ADDRESS BY

THE MINISTER OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, INDIGENISATION AND EMPOWERMENT

HON. SAVIOUR KASUKUWERE

AT THE LAUNCH OF THE ZIMBABWE DECENT WORK COUNTRY PROGRAMME

RAINBOW TOWERS, HARARE

14 FEBRUARY 2013
It is my pleasure and honour to make a few remarks at this important occasion where we are witnessing the launch of the Decent Work Country programme for Zimbabwe. The occasion affords us the opportunity to reflect as a nation on the current youth employment situation and the progress that we have made in implementing practical programmes, strategies and policies to empower Zimbabweans especially the youth for them to participate more meaningfully in the economic development of the country.

The youth empowerment agenda has been a priority for the Government of Zimbabwe since attaining independence in 1980. This has been in recognition of the vast number of youth with little or no education and skills to enable them to support their livelihoods or to become active in the mainstream economy of the country. The problem is further
exacerbated by the alarming high number of children and youth who drop out of school without the minimal skills for productive employment.

According to the 2012 National census, Zimbabwe’s population is currently estimated at 13 million, with youth constituting close to 60%. It is also estimated that the youth constitute 54% of the total labour force which is not formally employed but engaged in the informal sector. Furthermore, while the education system churns out over 300 000 young people into the labour market annually, less than 10% of these are absorbed into formal employment. The rest have to find their way into the informal sector where they have to run their own enterprises for survival.

Another challenge youth face is limited access to credit to capitalise their micro-informal businesses. Despite having brilliant business ideas, the youths are sometimes regarded as a high risk clientele group as they do not have the prerequisite collateral. Therefore, they often cannot access project funding from the formal financial institutions. This has left the youth stuck in the vicious poverty cycle as their businesses remain merely aspirational and micro in nature, providing income for subsistence purposes only.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, given their energy, enthusiasm and innovativeness, young people have the potential to contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of our nation. As such they must be placed at the forefront of building the economy of the country. There is need therefore to create an enabling environment
and opportunities for the socio-economic empowerment of the youth. It is our collective responsibility as Government, the Private Sector and our Development Partners to design and implement practical programmes to generate decent employment, reduce poverty among the youth and economically empower them to play a more meaningful role in the development and upliftment of their communities and the nation at large.

In this respect I would like to take this opportunity to commend the ILO in Zimbabwe for spearheading implementation of one such youth empowerment programme - the ‘Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development’, which has helped to demonstrate a working model for government and its social partners, that is, workers and employers. The Danida funded project is being implemented in 9 provinces of the country and is yielding positive results to the disadvantaged and vulnerable young women and men in the rural and semi-urban areas of the selected districts in the provinces. This has been made possible through the efforts of my Ministry’s dedicated Project Team and active support of the National Steering Committee, Technical Working Group, and respective District Implementation Committees.

The Programme is focusing on improving the sustainability and quality of jobs as well as income in selected economically viable sectors (for Training for Rural Economic Empowerment - TREE) and trades (for Informal Apprenticeship - IA) to ensure the results contribute accumulatively to address unemployment among the youths in the country. The Programme continues to prioritize up-scaling and increasing outreach in trades and sectors with a demonstrated capacity
to capitalize on value - chain development and decent employment opportunities.

The Programme is using the documented results, methodology and tools to sensitize and train new local partners and stakeholders in all areas to increase the scale, outreach and impact of the programme. The approach for informal apprenticeship has further been improved based on lessons learned during the first two years of implementation. The functioning of the micro credit scheme fund is being monitored closely to ensure that the microfinance Partner Institutions are managing the fund effectively and on a sustainable basis.

A special emphasis is being laid on the importance of gender equality and the Programme is making efforts to continue to mainstream a gender equality message into its intervention mix which can be evidenced through disaggregated data on reported results, set gender-specific outreach targets and furthermore implement selected affirmative action specifically targeted at, and promoting training and decent employment for young women.

The monitoring and evaluation system is being further strengthened to continually review progress made, adapt programme activities accordingly and report and communicate results to stakeholders. The results are also being used to stimulate social dialogue on youth aimed at measures to influence, review, adopt and implement effective policies, programmes and skills development systems that promote youth employment and rural development. The results will be mainstreamed in
macro level national policies for skills development, youth employment and empowerment, SME and rural development.

As a Ministry and on behalf of government we have adopted the TREE and Informal Apprenticeship models as working models for addressing the youth empowerment needs and solving the country’s rising youth unemployment challenge. As the results in the districts in which the project is being implemented demonstrate, more youths are being empowered for wage or self employment. We will take up the task of influencing the government to allocate the requisite resources from the fiscus as well as to encourage the utilisation of funds at community level for the benefit of young people in those communities.

However I appeal to ILO, Danida and other donors to continue supporting and capacitating my Ministry beyond December 2014 for perhaps another three (3) years for the Ministry to be in a position to then be fully developed in order to utilise the developed model by ILO.

Furthermore, my Ministry is currently working on an integrated community-based multi-sectoral broad-based youth empowerment strategy to enhance our skills training and empowerment programmes. The strategy will involve the following key processes;

- Identification of different economic and employment opportunities for the youth at the community and/or local level,
• Identification of training needs as well as designing and provision of appropriate training programmes related to the identified opportunities (for example, skills needed for construction work, mining processing, marketing of agricultural produce, business management skills, etc) and
• Facilitating the necessary post-training support including guidance in the use of production technologies, facilitating access to micro-credit and other financial services, facilitating access to wage or self employment, access to markets, start-up kits, support to formation of support groups and associations, etc.

In view of the inter-relatedness of the challenges facing youth and the need for cross-sectoral policies and programmes that attend to the needs of youth in a holistic manner, institutional structures or committees with representatives from all stakeholders, that is, government departments, community leaders, business sector, financial institutions, Development Partners and other relevant players will be constituted at the provincial, district and ward levels.

The programme will thus be able to link sectoral economic youth employment opportunities with the requisite training, funding and other development support programmes. All Government Departments and Development Partners will thus play a role towards this programme in more coordinated and integrated manner.

Ladies and gentlemen may I take this opportunity to thank all our partners, both Government and non-government who have continued to
support us in all our youth development and economic empowerment programmes and I have no doubt that the Decent Country Work programme that we are launching here today will go a long way in facilitating the socio-economic empowerment of the youth and indigenous citizens of Zimbabwe.

I thank you.