



Republic of Zimbabwe

WELCOME REMARKS

BY

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

HON. N. M. NDLOVU

AT THE

**UNCTAD E-TRADE READINESS ASSESSMENT OF
ZIMBABWE – NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP
AT THE HOLIDAY INN HOTEL, HARARE**

20 MARCH 2024

The Director of Ceremonies;

The Minister of Information Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services, Hon. T. Mavetera;

Chief Secretary to the Office of the President and Cabinet, Dr. Dr. M. Rushwaya;

The Permanent Secretary for Industry and Commerce, Dr. T. U. Wushe;

The Permanent Secretary for Information Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services, Dr. B. Chirume;

Other Senior Government Officials here present;

The United Nations Resident Representative in Zimbabwe, Dr. Ayodele Odusola;

South Korea's Ambassador to Zimbabwe, His Excellency Ambassador PARK Jae Kyung;

Representatives of the UNCTAD E-Commerce and Digital Economy Programme, Alesandro Vitale and Martine Julsaint Kidane;

Senior Government Officials;

Captains of Industry and Commerce here present;

Members of the Fourth Estate, the Media Fraternity;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed my singular honour to welcome you all to this very important and historic occasion, of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD's) e-Trade Readiness Assessment National Stakeholder Consultative Workshop for Zimbabwe.

This is a culmination of our engagement with UNCTAD in December 2023, when the Ministry of Industry and Commerce participated in the UNCTAD e-Week in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2023. It was during this international event that we were engaged and accepted UNCTAD's offer to assist Zimbabwe in undertaking an e-Trade Readiness Assessment, aimed at unpacking the country's e-commerce eco-system, taking into account the prescribed seven (7) pillars, namely e-Commerce Assessment; ICT Infrastructure and Services; Payment Solutions; Trade Facilitation and Logistics; Legal and Regulatory Frameworks; e-Commerce Skills Development; and Access to Finance.

Distinguished Participants,

Allow me to, first and foremost, take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of Zimbabwe, to express our gratitude to UNCTAD for roping us onto their E-Commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme. This robust thrust is specifically

aimed at supporting developing countries to harness e-commerce and the digital economy, for sustainable development, through strengthening their e-commerce enabling environment by way of demand-driven e-Commerce Strategies and Action Plans. Boosting digital readiness in support of robust digital economies and trade has become an imperative for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for all global players, in particular the developing countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is in light of this, that Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe and indeed my Ministry is very grateful to the UNCTAD e-Commerce and the Digital Economy Programme drivers, for championing thus initiative. The broad aim is an endeavour to help us interrogate the state of play in our e-commerce eco-system, to build our capacity for the requisite digital transformation in a structured manner that allows us to optimize economic benefits. In this regard, we feel honoured that the Head of the UNCTAD e-Commerce and Digital Economy Programme has been able to grace this occasion. I would also like to specifically acknowledge the hard work by the two UNCTAD drivers of this Programme, namely Mr. Alessandro Vitale and Ms. Martine Julsaint Kidane, as well as their Consultant, Dr. Gibson Chigumira, who continue to tirelessly work together with my Ministry officials.

By the same token, I would also like to acknowledge the various development partners that have partnered with UNCTAD, through the provision of the requisite resources that have enabled this e-Commerce and Digital Economy Programme to see the light of day. In this regard, I would like to specifically single out the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Ambassador PARK Jae Kyung, who is here with us today. Your Excellency, we are indeed grateful for the generous support extended by your government in support of this program and look forward to continued bilateral and economic cooperations between our two sister nations.

Distinguished Participants;

We are very pleased to note that the UNCTAD e-Commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme indeed resonates with the aspiration of our National Development Strategy (NDS) 1. The Digital Economy has been aptly identified as one of the priority areas of development, ICTs being a key enabler of industrial and economic development. Hence the entrenchment of ICT across all national development strategies critical for the attainment of the country's Vision 2030, for a prosperous and empowered upper-middle income society by 2030.

My Ministry prioritises the protection of consumer rights in the country including in the digital domain, in order to foster a trustworthy online e-commerce environment. The need for greater investment in digital technologies and skills development can never be overemphasised, in view of the fact that connectivity is the life-blood of both business transactions and human interactions. There is a beckoning need to enrich our digital space by retooling major facets of our economy in order to bring about the requisite agility and resilience and to deliver greater efficiencies across all value chains.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Adoption and increased usage of ICTs presents massive opportunities for extending growth beyond the conventional growth sectors. We are therefore looking up to the unfolding e-Trade Readiness Assessment by UNCTAD, to demystify how the country can leverage on the opportunities for sustainable development through widespread usage of ICTs. On this note, I would like to underscore the need for the ongoing process not to inadvertently sideline the Micro Medium and Small Enterprises (MSMEs), who have since become major contributors to Gross Domestic Product growth not only in Zimbabwe or the Southern African Region, but throughout many parts of the world.

This E trade ready Programme is poised to positively impact on the MSMEs capacity to enhance productivity and be mainstreamed into national economic development programmes. There is need to nurture the MSMEs through this Programme, with a view to enhancing their business processes and therein improve their customer bases and use ICT's to facilitate their graduation into large businesses. It is our most fervent hope that the UNCTAD e-Commerce Readiness Assessment will come up with workable recommendations regarding policy interventions that can be implemented at both the technical and policy levels. There is need to address the existing digital data divides in order for e-commerce to support inclusive and sustainable development that leaves no one and no place behind!

With this few welcome remarks, I would like to once again thank you all for coming. We greatly value your contributions and look forward to a mutually beneficial cooperation with all the stakeholders here represented. By the same token, I would also like to once again express our gratitude to UNCATD and their development partners for extending this E-Commerce and Digital Economy Programme to the developing countries and for also roping Zimbabwe in.

I wish you all very fruitful deliberations, both here in Harare and in Bulawayo.

I THANK YOU! TATENDA! SIYABONGA
