

## **Opening Remarks**

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“National Capacity Building Workshop on “Improved Local and National Government  
Capacities for Localizing SDGs and National Development Strategy-1 Progress Through  
Voluntary Local Reviews in Zimbabwe”

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Rainbow Hotels Kadoma Hotel & Conference, Kadoma

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to join you for the opening of this workshop on “Improved Local and National Government Capacities for Localizing SDGs and National Development Strategy-1 Progress Through Voluntary Local Reviews in Zimbabwe”, with a particular focus on SDG localization through voluntary local reviews.

I would like to thank the Government of Zimbabwe represented by our two government counterparts - the Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, the Resident Coordinator Office, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa for their tremendous work to organize this workshop in partnership with the Division for Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

I would like to sincerely thank the Government of Italy that is supporting UNDESA’s project on “Improved local and national government capacities for localizing SDG progress through Voluntary Local Reviews” that brought all of us together today.

This project, that was launched in June this year and ending in December 2024, will support the acceleration and scaling up of SDGs implementation and localization through the preparations of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) of SDG implementation in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay. Through this process, the project seeks to build the

capacities of government officials at the national and subregional levels for effective SDGs implementation at all levels, including the subnational level and reviewing and monitoring of progress.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As underscored by the recently concluded 2023 SDG Summit, there is a strong impetus for undertaking urgent, bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative actions necessary to reverse declines, get back on track and accelerate progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. The Summit adopted a ground-breaking Political Declaration as its outcome, to guide the work of member States and their development partners. The Summit as well the Political Declaration did recognize that the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs largely depends on inclusive national and local actions.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the need to engage all stakeholders in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and, among others, pledges that “Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities”.

The critical role of SDG localization that is led by local and regional governments was identified as one of the high impact initiatives at the SDG Summit. Various Ministerial Declarations of the High-level Political Forum also recognize the role played by local and regional governments in advancing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. These Ministerial declarations note that VLRs are a useful tool for better policies and better lives as they show progress and foster exchange of experiences in local implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In his Report on Our Common Agenda that informed the deliberations of the SDG Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General stated that: “The role of parliaments, cities and other subnational authorities is particularly being recognized in inclusive approaches, with, for example, voluntary local reviews of Sustainable Development Goal implementation providing a model on

which to build. Cities, local authorities and specifically VLRs are key actors and processes to advance sustainable development and inclusive multilateralism.”

The centrality of localization of the SDGs has similarly been emphasized by the G20 where, in 2021, under Italy’s Presidency, the G20 Development Working Group agreed to establish a G20 Platform on SDG Localization and Intermediary Cities and adopted High Level Principles on city-to-city partnerships to help maximize synergies across existing initiatives and address gaps that cities face to realize their development potential.

We are therefore all gathered here because we strongly believe that localizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is essential for ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goals and their pledge to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first reflect local needs, priorities, norms and values. The process of preparing a VLR allows all actors – policymakers at all levels of government, business, civil society organizations, academia, researchers, youth and persons with disabilities to engage in open and forward-looking dialogue about how to localize the SDGs and NDS-1.

This will ensure that local and regional governments and the communities that elect them to positions of public trust find SDGs relevant and meaningful in the spaces they occupy and operate as they relate to the delivery of public goods and services such as clean water and sanitation, quality education, health care and decent jobs.

In that regard, the cities, towns and districts that you represent have a huge responsibility to translate the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in ways that make them appear recognizable, urgent and meaningful. In the case of Zimbabwe, these local governments also have the responsibility to translate the NDS-1 and AU Agenda 2063 into programmes that improve lives and livelihoods at the local levels.

We therefore hope that this capacity building workshop will empower you to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs as well as the NDS-1 and Agenda 2063.

I thank you for your attention!