



Zimbabwe

Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare

Opening Remarks

by

Mr Simon Masanga,

**Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social
Welfare,**

National Capacity Building Workshop on Voluntary Local Reviews

Kadoma Hotel and Conference Centre

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Salutations!

United Nations Resident Coordinator, His Excellency, Edward Kallon,

Ambassador of Italy to Zimbabwe, H. E. Mr. Umberto Malnati

Senior Government Officials,

Representatives from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Amson Sibanda and his colleagues

United Nations Development Programme representative,

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa,

All representatives from Local Authorities,

Representatives from United Nations,

Civil Society Reference group on SDGs representative,

Distinguished participants,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is my singular honour and pleasure to address this important National Capacity Building Workshop on Voluntary Local Reviews Workshop as we implement and monitor the “Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” at grassroots level in line with the overarching principle of leaving no one behind. We have convened this gathering of selected local authorities, Ministries, Civil Society Organisations and United Nations Family among other stakeholders to exchange knowledge,

and share experiences and lessons learnt in conducting Voluntary Local Reviews of Sustainable Development Goals.

Allow me to commence by reminding you that our country as a member state to the United Nations is committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and 17 Sustainable Development Goals that were adopted in September, 2015 and reaffirmed during the just ended 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The SDGs are a result framework for the global agenda that seeks to eliminate extreme poverty, build partnerships, and stimulating economic growth around the world while caring for the planet and the future.

Our country is implementing the 2030 Agenda through our national development policies such as our Vision 2030 and National Development Strategy 1(NDS 1). In order to enable effective monitoring and evaluation of SDGs we recently proposed realignment of SDGs clusters to Social, Economic, Environment, and Governance Clusters, in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2022-2026).

It is imperative to appreciate the role of local authorities in implementing, monitoring and evaluating progress of SDGs because it is from local authorities that we get grassroot tangible evidence of SDGs and other policy implementation progress. I am imploring all local authorities to provide reports that feed into the proposed clusters to reflect actual progress at grassroots level to ensure no one will be left behind.

In addition, let me take this opportunity to advise the meeting that Zimbabwe will be presenting her 3rd Voluntary National Review at the

2024 High-level Political Forum with the 1st and 2nd having been presented in 2017 and 2021, respectively. Contributions from VLRs will be key to showcase to the world where we are as a country in terms of implementing SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This capacity building workshop comes at the right time, since world leaders were, barely three weeks ago, gathered at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to agree on transformative actions and commitments required in order to rescue the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. According to the Sustainable Development Report 2023, globally progress on SDGs is worrisome, as only 15 percent of SDGs are on track, 37 percent have stagnated or regressed, 48 percent are moderately or severely off-track. The triple challenges of climate change, conflicts, and adverse effects of Covid-19 pandemic being among the top challenges derailing global economies including Zimbabwe.

Our collective efforts are needed to enable our country to build forward better in line with reaffirmed commitments made by His Excellency, President Dr. E. D. Mnangagwa at the SDGs Summit. In a bid to stimulate urgent action to be taken to rescue the 2030 Agenda, the UN Secretary General urged Member States to: recommit to transformative SDGs action; advance inclusive policies for equality; strengthen capacity for SDGs progress; recommit financing SDGs for all; and strengthen UN System for SDGs.

Our country was among the first countries that embraced the Voluntary Local Reviews process with the first two reviews conducted in 2020 for Harare City and Victoria Falls Town. The findings of the two VLRs were presented at the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development that was held in the same year in Victoria Falls. Following the inception of VLRs in Zimbabwe, Cabinet, in 2020, gave a directive that the VLRs must be cascaded to all local authorities country-wide with priority being given to rural local authorities. In line with the directive, and through collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works and the United Nations family we managed to roll out four additional VLRs in 2022 for Bikita, Mutasa Districts, Zvishavane Town and Bulawayo City.

Apart from just providing progress made in attaining sustainable development, the VLR process has been a platform for government, local authorities, business, development partners, and civil society organisations to interact and share ideas regarding the status of sustainable development in the country and identifying areas of collaboration to strengthen implementation of SDGs at subnational and national level. The VLRs have also proven to be useful tools in localizing the global agenda for sustainable development.

As we are working towards the attainment of SDGs let us also be conscious of other regional and international obligations before us such as the Agenda 2063, the Southern African Development Community's Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, Paris Climate Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, just to mention but a few, as there are many other inter-governmental agreements we are party to

that provide frameworks for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs.

Ladies and Gentlemen, time is ticking; we are half way through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and coincidentally our NDS 1, hence progress should be visible even at grassroots level. As Government we acknowledge the various initiatives being undertaken by local authorities, but for us to attain the reaffirmed-ambitious Sustainable Development Goals, we need to accelerate our efforts and ensure that no one is left behind in this journey to 2030.

Despite notable progress we have made so far as a country, we still face some startling challenges: the inequality gap is still wide; many people still need of food and water; natural disasters such as droughts and cyclones are periodically affecting us; adverse effects of Covid-19 pandemic are still lingering with us. Working together for a common goal can make us emerge stronger and attain SDGs.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the implementation and achievement of the SDGs remains everyone's responsibility. We should ingrain SDGs as an integral part of our daily work as personal efforts contribute to the attainment of SDGs. The Government is cognisant of the role that local authorities and other stakeholders are playing in addressing challenges being faced by the general citizenry thereby fostering community development which is key in sustainable development. Partnerships with the private sector, civil society organisations and major stakeholders can be strengthened and leveraged by local authorities to ensure effective service delivery for the benefit of local communities.

It is through the establishment of partnerships among all players that we can achieve the SDGs. The attainment of SDGs will not be a reality if requisite financial support is not channelled towards this cause. We, therefore, call upon the local authorities to continuously forge partnerships with various stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of the SDGs. The private sector participation is critical to strengthening our economy and creating employment opportunities for the youth and marginalised women thereby addressing the inequality gap.

Ladies and gentlemen, before I conclude, allow me to acknowledge the continued support rendered by UNDESA with the support of the Italian Government and the UN country team towards SDGs implementation and in particular, this important capacity building workshop. This is a simple reflection of the importance of collaboration in programme implementation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as I conclude, I hope you took this workshop seriously, shared ideas openly and exchanged ideas that will enable you as local authorities to accelerate and collaborate in the implementation of SDGs. Our composition at this workshop, reflects the realities on the ground and the need to join hands in building our country. Let's continue working together to attain the global agenda.

With these remarks, I wish you fruitful deliberations in what remains of the workshop and bring new ideas and innovations that will take our country forward.

Allow me ladies and gentlemen to belatedly declare this Capacity Building Workshop on Voluntary Local Reviews officially opened.

Thank you.