversed achievement of SDGs;
- Inadequate resources to carry-out VLRs in all local authorities; and
- Limited capacity of local authorities to carry out VLRs on their own.

### **Lessons Learnt**

Due to broad stakeholder engagement involved in conductive VLRs, the VLRs have strengthened collaboration between government and other major stakeholders in SDGs implementation.

The Local Authorities now have SDGs focal persons and steering committees.

VLRs are accelerating the implementation of SDGs since collective efforts at community level in SDGs implementation is recognised and recorded.

The VLRs have addressed the issue of ownership, through enhancing citizenship participation in national development.

The VLRs put a spotlight on means of implementation and highlighted the importance of closer collaboration and partnerships with private sector, development partners, the diaspora, philanthropic organisations and civil society stakeholders to develop innovative financing mechanisms and service delivery models that balance the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

The VLRs have shown the urgent need for developing countries to tap into new sources of private capital that could be used to fill the SDG financing gap but will require innovative and scalable approaches, such as leveraging remittances, investments from pension funds, SDG Equity-Linked Bonds, and Green Bonds, among others.

It is envisaged that once all local authorities have taken part in VLRs, VLRs will be the springboard for future VNRs as they mirror the status of SDGs implementation at grassroots level.

**I thank you.**