

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HONOURABLE DR. FREDERICK M SHAVA, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE, AT THE 2023 ECOSOC OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT SEGMENT

Ambassador Albert R Chibindi, Vice President of ECOSOC responsible for the Operational Activities for Development Segment,

Ambassador Brian Wallace, Vice President of the General Assembly,

Ms. Amina Mohamed, UN Deputy Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to Ambassador Albert R Chimbindi, the Vice President of ECOSOC responsible for this Session of the Council, for inviting me to address the Development Segment. It is, indeed, my great pleasure to be back here in New York, and in this ECOSOC Chamber, a place I am very familiar with, having spent a few years here as the Permanent Representative of my country, including as the President of ECOSOC.

As you may recall, I was elected as the Seventy-Second President of the Economic and Social Council in July 2016 and my Presidency coincided with the beginning of the first term of our Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres in January 2017.

I wish to recall that, immediately after taking Office, Secretary-General Guterres announced his intention to introduce wide-ranging reforms across the board, ranging from UN management, the development system, and the UN's peace and security architecture, to the way the UN works and how it delivers on its mandate. By and large, those reforms have been welcomed and supported by Member States, and all other relevant stakeholders.

To this day, Secretary General Guterres has worked to ensure the blossoming of trust between and among nations, large and small, to build bridges, and to engage, relentlessly, in confidence building and mutual understanding.

I would like to take this opportunity to, once again, thank Secretary-General Guterres, and Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohamed, for their stewardship of this reform process thus far. We appreciate your efforts during what have been extraordinary times in history due to the several complex and interlinked crises.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations has been at the centre of our foreign policy since we became a member in 1980. The principles, purposes and values enshrined in the UN Charter are those we have always sought to promote and protect, in our participation in all the bodies of the august organization, including in the work of the Economic and Social Council, whose main focus is development.

Zimbabwe strongly believes that the UN has a key role in addressing the challenges of today, which include climate change; global poverty; defending human rights; eliminating the threat posed by nuclear weapons; providing peacekeeping forces in conflict zones; promoting gender equality; and responding to humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters, conflicts and other reasons.

The “polycrisis” we are facing today has demonstrated the immeasurable importance of the UN while, also, highlighting the need to make the organization more effective, efficient, representative and reflective of the current global realities.

Zimbabwe, therefore, supports the broad reform programme launched by the Secretary-General, in order to make the activities of the organization more efficient by improving coordination between UN agencies present on the ground, more transparent, and more responsive in the event of crises, and most importantly, fully aligned to the priorities of the partnering host countries.

Excellencies,

In a world in crisis, rescuing the SDGs has become more urgent and important than ever. At this midpoint to 2030, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is of great concern that only

12% of the SDGs are on track, while more than 50% of the targets are off track, and approximately 30% have either stagnated or regressed below the 2015 baseline. In that regard, the imperative to change course and rescue them must be our highest common priority.

Several UN and other reports have indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to a lost decade for development. It has led to the loss of around 7 million lives, destroyed livelihoods, and has pushed over 100 million people into abject poverty. It has set back human development, especially women's rights, by a full generation. This pandemic has been didactic by proving beyond all doubt, that we can only ignore global interdependence at our peril. Indeed, disasters do not respect national boundaries. The lesson was crystally clear – no one is safe until everyone is safe.

We have watched in admiration, as developed countries invested trillions of dollars in their own recovery, while we, from the Global South, were left to our own devices, to fend for ourselves. A global financial system that continues to favour developed countries and punishes those most in need, at a time we are faced with growing crises, has worsened an already bad situation. The much-vaunted solidarity, which is inherent in the principles of the UN Charter, and is at the core of multilateralism, is becoming very conspicuous by its absence.

What is now happening is a scenario in which many developing countries are addressing the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, the unequal recovery, and the other vulnerabilities that are being exacerbated by the effects of the climate crisis without much support. Since 2022, the situation has been compounded by the food, fuel, and financial markets crises, caused, in the main, by geo-political confrontations. It is during times like these that we, from the south, look to the United Nations for support and solidarity to weather the storm.

With the UN at the centre, we must collectively endeavor to connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security and women's empowerment. We must be guided by the belief that solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Operational Activities for Development Segment (OAS) presents an opportunity for us to review the progress and challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We from the African continent, a region that faces many interrelated challenges, ranging from catastrophic natural events such as the devastating Cyclone Freddy, to increased geopolitical tensions and unresolved conflicts, fully understand and appreciate the importance of a well-oiled UN Development System, and the differences it can bring to the lives and livelihoods of the majority of our people, our fauna and flora.

Disparities between and among countries are manifold and growth paths diverge in the new global environment. A number of African countries covered by the UN Economic Commission for Africa are unlikely to achieve a single SDG. Issues of gender equality, decent work and economic growth, and sustainable food production remain pertinent challenges in some parts of the African continent and beyond. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge and recognize the tremendous efforts being deployed by the African leaders, and the support of the partners, including the UN Development System, to finding durable solutions to the multidimensional challenges.

Excellencies,

We are now in the fifth year of the reinvigorated development system, and coincidentally, we will meet at the SDG Summit in September 2023, and as such, we have a great opportunity to showcase the outcomes and deliverables of the reformed development system, as well as share experiences and lessons learnt, as we formulate the best way forward at an increased scale and speed.

At national level, Zimbabwe and the UN enjoy excellent partnership, under the auspices of the 2022-2026 Zimbabwe United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (ZUNSDCF), which articulates the strategic engagement of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Zimbabwe, to support the country in achieving its national development plans and the SDGs, which were deliberately mainstreamed into our development blue print – the National Development Strategy I.

Anchored on Zimbabwe’s National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) 2021-2025, the ZUNSDCF has a development finance portfolio of US\$2.8 billion to be mobilised in support of the country’s development needs and the SDGs. It encapsulates the shared commitment and cardinal principle of leaving no one and no region behind, by delivering concrete results, through a Whole of Government approach, that ensures inclusive participation, and the reaching out to the people and the places that are furthest behind.

We are pleased to report that in 2022, the ZUNSDCF delivered US\$524 million in various projects and programmes, focusing on deliberate initiatives to target populations often left furthest behind, and these include children, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and rural farmers.

Zimbabwe experienced the benefits of a repositioned UN Country Team, which was at the forefront of supporting national response to the humanitarian disaster caused by Cyclone Idai in March 2019. At the peak of the devastation caused by Cyclone Idai in southern Africa, the UN and humanitarian partners ramped up the provision of emergency food, shelter, water and health care supplies to hundreds-of-thousands who had been affected across Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. I want to register our profound gratitude for that solidarity and support.

In March 2023, we convened the ZUNDSDCF Steering Committee to take stock and review progress made in 2022, in which together, we had prioritized social protection, resilience building, and provision of quality social services, gender equality, democratic and economic governance.

Distinguished Colleagues,

In 2022 our efforts were geared towards the attainment of the national priorities, and the Sustainable Development Goals in the following areas:

- i. Regarding Social Protection, the WFP and UNICEF complemented the work done by the Government in providing social protection services. To complement Government efforts, UNICEF and WFP reached a total of 1,827,697 people with general social protection services (Cash, or in-kind support). Through the combined contribution of all UN agencies, over 4.6 million people received social protection services. In addition to that, about 250,000 people benefitted from rehabilitated community infrastructure interventions including (construction of 5 community roads, rehabilitation of 7 irrigation schemes, 64 Community gardens and construction of 446 community water systems (piped water schemes, boreholes, springs and deep

wells). The infrastructure was constructed by FAO and UNOPS in collaboration with the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Resettlement through the Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Programme.

- ii. The Government worked together with UNICEF, UNESCO and ILO to improve the enabling environment on education by supporting the development of the Education Policy and the School Financing Policy, Early Learning Policy as well as the National TVET Policy. The Education Sector Strategic Policy (ESSP 2021-2025) was also disseminated to all districts and was used to guide the implementation of the education in the districts. UNICEF continued to work with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in making the learning environment conducive by providing WASH systems in schools. The Government and UNICEF provided hygiene and sanitation kits (including menstrual hygiene products) to 1,346,390 children with the distribution being (672,072 girls and 674,318 boys).
- iii. On Justice Delivery, the Government and the UN (UNICEF and UN Women) worked together with the justice delivery institutions in enhancing the access and dispensing of justice at the sub-national levels. A total of 23,158 people accessed justice services through legal aid assistance, community mobile legal aid clinics, legal aid help desks, paralegal aid services and monitoring of children in detention. The virtual courts, child friendly courts and setting up of call centres for the Zimbabwe Republic Police, National Victim Friendly System have been rolled out to be devolved to the remote areas to improve access to justice for

vulnerable people, especially women, children, and persons with disabilities. This enhanced access to justice is also attributed to the Government and UN efforts in capacity building of justice staff and support to the decentralisation of diversion services. The UN is also complementing government efforts in promoting human rights and in the fight against gender-based violence and child marriage.

- iv. Zimbabwe's quest to achieve Universal Health Coverage remains on course. Renovations and the construction of health centres, clinics and district hospitals are being expedited.
- v. As part of our re-engagement agenda, Zimbabwe launched the Structured Dialogue Platform on Arrears Clearance and Debt resolution Strategy in December 2022, to engage with its creditors and development partners with the aim of unlocking new capital from international financial institutions. The Dialogue Process includes three pillars, namely Economic Growth and Stability, Governance and land Tenure, Compensation of Former Farm owners and the resolution of Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreements (BIPPAs). The UN co-chairs the last pillar and has been actively involved in the drafting of the matrix of this important pillar.
- vi. On the road to promoting gender equality, the Government has formulated Constitutional Amendment No. 2 of 2022 which provides for 30% Women's Quota in Local Government Elected Councillors per Council. In addition, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission, in partnership with UN Women, strengthened the capacities of 80 aspiring women political candidates to run for

elections in 2023 in four additional electoral districts under the women's Training and Mentorship Programme. Measures are in place to ensure violence free elections so as to encourage women's participation during the upcoming elections.

Distinguished Delegates,

We are strongly convinced that our partnership, guided by this new generation Cooperation Framework, will assist us to achieve our development plans as provided for in our National Development Strategy One.

At this point, let me underline the critical role of Resident Coordinators and stress that they should continue to support countries by focusing on policy transformations, partnerships, and coalition building to accelerate the momentum for implementing the SDGs and achieving tangible, transformative results. It is critical for Resident Coordinators to prioritize economic development, focusing on the overarching goal of the Agenda 2030, to alleviate poverty.

We are pleased to note from the Report to be presented by Secretary-General Guterres to this Segment that, the investments made in the repositioning of the UN development system are delivering results, with country team programming and policy support increasingly well regarded by host governments, including my own. We continue to urge for stronger alignment to national needs and nationally determined priorities, and look forward to benefiting from policy advice, including on climate action, as we work towards the Climate Ambition Summit in September and COP28 in November 2023.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As is the case in many developing countries, financing the SDGs remains one of the major challenges we are currently facing. With the added burden of illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed on some of us by some Western countries, we have, thus far, largely financed the SDGs from resources mobilized domestically. We continue to leverage on the convening power of the UN, to try and bring on board other different stakeholders, including the private sector, and banks, in the hope of finding solutions suitable for Zimbabwe. We applaud the loud calls by the Secretary General of the UN, the African Union, the SADC, the COMESA, the NAM, the G77 and China, and several other countries, for the sanctions to be removed immediately and unconditionally, to allow Zimbabwe, and other countries in the same predicament, the opportunities to work towards achieving the SDGs.

Zimbabwe welcomes the initiative by Secretary-General Guterres, through the SDG Stimulus of at least US\$500 billion per year for sustainable development. We have noted from the Report to be presented by Secretary-General Guterres that the promise to shift “from billions to trillions”, is proving difficult to deliver. The means of implementation, particularly finance, are the elephant in the room and we have an obligation to honestly interrogate the matter.

We call on the UN development system to exert all efforts, to support developing countries to leverage robust partnerships with development partners, including international financial institutions and the private sector, to achieve the scale and pace of progress required to deliver and meet the 2030 Agenda.

At a time calls for the reform of the global financial architecture have been growing, we call on international financial institutions and multilateral development banks to increase the provision of immediate liquidity to the countries' most in need, and expand fiscal space by allocating more financing in the form of grants and concessional loans.

Excellencies,

It is comforting to hear that Member States and UN entities have made progress in achieving the Funding Compact. This is, however, not sufficient for the fundamental changes that are required. We need full delivery on the Funding Compact commitments and all the other commitments for that matter. In order to achieve this, we call on all partners to align their funding so that we can provide integrated support to advance the SDGs.

It is critical that we remain true to the commitment to ensure that the US\$281 million a year budget for the Resident Coordinator system is fully funded. It is of great concern that the funding gap has continued on an upward trend, with a gap of US\$85 million in 2022.

In conclusion, Zimbabwe reiterates the urgency required to get the SDGs back on track, and pave the way for a better future. 2023 is a make-or-break year and a time for transformation. The OAS, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), and the SDG Summit are opportunities that should be fully seized upon to put the SDG train back on the rails.

The United Nations should remain an indispensable anchor of the multilateral system, where nations work together to face such unprecedented challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, development, conflict, migration, and humanitarian crises. Solidarity should remain the hallmark of the multilateral system, with the UN at its core.

I thank you for your kind attention!