



**SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON
VOLUNTEER ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**STRENGTHENING VOLUNTEER INFRASTRUCTURE FOR
PEACE AND COMMUNITY-CENTRED SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

Statement by

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Dear Volunteer partners for peace and sustainable development,

I am truly inspired by your discussions and recommendations over these past two days and the wonderful examples of volunteer action on-the-ground, including youth volunteer corps; youth led participatory development approaches and all the exciting research by universities and think tanks in Southern Africa. Based on all this exciting and inspiring work, I have a few thoughts on how to strengthen community-centred sustainable development in Southern Africa – the subject of our panel today – and would really like your feedback.

- 1) We, the volunteer community, **urgently** need to bring volunteerism to the centre of the policy and development agenda of the Southern Africa region of the world and not remain in the periphery or margins. We will have a chance to do this by bringing recommendations from global and regional conferences during IYV+10, including from this Southern Africa Conference to the two United Nations General Assembly sessions on volunteerism on 5 and 6 December in New York. In my view, it is urgent and imperative that when you get back to your office, each and every one of you – as transformational leaders – advocate for your Government's delegation to the United Nations to make supportive statements on volunteerism at the UN General Assembly sessions based on the burning issues we have discussed here and which are captured in the Conference Declaration. One way is to seek the support of your principal – whether Minister, Head of Ministry or Head/CEO of your organization or Speaker of Parliament – to advocate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in your country. The UNV Programme Officers in your country (many of them are here today) are at your disposal on how to strategize with you on this. VOSESA has also offered its support.
- 2) Mark IYV+10 on 5 December with pride in your country – this can take the form of a seminar on volunteerism for community-centred sustainable development, it can be a concert, march, sports event, photo exhibition or a “share fair” celebrating volunteerism and your version of ubuntu. And, help to launch the first ever State of the World's Volunteerism Report on 5 December all over the world including, I hope, in the SADC region – it is a report celebrating volunteerism, celebrating your work by giving examples, celebrating you and other

transformational and inspirational leaders. And after 5 December, read and discuss it with other volunteer leaders and to see if it has some lessons for you and your wonderful work. Our UNV Programme Officers based in the UNDP Country Offices would be happy to work with you. Celebrating IYV+10 on 5 December would be a good way to raise awareness of volunteerism in your country and to give recognition to the millions of volunteers.

- 3) Develop a vision for an alternative development paradigm that is people and community-centred, which builds upon the traditional core values of African society and is rooted in concepts of ubuntu, umuntu, *letsema*, *kubatsira*, *kujitolea* and other forms of community-centred volunteering. A vision of sustainable development and regional integration based on values, people, community solidarity, social cohesion, social capital and development capital. To build a civil society instead of the material and self-centred society we have become.
- 4) Volunteerism knowledge management – I heard the need for this over and over again. We need to systematically share and document experiences and good practices on community-centred sustainable development, especially of MDG results and achievement. 2015 is still four years away. There is still time for us to systemically pool our results and show the transformational impact, not only to ourselves but also to policy makers, decision makers and funders. Our friends in Universities and research institutions can help us in knowledge management. Imagine a virtual library of volunteer efforts in Southern Africa! And while I am on the subject of knowledge management, how about setting up knowledge networks on volunteerism for community-centred sustainable development – let's ask our IT literate volunteer friends to help us to set up social networks, Twitter and e-networking sites – that will make volunteerism “cool” for the young and stimulate ideas in older people like us. And more research on volunteerism and community-centres participatory development approaches is certainly needed – the examples today were very inspiring.
- 5) Develop an integrated and holistic model (or models) for community-centred sustainable development based on the many examples we have heard about

here. We need to blue-print, replicate and upscale them. We really have to go to scale and beyond the pilot stage: to bring about transformational change we have to help thousands and millions of people to address HIV/AIDS; come out of poverty; create jobs, self employment and entrepreneurs; health, education, environment, humanitarian, disaster risk reduction and response challenges are also great. I hope that the post MDG development paradigm will be holistic, sustainable and equitable and that volunteerism will be an essential component of it. A model in which the elderly, men, women, boys, girls as well as the marginalized and socially excluded can participate – development that is inclusive and which leaves nobody out or behind. Development that comes from the heart, is rooted in inspiration, and is propelled by the desire for the common good for one's community and for humanity. It will be a community-centred sustainable development approach that places people at the centre and empowers them to get involved in both individual and collective action.

- 6) Community-centred development will be bottom-up development based on a community's vision for its future, with benchmarks, milestones, targets and indicators set by the communities themselves – and not by outsiders – and which are implemented by communities themselves drawing first upon their own resources, capacities, abilities, knowledge and social capital and only then with support from local and national Governments, development partners and other stakeholders. The communities' goals will be incorporated in local, regional and national plans and budgets. I believe that such a new development paradigm will be holistic and not happen in "silos" as at present where health practitioners do not speak to the poverty practitioners and the environment practitioners rarely to the gender practitioners. Communities do not think in sectors or silos – we do. Earlier this year, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told business leaders at Davos that we need change "in our lifestyles, our economic models, our social organization, and our political life". He talked about "tearing down the walls between the development agenda and the climate agenda." We must stop seeing sustainable development as a parallel track to economic or social development.

- 7) A post-MDG world will be characterized by sustainable, just and equitable societies and communities and that it will be based on human well-being rather than material well-being and will protect and preserve our planet because it is the only planet we have, and which we would like to pass on intact to our children and grand children. I hope that the future will contain a strong global volunteer movement or coalition which is at the forefront of visioning and implementing this new development paradigm for the world and for Southern Africa.
- 8) We need to develop more transformational leaders like you, especially youth as “agents of change” in their communities. We need to combine leadership development with more systematic learning for all of us based on the knowledge we have and what we are going to collect – a new kind of training. In UNV we are already working with the UN Staff College to train UN staff in community-centred sustainable development through volunteerism – we want to start creating awareness of the transformational power of volunteerism for peace and development in our UN colleagues. Maybe there is scope for doing something similar with Southern African Universities once we have our holistic community-centred sustainable development course work and model.
- 9) We need an enabling environment for volunteering including laws (e.g. Mozambique) and youth corps (DRC, Lesotho, ECOWAS, African Union, other) but with a question: for what? And how to measure volunteer impact – not only community-centred sustainable development and MDG impact, but also non-tangible impact such as social capital, development capital, solidarity, well-being. And may I add happiness?

Thank you.