

## **Concluding Remarks- Amson Sibanda**

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“National Capacity Building Workshop on Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) in South Africa”  
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First, I would like to thank our partners, the Government of the Republic of South Africa represented by the NPC and Commissioner Zondi, StatSA and SALGA, and the UN RCO and UNCT for organizing this “National Capacity Building Workshop on Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) in South Africa”.

I also wish to thank the Government of Italy whose financial support made this workshop a reality. I also thank our regular partners, UN Habitat, UNECA, UNICEF and APRM for their contributions to this workshop, as well as Andrea Ferrannini from Acton Research for co-development and Robert Papa, from Busia county who also joined us to share valuable VLRs experiences from Italy and Kenya.

More importantly, I would like to thank all of you for taking time off from your busy schedules to be with us. You have been very active throughout, demonstrating your commitment to contributing to advancing the localization of the SDGs in South Africa. You each represent the various stakeholders of this very beautiful rainbow nation. As local and regional governments, you are also the solid bricks that we need to rebuild forward better and stronger, brick by brick.

As we said at the opening of this workshop, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for transformative initiatives whether we are talking about how best to localize the SDGs, strengthen local capacities, data and knowledge gathering, stakeholders and partnerships, financing and disaster risk reduction and resilience in SDGs localization.

National capacity building workshops such as this one are important for several reasons. First, they demystify the global, regional and national agendas. Second, they give us an opportunity to build and strengthen communities of practice. I would encourage you to form a WhatsApp VLR or SDGs localization group. That will allow you to easily stay in touch and support each other. This is one good practice we have learnt from other countries. Third, we learn from each other. Fourth, they are also a means of implementation as they contribute to catalyzing change in the way we all translate global, regional and national agendas and development plans into more meaningful local action plans, deliver public goods and services, strengthen institutions and partnerships and ensure that we leave no one behind. We all heard of the importance of VLRs as an instrument to accelerate SDGs implementation. It is not about the size of your local municipality or regional government. Any small, medium-sized or large local and regional government can get started on this process. You might not have all the data or human or financial resources that you need. What is important is to start the start process.

As the UN system, we remain committed to continue working with all partners to achieve the SDGs.

To build long-term resilience among the poor and most vulnerable populations and avoid leaving them further behind, we should focus on strengthening systems and catalysing collaborative and transformative partnerships, not only with national Governments but also with regional bodies, development partners, local authorities, the private sector, civil society and local communities.

I look forward to seeing you again in person at future capacity building events as our focus shifts to accelerating implementation, monitoring and evaluating the SDGs. This will not be a one-off event. So, we look forward to meeting you again as we continue to seek innovative ways to empower all stakeholders interested in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs in this Decade of Action and Delivery as well as AU Agenda 2063, the National Development Plan 2030 and the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030. As UNDESA, we are also prepared to organize online workshops with you on any topic related to VLR preparations, so reach out to us through NPC and we can organize two-hour virtual sessions that will allow to take this work forward. We have organized similar workshops at the global and have had the opportunity of having Cape Town join us. More importantly, we look forward to an inclusive process as you start the process of preparing the 2024 VNR that will be informed by VLRs.

I would also like to thank Dr. Kefiloe's team – Lusanda, Xoliswa, Silondile, Dakalo and Ziphezinhle for all the tireless effort you put into this workshop. It hasn't been easy organizing this workshop, but you have persisted, and demonstrated professionalism in what you do. I would like to thank my colleagues in DSDG/DESA, Nardos and Menbere. I am sure everyone gathered in this room truly appreciates your efforts.

I thank you!