

Zimbabwe Voluntary National Review (VNR) of SDGs for the High Level Political Forum

Summary of Key Messages

Zimbabwe has committed itself fully to Agenda 2030. Sustainable development is a core constitutional imperative and an overall strategic objective for the country. Zimbabwe's Constitution guarantees political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights for all citizens. These rights are clearly articulated and provided for in the Bill of Rights, and are justiciable. Moreover, Chapter 12 initiatives on oversight bodies, including the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Anti-corruption Commission, Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Gender Commission and the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights, have created a strong foundation for building an inclusive and peaceful society for sustainable development.

The SDGs are being implemented in the context of economic recovery following the El Nino-induced drought of 2015/16 which left over 4 million people food insecure, 51 percent of whom are women. Price instability, especially during the lean season, compromises the ability of households to obtain an adequate year-round supply of food through markets. The GDP growth rate declined from 1.1 percent in 2015 to an estimated 0.6 percent in 2016. However, it is projected to increase to 3.8 percent in 2017. This growth will be driven by anticipated improvement in the agriculture, manufacturing, mining, construction and financial sectors. Some of the key initiatives supporting the economy include:

- The ***special programme on maize production for import substitution (command agriculture)*** aiming to ensure the country produces adequate grain to feed itself by giving identified farmers inputs, irrigation and mechanised equipment.
- ***Strategic protectionist policy*** through the promulgation of Statutory Instrument 64 of 2016 to support local industry. This intervention has resulted in capacity utilisation in local industry increasing significantly, from 34.3 percent in 2015 to 47.4 percent in 2016.
- ***Ease of doing business reforms*** being spearheaded by the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC). The reforms focus on the ten global indices of doing business, as follows: Starting a Business; Protecting Minority Investors; Enforcing Contracts; Resolving Insolvency; Getting Credit; Paying Taxes; Trading Across Borders; Construction Permits; Registering Property; and Getting Electricity.
- The ***Special Economic Zones Act*** promulgated by Government in October 2016 to promote foreign direct investment inflows. Government has already designated three sites as special economic zones, namely Sunway City, Bulawayo Industrial Area and Victoria Falls.

Reflecting its commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Zimbabwe volunteered to undertake a national review of SDGs in 2017, along with 44 countries, including seven African countries. The voluntary national reviews (VNRs) seek to

facilitate sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges, opportunities and lessons learnt, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The process of VNR in Zimbabwe involved extensive consultation with government ministries, development agencies, the private sector, unions and civil society organisations. The primary focus of this report is on SDGs 1 and 2, and the enabling goals (3, 5, 9, 14 and 17).

Institutional arrangements

Government has put in place a clear institutional framework to guide the implementation of the SDGs in Zimbabwe consisting of:

- A Steering Committee to provide overall guidance and strategic leadership to the process. The Steering Committee is chaired by the Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet and the membership comprises all line ministry Permanent Secretaries and the heads of the UN agencies.
- A Technical Committee to spearhead the technical processes as well as providing technical back-stopping. The Technical Committee is chaired by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Macroeconomic Planning and Investment Promotion. Membership includes SDG focal persons from line ministries and representatives from UN agencies, development partners, the private sector, civil society and the Office of the President and Cabinet.
- Thematic clusters for mainstreaming and localising the SDGs.
- A monitoring and evaluation policy including prioritised SDGs targets and indicators.
- Coordination mechanism led by the Ministry of Macroeconomic Planning and Investment Promotion under the guidance and supervision of OPC, for SDG implementation.

Key Successes

SDG 1: Government has prioritised ending poverty and this is informed by and reflected in the country's development policies. Some of the initiatives that Government has taken to address poverty include:

- Launch of an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) in September 2016 as part of Government's international re-engagement efforts, and to eradicate poverty and ensure inclusive growth.
- The December 2016 launch of the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) which seeks to strengthen mechanisms for reducing poverty and vulnerability by improving the coverage and effectiveness of the various social protection programmes in place.

The trends on key indicators show that:

- Zimbabwe's multidimensional poverty index (MPI) declined marginally from 0.172 in 2011 to 0.127 in 2014.
- The percentage of people who are MPI poor declined significantly from 39.1 percent in 2011 to 29.7 percent in 2014.

- Of the 6.3 million children in Zimbabwe, 78 percent (4.8million) live in consumption poverty and 26 percent (1.6 million) live in extreme/food poverty.

While, the El Nino-induced drought and subsequent floods might have aggravated the poverty situation, a good harvest in the last season may have helped mitigate some of these adverse effects.

SDG 2: Zimbabwe has a strong policy environment for achieving food security and improved nutrition, and has prioritised ending hunger within its overall development agenda. The government with support from the UN recently introduced the zero-hunger strategy. Interventions in the agricultural sector have been aligned to the principles of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). Developments on key indicators include:

- Reducing the portion of people who are extremely poor to 16 percent.
- A sharp increase in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) score, due to erratic rainfall and drought, from 16.5 in 2014 to 30.8 in 2015 but a subsequent decline to 28.8 in 2016.
- An increase in the total area under maize production by 52 percent, from 1,161,997 hectares in 2015/16 to 1,770,389 in 2016/017.
- Expected agricultural sector growth by 12 percent this year.
- Projections that the country could produce over 2.8 million tonnes of cereals and other food crops, against a national food requirement of 1.8 million tonnes.
- A decline in prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years to 27 percent in 2015, from 32 percent in 2010/11).

SDG 3: Zimbabwe has made positive efforts to create an enabling policy environment to improve public health. Some of these initiatives include:

- Provision for the right to health under Section 76 of the Constitution. Government developed the National Health Strategy for Zimbabwe 2016-2020 which seeks to achieve 'Equity and Quality in Health: Leaving no one behind.' The Strategy is anchored by four priority areas, namely: communicable diseases; non-communicable diseases (NCDs); reproductive, maternal, new-born, child and adolescents; and public health surveillance and disaster preparedness and response.
- Accession to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2015 which has enforced greater compliance with tobacco advertising laws.
- A robust HIV response strategy. Zimbabwe has also pioneered innovative approaches, including mobilisation of domestic resources through the AIDS levy to ensure sustainability. This will be topped up by donor support to the health sector through the Health Development Fund and the Global Fund which secured over \$400 million for HIV related interventions. The Ministry of Health has developed an HIV Prevention Revitalisation Roadmap to guide implementation of high impact HIV prevention interventions, particularly targeting hotspots and key populations.
- The introduction by Government in January 2017 Government of a 5 percent levy on all mobile phone airtime and mobile broadband which is going towards a Health Fund.

Of concern is the unavailability of current comprehensive data on the burden of NCDs and their risk factors due to failure by the country to conduct the recommended WHO NCD STEPWISE survey. This has had a negative impact on meaningful NCD programming.

Zimbabwe has made significant progress on the health front including:

- A drop in HIV prevalence to 14 percent in 2016 (Female at 16.6 percent; Male at 11.2 percent) from 18 percent in 2005/06.
- A decline in the under-5 mortality rate, from 84 per 1,000 live births in 2010/11 to 69 per 1,000 live births in 2015. The infant mortality dropped from 57 per 1000 live births in 2010/11 to 50 per 1,000 live births in 2015.
- Coverage for all basic vaccinations among children aged 12 to 23 months in Zimbabwe was 76 percent in 2015, up from 65 percent in 2010/11.
- A decline in the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) estimated at 651 deaths per 100,000 live births during the seven-year period before the 2015 survey, representing a decline from 960 deaths per 100,000 live births during the seven-year period preceding the 2010/11 survey.

SDG 5: Government is committed to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment and the Constitution provides a robust legal framework for the promotion of SGD 5. Several policies and institutions have been put in place to actualise these provisions, for instance:

- The National Gender Policy (NGP), the goal of which is 'to eradicate gender discrimination and inequalities in all spheres of life and development'.
- The Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) which seeks to ensure gender equality as provided for in the Constitution.
- Zimbabwe is one of the few countries that has come up with a special electoral quota system to increase women's representation in Parliament to at least 30 percent.
- The Constitutional Court in 2016 passed a judgement outlawing marriage of persons below the age of 18 years. This is a landmark ruling that will advance child rights in Zimbabwe by helping to end the harmful and prevalent practice of marrying children, especially girls. The ruling not only upholds the Constitution but also reaffirms Zimbabwe's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

The following key milestones have been achieved.

- The country has achieved near gender parity in key indicators of educational attainment.
- The representation of women in the Senate increased from 23.2 percent in 2012 to 47.5 percent in 2017 and there was an increase from 16 percent in 2012 to 32.6 percent in 2017 in the National Assembly.

SDG 9: Well-developed infrastructure is crucial for a well-functioning society and competitive industrial sector. Building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and fostering innovation are firmly placed at the centre of the Government's programme. Major infrastructure projects have been launched in the areas of utilities, transportation and connectivity, and industrial zones. Some of the key initiatives include:

- Rehabilitation of water and sewerage infrastructure in several urban centres. Among them are the Urgent Water Supply and Sanitation Rehabilitation Project Phase 1 in Mutare, Masvingo, Kwekwe, Chegutu, Harare, and Chitungwiza.
- Expansion of the Kariba South power station, the Emergency Power Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project to rehabilitate power transmission and distribution systems, as well as the rehabilitation of the Ash plant at Hwange thermal power station.
- Upgrading of Victoria Falls Airport to cater for wide body aircraft with an expanded runway.

Challenges

Despite the above achievements, the country is facing several challenges in terms of implementing the SDGs. These include:

- Limited fiscal space, with the bulk of fiscal revenues going towards funding recurrent expenditures. This is exacerbated by high indebtedness.
- The increase in the urban population coupled with rising informal economy activities which has led to several challenges including: rising incidence of urban poverty; inadequate housing; inadequate provision of services; and environmental degradation and pollution.
- The negative impact of relatively low per capita incomes on secondary school enrolment and access to healthcare.
- Gaps in terms of policy implementation and coherence.
- Insufficient timely and disaggregated data for most indicators, making it difficult to track and monitor progress.

Lessons learnt

- **Prioritisation is key:** Zimbabwe has committed itself to implementing all the SDGs with an emphasis on SDGs 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13 and 17. The prioritisation exercise was guided by the country's vision, the need to focus on enabling Goals, resource availability and our unfinished business from the MDGs.
- **Integration and alignment are essential for effective implementation:** The SDGs have already been mainstreamed and integrated into the national development plan, and SDG implementation and national priorities will continue to be aligned. Plans are in place to strengthen the capacities of sub-national authorities to align strategies and policies at that level to achieve the SDGs.
- **Parliament plays a vital role in domestication and ownership:** Extensive consultations with parliamentarians led to the establishment of a Parliamentary Thematic Committee on SDGs represented by all Chairs of portfolio committees.

Such processes will enable actions towards enabling legislation, appropriation, oversight and monitoring of the SDGs.

- **Targeted specific interventions can pay hefty dividends:** The recent initiative on 'Command Agriculture' including targeted input subsidy provision, has strengthened resistance to economic and climate-induced shocks.
- **Strong partnerships are essential to progress on the SDGs:** In view of the comprehensive nature of the SDGs, strong partnerships play a vital role in SDG implementation. The donor community provided support to the tune of \$800 million in 2016 somewhat easing the tight fiscal situation in the country.

Opportunities

- Innovative mobilisation of domestic resources will be critical to building financial capacity and creating fiscal space for sustainable development. There is scope for fiscal expansion in plugging leakages through illicit financial outflows to the tune of US\$1.8 billion annually.
- The huge informal economy also presents significant opportunities for Government to increase the fiscal space if appropriate policies are put in place to harness its full potential.
- Leveraging the youth demographic dividend through skills development among other approaches.
- Harnessing ICTs for sustainable development by building on current initiatives such as the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

Next Steps

- Strengthening the National Budget policy to achieve the SDGs.
- Dialogue and follow-up action on financing for development in Zimbabwe.
- Aligning sub-national strategies and policies to achieve the SDGs.
- Capacity building support targeting civil society to enhance and broaden participation in the implementation of the SDGs.
- Enhance the capacity of the statistical agency to address the data demands of the 2030 Agenda effectively.
- Expand climate smart agriculture, and improve agricultural extension services and rural infrastructure.