E-CONFERENCE ON THE PLAN FOR NATIONAL STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT

Remarks by the UN Resident Coordinator and Designated Official for Security,

H. E. Rosa Malango

Thursday, August 27, 2020 10:00 am

Salutations:
Honourable Ministers,
Your Excellencies the Ambassadors,
Heads of Government Agencies
Development Partners,
Colleagues from the UN system,
Members of the private sector,
Members of the Academia,
Members from the Media fraternity,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I welcome you to thank the organizers for inviting me to this timely dialogue on the “Role of Quality Statistics in National Development and Post Covid-19 Recovery in Uganda”.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for policy makers, development partners and citizens to make evidence-based decisions aimed at ensuring their survival as well as reducing their exposure to the disease and ensuring clear pathways to recover once affected. Decisions on humanitarian assistance, development programming and safety must protect the most vulnerable while reinforcing resilience. As the country adopts measures to counter the spread and potential impacts of COVID-19, we are witnessing disruptions in the demand and supply of timely, disaggregated and credible data. Restricted movement, the inevitable call for social distancing and likely diversion of financial resources to address emergency needs will have
far-reaching effects on the capacity of the National Statistical System to produce the much-needed data.

Uganda’s ability to sustain its gains in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be severely affected by the challenges being faced by the national statistical systems to produce reliable, consistent and comparable statistics for 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets and 232 indicators. The comprehensive nature of the SDGs, addressing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development means that statistics is critical for accountability and tracking of its contribution to the national vision for the country.

Having credible disaggregated data is the first step to identifying those who are most vulnerable to poverty, hunger, the pandemic, natural disasters and other forms of deprivation. The UN socio-economic impact analysis shows that SDGs will be impacted negatively across the board, but the effects are likely to be most severe for Eliminating Poverty (SDG1), Zero Hunger (SDG2), Good Health and Well-Being (SDG3), Gender Equality (SDG5), and Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG8). It is critical, therefore, that our statistical system makes conscious effort to identify those most likely to be affected the most in order to ensure that they are not left behind during service delivery.

At the global level, UN Member States have committed to periodically report their progress on the journey to sustainable development, through Voluntary National Reviews. I commend Uganda for having been one of the countries that reported on its readiness to implement the 2030 Agenda in 2016 and then reported on its progress last month during the 2020 High-Level Political Forum. While this demonstrates national commitment to SDGs, the Country has data on only 92 out of 201 applicable indicators. Quality and timely statistics enable us to determine what works and what does not work in the development response. This helps to inform planning, ensure coherence in implementation, reduce wastage of scarce resources and improve confidence in national systems.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

As we strive to build new systems, norms and solutions in response to COVID-19, allow me to share a few key recommendations on how we can fully harness the power of data to achieve sustainable development and sustain peace:

i. We need to fully **align the national data system to the national and global development frameworks** to ensure progress reporting & impact analysis. We need to shift from national and regional averages towards ensuring that data is disaggregated by the different dimensions such as ethnicity, sex, age, geographical areas, disability, among others;

ii. Given the ever-evolving data ecosystem, **continuous capacity building at the national and sub-national levels** remains a pre-requisite. These initiatives should be local-driven, sustainable and managed collectively by those who benefit from them.
iii. We need to create an **open national data portal** that presents data in simple formats that can be interpreted and meet the needs of potential users. Data consumers must be helped to make sense of the overwhelming volumes of data through increased collaboration across policy makers, planners, media, civil society and the public.

**iv.** Lastly, this is **the time to appreciate and fully explore synergies and partnerships with the private sector, academia and civil society** for new innovative forms of data to supplement the traditional data generation methods. In several countries, public-private partnerships are enabling the use of big data and other non-traditional data sources in policymaking by mainstreaming their use in official statistics.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

I like to conclude by reiterating our commitment as the United Nations to support national efforts to enhance the role of statistics in sustainable development. The current UN support to the development of an SDG dashboard, the review of the National Standard Indicator framework, the improvement of poverty measurement, continuous statistical capacity building, plans to establish a joint UN programme on data and statistics within the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2021-2025 and other similar initiatives, are a testament to our commitment.

I extend my appreciation to the Government and the people of Uganda for maintaining the United Nations as a trusted partner in sustainable development. I also congratulate you for your strides in managing the COVID-19 response and adopting the new National Development Plan III.

I look forward to an insightful dialogue.

Thank you for your attention.

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