**Opening Remarks**

**by Mr. Amson Sibanda**

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**“National Workshop on “Localizing SDGs and National Development Strategy Progress Through Voluntary Local Reviews in Mozambique”**

29 November – 1 December

Macaneta Beach Hotel, Mozambique

Mr. Lambo Domingos, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Economy and Finance,

H.E. Mr. Gianni Bardini, Ambassador of Italy to Mozambique,

Mr. Edo Stork, UNDP Resident Representative in Mozambique, represented by Mr. Cristino Pedraza,

Ms. Catherine Sozi, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Mozambique, represented by Mr. Santiago Rodriguez Goicoechea,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

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

I would like to thank the Government of Mozambique represented by our government counterpart, the Ministry of Finance and Economy, as well as the Resident Coordinator Office, the United Nations Development Programme, UN Habitat, 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 also 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 is supported by the Government of Italy was launched in June this year and ending in December 2024, is supporting the acceleration and scaling up of SDGs implementation and localization through the preparations of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) of SDG implementation in six countries in Africa and Latin America - 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 monitoring and reviewing of progress, gaps and challenges.

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 Summit further reiterated that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains the ideal framework to guide our efforts towards a world that is socially fairer, environmentally more sustainable, and economically more developed, inclusive and less unequal.

Despite this broadly shared recognition, we are in a race against time. According to the 2023 Report of the Secretary-General on “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue for People and Planet”, only about 12% of the SDG targets are on track; close to half, though showing progress, are moderately or severely off track and some 30% have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline.

Hence, there is urgent need for change and effective strategies at the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda. Unless countries and their development partners take urgent action now, we miss the opportunity to make the 2030 Agenda a reality for all. This collective failure will be felt heavily by developing countries, the world’s poorest people, women and children, persons with disabilities and other groups in vulnerable situations.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals relies on strengthening multilevel governance and effective policy integration at all levels of government. However, integration across policy domains remains challenging for local and regional authorities, particularly when it comes to articulating policies that recognize trade-offs and interactions between different SDGs.

To help address some of these challenges, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) have recently emerged as an effective tool to localize the Sustainable Development Goals. VLRs represent an innovation by and for the local and regional governments to advance progress on their local and regional priorities in a participatory, inclusive and transparent manner. The VLR process can accelerate the localization of the SDGs by promoting data innovation and tailored measurement frameworks at the subnational level. They also foster multi-stakeholder engagement and awareness, commitment and partnerships for the global goals. In the end, VLRs strengthen transparency and accountability, contributing towards rebuilding the social contract.

Here in Mozambique, there is already strong commitment from the government to support local action. In the face of persistent climate change induced disasters that include impacts of cyclones, floods and droughts, the LoCAL methodology is strengthening the capacity of local governments to improve the delivery of climate-resilient basic services to communities and to enhance decision-making processes based on local knowledge, using Performance Based Climate Resilience Grants. Further, the Mozambique National Association of Municipalities (ANAMM), working under the National Reference Group is supporting SDG localization efforts in municipalities.

In that regard, this workshop builds on the work that UNDP is leading under its “SDG Localization Project” which seeks to engage the highest level of Governance structures on the implementation of the SDGs at the local level, thus strengthening their inclusion in the planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting processes at the local level; to sensitize the public about the importance of the SDGs and their application in public policies and their relationship with the planning processes carried out in the different provincial, district and municipal institutions; and, knowhow initiatives and projects that aim to include the most vulnerable groups as beneficiaries of development programs to ensure community participation and leaving no one behind.

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, the private sector, civil society organizations, academia, researchers, donors, youth and persons with disabilities to engage in open and forward-looking dialogue about how to localize the SDGs and the National Development Strategy.

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 quality and affordable public goods and services such as clean water and sanitation, quality education, health care and decent jobs.

In that regard, the provinces, districts and municipalities 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 Mozambique, government authorities at the provincial, municipal and district levels also have the responsibility to translate the National Development Strategy and AU Agenda 2063 into programmes that improve people’s lives and livelihoods at the national, provincial, district, and municipal 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 and AU Agenda 2063 in Mozambique.

I thank you for your attention!