

Thank you, Chair.

We welcome Eswatini's VNR and appreciate the progress made toward the SDGs. We recognize the country's success in reducing maternal and child deaths, as well as the decline in HIV and TB cases. At the same time, we remain concerned about the shortage of medicines and the growing burden of non-communicable diseases. These issues must be addressed to improve public health for all.

On SDG 5, it is good to see more women in Parliament and the launch of the Gender Policy in 2023. But gender-based violence is still a major problem. At the core of the gender policy should be the implementation of gender transformative education from ECCDE to higher education, including in adult learning and education.

Unemployment is one of the biggest challenges under SDG 8. Youth unemployment is still very high, despite a small decrease. We urge the government to invest in gender-just skills training, promote small businesses, and support a job-creating economy that ensures decent work and dignity for young people and disadvantaged women.

We also note the rise in international aid under SDG 17. Yet civil society must be part of the planning and utilization of these resources. We also need access to better data, stronger cooperation across sectors and more open ways of working.

Our key questions:

1. The allocation of funds for debt servicing raises grave concerns given the country's limited fiscal space, how can Eswatini support efforts towards convening the UN Convention on Sovereign Debt that will establish a fairer and democratic debt restructuring where debtor countries will have a stronger voice?
2. How will Eswatini create institutionalised mechanisms and open ways for civil society to help shape and track progress on its SDGs.

Thank you and we look forward to more collaboration.