

22nd Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Remarks by Ms. Jeannette Nyiramasengesho, Chairperson, Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities

On behalf of the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities and on my own behalf, I congratulate the United Nations Economic and Social Council for convening the twenty second session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration to discuss on the issue of public participation and to share experience and lessons learned so that, as a family of Nations, we can shape the future we want for public administration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

I wish also to welcome the paper on “Promoting the governance principle of participation in support of the Sustainable Development Goals” as prepared and submitted by Dr Najat Zarrouk and her team. This paper reflects the current governance dynamics and challenges associated with the concept of “participation” in the current arena. RALGA subscribes to the proposed practical scenarios for effective participation towards the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA) is an exclusive membership organization bringing together the City of Kigali and all the Decentralized Administrative Entities in Rwanda, which was established in 2003, with a mandate of capacity building, advocacy and representation for the members. Its vision is to have efficient local government entities where people and stakeholders are involved in development. Moreover, its objective is to assist local government entities in achieving their mission, complying with principles of good governance and decentralization.

The ultimate objective of the decentralization policy in Rwanda is to ensure effective citizen participation in national and local governance for sustainable development. In that context, RALGA assists the members by carrying out their advocacy and capacity building in the sectors of policy of decentralization, increasing finances of local government entities, local economic development and social development. By so doing, RALGA plays a significant role in ensuring

that no one is left behind in Rwanda. Accordingly, RALGA regularly organizes induction courses and other trainings for elected leaders and technical staff, so that they can effectively engage the citizens and efficiently deliver services. This is achieved through collaboration with the Government of Rwanda as well as with national and international partners.

RALGA believes that, sub-national governments are indispensable entities for citizen participation. They implement all government policies and programs and deliver all forms of services. This big task puts them under regular pressure of monitoring and evaluation as well as scrutiny of transparency of accountability. With limited capacity and insufficient resources, local governments need their Association like RALGA, to represent them where they cannot participate individually and secure donor support or requesting relevant authorities to timely avail what they owe local governments. This shall be achieved if political, administrative and fiscal decentralization become effective under the decentralization policy frameworks.

The Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities understands that; effective citizen participation is about planning, implementation, delivery, monitoring and evaluation as well as effective partnerships. Citizens are not subjects but partners for the Government. Accordingly, all planning frameworks need to respond to the expectations of the citizens and regular feedback is key to citizen engagement. That is what we, at RALGA, call “inclusive governance”.

However, citizen participation has own challenges such as capacity gaps for local government leaders and staff, limited capacity of citizens or mindset to understand their rights and obligations as well as the limited capacity of non-state actors in monitoring policy implementation and advocacy. Such a positive synergy can lead to effective participation and governance for sustainable development. In that context, citizens are involved in decision making at all levels, so that they can effectively shape and own their destiny.

If we want the SDG s to be achieved at local level, Governments and development partners need to streamline sectoral decentralization by respecting the principle as that funds follow functions. This is a shared responsibility in terms of capacity building, resources mobilization and allocation, implementation of policies and programs to deliver impact as well as effective monitoring and evaluation. As Rwanda has volunteered to perform the Voluntary National Review for 2023, we at RALGA, with support from United Cities and Local Governments, are in

the process of elaborating the Voluntary Sub-national Review report, which shall be presented to the High Level Political Forum at the United Nations in July 2023. If the United Nations can support that approach, as far as we are concerned in Rwanda, we can undoubtedly achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We have opted for their localization, and we thank all those who keep supporting us during their implementation and monitoring. We never fail our good partners, wherever they come from.