



STATEMENT ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AFRICAN UNION

AFRICA DAY

25 MAY 2013

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) joins the rest of the African continent in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU). This is the day when Africans celebrate unity and the long held objectives of self-determination, rule of law and democracy.

This year's theme is Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. This theme reminds African leaders of the need for a coordinated and unified African voice in addressing the current political, economic and social problems facing the continent. In addition the theme generates the hope that Africa can rise above its challenges to realise its social, economic and political potential for the good of its citizens. As Africans, this is the day to reflect on our collective ideals and aspirations and re-commit ourselves to establish democratic institutions that promote and protect human rights, the rule of law and allow accountable and transparent governments in Africa. However, this commitment has not been fulfilled as demonstrated by problems in countries such as Zimbabwe, Mali and Libya, which are marred by human rights violations, disregard for the rule of law and undemocratic institutions.

Zimbabwe has been ruled by a coalition government since February 2009 which was facilitated by the AU following the disputed 2008 elections. This year it is due to hold elections. It is thus the duty of the AU to ensure that the socio-political environment is conducive for the conducting of free and fair elections. More particularly the AU should ensure that sufficient interventions and measures have been put in place to prevent politically motivated violence

that has featured in most elections since independence. Indeed Pan Africanism and African Renaissance cannot be achieved if some African governments deny their people the right to freely participate in the governance of their countries contrary to the AU Constitutive Act, which makes popular participation through free and fair elections an obligation for member states.

The Forum urges the AU as the parent guarantor of the Global Political Agreement to:

- ensure that the socio-political environment is conducive for the holding of free and fair elections.
- implore the Government of Zimbabwe to respect all human rights and take necessary steps to protect rights and freedoms enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Ensure that parties, candidates and citizens are free to communicate their views to the electorate, and that they enjoy equality of access to the public media
- urge the GoZ to ratify the African Charter for Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). The ACDEG provides for democracy, rule of law, human rights, and the culture of democracy, democratic institutions, democratic elections and sanctions in cases of unconstitutional changes of government.

Forum Members

Amnesty International-Zimbabwe
Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe
Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
Justice for Children Trust
Legal Resources Foundation
Media Institute of Southern Africa-Zimbabwe
Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe
Non-violent Action and Strategies for Social Change
Research and Advocacy Unit
Students Solidarity Trust
Transparency International-Zimbabwe
Women of Zimbabwe Arise

Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of the Offender
Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights
Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust
Zimbabwe Human Rights Association
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
Zimbabwe Peace Project
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association