



Zimbabwe

Introductory Statement

By Head of Delegation of Zimbabwe

Honourable Minister of Women Affairs, Community, Small and
Medium Enterprises Development

75th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women

**Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties
Under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of
All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**

**Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

It is an honour and privilege for me and my delegation to appear before this eminent Committee to officially present the Republic of Zimbabwe's 6th Periodic Report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

At this juncture, allow me to introduce senior members of my delegation as follows:

- His Excellency, Ambassador Taonga Mushayavanhu, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations Office at Geneva;
- Honourable Chido Madiwa, Member of Parliament and Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development;
- Commissioner Tsitsi Choruma, Commissioner with the Public Service Commission;
- Ambassador Jonathan Wutawunashe, Secretary to the Service Commissions; and

- Mr. M. Matshiya, Permanent Secretary for Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development;

My delegation also includes of representatives of eight (8) other relevant line Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government, who will assist in responding to questions raised by this Committee.

Madam Chair,

We come here in the context of a new Dispensation in Zimbabwe, which is actively committed to comprehensive reforms and is open to constructive ideas as it accelerates the alignment of laws to the new Constitution in order to address legislative and policy deficiencies.

The Report that I am presenting today was informed by the Harmonized Guidelines on Reporting under the International Human Rights Treaties. It was compiled under the auspices of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, with wide consultations with various stakeholders, including Civil Society Organisations and National Human Rights Institutions.

The Report captures responses to recommendations and concerns of this Committee on the State Party's 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Combined Periodic Report. Further, it addresses concerns raised through the list of issues and questions shared by the Committee following its consideration of our State Party Report for the 6th reporting cycle.

Madam Chair,

I wish to reiterate that my Government is highly committed to ensuring that matters of discrimination against women and all other related gender inequalities are addressed in a manner that conforms to international human rights standards. To this effect, the State Party in 2013 adopted a very progressive Constitution which promotes gender equality and women's rights. Further, the Government of Zimbabwe continues to implement legislative and administrative measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

Madam Chair,

1. Definition of Discrimination against Women

- In terms of complying with the Definition of Discrimination against Women as outlined in Article 1 of the Convention, the State Party through Section 56 of the Constitution provides for Equality and Non-Discrimination and sets

grounds for non-discrimination which include sex, gender, marital status and pregnancy, among others.

2. Constitutional Provisions to Promote Gender Equality

- Further, one of the most progressive features of the Constitution is its expanded Declaration of Rights, which provides for elaboration of certain rights, including the rights of women. Section 80 of the Constitution provides that every woman has full and equal dignity of the person with men, including equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities.

Madam Chair,

- During the period under review, the State Party undertook a process of aligning the National Laws to the new Constitution, with laws addressing gender and the rights of women being prioritised.
- Of note are the following pieces of legislation, which are paramount to the advancement of women's rights and have been scheduled on the legislative agenda for the 9th session of Parliament.
 - a) **Public Entities Corporate Governance Act** was promulgated in 2018. Section 7 of the Act gives effect

to the Constitutional Provisions in Section 17 on gender balance by stating that (a) binds a *line Minister to ensure that, so far as practicable, there are equal numbers of men and women on the board of every public entity for which he or she is responsible.*

- b) **Labour Amendment Bill** will address the issue of equal pay for work of equal value for both men and women in line with ILO principles.
- c) **Harmonised Marriages Bill**, which seeks to harmonise all marriage laws in Zimbabwe and to criminalise all child marriages.
- d) **Guardianship of Minors Amendment Bill** confers equal rights to both parents with regards to custody and guardianship. **The Children's Bill** seeks to align different interpretations in the definition of a child and **the Child Justice Bill** sets the minimum age of criminal responsibility at ten years.
- e) **Education Amendment Bill**, which provides for the progressive realisation of the right to a basic State-funded education. It also recognises the right of a pregnant girl to continue with her education.

f) **Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act amended to incorporate minimum mandatory sentencing for rape and sexual offences** will ensure that Section 64 of the Act provides for “minimum mandatory sentencing for rape and sexual offences”. The minimum sentences proposed in the amendment range from five (5) years to 30 years depending on the gravity of the offence.

3. Protection of Women against Violence

Madam Chair,

The State Party has also put in place policy and administrative measures to ensure the protection of women from violence. The State Party adopted a National Programme on GBV Prevention and Response (2016-2020), succeeding the National GBV Strategy (2012-2015). Through the implementation of the National Programme, the State Party has made the following strides:

- ✓ Establishment of One Stop Centres (OSCs) and Community Based Shelters for survivors of Gender Based Violence.
- ✓ Development of the GBV Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) specifically for the establishment

of One Stop Centres, establishment of Community Based Shelters, provision of Community Based Counselling as well as on provision of legal aid. These Standard Operating Procedures have assisted in standardising GBV services offered by different players.

- ✓ Capacity Building of service providers on survivor friendly approaches.
- ✓ Development of a National GBV referral pathway
- ✓ Operationalization of a well-coordinated Victim Friendly System (VFS) comprising the Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) under the police, the Victim Friendly Courts (VFC) under the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) and the Victim Friendly Clinics under the Ministry of Health and Child Care.
- ✓ Continuous awareness raising on GBV through various mediums.

4. Temporary Special Measures

Madam Chair,

The State Party has implemented a Temporary Special Measure established through the Constitution in terms of sections 120 and 124, which provide for a reserved quota for women in the National Assembly and election to the Senate through a system

of proportional representation. The Electoral Act has since been amended to reflect the aforementioned provisions of the Constitution.

Women's representation in Parliament more than doubled for 17% following the 2008 general election, to 31% in the elections 2018.

However, the Constitutional quota is set to expire in 2023 and in this regard, the State Party is currently undertaking Constitutional amendments to extend the quota by two more terms. A Constitutional Amendment Bill has already been gazetted and will be debated in Parliament in March 2020.

5. Negative Social and Cultural Patterns that lead to Discrimination

Madam Chair,

In terms of progress in addressing social and cultural patterns that lead to discrimination and stereotyped roles for women, the State Party has developed a National Action Plan and Communication Strategy on ending Child Marriages, which is being rolled out in all the country's Provinces. Further, the State Party is continuously engaging with traditional and

religious leaders with a view to transforming negative cultural and social norms that fuel discrimination against women.

6. Trafficking in Persons

Madam Chair,

As highlighted in the State Party Report, the Government of Zimbabwe has made significant strides in combating Trafficking in Persons and in this regard, the State Party has improved in its compliance to the Palermo Protocol which has resulted in the State Party being upgraded from tier 3 to tier 2. In addition, the State Party is in the process of amending the Trafficking in Persons Legislation to incorporate a comprehensive definition of the crime of trafficking in line with the Palermo protocol. Principles for the amendment are already in place.

7. Education

Madam Chair,

In terms of measures to address discrimination against women in the field of Education, the Education Act provides for compulsory education for every child of school going age. Further, the State Party has also put in place administrative measures to address barriers to women's and girls' education. Some of these measures are as follows:

- ✓ Unfreezing of teaching posts, resulting in filling of 3 000 posts in 2019 and 5000 in 2020.
- ✓ Construction of 2000 new schools, rehabilitation of dilapidated school buildings, and provision of disability access features.
- ✓ Construction of accommodation for female students in tertiary institutions. To date, two hostels for two Polytechnic colleges and three hostels for Universities have been constructed, with each having a capacity of 352 students.
- ✓ Adoption and implementation of the Non-Formal education policy.
- ✓ Review of the curriculum for both Education Ministries with thrust on a heritage based Education 5.0 which emphasizes on teaching, research, community outreach, innovation and industrialisation

8. Employment

Madam Chair,

On employment, the State Party has a draft Labour Amendment Bill in place, which is designed to address the issue of Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value in line with International

Labour Organisation principles. The public service is already ahead in implementing the ILO convention on Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value

The Public Service Act is currently being amended to include a code of conduct that will address issues of sexual harassment. The principles to amend this Act have already been approved by Cabinet.

9. Health

Madam Chair,

The State Party has experienced a drop in Maternal Mortality Ratio, with the 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey reporting that the Maternal Mortality ratio has declined from 651/100 000 live births in 2015 to 462/100 000 live births in 2019. This significant drop has been attributed to a robust maternal and newborn health system built around the health systems strengthening framework. Some of the measures in place include:

- Establishment and refurbishment of Maternity Waiting Homes (MWH);
- Removal of maternity fees at State Health Institutions;

- Operationalization of 15 midwifery training schools;
- Improvements in Antenatal Care (ANC) coverage, including in the rural areas.; and
- Improvement of rural women's access to family-planning information and services.

10. Economic and Social Life

Madam Chair,

The State Party has introduced a number of women empowerment programmes, especially in the key economic sectors, namely, mining, agriculture, tourism and trade. Measures are also in place to strengthen women's access to finance and some of the initiatives in place include:

- ✓ The adoption of a Financial Inclusion Strategy, which has seen the introduction of a number of empowerment loans targeting women and the establishment of the Women's Micro-Finance Bank, which has seen 75 451 women opening bank accounts with the Bank and disbursement of 46 879 loans to women amounting to \$19 658 158 between August 2018 and November 2019

- ✓ The Women's Development Fund which has to date benefitted a total of 2 279 women's groups, with a total loan amount of \$4 281 107.
- ✓ Implementation of the SMEs loan facility where a 30% quota has been reserved for women.

11. Challenges

Madam Chair,

Some of the challenges faced by the State Party in the implementation of the Convention include the following:

- Economic challenges due to the continued imposition of illegal economic sanctions on the country;
- The absence of balance of payments support from the international financial institutions, which has forced Government to largely depend on resources mobilised from the domestic market.
- Effects of climate change that continue to impact negatively on the livelihoods of women, particularly those in marginalized areas, by imposing a huge burden on women's access to water, means of production, energy, shelter and food.

12. Conclusion

Madam Chair,

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Zimbabwe remains committed to ensuring the promotion and protection of women's rights through the implementation of Constitutional, Legislative and Administrative measures and the fulfilment of its Treaty obligations under CEDAW and other key gender equality instruments. My Government will continue to work closely with all stakeholders and development partners to ensure the full realisation of women's rights in Zimbabwe.

Madam Chair,

To this end, my delegation is ready to fully cooperate with this Committee and to respond to all questions concerning the measures taken by the State Party to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women as set out in the State Party's 6th Periodic Report.

I thank you.

