



Zimbabwe
HUMAN RIGHTS
NGO Forum

25 May 2016- Statement on Africa Day

Today, 25th May, Africa celebrates its day with a particular focus on the rights of women. Africa Day marks the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on May 25th, 1963, which was then established as the African Union (AU) in 2001 with different and more comprehensive objectives to meet the demands of the new millennium.

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) joins the rest of the world in commemorating Africa Day as well as the 30th anniversary of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights established in 1986. The theme for this year's commemorations is "African Year of Human Rights, with particular focus on the rights of women".

The theme recognises that 2016 marks the second consecutive year that gender equality and women's empowerment are adopted as the highest priority on the continental agenda, based on the AU's implementation framework, which aims to advance gender equality through the acceleration of the implementation of global and regional decisions on gender equality and women's empowerment. Internationally the year 2016 also commemorates 36 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), including the 21st anniversary of the 1995 Beijing Declaration, which outlined key global policies on gender equality.

The Forum rejoices in Zimbabwe's membership of the AU including the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (African Commission) and its consequent obligations to implement the AU framework and African Commission recommendations. The Forum recognises the AU's significant role in unifying the African continent to collectively address issues of gender disparities and women's empowerment. In this context the Forum acknowledges the Zimbabwe government's contributions through the adoption of a 2013 Constitution that addressed some gender sensitive provisions as demanded by Zimbabwean nationals, including the creation of a Gender Commission. The Commission was established to promote gender equality and oversee the implementation of regional and international instruments such as the CEDAW; the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Women's Protocol) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. The Forum is cognizant of the fact that the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR) has the mandate to interpret and implement provisions of the Maputo Protocol and we thus encourage Zimbabwe and other African states to ratify the Protocol establishing the AfCHPR to enable women to seek remedies at the continent's principal judicial body.

The Government of Zimbabwe has made notable gains in promoting the rights of women. These include the upholding of gender equality as one of the Constitution's founding values and principles; the establishment of the Gender Commission though its not fully functional; outlawing of child marriages; national efforts through Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF) for the period 2016-2020 to empower specific groups, including survivors of gender-based violence, people with disabilities, young women, and women workers with knowledge and information in order to create a conducive environment for them to benefit equally from opportunities.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains one of the most common and serious human rights violations in Zimbabwe. Despite the acknowledged gains women and girls continue to face numerous challenges in the political, social and economic spheres as a consequence of gender inequalities and imbalances. The ZUNDAF 2014 Zimbabwe Country Analysis Report noted that women's enjoyment of their rights is adversely affected by harmful cultural and religious practices.

Zimbabwean challenges, also prevalent in other African countries, demand collective solutions through inter-governmental institutions of the AU. The Forum takes comfort in government's membership in the AU, its capacity to adhere to the Union's policies and protocols and progressive steps it has taken for the realisation of gender equity. More can be done in this regard. In particular, whilst the Forum appreciates efforts by the government in repatriating women trafficked to Kuwait, we would urge Zimbabwe to address the structural and socio-economic challenges that have led women being rendered vulnerable to such heinous exploitation and violation of rights.

The Forum calls upon the Government of Zimbabwe:

To respect the independence of the Gender Commission and promote its viability through access to resources for the effective realisation of its mandate.

To ratify the Protocol to the ACHPR on the establishment of an African Court on Human and People's Rights to enable Zimbabwean women to approach the continent's principal court with complaints about human rights violations after exhaustion of domestic remedies. To respect women's rights as guaranteed in our constitution and the Maputo Women's Protocol).

The Forum also calls upon the AU to provide technical assistance to member states as well as strengthening its monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance and facilitate implementation of regional treaties and protocols.

Member organisations of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum

Forum Members

Amnesty International-Zimbabwe
Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe
Civic Education Network Trust
Counseling Services Unit
Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
Justice for Children
Legal Resources Foundation
Media Institute of Southern Africa-Zimbabwe

Media Monitoring Project 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