



7<sup>th</sup> August 2019 marked another milestone in the diplomatic discourse of Zambia. The day marked the official launch of the Sustainable Development Goals Sub-Regional Center for Southern Africa, housed in Lusaka. The launch was graced by the Republican President Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu and his counterpart President Paul Kagame of Rwanda. This launch came after the Zambian Government, on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, signed an agreement to establish the centre in Zambia on behalf of the southern African region in **order to foster for the implementation of SDGs in Southern Africa, in line with the principles of the African Union 2063 Agenda.**

At continental level, following the adaption of the SDGs in 2015, African countries agreed to establish an African institution to promote the implementation of SDGs. In 2016, the SDG Centre, whose headquarters is based in Kigali Rwanda, was established to further this cause and create partnerships across Africa. The objectives are that all countries were acting together in the pursuit of achieving

both the African Development Agenda and the Global Agenda.

The Southern Africa SDG Centre in Lusaka Zambia is a strategic institution that will aid with the speedy implementation of the SDGs in the SADC region. Zambia currently hosts the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), as well as United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (Sub Region Office). Zambia also houses The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), an African Union organ. Further, President Lungu is the immediate past Chairperson for The TROIKA, which is the SADC organ on politics defence and security. All these milestones emphasise the positives of Zambia's Economic Diplomacy and all-encompassing development approach.

From the above, Zambia continues to score positive strides in its diplomatic relationships, both bilaterally and multilaterally. The establishment of the SDG Centre in Lusaka

offers opportunities for Zambia in its implementation of the Global Agenda, AU Agenda 2063 and domestication of the SDGs as the country is implementing the Seventh National Development Plan. **Overall, Zambia remains a premier investment destination especially underpinned by the favourable investment climate ranging from political stability, favourable climate, abundant skilled human resources, central location, to its interlink with SADC and COMESA.**

The hosting of the Centre in Lusaka offers an **opportunity for easy access to information for Government, Academia, Civil Society, research institutions and other stakeholders, especially in relation to SDGs implementation and AU Agenda 2063 indicators for the country and the region, which are essential for decision-making.** According to the Seventh National Development Plan, Zambia, in the previous National Development Plans, faced a challenge of lack of data due to the failure of the M&E systems to provide information; therefore, the SDG centre is an opportunity that Zambia can use to capacitate its implementing institutions in data collection through appropriate M&E systems.

With support from the Centre, Zambia will be able to create viable partnerships within and outside the country which are essential in the implementation of SDGs and the National Development Plan. Additionally, the technical expertise and evidence research findings from the Centre will feed into Government decision-making processes. Overall, the Centre will play a key interlinking role of facilitating collaborations between key institutions in the region, who are all focused towards SDGs implementation. This will further promote integration in the region at institutional level.

Lastly, the housing of the Centre in Lusaka continues to improve the diplomatic status of Zambia and offers opportunity for hosting

and housing of several other global and regional centres. This decision further validates Zambia's stability and peaceful environment which are key drivers for potential international business owners to establish businesses which would benefit the country both socially and economically.

In order for Zambia to harness for opportunities arising from housing the SDG Centre in Lusaka Zambia, there is need for willingness by all stakeholders in the development sphere, to offer support and cooperation for the successful establishment and operations of the Centre.

Zambia's Economic Diplomacy remains very positive

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