



United Nations
Zimbabwe

Statement of UN Resident Coordinator in Zimbabwe

Sensitization Workshop to Head of Government Ministries

31st July 2017

HARARE, ZIMBABWE

Salutation

The Permanent Secretary for Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Mrs V.Mabiza,

Other Permanent Secretaries here present

Director of Policy and Legal Research, Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs,

Mrs Mabel Msika,

Director for Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs, Mr Tapiwa Fresh Godzi

Heads of Government Ministries and other Government Representatives

Dear United Nations colleagues,

On behalf of the United Nations in Zimbabwe, let me start by warmly thanking all of you for taking some time off your very busy schedule to attend this one day sensitization workshop on the UN Human Rights System and the obligations of Zimbabwe. This demonstrates your commitment to advancing the promotion and protection of human rights.

As you already know, the nine core international human rights treaties are our common framework to advance human rights across the world. These treaties are legal documents that provide tools to address issues faced daily by people worldwide. They are essential to the practical implementation of the noble objectives of the United Nations Charter: peace and security, development and human rights.

The United Nations Human Rights Treaties and the treaty monitoring bodies constitute a fundamental pillar in the international promotion and protection of human rights. The treaty

standards are the benchmark for assessment and the treaty bodies in collaboration with member States serve as a platform to steer proactive initiatives geared towards advancing international promotion and protection of human rights.

Zimbabwe has ratified six core international human rights treaties in the realm of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the two Optional Protocols, and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities(CRPD) and the Optional Protocol.

Zimbabwe has not yet ratified three core international human rights treaties namely the Convention against Torture, and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW) and the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED). Zimbabwe is also still to ratify the optional Protocols to the CCPR, ESCR and CEDAW. I want to recall here some recommendations made by member nations during the Second Cycle Universal Periodic Review for Zimbabwe which encouraged Zimbabwe to ratify these treaties. While Zimbabwe noted those recommendations, we encourage you in the future to critically examine them with a view to ratifying them as tools to augment your efforts in human rights promotion and protection.

Ratification and implementation of human rights treaties demonstrate the ratifying State's intention to comply with international norms and standards, and its commitment to improve the lives of its people. The treaties clarify what human rights mean in practice, providing a common language to help to build a broad international consensus to defend rights and combat violations.

In terms of Zimbabwe's reporting obligation to the treaty bodies, the State party has six overdue reports on the CERD, CCPR, ESCR, and CRPD CEDAW. Some of these reports are dating back to 1998. However we note the encouraging efforts by Government of Zimbabwe towards eliminating this backlog in reporting. I am advised that draft reports for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) have been finalised and await a process of Cabinet adoption. I am further informed that two reports, one the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and another on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights are being finalised with the former going through a process of provincial consultations to ensure participation and involvement of grassroots populations and NGOs. These efforts are being supported by UNDP and UN Women and indeed the whole UNCT through the UNCT human rights working group. We are hopeful that these efforts will translate human rights from the clauses of the various conventions into lived realities.

When States become a party to one of the international human rights treaties, they are obliged to submit an initial report followed by periodic reports to the treaty monitoring bodies. The main purpose of the reporting process is for the treaty bodies to examine the level of the State's

implementation of its obligations under the treaties. The preparation of the State report serves as an opportunity to assess and debate human rights issues in the country and identify problems and areas that may require further attention. Reporting to the treaty bodies provide an avenue for expert guidance from the human rights committees on interpretation and implementation of the treaty. After the review of a State report, concluding observations that emanate from the treaty bodies set out minimum standards for State obligations, provide interpretation of rights and provides guidance for implementation of the treaties at the national level. Current action plans developed with support from UNICEF and UNDP include the action plan on the CRC and the UPR National Plan of Action which we continue to encourage their implementation.

We are well aware that the increase in ratifications and individual complaints has all led to growing and often competing demands and requirements to member States. In this regard, States themselves have realised that a more comprehensive, sustainable and efficient approach to reporting and follow-up is needed, given the demands not only of Treaty Bodies but also the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic review , visits by Special Procedures mandate holders and the Regional Human Rights System. States are increasingly improving their governmental structures to engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms by setting up National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRFs). Such structures should contribute to transform reporting from a perceived burden to a concrete benefit for States and ultimately rights holders. The IMC in Zimbabwe established back in the 1990s has provided an inter-ministerial mechanism for complying with Zimbabwe's obligations under various treaties. Let me take an opportunity here to encourage Government to adequately resource the IMC in order for it to clearly undertake its

very important mandate while I encourage policy makers here present to support IMC members in different ministries so that they can undertake their tasks.

Amid six outstanding reports as aforementioned and three core international human rights treaties and other related optional Protocols still to be ratified, I would like to commend the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and other Government Ministries for working in collaboration with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UNCT in Zimbabwe to identify ways in which the United Nations can provide technical assistance to Zimbabwe towards enhancing timely fulfillment of its treaty body obligation particularly with regard to reporting and implementation of recommendations.

From 1-3 August 2017, members of the Zimbabwe Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, responsible for State party reporting and the implementation of recommendations in collaboration with other stakeholders will be attending a three a training at this venue. Members of the IMC are composed of representatives from various Government Ministries that you all are heading. I would like to take this opportunity to request that in your capacity as Head of Government Ministries, we would appreciate your collaboration in ensuring that the IMC functions effectively particularly in terms of State party reporting. We hope that after the sensitization workshop, you will have a much better understating of Zimbabwe's obligation as a State party to international human rights treaties and other human rights mechanisms and a better appreciation of the importance of human rights mechanisms on fostering the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level. I hope that after this sensitization workshop and the three day training of member of the IMC, the IMC will play a much more proactive role to

enhance State party reporting to human rights mechanisms and the implementation of concluding observations or recommendations from human rights mechanisms within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

As UNCT, we remain at all times committed to supporting you in endeavors on state reporting and as is happening today, we can draw on our global resource network in supporting capacity needs of states. I wish you all a successful training with meaningful results in due course.

Thank you.