

Speech by Ms. Rose K. Ssebatindira

UNDP Eswatini Resident Representative

At the Launch of the Parliament Strategic Plan and Website

Esibayeni Lodge- Matsapha

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Programme Director,

His Excellency the Right Honourable Prime Minister,

Hon. Cabinet Ministers,

Honourable Members of Both Houses of Parliament,

Principal Secretary,

Senior Government officials,

UN Colleagues,

Esteemed Members of the Press,

Ladies, and gentlemen. SANIBONANI

Introduction

I am truly delighted and deeply honoured to join you today to witness the launch of the Strategic Plan and Website for Parliament.

Excellency, members of parliament are uniquely positioned to act as an interface between the people and state institutions; with a principal role to promote and adopt people-centred policies and legislation that ensures equity and fairness for all people. The challenge for many countries, has been on how to bridge the legislature with the national development plan that is supposed to enshrine the sustainable development goals.

The launch of the Parliamentary Strategy Plan is timely as it coincides with the ongoing development of the new National Development Plan 2022-2028. UNDP is privileged and honoured to support both processes, which presents a unique opportunity for alignment and capacity building. For this to happen, we must be deliberate in establishing linkages between these two strategic documents and ensure that the Parliament Strategic Plan is not implemented in isolation of the National Development Plan and the SDGs.

Excellency Prime Minister,

I am encouraged that the Parliament Strategic Plan that is about to be launched, if effectively implemented, will enhance the regulatory and fiscal environment needed to accelerate progress towards reaching the SDGs targets. The new Parliament website is another important forum to enhance communication and facilitate citizen participation in these processes.

Allow me to share three reflections that came to mind as I reviewed the Strategic Plan:

First, ensuring the integration of SDGs into strategic national development budgets is one of the most critical roles of parliament to make sustainable development a reality. How can we strengthen the parliamentary oversight role to ensure that the NDP and SDG financing respond to critical sectors (such as agriculture), that can propel productivity and catalytic transformation to improve livelihoods of the most vulnerable?

For instance, this year's budget allocation to agriculture, was only 6% of the overall budget, well below the 10% standard prescribed by the Maputo Protocol. **The Ministry of Employment and Social Security, budget allocation was only 1.5%**, despite growing increase in the

unemployment rate 33% (2021) and yet it has a critical mandate to create decent employment opportunities, particularly for young people.

Parliament must play a significant and informed role in bridging the divide between financing and planning to ensure that the SDGs are adequately and equitably financed through the national budget, similarly there is a need to scrutinize national budgets in more detail to ensure they effectively target society's most marginalised groups.

Secondly, The Strategic Plan maps out a clear roadmap on how to empower members of Parliament to exercise their role effectively, however, greater focus and investment is also needed to empower citizens to understand the role of their parliamentarians and how that contributes to their daily lives, in a structured manner. This will strengthen social contract.

Third; The institution of parliament in all countries records high turnover, as citizens exercise their rights to choose their representatives. This right of democracy must enhance the parliamentary role. **It is therefore imperative to ensure that the induction and capacity building of parliamentarians is institutionalized**

Your Excellency, as I conclude allow me to take a moment to commend the secretariat team under the leadership of the Clerk for working

tirelessly under very constrained conditions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that the strategic plan and the website are completed timely. I would also like to congratulate the Leadership of both the Houses of Parliament for their commitment and guidance towards the process. And, to all members who contributed to this final product, I want to say congratulations for such a great job.

UNDP greatly appreciates the partnership and the strong collaboration between our entities and as we launch this product, let us also commit to its full implementation.

As the global UN lead institution on governance, we have committed, under the corporate Strategic Plan 2022-2025 to support over 140 countries to “future proof” governance systems through anticipation, better management of risks, and local driven innovative solutions, including through digitization. By supporting the development of the Strategic Plan and website, we are contributing to the country’s efforts to attain SDG 16 which speaks to Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

I wish to assure you your Excellency of UNDP’s continued commitment in supporting the development agenda of the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Siyabonga

