

## **Opening Remarks**

### **National Workshop “Strengthening National Capacities for Enhancing the Resilience of Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and Accelerating Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe”**

Mr. Amson Sibanda, Chief, National Strategies and Capacity Building Branch, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Director of Ceremonies

Minister of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development,  
Hon. Senator Monica Mutsvangwa

Minister of Provincial Affairs and Devolution for Bulawayo Metropolitan Province,  
Hon. J, Ncube,

Chief Director, Mr. Francis Gondo,

Government officials here present,

National Consultant, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Ms. Sibongile Sibanda,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

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

I would like to start by thanking Hon. Minister Senator Mutsvangwa and Hon. Minister Ncube for your graceful presence at this workshop. It demonstrates the strong commitment of senior policymakers towards 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 multiple crises that have impacted MSMEs to run businesses efficiently. Secondly, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to government officials, MSME entrepreneurs and stakeholder groups for your active participation in this workshop. This is essential for having enriched insightful discussions that identified challenges and good practices on strengthening capacities to unlock full potentials of MSMEs in accelerating sustainable development. To all participants in the workshop, I appreciate your active engagement for sharing expertise throughout the workshop. I believe this workshop will elevate knowledge and deepen insights that will support the growth and resilience of MSMEs with applicable solutions in 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 become a strategic objective in the Global Digital Compact endorsed by Heads of States at the Summit of the Future. 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 due to 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 here today, is because we are all committed to support MSMEs. Micro and small enterprises, when acting collectively, constitute strong engines for accelerating Sustainable Development Goals. You are all witness and enablers to unlock the power of MSMEs not only as job creators, but also as incubators for entrepreneurship innovations. It is therefore important that the government departments, MSME associations, public and private sector partners 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 uncertainties. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, MSMEs are often left with few avenues to access affordable credit and market opportunities. 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. Likewise, they suffer from limited access to economic stimulus packages at the same time of facing mounting cashflow pressures.

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 times of multiple crises. In this context, I believe this workshop and the training guidebook it has validated will provide valuable opportunities for strengthening capacities, enhancing business climate and identifying solutions to leverage the full potentials of MSMEs for transformative changes and accelerating sustainable development. 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 workshop will not be possible.

Although the workshop takes place only in four days, I believe the journey of our collaborations will go far to sustain impact on the MSME sector in Zimbabwe. I am grateful for each one of you, who has actively shared your knowledge and expertise during the workshop. Likewise, I expect and will highly appreciate your continuous efforts to apply what you have learned here within your communities to elevate MSME resilience for accelerating sustainable development by creating incomes, jobs and inspiring innovations.

Ladies and gentlemen, my sincere congratulations to this workshop as a great success, and we look forward to continuing our successful collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprise Development for accelerating sustainable development and the National Development Strategy 1 (2021-2025).

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