



Republic of Zimbabwe

WELCOME REMARKS

BY

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

HON. N. M. NDHLOVU

**AT THE JOINT LAUNCH OF
THE ZIMBABWE E-TRADE READINESS ASSESSMENT
REPORT,
THE NATIONAL PRODUCTIVE CAPACITIES GAP
ASSESSMENT (NPCGA)
AND THE HOLISTIC PRODUCTIVE CAPACITIES
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (HPCDP).**

RAINBOW TOWERS, HARARE

22 MAY 2025

The Director of Ceremonies;

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

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

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

Permanent Secretary for State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution for Harare Metropolitan Province, Mr. C. Chiringa;

Senior Government Officials here present;

Ambassador of Korea to Zimbabwe, H.E. Mr. PARK Jae Kyung;

UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Edward Kallon, represented by Mr Ayodele Odusola;

UNCTAD Secretary General, Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, who is participating virtually;

Representative of the UNCTAD E-Commerce and Digital Economy Programme, Mr. Alesandro Vitale and Ms. Martine Julsaint Kidane;

Director of the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes, Mr. Paul Akiwumi;

Captains of Industry and Commerce here present;

Members of the Fourth Estate;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am deeply honoured to extend a warm welcome to you all to this historic joint launch of the **Zimbabwe e-Trade Readiness Assessment Report, the National Productive Capacities Gap Assessment (NPCGA) and the Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programme (HPCDP)**. It is pleasing to note that these reports aim to assist the industrial and commercial sectors regain their position as the primary drivers of economic growth and development in our country. They particularly symbolise a significant step forward in our collective pursuit of digital transformation, industrialisation and economic growth. It goes without saying that the digital era, with e-commerce as one of its anchor pillars, is here to stay and we can only drag our feet in jumping on board, at our own peril. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce is therefore very delighted that we are gathered here today, to advance this agenda, for the benefit of our economy and citizenry.

The journey to where we are today started in December 2023, when the Ministry of Industry and Commerce participated in the UNCTAD e-Week in Geneva, Switzerland. It was during this international event that UNCTAD extended an offer to assist Zimbabwe in undertaking an e-Trade Readiness Assessment, aimed at unpacking the country's e-commerce eco-system. The Ministry readily took up the offer and the

UNCTAD Project Team has been working tirelessly with us from that time, to date.

The **Zimbabwe e-Trade Readiness Assessment Report** will serve as a roadmap, highlighting our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges and identifying areas where strategic interventions are needed across the seven critical pillars that are regarded as key to embracing digital transformation. These seven pillars include:

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.

This assessment will guide our National e-Commerce Strategy to harness the potential of digital trade, enhance competitiveness and bridge the digital divide. In today`s interconnected world, e-commerce is no longer an optional luxury, but a fundamental imperative for business to thrive, expand their reach, and create new sustainable opportunities.

We also have on the other hand, the **National Productive Capacities Gap Assessment (NPCGA) and the Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programme (HPCDP)**, which offer critical insights into our economy`s current productive capacity and identifies the gaps that need to be addressed to enhance efficiency, diversify our

industries, create high-value goods and services. Understanding these gaps is essential for formulating targeted policies that will boost our industrialisation agenda, create employment and improve the livelihoods of our citizens. Through the NPCGA Initiative, UNCTAD has come to the conclusion that the underlying cause for the developing countries' systemic and structural development challenges is their limited productive capacities.

Distinguished Guests;

I am pleased to note that this assertion totally resonates with the short-term transitional programme that the Ministry of Industry and Commerce is currently seized with, namely the Zimbabwe Industrial Reconstruction and Growth Plan (ZIRGP) 2024-2025, focussing on growth opportunities in the industrial and commercial sectors, aimed at reducing the import bill and facilitating local production. It also recognizes underlying policy issues that need to be addressed during the process leading to the National Development Strategy 2 and the Zimbabwe Industrial Development Plan (2026-2030).

The ZIRGP will also address immediate challenges in the manufacturing and commercial sectors, while laying the foundation for accelerated industrial development under the Zimbabwe National Industrial Development Policy 2, in order to achieve our Vision 2030 aspirations.

This work will therefore leverage on the results of the **National Productive Capacities Gap Assessment (NPCGA)** whose report we are also launching today. For us, the NPCGA could not have come at a more opportune moment and we are very grateful to UNCTAD for opening this space to buttress our endeavours to unlock the full potential of the Zimbabwean economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The e-Trade Readiness Assessment report before us today is testament to the collaborative efforts of policymakers and regulators, private sector, civil society, and development partners.

This is expected to lead to the formulation of an e-Commerce Strategy for Zimbabwe, to serve as the much-needed compass-guide for Zimbabwe to navigate the rich e-commerce and digital economy ecosystem for the good of both the economy, business sector and the citizenry of our country.

It is indeed pleasing to note that most of you have been involved in the preparatory stages of this national endeavour that the Ministry of Industry and Commerce is spearheading, with the support of our sister Ministry of Information, Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services, with a view to harnessing the full potential of e-commerce for Zimbabwe's economic growth. Your active participation is indeed very crucial in shaping Zimbabwe's e-commerce future.

Distinguished Participants;

We acknowledge the challenges highlighted, including the urban-rural digital divide, issues with last-mile connectivity and affordability, the need for a comprehensive national e-commerce strategy, and the importance of strengthening our legal and regulatory frameworks to foster trust and security in online transactions. Furthermore, enhancing digital skills, particularly among SMEs and women-led businesses, and improving access to finance for digital initiatives are also paramount. The e-Trade Readiness Assessment therefore offers us a strategic roadmap to build upon our strengths and address the identified weaknesses in a systematic and prioritized manner.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am pleased to inform this august gathering about the positive response we have just received from UNCTAD, on our request for technical assistance to develop a National e-Commerce Strategy that addresses the issues identified by the e-Trade Readiness Assessment carried out by UNCTAD, whose report we are launching today. UNCTAD has indeed agreed to collaborate with the Government of Zimbabwe in developing the National e-Commerce Strategy. Let me take the opportunity to express our gratitude to the UNCTAD Secretary General, Madam Rebeca Grynpsan, who is participating virtually. Let me also take the opportunity to reaffirm the Government of Zimbabwe's total commitment, which we shall soon confirm when we

sign the e-Trade Reform Tracker Licence Agreement, when all due legal diligence has been dispensed with.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Government of Zimbabwe is grateful to the UNCTAD e-Commerce and the Digital Economy Programme coordinators namely Mr. Alessandro Vitale and Ms. Martine Julsaint Kidane and Mr. Paul Akiwumi for their dedicated commitment to the collaborative programmes the Government of Zimbabwe is running with UNCTAD through the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. By the same token, Government is equally indebted to the Consultant, Dr. Gibson Chigumira, who provided the requisite on-the-ground support. Without his dedicated commitment, we would not be where we are today.

Let me also acknowledge the various development partners that have partnered with UNCTAD, through the provision of the essential resources that have made this e-Commerce and Digital Economy Programme and the National Productive Capacities Gap Assessment (NPCGA) and the Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programme (HPCDP) a reality. In this regard, the Government appreciates the generous funding from the Republic of Korea and core donors of UNCTAD's E-Commerce and Digital Economy programme, which has enabled the programme to see the light of day. We look forward to continued collaboration and mutual cooperation in this area.

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 (2021-2025), which has identified Information Communication Technology as one of the priority areas of development and a key enabler of industrial and economic development. In order to attain the country's Vision 2030, for a prosperous and empowered upper-middle-income society by 2030. ICT is now a cross-cutting issue in all national development strategies.

There is need for collaboration between Government, industry stakeholders and technology providers, to create a supportive ecosystem for AI development. The Ministry remains committed to further improve the ease of doing business environment, to promote thriving business enterprises through simplifying and automation of systems.

Today's launch is not just about presenting reports; it is about initiating a national dialogue and galvanising collective action. The findings of these assessments will inform our policy decisions, guide our investment strategies, and shape our engagement with the global economy. We call upon all stakeholders including Government Agencies, the private sector, academia, and civil society, to actively

participate in translating these findings into concrete actions that will drive Zimbabwe`s industrialisation and digital transformation.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

With these few welcome remarks, I would like to once again thank you all for coming. Let us continue working together to build a thriving digital economy and a robust industrial sector that will drive sustainable growth and achieve a middle-income society economy by 2030.

I Thank You!

Tatenda!

Siyabonga!