



**His Excellency Edward Kallon, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator**

**National Capacity Building Workshop to Localize SDGs in Zimbabwe**

**Friday 06 October 2023, Kadoma**

**Salutation here!**

- The Secretary, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Mr Simon Masanga
- Ambassador of Italy to Zimbabwe, H.E. Mr. Umberto Malnati,
- Senior Government Officials,
- Representatives from Local Authorities,
- UN DESA, UN ECA, UNDP and members of the UN family,
- Esteemed delegates and presenters,
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honor to address you today on the importance of accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Zimbabwe through improved capacities for localizing the SDGs.

I would like to congratulate the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works for organizing this national capacity building workshop. I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by the Division for Sustainable Development Goals UNDESA, UN ECA and the UNDP Zimbabwe towards this effort.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Zimbabwe, like many other countries, recognizes the importance of localizing the SDGs to ensure that these goals reflect local needs, norms, and values.

In his speech to 78<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly, HE the President of Zimbabwe said the following, and I quote: **“To accelerate action on the SDGs, we must scale up investments in people and communities by ensuring access to quality education, healthcare, clean water, and sanitation for all. The creation of economic opportunities, decent jobs and entrepreneurship, especially among women and the youth, must remain a priority”** End of Quote.

To realise this goal, sub-national and local government will need to play a pivotal role in the implementation process, addressing core issues such as poverty, food security, education, healthcare, water and sanitation services, gender equality, youth empowerment, and reducing inequalities.

It is estimated that at least 60 percent of the SDG targets cannot be reached without proper engagement and coordination with local government. This implies that local governments must be engaged in both the implementation and in the review of progress in the achievement of SDG targets and the Sustainable Development Agenda.

To ensure that local governments are engaged in these review, the concept of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) has gained recognition and momentum as a powerful accelerator of SDG implementation.

The VLRs constitute an effective mechanism for monitoring and tracking progress in SDGs implementation at sub-national level. VLRs contribute to data collection, inclusive decision-making processes, strengthening multilevel governance, and inform the elaboration of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). The Reviews also foster the integration of the SDGs into national and local planning, allowing us to respond better to the specific needs of local communities and geographical areas.

I have been made to understand that during this three day workshop, you have been capacitated to integrate the SDGs into local development plans and strategies.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

The Government of Zimbabwe had identified devolution as key pillar in driving economic development. Under devolution, citizens will be involved in setting the development agenda in their communities. Most of the policy guidelines on devolution put emphasis on economic devolution, intending to transform provinces and districts into economic hubs to grow local domestic product (GDP) ie emphasis on Prosperity. But as the 2030 Sustainable development agenda has articulated, there is more to development than just prosperity. We must also local at the other pillars including People, Planet, Peace and Security and Partnerships. They are all integrated and indivisible. You can't achieve one without the other!!

This is why your local reviews must be holistic if they are going to be useful in allocation of resources and driving the development agenda at the local level. It is therefore very important that these reviews make sense to the citizens and policy makers in these localities.

Although SDGs have been incorporated into Zimbabwe Vision 2030, the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (2018 -2020), the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS 1 2021-2025) as well as the national budgets, the global SDG index (2019) ranked Zimbabwe 121 (out of 195 countries) in terms of progress towards the implementation of SDGs – with a score of 59.7.

Part of the reasons (but not exclusively) why Zimbabwe has such a poor score is because of an overall data gap estimated at about 44 percent. In the expectation of national commitments at the 78<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly, one of the key expectations was the commitment by governments to ensure that we have country level (and sub-national) level data for at least 90 percent of SDG targets by 2027.

The two statistics above speak to our current status and the ambition. They point to the need for us to continuously improve collection, analysis and dissemination of high quality, reliable and timely data, disaggregated by sex, disability, region and other relevant variable. Effective local action requires disaggregated data collection and management at various local levels and it is my hope that these VLR exercises will contribute to this effort.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

The 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs are the culmination of a historic, inclusive, and ambitious effort to create a sustainable future for all humanity.

These goals are interconnected, and it is crucial to adopt an integrated policy approach to achieve them. Just like solving a Rubik's cube, we must consider all sides in relation to each other if we are to find a solution.

Our current development practices and institutions often favor siloed approaches, leading to disparate and competing strategies that hinder progress towards the SDGs. As a result, we find ourselves facing significant challenges, with only 15 percent of targets on track for achievement by 2030 and some areas even regressing from the 2015 baseline.

The urgency to transform this status quo cannot be overstated. We need to ensure that an integrated approach becomes the norm, where economic models and policy processes are reformed to align with our ambitions, and investments are scaled up to accelerate SDG progress.

To achieve this, the UN has identified six key transitions that have the potential to catalyze and multiply the impact across all goals. These transitions include:

1. Food systems.
2. Energy access and affordability.
3. Digital connectivity.
4. Transform education.
5. Jobs and social protection; and
6. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

These transitions serve as a useful organizing framework to identify investment pathways that can accelerate SDG progress. The priority level and action accorded to each transition will be determined by the prevailing country context.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is important to highlight that these transitions must be just and equitable, putting human rights, gender equality, and the principle of Leaving No One Behind at the forefront.

For example, the transition in food systems must address the disproportionate food insecurity experienced by women and rural communities. Similarly, the transition on jobs and social protection must ensure universal health coverage for all. Achieving these transitions requires effective means of implementation. We must bridge the data gap, strengthen SDG localization, and leverage science, technology, and innovation. It is also critical to strengthen governance, policy, and regulatory frameworks, and enhance public sector capabilities.

In this regard, financing plays a crucial role, with a need for a quantum leap in finance flows from billions to trillions for the global implementation of the SDGs and I am sure we will require billions to achieve the SDGs in Zimbabwe. This entails mobilizing both public and private sector investments, restructuring debt, and lifting trade barriers.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

To support Zimbabwe, deliver on these transitions, UN in Zimbabwe will focus on four actions.

- Drive policy and regulatory shifts
- Develop bankable national projects with public and private sector participation,
- Attract financing from all sources, and
- Commit to capacity-building to support institutions and civil society.

At the global level, the Joint SDG Fund has already begun providing crucial support, incubating, and capitalizing new avenues of financing.

The SDG Summit, that was held recently marking the midway point to 2030, presented an essential opportunity to put the SDGs back on track and secure the breakthroughs needed for SDG acceleration and I strongly encourage you to incorporate some of the approaches and strategies as we intensify localizing the SDGs.

I therefore encourage the six local authorities (Chinhoyi Municipality, Gokwe North Rural District Council, Mutare City Council, Murehwa Rural District Council, Nkayi Rural District Council and Bulilima Rural District Council) who are engaging in the VLRs process in the year 2023/2024, to commit to this exercise identify evidence based actions that accelerate progress towards a sustainable future for all Zimbabweans – leaving no-one and no-place behind.

The UN development system in Zimbabwe remains committed to continuous improvement and to supporting countries in this process. Let us join hands, work together, and turn our ambitions into action, accelerating progress towards a sustainable future for all Zimbabweans – leaving no-one and no-place behind.

Thank you.