



Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland
to the United Nations

Chairperson
Honorable Ministers
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Chairperson,

I am fully aware that this session is not meant to deliver speeches but present and share my country's thoughts and best practices in addressing poverty and challenges encountered thereof.

However, it would be remiss of me not to express my country's heartfelt appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme for organizing this meeting to celebrate the Organization's 50th Anniversary and also applaud and commend the work of the Organization in Swaziland in supporting the country's efforts towards poverty eradication and subsequently, sustainable development of the economy.

This is because over the years the UNDP has continued to be a close and important development partner of my country.

To this end, let me preface my short presentation by underscoring that Swaziland will always count on the support of UNDP as well as the entire development system of the United Nations in her efforts aimed at fighting the poverty scourge and other emerging global challenges.

Specific support by the UNDP

Chairperson,

The United Nations Development Programme has always been working hard to drive economic growth and development and subsequently improve the quality of life for everyone. Over the years, the Organization has made great strides in partnering with people at all levels of society in Swaziland.

It has also assisted the Government to ensure that development is initiated at all levels in order to enhance the livelihoods of the general populace.

Our approach to poverty reduction

Chairperson,

Swaziland has learned that development is a bottom-up, inclusive and participatory process, that is, a process that does not only aim at large enterprises or urban population but also help initiate and enhance development at all levels including the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as well as rural development. We understand that these are the true and genuine drivers of the economy to reduce poverty among the citizens of a country. Therefore, we have a strong conviction that these must be strongly supported and nurtured.

Government's support to small businesses

Chairperson,

The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland has therefore, continued to build capacity of the MSMEs by providing practical training on management of their businesses as well as provision of seed capital for business start-up initiatives, among others. Such an approach by Government has produced invaluable outcomes which we believe shall be sustainable.

To this end, as a result of a feed-back received from these enterprises, Government has continued to encourage them to consider value-addition and diversification whenever possible instead of relying on primary and/or few products.

Major challenges faced

Chairperson,

The Kingdom of Swaziland is faced with a variety of economic, social and environmental challenges that have succeeded to slow down development efforts undertaken by Government to achieve her priority objectives. These challenges continue to be a stumbling block in fighting poverty and subsequently, attaining sustainable development.

Trade: Swaziland being a country that is commodity (sugar) dependent, some of the evolving developments in the global trading arena have had a negative impact on the country's trade with the rest of the world. A case in point includes the inevitable evolving changes taking place at the European market, particularly trade in sugar – the Swazi gold. These have resulted to a drastic reduction in sugar price due to global competition.

Climate change:

Chairperson,

The trade challenge is exacerbated by other emerging global challenges particularly the scourge of climate change. Climate change continues to let down all efforts put in place by the Government to eradicate poverty as well as undoing developments achieved over the years. One would emphasize that climate change has had an overall negative impact because of its universality and negative effect on almost all sectors of the economy. The whole Swazi population has been hit hard because every sector; individuals, both in rural and urban areas; livestock; and the entire ecosystem are partially or totally dependent on favourable weather conditions.

To be specific, climate change has resulted in mass deaths of livestock - the pride and wealth of the Swazi nation; completely devastating crops as well as preventing cultivation of crops, including maize our staple food, among others. This has exacerbated food and nutrition insecurity which has remained one of the major concerns over the past two decades.

Drought declared a national disaster

Against this backdrop, last week the Government of Swaziland has finally declared the drought, a national disaster and therefore declared a national emergency because the entire Swazi nation is affected by the drought. The drought has resulted in serious reduction of water required for crop production, human consumption and sustaining the remaining livestock.

Working towards addressing the challenges

Chairperson,

The Government of Swaziland has identified what would be necessary to address the crisis as it continues to unfold as well as calculating preliminary costs involved. Therefore, in a bid to mitigate some of the above challenges, a National Drought Mitigation and Adaptation Plan (NERMAP) has been developed in consultation with a diverse group of stakeholders.

The Plan outlines the immediate actions as well as recommends long-term interventions. It prioritizes food and water security through intensified local maize production as well as measures to increase access to

potable water. It also challenges the nation to embrace adaptation measures to better confront the situation now and in the future.

Conclusion

Chairperson,

In conclusion, once again, let me express my appreciation to the UNDP for convening us and to share thoughts and best practices on this topic that is fundamental to the livelihood of the populace and development of UN Member States as well as in accomplishing the global development goals.

I thank you Chairperson for affording me the opportunity to share my country's thoughts on this important topic.