

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE HON MINISTER OF JUSTICE, LEGAL AND
PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE,
MR PATRICK A CHINAMASA (MP) AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL : 5 MARCH 2008

Mr President,
Madam High Commissioner,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me commence by wishing you well, Mr President, as you guide our deliberations in this the 7th Session of the Human Rights Council. My expression of goodwill goes also to all your team in the Extended Bureau and to the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights which facilitates our meetings here.

Under your leadership, Mr President, infact in a few weeks' time, the first group of states will appear before the new Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism. This will be historic; the UPR is accepted as the most significant innovation characteristic of the Human Rights Council as this sets it apart from the maligned and now defunct Human Rights Commission. We wish that process well and trust that for once, those who have for too long named and shamed some members for alleged violations of human rights, that they too will stand and be scrutinised for their own observance of these hallowed values. We should, however remain vigilant against those who still desire to peddle their hidden and despicable agendae here to pursue hegemonic political ends, instead of those of human rights properly understood and observed and promoted. On our part, we look forward to appearing before the UPR in 2011 as scheduled.

Zimbabwe joins other members in voicing our discontent with the Office of the High Commissioner for repeated dereliction of duty and failure to consult intergovernmental bodies in the preparation of important programmes such as the Strategic Management Plan. Is this out of disdain of members? We hope not but we continue to be amazed at the High Commissioner's continued disregard of the directive of her superior, the United Nations Secretary-General himself. Likewise, we deplore the increasingly interventionist practices which intrude into member states' affairs by this Office and some of the mandate holders. Simple courtesy and closer consultations could dispel many misgivings in this regard. Regrettably the Office of the High Commissioner sees itself as some deified oracle which spews out edicts we must all follow. The Office must be clear that its behaviour can only result in non-cooperation as many states will rightly reject this imperious pattern of behaviour.

Notwithstanding these observations, we remain committed to cooperating with the Office when it conducts itself appropriately. We expect the Office to remain close to its mandate and not debase its mission by pandering to the whims of the powerful and swayed by falsehoods of NGOs of dubious credentials.

Mr President, since my last appearance before this august body last year, the Ruling Party and Opposition Members of the Zimbabwe Parliament unanimously co-sponsored the enactment of Constitutional Amendment No. 18 (October 2007) which among other provisions, gives legal basis for the establishment of a Human Rights Commission which as an independent body, will act as a watchdog to ensure full observance and promotion of all human rights. The Constitutional Amendment and subsequent co-sponsorship of various pieces of legislation addressed opposition concerns and levelled the playing field in the run-up to the March 29 harmonised Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Authority elections.

Yet our detractors remain unrelenting in their condemnation of our government. When we sought to give substance to our people's economic, social and cultural rights through a belated equitable land restitution exercise, we drew the wrath of the United Kingdom, the USA the EU and the white Commonwealth countries. For nearly a decade now, Zimbabwe has endured an economic blockade characterised by the cutting off of development assistance, credit lines for essential medicines and balance of payment support, imposition of travel bans on key economic players and trade officials and a determined and well-funded media demonisation. Yet we know the design and the game's ends; we reject this Anglo-American treatment of Africa as their playground in which they can wantonly consign the majority indigenous people to the valleys of poverty while designating certain racial groups to a seeming permanent occupation of the heights of wealth. We remain opposed to the machinations of the West in their attempts to use their economic muscle to impose their unilateral views on Zimbabwe.

Undaunted, Zimbabwe marches on and in just over three (3) weeks, our people will once again exercise their civil and political rights as they go to vote for their president, legislature and local councillors. Everything is being done to ensure that these elections are conducted smoothly to ensure an out come that truly reflects the will of the Zimbabwe people. We resolutely pay no attention to our perennial detractors who have already rushed to judge those elections. At the end of it all, we shall have authentically elected Zimbabwe's new leaders; not some foreign anointed pseudo leaders.

Let me also say the following, after a number of member states criticised my government.

I find it utterly unacceptable to be lectured on good governance and democracy by an unelected United Kingdom Minister. It is also a pity that a

few other EU states join the UK in their stance, thus making this an unholy racist ganging up against us. Shame on them all!

In conclusion, Mr President, let me say for the umpteenth time that, human rights belong to all nations and are not gifts from the "developed" world. Zimbabwe remains committed to the noble goal of the full enjoyment of all human rights by all our people and wish it were the same ambition for other nations.

May I wish the Human Rights Council successful deliberations and a smooth run for the UPR mechanism.

I thank you