

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past three days, we have taken a remarkable journey together. I want to congratulate all of you all for having shared your knowledge, ideas and experiences in implementing the SDGs at local level, through a lively and collegial atmosphere.

It is a rare privilege to gather such a dynamic and diverse group of more than **100** participants, including Mayors, experts from governments, the UN system and academia from around the world.

Even though the venue was chosen through the effective lobby the Mayor of Lilongwe made with my colleague Jean (to use Mayor Bikoko's own words), those last three days proved us right in selecting Lilongwe to welcome this very important International Mayors Forum.

I also appreciated very much the field visit and the low-cost housing project I had the opportunity to see yesterday. On our way back, our stop to those shops where we could witness very fine craftwork from Malawi. I must say that it was interesting for me to have a first experience in bargaining (from 50 dollars I succeeded to get an art piece for as low as 20).

And thanks to the patrol cars that escorted us, we could have a very safe and interesting field visit.

I must that I also appreciated very much the traditional dance and singing performance we could see on Wednesday evening. I could feel the high energy and peace, through the smile of the performers, and that people are very much at the centre of everything in Malawi. Truly, Malawi is a land of peace and opportunity. This confirmed again our choice in selecting Lilongwe.

Please give a round of applause to His Worship the Mayor of the City of Lilongwe, Councillor Desmond Bikoko.

I would like to officially invite you Mayor Bokoko, to next year's Mayors Forum as the previous forum's hosting Mayor.

Dear Mayors, our Office, UNOSD, is very proud of having sponsored this Mayors Forum in Lilongwe, from your travel and stay, the meals and up to the reception dinner on Wednesday night. I know, however, and please excuse us if, due to the UN rules and procedures, we could not treat you at the level you deserve, recognizing also that some of you had even to travel very long distance to get here with us this week. We thank you for being here as well as for your understanding of our constraints.

Of course, this Forum could not have taken place without the support of our colleagues from UNDP Malawi.

Please join me in giving them a round of applause.

As it was mentioned a few times during the conference, we are part of UN DESA. We are very thankful to our UN DESA colleagues from New York, Birgitta and Emily, as well as Keping from UNPOG in Korea, for their contribution to the Forum.

From UNOSD, of course, my colleagues Jean, Ilae and Shelley were also very instrumental in making this Forum a success.

Please join me in giving all of them a round of applause.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge all the presenters and participants. All the presentations and interventions were excellent and so were the interactive dialogues.

UNOSD is looking forward to continuing to develop this community of practice over the years to come. You must also be our ambassadors towards your national authorities, the UN Member States, to whom we are also committed to support in this journey to achieve the SDGs.

I wish you all a safe trip back home.

Thank you.