



Press Statement on the Resolutions of the International Conference on Transitional Justice in Zimbabwe Regarding the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) strives for a victim-centered transitional justice mechanism that works with and for all Zimbabweans. For the past 15 years, the Forum has worked with victims of organized violence and torture to find redress. It has created platforms for dialogue in dealing with Zimbabwe's past including the First International Conference on Transitional Justice held in October 2012.

Zimbabwe's new constitution signed into law on 22 May 2013 establishes the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) for a period of ten years. One of the major functions of the NPRC is to ensure post-conflict justice, healing and reconciliation.

The Forum, in collaboration with the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), Capetown, South Africa, hosted the Second International Conference on Transitional Justice from 9 - 11 October 2013. The conference was held in Johannesburg. It brought stakeholders from a cross-section of Zimbabwean and regional civil society, government institutions, churches, farmers, labour, local and regional media houses, international organisations, development partners and academics. A total of 78 delegates participated in the conference.

World-renowned experts and former commissioners made presentations on Kenya, Guatemala, Germany, Sierra-Leone, South Africa and Northern Ireland. The objective of the conference was to highlight how to set up an effective commission, how the commission should run, challenges faced by other commissions, and how to implement the recommendations coming out

of the conference. Professor Pablo de Greiff, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence, delivered the keynote address. In his address, the Special Rapporteur noted that Truth Commissions do not start from scratch but derive from the work done by civil society organisations.

The conference agreed on the following points of action regarding the NPRC in Zimbabwe:

- I. Research, Documentation and Archiving: The need for collation of existing historical narratives of the past.
- II. Ensuring public participation and input into the NPRC draft bill, and processes leading to the appointment of commissioners and its work, so that there is ownership of the process by the citizens; and to ensure that people of unquestionable integrity, impartiality and competency are appointed to the NPRC.
- III. Ensuring that the NPRC operates in a transparent and accountable manner as set out in the constitution.
- IV. The setting up of the NPRC, its work, debates, public meetings and all related activities must be broadcast through print, radio and electronic media at every stage to keep the public informed and involved.
- V. Stakeholders to assist the NPRC in the identification of victims and the provision of any other information relevant to the work of the NPRC.
- VI. The government must ensure that there are adequate protection mechanisms for victims and witnesses who will testify before the NPRC as well as institutions that will provide relevant information. Civil society to set up a monitoring mechanism to ensure the protection of the victims in their interaction with the commission.
- VII. The establishment of a Working Group, whose framework should include work on structures to implement various recommendations on transitional justice.

While the Forum pledges its unwavering support to the NPRC, it encourages the government of Zimbabwe and all stakeholders currently working on the NPRC process to take into consideration these action points put across by participants at the conference. The Forum further draws the attention of the state, all institutions, agencies of government at every level and non-state actors, to section 235 of the constitution, which protects the independence, impartiality, integrity, and effectiveness of all independent commissions.

Participating Organisations

Amnesty International (Zimbabwe), Bulawayo Agenda, Church and Civil Society Forum, Commercial Farmers Union, Counselling Services Unit, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, Gweru East Trust for Development, Heal Zimbabwe Trust, Human Rights Watch, Hwange Agenda, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Institute of Peace Leadership and Governance, International Commission of Jurists, International Crisis Group, Justice for Children, Law Society of Zimbabwe, Media Institute for Southern Africa, Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe, Midlands State University, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Musasa Project, National Association for Non-Governmental Organisations, Nhimbe Trust, Non-Violent Action and Strategies for Social Change, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - Regional Office for Southern Africa, Organ on National Healing Reconciliation and Integration, Research and Advocacy Unit, Transparency International (Zimbabwe), Veritas, Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, Youth Dialogue Action Network, Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of the Offender, Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights, Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust, Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers Union, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Zimbabwe Human Rights Association, Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Zimbabwe Peace Project, Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Associations

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