

Opening Remarks

International Workshop “Strengthening National Capacities for Enhancing the Resilience of Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and Accelerating Sustainable Development in Times of Multiple Crises”

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Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you today at the international workshop on “Strengthening National Capacities for Enhancing the Resilience of Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and Accelerating Sustainable Development in Times of Multiple Crises”.

First of all, I would like to start by thanking policymakers and MSME entrepreneurs coming from Cambodia, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Lao PDR, Kenya, Madagascar, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. Your presence today demonstrates the strong commitment to the critical issue of strengthening resilience among micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) for accelerating sustainable development, especially when the world is grappling with simultaneous challenges that have impacted MSMEs to run businesses efficiently. Secondly, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to researchers, private sector participants, and my fellow colleagues from

the United Nations for your attendance on this workshop, which will enrich insightful discussions to identify challenges and good practices on this critical topic of strengthening capacities to leverage full potentials of MSMEs in accelerating sustainable development. To all participants in the workshop, I encourage and expect your active engagement for sharing expertise over the next three days. I believe this workshop will help you elevate knowledge and deepen insights that will support the growth and resilience of MSMEs with applicable solutions in real-life contexts of your respective countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, MSMEs play crucial roles in facilitating transformative changes and accelerating progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In his message to the United Nations' Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Day that was held on 27 June 2024, the United Nations Secretary-General urged the world to commit and support MSMEs for “*accelerating progress towards SDGs and leaving no one behind*”. Investing in MSMEs and promoting MSME access to the digital economy has been prioritized as a strategic objective in the Global Digital Compact endorsed by Heads of States in the Summit of the Future convened in this September. Moreover, supporting MSMEs has also been included in Secretary-General's report on Our Common Agenda, as a critical means to build a fair and resilient global economy that works for all.

Nonetheless, MSMEs in developing countries, especially those owned by women and youth, have been hit the hardest by the negative socioeconomic impact stemmed from the global pandemic, rising inflations and interrupted supply chains. The Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 has informed that MSMEs in developing countries have not bounced back as rapidly as their counterparts in developed countries. Challenges facing MSMEs in developing countries are not only affecting job creation and exacerbating inequalities, but also jeopardizing the hard-won progress towards SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen, the reason why we are all here today, is because we are all committed to support MSMEs. Micro and small enterprises, when acting together collectively, constitute strong engines for accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals, especially goals relating to creating jobs, eradicating poverty and hunger, reducing inequalities and enhancing

shared prosperity. You are all witnesses to the power of MSMEs not only as job creators, but also as incubators for entrepreneurship and innovations. It is therefore important that the government departments, MSME associations, public and private sector partners and all stakeholder groups to join hands for actively supporting MSMEs worldwide. This support will not only strengthen MSME capacities, but also ensure MSMEs contributions to digital connectivity and job creation, as key transitions with catalytic effects across SDGs.

Despite their important roles, MSMEs are vulnerable to economic shocks and uncertainties. Even before the pandemic, MSMEs are often left with few avenues to access to affordable credit and market opportunities, such as those emerging from e-commerce and regional trade integration mechanisms. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing challenges and further threatened to overwhelm MSMEs' coping capacities. Compared to large and formalized enterprises, MSMEs are less able to formulate business plans in preparation for uncertainties. Likewise, they suffer from limited access to economic stimulus packages launched during times of crisis.

Ladies and gentlemen, the efforts to accelerate progress towards SDGs requires not only sustained policy support. It also calls for concrete and demand-driven measures that strengthen MSME capacities, especially in the era of digital economy. In this context, I believe this international workshop will provide valuable opportunities for strengthening capacities, enhancing business climate and identifying solutions to leverage the full potentials of MSMEs for accelerating sustainable development, through inclusive discussions among all stakeholder groups. At this moment, I would like to sincerely thank the funding support from the United Nations Development Account and the United Nations Peace and Development Fund, without which this international workshop will not be possible.

Although the workshop will only take place in three days, I believe the journey of our collaborations will go far, with sustained impacts on the MSME sector in your respective countries. I expect each one of you to share and apply the knowledge and skills you have learned in Addis Ababa when returning to your home countries and communities. You all constitute crucial building blocks for enhancing MSME resilience and elevating MSME contributions to accelerating

sustainable development, and reinforcing the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels.

I thank you for your attention and wish the workshop the best success.

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