



KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE GUEST OF HONOUR; MINISTER OF JUSTICE, LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS HONOURABLE ZIYAMBI ZIYAMBI; AT THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY COMMEMORATIONS; TAKASHINGA CRICKET GROUNDS, HIGHFIELD, HARARE: FRIDAY 8 DECEMBER, 2017.

**The Minister of State for Harare Metropolitan Province, Honourable Miriam Chikukwa
Other Honourable Cabinet Ministers here present.**

The Mayor of the City of Harare, His Worship Councilor Bernard Manyenyeni

The Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Commissioner Elasto Hilarious Mugwadi

Commissioners of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission

Other Commissioners here present

Honourable Members of Parliament here present

The Secretary for Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, and other Permanent Secretaries here present

The Country Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mr.

Georges Van Montfort and other UN Country Team Representatives here present

Development Partners here present

Representatives of the Chiefs Council

The Executive Secretary of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Dr. Makanatsa Makonese

Secretariat of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission

Representatives of Harare City Council and other Councils represented here

Representatives of Universities and Tertiary Institutions

Directors and Officers of Government Line Ministries

Directors and Staff of Civil Society and Faith Based Organizations

Representatives of the Private Sector

Members of the Media Fraternity

Performing Artistes here present

The Highfield Community

Ladies and Gentlemen

Boys and Girls here present

All Protocol Observed.

It is a great honour to address you here today on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe at this occasion to commemorate International Human Rights Day (IHRD) under the theme “*#StandUp4HumanRights*”.

Today Zimbabwe joins the global community in celebrating this important day on the International Human Rights Calendar. This commemoration is held annually on the 10th of December and coincides with the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted the



Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 after the horrific experiences of the Second World War.

This year's commemorations of International Human Rights Day are special because from 10th December this year, we begin a year-long celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). As you may be aware, the UDHR is the first comprehensive declaration on human rights, asserting without doubt, that people have rights or certain entitlements simply because of being human, regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political affiliation or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The thirty articles of the UDHR include the right to freedom, dignity and equality, the right not to be discriminated against, the right to life, liberty and security, freedom from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, recognition as a person before the law, equality before the law, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of assembly and association, the right to work, the right to an adequate standard of living which includes adequate food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, the right to education and the right to culture. These rights are ours, simply because we are human beings.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has inspired a wide range of other international agreements such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which are legally binding on Zimbabwe because the Government of Zimbabwe acceded to and ratified these human rights treaties.

In addition, as a member-state of the African Union (AU) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Government of Zimbabwe has also signed many other regional treaties on human rights which include the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol or Women's Rights Protocol), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Protocol.

Zimbabwe also continues to honour its obligations under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) which involves a periodic peer review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States. The ultimate aim of this mechanism is to improve the human rights situation in all countries and address human rights violations wherever they occur. In November 2016 His Excellency, the President of Zimbabwe, Comrade Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa who was then Vice-President of Zimbabwe responsible for the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs led the Zimbabwean delegation that appeared before the United Nations Human Rights Council to declare the actions which the Government of Zimbabwe had taken to improve the human rights



situation in the country and to fulfil human rights obligations. In March this year, the review process was finalized and Zimbabwe supported 151 recommendations out of the 260 recommendations on improvement of the human rights situation in the country. An Action Plan has since been put in place to facilitate implementation and monitoring of progress. I urge all Government Line Ministries to be guided by the National Action Plan for the UPR in the implementation of programmes and interventions to improve the enjoyment of human rights by the people.

Most of the values and principles that are enshrined in the UDHR have been incorporated in the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20 Act of 2013. The Constitution of Zimbabwe has a broadened Bill of Rights or Declaration of Rights in Chapter 4 of the Constitution. This Bill of Rights goes a long way to domesticate most of the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we are celebrating today, and other international, regional and sub-regional human rights treaties Zimbabwe is party to. However, rights in these numerous documents that Zimbabwe has signed, including those in our Constitution will remain of little benefit to the generality of the people if they are not effectively promoted, protected and enforced.

The primary responsibility for protecting and promoting human rights lies with Government as the duty bearer, and it is in fulfilment of that obligation that five Independent Commissions Supporting Democracy in Zimbabwe are established by Chapter 12 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, one of them being the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC). The other Independent Commissions Supporting Democracy in Zimbabwe are the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC), the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC), and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC). With the exception of ZEC which is fully decentralized, I am aware of the fact that these Commissions are at different stages of operationalization. The Government of Zimbabwe is committed in ensuring that all these Independent Commissions are adequately resourced to provide effective service delivery. I urge Development Partners, some of whom are represented here, to enhance the support they currently provide to these institutions with additional resources to augment Government efforts. I therefore urge all these Commissions to indeed, **StandUp4HumanRights** and impact positively on the human rights situation of the people of Zimbabwe in their respective mandate areas.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to note the progress made on alignment of laws to the Constitution which is being coordinated by the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce (IMT) on the Alignment of Legislation to the Constitution set up in 2015. Of the three hundred and ninety six (396) Acts that were in our statute books upon the adoption of the Constitution, an assessment revealed that two hundred and six (206) required alignment. The alignment of thirty (30) Acts, including the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission Act (Chapter10:30), remains outstanding. Of the 30 outstanding Bills required for alignment, I am pleased to announce that a number of them, eleven (11) in particular, are before Parliament. I commit my Ministry to expedite the completion of the alignment of laws to the Constitution and ensuring the procedures for enforcement of

recommendations arising from the work of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission on investigations and monitoring are implemented and enforced.

I take note that the year-long campaign to mark the upcoming 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights under the theme “*#StandUp4HumanRights*” calls for member states to stand up for equality, justice and human dignity. The new Constitution guarantees the independence of the Judiciary and provides for principles guiding the Judiciary since enforcement of the rule of law is a key tenet of human rights. I commit my Ministry to ensuring that all persons in Zimbabwe have access to justice and that the rule of law prevails. The founding values in section 3 of our Constitution include, among others, the supremacy of the Constitution, the rule of law and fundamental human rights and freedoms.

I am glad that the establishment of the Constitutional Court, has played an important role in providing access to justice and upholding constitutionalism and the rule of law. May I reiterate that the law should apply equally to everyone, without fear or favour. Our Superior Courts continue to make and affirm milestone judgements that have had an immense positive impact on promotion and enforcement of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The landmark judgement by the Constitutional Court that outlawed child marriages in Zimbabwe earned our Constitutional Court an international award. In the landmark judgement, the Constitutional Court affirmed 18 years as the age of majority as provided for in the Constitution of Zimbabwe, and hence concluded that no child should marry before that age.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe accords political rights to every Zimbabwean citizen which include the right to free, fair and regular elections. In this regard I urge all citizens of Zimbabwe to show the same unity of purpose displayed recently in terms of their active participation in the political developments that ushered in the new political dispensation, by actively participating in all electoral processes being administered by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to deliver credible elections in 2018. I particularly urge Zimbabwean citizens who are 18 years and above to participate in the ongoing Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) exercise, if they have not yet done so, in order for them to vote in the forthcoming general elections.

The new Government of Zimbabwe under His Excellency, President Emmerson Mnangagwa is conscious of the legitimate expectations of Zimbabweans for improvement and fulfillment of their socio – economic rights that include the right to work, the right to health care, the right to education, the right to clean water and sanitation, and the right to food and shelter. In his inaugural speech, His Excellency, the President of Zimbabwe defined the parameters for the new dispensation and pledged to rebuild the country, ensure optimum utilization of land to achieve national food security and expressed commitment to create conditions for an investment-led economic recovery that places a high premium on employment creation, equity, freedom and democracy, and provision of services, principally health, shelter, clean water, education and other key social services while ensuring acts of corruption, mismanagement, and inefficiency are weeded out.



With the new political dispensation, we are confident that our country will reclaim its rightful position in the global family of nations. Zimbabwe is ready to participate in the development agenda of the world being guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are development priorities and aspirations to be achieved by 2030. These include among others, No Poverty; Zero Hunger; Quality Education; Gender Equality; Clean Water and Sanitation, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in applauding and congratulating the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Harare Metropolitan Province, the Highfield community and all partners for collaborating in hosting this event bringing together state and non-state actors represented here for the sole purpose of promoting human rights. Such collective efforts can only make our society better and foster a culture of respect for human rights as enshrined in our Constitution, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which we are celebrating today and other human rights treaties to which Zimbabwe is a party.

Let me conclude by noting that section 44 of the Constitution ascribes the duty to respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights and freedoms set out in the Declaration of Rights to the State, every person, (including juristic persons) and every institution and agency of government. Ultimately, it is everyone's responsibility to respect and promote the human rights values of fairness, justice, equality, non-discrimination, respect for life, human dignity, tolerance, non-violence and respect for diversity so as to ultimately foster a universal culture of human rights. Let us therefore all ***StandUp4HumanRights.***

I wish you all enjoyable commemorations.

I Thank You