



**ZIMBABWE**

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

**BY HEAD OF DELEGATION OF ZIMBABWE**

**HONOURABLE MINISTER FOR WOMEN AFFAIRS, GENDER AND COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT**

**DR. Olivia. N. MUCHENA**

**51<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION  
AGAINST WOMEN**

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATE PARTIES UNDER  
ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

**Madam Chairperson,**

**Distinguished Members of the Committee,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

## **INTRODUCTION**

It is an honour to appear before this Committee to discuss the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Combined Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe on the implementation of the CEDAW. I look forward to engaging with you in what I expect to be frank, fruitful and constructive dialogue today.

The Government of Zimbabwe attaches great importance to this mechanism and values the opportunity to assess the achievements of our country in the promotion and protection of women's rights. The high level and multi sectoral delegation that I have brought with me today is a clear testimony to the importance we attach to this review process.

I have the honour to introduce to you, members of my delegation who include

- My colleague, The Minister of State, Organ for National Healing and Reconciliation and Integration in the Office of the President and Cabinet, Honourable Sekai M. Holland,
- Permanent Secretary in my Ministry Dr. Sylvia J. Utete Masango,
- Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the UN Office in Geneva, Ambassador James Manzou

- Deputy Commissioner General, ZRP (Home Affairs) Josephine Shambare
- as well as officials representing Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, and the Public Protector's Office. We also recognise the presence of two Commissioners of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission.

Madam Chair I wish the house to note that since the submission of the national report, three political parties signed the Global Political Agreement (GPA) that gave birth to the Inclusive Government which facilitates among other things the economic stabilisation and growth, promotion of equality, national healing, cohesion and unity.

My statement will therefore focus on the progress that Government of Zimbabwe has made in the promotion and protection of women's rights since the submission of our report in 2009.

## **CONSTITUTION MAKING PROCESS**

Madam Chair,

In 2009, Zimbabwe embarked on a Constitution making process in line with Article VI of the GPA which states *that "negotiations for the new constitution should be mindful of the need to ensure that the new constitution deepens our democratic values and principles and protection of equality of all citizens particularly the enhancement of full citizenship and equality of women."* This process opened a window of opportunity for the women of Zimbabwe and Government to address the gender gaps that exist under the current Constitution.

To engender the constitution making process, the Select Committee of Parliament (COPAC), a committee mandated to spearhead the constitution making process, has a 36% female representation. Further, of the 17 thematic committees constituted to lead

the constitution process, one thematic Committee was devoted to women and gender issues. However, gender was also mainstreamed in other thematic committees.

In April 2009, the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development (MoWAGCD) held a National Women's Consultative Conference on the new Constitution. From the conference, the women of Zimbabwe came up with a common position on the inclusion of social and economic rights, equal representation in decision making positions and prohibition of discrimination on the basis of customary law and other norms and practices. As a result, more women than men participated in the outreach process as reflected;

- 39.44% females,
- 37% males,
- 22.64% youths and children and
- 0.72% people with special needs.

The constitution making process is still ongoing and my Ministry will continue to actively engage all stakeholders to ensure that the rights of women are fully incorporated.

However, Zimbabwe is likely to face resource constraints in its efforts to educate the women and society on gender equality provisions of the new constitution and to realign current policies and legislation.

## **WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

Zimbabwe is implementing the following measures so that women access justice:

- **Establishment of the Family Law Courts**

The Government is working towards the establishment of a family law court. The objective of the initiative is to establish a simple, non-adversarial and specialised court

system that incorporates mediation and reconciliatory strategies, and mainstream gender in the justice delivery system.

- **Marriage Law Reform**

Government reiterates its commitment to reforming the marriage law regime. Although the project has taken a considerable period, Government has not relented in its efforts to harmonise marriage laws to ensure that a woman's choice to opt for one type of marriage does not result in any form of discrimination against her. Following the presentation of the Bill to Cabinet as highlighted in the Report, Cabinet instructed that a research be conducted to determine the prevalence of each type of marriage and its impact on women. The research will further investigate challenges which communities face in registering marriages and the level of awareness of the illegality and consequences of early marriages. The research will enable Government to amend the laws from an informed position during the course of this year (2012).

- **Legal Literacy**

To enhance women's access to justice, Government introduced a legal literacy programme. The objective of the programme is to explain family related legislation in a simplified form, A handbook and training manual on Family Laws, as well as simplified pamphlets on the family and other women related laws have been developed and published.

Subject to availability of resources, it is Government's intention that these simplified pamphlets be made available in local languages to women and communities throughout Zimbabwe.

## **GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING AND GENDER RESPONSIVE ECONOMIC POLICY MANAGEMENT**

Madam Chair,

To complement the initiative on gender budgeting, Government is implementing a programme on Gender Responsive Economic Policy Management. The programme is aimed at strengthening the capacity of economic planners in government and other policy makers to formulate and implement economic policies and strategies that are gender sensitive. To date, sixty two (62) senior officers responsible for budget formulation and policy planning from various ministries have been trained.

### **STRENGTHENING OF THE NATIONAL GENDER MACHINERY**

In line with the Beijing Platform for Action, critical area on "**Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women**" Government continues its effort of strengthening the National Gender Machinery. Gender Focal Persons in all line Ministries were reconstituted and appointments were made at Director Level. The Gender Focal Persons have been capacitated in using the CEDAW framework and the 28 targets of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development as gender mainstreaming strategies in their respective Ministries.

However, the effectiveness of the national gender machinery is being compromised by limited budgetary allocation and public service freeze on recruitment due to resource constraints.

### **WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

The Government realises the important role women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building. In this regard, the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration, enshrined in the GPA has three Ministers, one of whom is female. The Organ is spearheading the establishment of a National Infrastructure for Peace through an Act of Parliament to provide a regulatory framework for sustainable peace and reconciliation.

Further, a Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC) which was constituted to ensure the full implementation of the GPA has 25% female representation.

In line with Article 8 of the Convention, the Government continues to deploy women in peace keeping missions. Since 2009, the Zimbabwe Republic Police has deployed 368 officers to UN missions in several countries and regions. Of the officers deployed in Liberia 40% were women, Timor Leste 14.6% and Sudan, Darfur 100% . Seven women assumed the position of Commander during the UN missions.

## **WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS AND DECISION MAKING**

Madam Chair

In line with Article 7 of the Convention, Government remains committed to eliminating discrimination against women in political and public life. Zimbabwe has had a female Vice President since 2005 and a female Deputy Prime Minister since 2009, President of the Senate, Deputy Speaker of Parliament and the Judge President of the High Court between 2006 to 2010. Both the Human Rights Commission and the Electoral Commission have 44.4% female representation while the Public Service Commission has 67% female representation. At other levels of decision making, 29% are Supreme Court and High Court Judges, 41% Magistrates, and 42% Administrative Court Judges. In the police force 25% of Deputy Commissioner Generals are women, 40% Commissioners and 36% Senior Assistant Commissioners. In the defence forces they are 7% women colonel, 13% wing commanders and 16% flight Lieutenants, In the prison service, there are 50% women Assistant Commissioners.

Madam Chair, women of Zimbabwe have taken advantage of the Constitution making process and lobbied for the inclusion of the 50% quota system in the new constitution in line with the SADC and AU Protocol. The principle of gender parity was fully endorsed by

the people and their traditional leaders in the outreach programme during the constitution making process.

## **ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

### **Effective Referral Systems**

Zimbabwe has worked to ensure the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act through a comprehensive multi-sectoral response which has resulted in the adoption of three models: *Strengthened Referral Pathway, Traditional Referral Systems and One Stop Centres.*

- The Strengthening of the **Referral pathway model** seeks to increase access to life saving multi-sectoral response needs of survivors. As such, coordination meetings of gender based violence working groups (composed of cross section of the community) are regularly convened at district and provincial level to ensure that all partners provide accessible, prompt, confidential and appropriate services to survivors of gender based violence.
- **One Stop Centre** model is being piloted in Manicaland Province where all services are housed under one roof. The project has been established at district level to ensure a link between local communities and more established province-based services. This project has assisted in increasing domestic violence survivor's access to services including health care, psychosocial support and legal aid.

### **4ps Campaign on Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence**

In 2010, Government launched the Campaign to extend the 16 Days to 365 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence underpinned by the Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence. The Campaign is promoting the 4Ps concept which focuses on

**Prevention, Protection, Participation and Programmes.** As part of the campaign, information on Domestic Violence Act and other laws have been translated in local languages and distributed to rural, communities.

### **Engaging Men and Boys**

The Ministry is actively involved with PADARE a men's forum on gender that engages men and boys against gender based violence. The organisation's guiding principle is "Men of quality are not afraid of equality."

## **WOMEN AND HEALTH**

Since the submission of Combined CEDAW Report in 2009, the following are some of the initiatives introduced to give effect to article 12 of the Convention:

- **Rolling out of the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality (Carmma) In Zimbabwe**

To further strengthen women's reproductive health rights a Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality (CARMMA) was launched in 2010. The campaign which ran under the theme: "**Zimbabwe Cares: No Woman Should Die While Giving Life**" sought to accelerate the availability and use of universally accessible quality sexual and reproductive health services that are critical for the reduction of maternal mortality.

- **Revitalization of Maternal Waiting Homes (MWH)**

The programme was commissioned in 2010 with the target of revitalizing at least one Maternal Waiting Home per district in the initial phase of the programme. To date 62 out of the 72 districts MWHs have been revitalized. Revitalization of MWHs has improved institutional deliveries and reduced maternal mortality.

- **Free Maternal and Child Care**

The Government launched in 2011 a Health Transition Fund. The fund will ensure the provision of free maternal and child health services by all public health facilities.

- **Family Planning Services:**

Zimbabwe has an overall contraceptive prevalence rate of **60.2%** and the knowledge of Family planning methods is almost universal, above **95%**.

However Madam Chair, the health sector continues to experience high attrition of skilled labour which has negatively affected service delivery. Furthermore the suspension of the Global Fund Round 11 will have a negative effect on the achievement made on the health delivery system.

## **WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

Madam Chair,

The Government of Zimbabwe realises that empowering women economically is an essential part of addressing poverty and security of rights in the home. As such economic independence and empowerment, has been employed as one of the key strategies to achieving gender equality. Informed by this position, the following are some of the measures introduced:

- **Medium Term Plan**

The Medium Term Plan (MTP) approved by Government in June 2011, is a blueprint guiding economic policy over the next four years to 2015. The plan has set the Mainstreaming of Gender into economic activities as one of the National Priorities. To this end, the plan seeks to ensure the full participation of women and girls in all sectors of the economy as well as in all economic development programmes.

- **Broad Based Women Economic Empowerment Framework**

The Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development in partnership with the World Bank has come up with a Broad-based Women's Economic Empowerment framework to ensure that women effectively participate in key sectors of the economy such as mining, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture. The framework is designed to serve women from all backgrounds and to be applied across all sectors, hence broad-based. The overall objective is to address the economic manifestations of poverty among women by facilitating women's access to, and control of resources and opportunities and accrued benefits in mainstream economy.

The implementation of this framework will require adequate resources.

- **Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act**

Madam Chairperson,

In 2007 Government enacted the Indigenisation and Economic *Empowerment* [Chapter 14:33]. Section 3 of the Act empowers Government to specifically recognise women in the measures taken to implement the Act. Other special groups include young persons and persons living with disabilities.

Government has intensified the implementation of the indigenization programs through the unveiling of Community Share Ownership Trusts and Employee Share Ownership Schemes. .The Trusts are a vehicle for broad-based participation in shareholding in businesses by communities living in the area. The proceeds from the participation are used for the provision of social and economic infrastructure for communities such as schools, hospitals, roads, water and sanitation thereby addressing women's practical and strategic needs. The Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development is currently lobbying for adequate representation of women on Community Trust Boards, as well as women benefitting from other Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Programmes.

There is need to build capacity of women in Financial literacy to enable them to understand and embrace indigenisation and further to migrate from informal business associations into macro ventures.

- **Women's Development Fund**

The Women's Development Fund, a revolving loan fund, was created to promote economic empowerment of women at grassroots level. Cognisant of women's living realities and challenges, no collateral security is required in accessing the loans. A total of 2545 women across the country benefitted from the Fund in 2010. The loan repayment rate within one year was 70%. The initial allocation of US 1 million has been increased to US 3 million in 2012

- **Internal Lending and Savings Schemes**

An Internal Lending and Saving Schemes meant to build a capital base from group member's regular contributions is being promoted by Government in partnership with CARE International. To date, 329 Saving and Credit groups throughout the country with a total of 2096 membership have been established. Of these, 1796 are women. The programme incorporates basic business management training. Projects undertaken to include among others, mining and agro-based initiatives.

## **Women's Council**

Having noted the lack of coordination of programming around women's issues, Government has started the process of establishing a Women's Council through an Act of Parliament. The primary objective of the Women's Council is to ensure coordination and harmonization of the Gender machinery and the various women's organisations working in Zimbabwe. The creation of the Council will go a long way in ensuring that

human rights treaty based obligations are effectively implemented at national level including the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Madam Chair,

The progress made is being affected by the illegal economic sanctions imposed upon our country by some western countries.

In accordance with Article 4 of the GPA on sanctions and measures, We seek your support as we call upon those responsible to unconditionally remove the economic sanctions and measures as women and girls have borne most of the brunt of these..

Madam Chair,

**In conclusion** Zimbabwe remains committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. We look forward to continued cooperation and assistance with our partners to promote the advancement of women and girls.

My delegation will be happy to provide answers to any questions that you have concerning the measures taken by the Zimbabwean Government to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women as set out in our State Party Report.

I thank you