

***OPENING SPEECH***

**National Capacity Building Workshop on Digitization and Entrepreneurship Skills among Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises for Accelerating Progress towards Sustainable Development Goals in Ethiopia**

**26 February 2024,**

Distinguished Guests and Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Ministry of Industry, and indeed on my own behalf, I have the honor and great pleasure to extend to you all a warm welcome for today’s event-National Capacity Building Workshop on Strengthening Entrepreneurship and Business Digitization among Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises for Accelerating Progress towards Sustainable Development Goals in Ethiopia.I would like to congratulate the development partners who have taken part in supporting SMEswhich will have immense significance and contribution to job creation and economic development.

Ethiopia's economy is primarily based on agriculture, accounting for 35% of GDP and supporting over 72% of the population. We know all too well that no country in history has managed to transform its economy without creating a strong manufacturing sector since growth in the manufacturing sector is fast and much higher than in other sectors & its contribution to poverty reduction, economic growth, job creation, and technological advancement. So, manufacturing is a proven tool for structural transformation.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Micro-, Small and medium manufacturing industries are the bases of large industries and have a significant role in industrialization. As long as appropriate policies, strategies, and incentives are formulated and provided for SMEs, the manufacturing sector will achieve sustainable growth and development.

Thus, micro-, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have a key role in economic growth and equitable development in developing countries. Their contribution to employment generation, poverty reduction, and wider distribution of wealth and opportunities represents a major window of opportunity for most developing countries. However, the potential role of MSMEs is often not realized because of a set of problems commonly related to size.

The Ministry of Industry is implementing programs to enhance MSME resilience and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in decent job creation. Currently we have over 26,000 small and medium manufacturing enterprises are involved in job creation and import substitution, but supply chain management, technological, finance, and marketing constraints are the bottlenecks for growth. Therefore, the government is collaborating with various institutions and development partners to create a conducive environment for MSMEs and expand regional industrialization throughout the country.

In general, the growth of manufacturing industries in Ethiopia presents a significant opportunity to accelerate economic growth and achieve its industrial development objectives.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Ministry of Industry prepared a new industrial policy that helps to create an enabling environment for the manufacturing sector and following this policy strategies are prepared and started to be implemented. In line with this, we are implementing a flagship national program called “**Ethiopia Tamirt**”. Since we started this movement we have been able to reestablish and open more than 390 enterprises that were closed due to various problems. We were able to bring the sector to high attention and focus area of the respective stakeholders and bring industrialization to be the prior agenda of the country.

These four (4) day capacity-building workshop is aimed at

* Build and strengthen business management skills among MSME entrepreneurs, especially women and youth-led enterprise
* Improve the capacities of MSME entrepreneurs to make them better competitors in local, regional, and global markets and value chains.
* Provide business advisory support, including enhancing e-commerce and digital marketing skills, that facilitate MSME digital transformation
* Sharing experiences with each other.

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to reassure your Excellences and distinguished participants, the Ministry of Industry is always committed to fostering and nurturing the development of micro, small and medium manufacturing industries.

I am confident that this training Workshop will tremendously help promote prosperous linkages between MSMEs, suppliers, large industries as well as customers and help move the mutual development process of forward and backward linkages.

Let me extend my appreciation first of all to UNDESA (United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs) for preparing and supporting this capacity-building workshop and to the participants for making time out of a busy schedule to come and join us in the workshop. Once again, I would like to thank all organizers of this workshop who have devoted time and resources during the preparation process.

With these remarks, I declare the training program is officially opened.

**I wish you a successful session.**

**I thank you!**