

ZHRC Statement on the New Political Dispensation and Prospects of a Zimbabwe Where Human Rights are Protected, Promoted and Enforced

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) acknowledges the position taken by the Second Executive President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, His Excellency Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa in his inauguration speech delivered on the 24th of November 2017 to focus on Unity, Peace and the Development of our Nation. In particular the ZHRC is encouraged by the President's declaration that he intends to serve Zimbabwe *"as the President of all citizens regardless of colour, creed, religion, tribe, totem or political affiliation."* This is a critical declaration as it resonates with the core principles of human rights, premised on the tenets of equality and non-discrimination as provided for in Section 56 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (Number 20) Act, 2013.

In line with this positive trajectory, the ZHRC expectantly looks forward to the President and his new administration tackling some of the critical human rights issues that the country has been grappling with over the years as detailed below:

- 1) The ZHRC applauds the President for recognising the need to compensate all those who lost their land during the implementation of the country's Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). In the same vein, the ZHRC encourages the President and the new Government of Zimbabwe to consider ending the eviction of the few remaining white farmers in recognition of their citizenship status and to ensure that they are treated like any other Zimbabwean in the allocation of land.
- 2) The President in his speech encouraged the many Zimbabweans who have left the country over the years to come back home and help in the rebuilding of our Nation. This is a bold acknowledgment of the fact that these Zimbabweans remain citizens of our country regardless of where they may be currently resident. As a first step towards embracing these citizens, and accepting the immense contributions they have made towards sustaining our country through diaspora remittances, the Government is encouraged to put in place measures to ensure that they are able to vote from their current locations during the 2018 general elections as provided for in Section 67 (3) (a) of the Constitution which gives every Zimbabwean citizen above the age of eighteen (18) years the right to vote. In line with the same provision, prisoners should in our view also be allowed to exercise their right to vote.

- 3) The ZHRC has noted the call by the President for Zimbabweans who externalized foreign currency and other assets to repatriate such resources by the end of February 2018 or face prosecution. This is an important call in that if heeded, the repatriation of these resources will go a long way in kick-starting the growth of our economy and easing the cash shortages which the country has been struggling with for over a year. The cash crisis has had a negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights by Zimbabweans including the right to dignity, as citizens including the elderly and persons with disabilities have been forced to sleep in bank queues as they seek to access their money.
- 4) Whilst acknowledging that building peace and reconciliation falls within the mandate of our sister commission, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC), the ZHRC encourages the New Government to address the issue of the Gukurahundi disturbances that took place in the Matabeleland Region and parts of the Midlands Province in the early to mid-1980s. Addressing this issue of national concern will help in ensuring closure on the part of the affected families, whilst at the same time ensuring that Zimbabweans are able to move forward together in the spirit of forgiveness and oneness.

The ZHRC acknowledges that there are many other human rights issues that require the attention of the President and his new administration. However, the Commission expresses the view that addressing the above issues will play a critical role in setting the country on a positive path and this in turn will help in progressively addressing the other myriad human rights challenges that require attention.

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