



Government of Zimbabwe

**Remarks by the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social
Welfare**

Hon. Prof. P. Mavima

**at the 7th Session of the
Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD)**

2021

The President of the Republic of Congo , His Excellency , Denis Sassou Nguesso;

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo, Hon. Clément Mouamba ;

President of the United Nations ECOSOC , Ambassador Munir Akram;

UN Deputy Secretary General , Ms. Amina. J. Mohammed;

The Minister of Tourism and Environment of the Republic of Congo , Hon. Mrs. Alerte Soudan-Nonault ;

African Union Commissioner , Ambassador Albert Muchanga~~Anan Abu Zeid~~;

Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ECA, Dr Vera Songwe;

Hon. Ministers and Senior Government Officials from AU members states who have joined us virtually;

Representatives of UN Agencies, AU secretariat and Development Partners;

Representatives of Civil Society Organisations, Private Sector, Major Groups and other stakeholders

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen!

Let me start by thanking the President of the Republic of Congo, His Excellency , President Denis Sassou Nguesso , for accepting to host the Continent in the deliberations of the 7th African Regional Forum in a year in which the Covid 19 pandemic dictated a new way of engaging , taking away the joy and pleasure of expressing our brotherhood and sisterhood in the true African way. It is in that regard, that I wish to express our gratitude for extending a personal invitation to Zimbabwe as the outgoing Chair to be with the people of Congo during the 7th African Regional Forum . We feel greatly honoured and I wish on behalf of Zimbabwe to reaffirm continued solidarity with the Republic of Congo as you assume the important responsibility of leading the Sustainable Development path for Africa.

It gives me pleasure to be addressing you as the outgoing Chair of the 6th Bureau of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development at this 7th Session of the Regional Forum. Going forward we are fully confident of the capacity and capabilities of the ~~Indeed the 6th Bureau is paving way for the equally capable~~ 7th Bureau which will be chaired by the Republic of Congo.

At the outset, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the member states for the confidence they reposed in us during Zimbabwe's tenure as Chair and for their support and cooperation

without which the Bureau would not have been able to successfully carry out its mission.

Allow me also to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to the members of the 6th Bureau who exhibited unmatched commitment even in the face of a myriad of challenges, major among them being the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. The members of the 6th Bureau include, Zimbabwe as the Chair; First Vice Chair, Democratic Republic of Congo; Second Vice Chair, Uganda; Third Vice Chair; Liberia and Rapporteur, Morocco. I also extend my gratitude to the Secretariat of the 6th Bureau for a job well done during our tenure.

Your Excellences
Ladies and Gentlemen

When we took over from the fifth Bureau in February 2020 in Victoria Falls , the clarion call was clear: to *accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the decade of action in order deliver a transformed and prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.*

There was general consensus that Africa had made substantial, but insufficient, progress in implementing Sustainable Development Goals. Africa had to redouble its efforts in all indicators especially

ending extreme poverty (goal 1), access to affordable health care (3) and decent work and economic growth (goal 8).

Urgent action to combat climate change was identified as one of the key priority areas for action as a result of the recurrence of natural disasters which had hard hit the continent. Cyclones Idai and Kenneth for example which affected part of southern Africa had led to the contraction of economies and extensive damage to infrastructure of the affected countries in the region.

The year 2020 proved to be acutely challenging and the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage economies worldwide. Sadly, the pandemic claimed lives of significant numbers of our people. The pandemic triggered a public health and economic crisis and continues to exacerbate socioeconomic challenges within our countries. It has uncovered deeply entrenched anomalies and inequalities within our societies and has led to the slowdown in economic activities and loss of jobs in many countries. The pandemic caused the derailment of the progress which had been made in the implementation of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063.

Inspite of the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is need for resilience in African countries in order to build forward better. The challenges of funding of the

implementation of two agendas have been worsened by the pandemic hence the need for intensified efforts in mobilising funding for the worst affected countries.

Your Excellences
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am gratified to note that the 7th Session of the Regional Forum is being held under the theme "*Building forward better: Towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.*" This theme acknowledges the importance of reconstructing our socioeconomic systems by leveraging opportunities presented by green and low carbon development trajectories with a view to building a resilient, inclusive and sustainable Africa.

In combating the COVID-19 pandemic, member countries are encouraged to strike a balance in their interventions and not neglect the other underlying challenges such as climate change and the million dollar question of what to prioritise between saving the lives of our people and responding to the compelling arguments to open up economies severely affected by Covid 19 containment measures .

The rollout of vaccines is a welcome development but the recovery of the countries from the effects of the pandemic will likely take

longer. I join the growing calls for Africa to use its capital and human resources to develop its own medical solutions including the production of vaccines given the vaccine nationalism that we are witnessing. It is in that regard that I call for the equitable distribution of vaccines irrespective of economic and political considerations of a country .

Ladies and Gentlemen, the implementation and achievement of the SDGs Global Agenda remains everyone's responsibility hence the mantra "leave no-one behind." Building forward better will require the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and concerted efforts to strengthen the capacity of Africa to respond to jolts such as COVID-19 and climate change. There is need to strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement and to create synergies towards achieving the two mutually reinforcing agendas , Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030.

It is against this backdrop that I implore the incoming Bureau to leverage on technology, innovation and global partnerships in building forward better with the support of all member states.

Your Excellences
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take the opportunity to share my thoughts with the incoming Chair and Bureauu as they steer the ship in the new normal dictated by the Covid 19 pandemic . Colleague Minister, and incoming Chair, and your new Bureau , I consider the following important issues as you work out the plan to implement the outcomes of the 7th African Regional Forum ;

1. The biggest accelerator towards pushing Africa to the finishing line starts with changing the mindset of our people for the need to develop local solutions. It is imperative to contextualize the Agenda to local social realities for our people to own and drive the Agenda.
2. The need for resource optimization makes it imperative for us to aggressively explore resource mobilization strategies anchored within the endowments of the Continent given the ever increasing financing gap for the SDGs in Africa.
3. A new inclusive development trajectory is required to lift the lives of the majority of our people. It is beyond doubt that economic indexes alone are not enough to transform lives. There is no substitute to inclusive growth for our Continent.
4. Africa must take its future in its own hands . Achieving the 2030 and 2063 Agenda should primarily be the responsibility of Africa and its Citizens.

5. The outcomes of the Forum on Science , Technology and Innovation should be utilized to enable us to deal with the technology divide which greatly impacts on our capacity for inclusive and rapid sustainable development.

As I conclude, I would like to implore all of us attending this year's Forum to play our part in coming up with a comprehensive plan of action to be followed by Africa towards the achievement of both agendas. Knowing that our ability to build forward better depends to a greater extent on the effective implementation and monitoring of the two Agendas. By so doing we will provide strategic guidance that will steer our continent towards better life for all.

To the incoming Bureau, kindly accept my sincere wishes for success, as you take up this critical task of leading the implementation of the two Agendas in Africa. May this 7th Session produce robust ideas to take the implementation and coordination of Agendas 2030 and Agenda 2063 in our beloved continent forward.

God Bless Africa !

Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you all and all the best in 2021.