



**Statement during the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNIDO General Conference on 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2023, delivered by H.E. Hon. Jibril Abdirashid Haji Abdi Minister of Commerce & Industry of the Federal Government of Somalia**

Madam President, Ambassador Debora Lepre,

UNIDO Director General Mr Gerd Müller,

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues,

Ladies, and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madame President, on your election as the President of the 20th session of the UNIDO General Conference. Somalia is very thankful for Italy support and partnership, also demonstrated through the strategic support to UNIDO technical cooperation portfolio.

Mr. President, allow me to open my statement by expressing Somalia outmost appreciation to Mr Gerd Müller, Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization for welcoming Somalia at the twentieth Session of the organization General Conference here in Vienna. It is my honour to participate in this conference, representing the Federal Government of Somalia.

Excellencies, Somalia is transitioning from humanitarian focused towards, development approach. The new narrative Somalia is reshaping focuses on building a more sustainable and prosperous future for the tomorrow generations of young Somalis.

The Government of Somalia is building the foundation that will advance the country towards a modern economy. This means building institutions, creating enabling

environment to attract investments, and realize inclusive and sustainable industrial development and in turn achieve economic growth and job creations, translated into prosperity for our population.

Somalia is continuing to make progress towards reaching the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative Completion Point by end of the calendar year 2023. Upon reaching the (CP), Somalia will qualify for full and irrevocable debt relief, which could reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio from 41% in 2022 to 6%, meaning that debt is sustainable in a forward-looking sense, thereby turning a new page in the country's development trajectory.

Excellencies, Somalia is a country with huge potential and opportunities, to mention a few:

- 70% of the Somali population, is under 35 years old. Hence, the country has access to human capital that can be developed in various expertise and sectors for the years to come.
- The potential in renewable energy in Somalia is one of the highest in Africa, in terms average sunlight hours and highest potential for wind energy – this will allow for cheaper and cleaner energy solution in the continent, which could, in turn, be a driver for attracting investment, hence also stimulate manufacturing capacity
- With the longest coastline in Africa, stretching more than 3,000km, Somalia fisheries sector has potential to grow up to 600,000mt per year valued at 350 – 940 million a year. Great part of Somalia potential in the blue economy space is still untapped. Sustainable and well calibrated intervention will be required to ensure that the fisheries industry of Somalia is maintained by also balancing out the industrial development needs of Somalia.
- Livestock and Agriculture sector remain the main source of employment and exports in Somalia. Agriculture's share of gross domestic product (GDP) in about 75% and represent 93% of total exports. Investment across a wide spectrum of intervention of the value chains are indeed critical and have the potential to launch the growth of the Somali economy.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen, despite the opportunities that I highlighted, the country, has been hampered by frequent and overlapping shocks related to climatic hazards, lack of, unemployment, poor infrastructure, and limited manufacturing and therefore stagnant economic opportunities.

Therefore, it is about time, that a sustainable strategy is put in place for a Least Developed Country like Somalia, to translate the existing potential and opportunities into sustainable economic growth, jobs, income generated through manufacturing, and facilitate access to affordable health care, education, and clean energy.

Especially, our youthful population is catalyst for development, and highly IT literate. This presents an opportunity for innovation and entrepreneurship, which can advance the country towards future growth. This means investment in education and green skills. As a result, will enable the country to leapfrog towards the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution. UNIDO can play a crucial role in promoting state of art technology and expertise to increase efficiency and productive in the major sectors in Somalia, such livestock, fisheries, agriculture and energy - For instance, investments in technology and infrastructure in the agriculture sector, can help farmers to optimize crops yields, and mitigate against climate shocks, that the country is suffering from at the moment.

Furthermore, we need to promote the local private sector and enterprises to adapt digital technologies, explore e-commerce and business models using AI.

With use of technologies and digitalization comes, investments in skilled labour. Therefore, I would like to urge all of us, to prioritize investments in education, and promote STEM, readying youth for the future jobs, such as software engineers, or farmers and fishermen to gain data analysis skills, and green skills in the manufacturing sector.

A Blue Economy strategy in line with UN Cooperation Framework and National Development Plan 9, will go long way to build a sustainable ocean based economy, knowing that Somalia's marine ecosystem is highly productive and can foster food security, while keeping in mind the environment sustainability of the oceans and coastal areas, promoting economic growth, social inclusion and improvement of livelihoods for Somalia populations.

Most importantly, investment in education system, will not only allow our population to adapt to ever-fast changing markets, but it will help us to leapfrog Somalia, towards sustainable industrial development and compete on the global market and as a result allows us to shape the overarching theme of today 'fair globalization'.

Lastly, on behalf of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Federal Government of Somalia, we would like to express our gratitude to UNIDO Somalia Programme Team. UNIDO has been working with us for the past few years. It helped us shape the narrative towards sustainable development, imbedded change of mindset, implemented innovative investments for entrepreneurs such a Credit line in partnership with local Commercial Bank, that helped to advance and upgrade the operations of MSMEs in Somalia but also set an example for development programming. The Business Incubators Project, Productive Sectors Development Programme are currently being implemented with a desire to shift towards development and creating enabling environment for the Somali businesses and the private sector to thrive.

With that said, I would like to thank the Director General, Mr. Gerd Müller, and UNIDO for inviting me to deliver remarkat at this 20<sup>th</sup> UNIDO general conference and look forward to work with UNIDO to pursue even more innovative solutions in our pursuit of our progress through inclusive and sustainable development, in Somalia for a better tomorrow!

Thank you!

H.E. Jibril Abdirashid Haji