

*STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE P.A. CHINAMASA, MP,  
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*HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 61<sup>ST</sup> SESSION  
OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS,  
GENEVA, 17 MARCH 2005*

Mr Chairman,  
The High Commissioner For Human Rights,  
Distinguished Delegations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

May I commence by congratulating you, Mr Chairman, Ambassador Makarim Wibisono, upon your assumption of the heavy responsibility of leading this august Commission. I am confident that the Members of your Expanded Bureau will assist you well during the deliberations of this 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the Commission. That notwithstanding, your excellent public service record ensures that you will lead this Commission Session well.

I also wish to congratulate and welcome the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs Louise Arbour. Your task is an enormous one Madame. Rest assured that my country wishes you well and that we will cooperate with you as is necessary as you carry out your duties. In particular, we welcome your stated undertaking to put matters of social, economic and cultural rights on an equal footing with those of civil and political rights. It is time this anomaly was corrected. You start well, Madame.

Mr Chairman,

Some two weeks from today, the citizens of Zimbabwe will be voting for a new Parliament. This would be the sixth time since independence that our people are voting to choose a new Parliamentary leadership. Our Government is doing its best to ensure that our people are able to exercise this sacred right freely and peacefully. Our people embarked on a protracted 15-year war to ensure that they enjoy this right among other fundamental freedoms. As a revolutionary government, nay as a people's Government, we derive our legitimacy to govern from the mandate given us by the people of Zimbabwe expressed regularly in democratic elections. Because we earned our freedom the hard way through the shedding of the precious blood of our people, we brook no gratuitous advice from anyone purporting to tell us what freedom is or ought to be. In short, we hold in utter contempt the preachings of our erstwhile colonisers and oppressors on the subjects of freedoms, human rights, good governance and the rule of law. Our freedom roots are well anchored in Zimbabwean soil and there-from we derive our calling to fight for and defend our hard-won freedom and the sovereignty of our country. That is why we feel very strongly that we should be left alone freely to choose our leaders - even when our choices should prove to be unpalatable to outsiders whose interests and agenda are at variance with our own. Democracy is not an event but a process and as a young country we are thus far very proud of the achievements we have scored in the evolution of our democratic processes in a very short period of time since independence in 1980.

In order to match and comply with norms and standards evolving in the SADC Region in line with SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing the Conduct of democratic elections adopted by the SADC Summit in Mauritius in August 2004, we have effected Electoral Reforms whose overall effect has been a complete overhaul of the

institutions, processes and systems relating to Elections. This has rendered more transparent the manner we conduct our elections. Above all, the reforms have ensured greater participation of the population in the democratic process.

We have invited many foreign governments, institutions and individuals to observe us as we vote on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005. No-one should deny us, as a sovereign country and people, the right not to extend invitations to those countries which have imposed economic sanctions against our country and have been for the past five or so years been in the forefront of machinations to isolate Zimbabwe internationally. We have no moral obligation to invite governments which have biased and pre-conceived notions about the outcome of our elections

Mr Chairman,

It therefore is most odd that foreign powers who have colonial vested interests in our country should posture here and seek to lecture us on human rights. The United Kingdom Minister, Mr Bill Rammell, sought to pass judgement on the electoral process underway in Zimbabwe. Our people go to the polls on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005 under the most peaceful conditions desirable. We are not surprised that the United Kingdom and some of their allies in the West, should want to prejudge our elections because they know that they have backed a losing horse over all these years. British interference in our internal affairs commenced with their financing the founding of the opposition party and has continued on with their partisan hostile broadcasts beamed to the population of our country to sow dissent and lawlessness with the goal of unconstitutionally changing our government. Let me assure this august body that our enemies, led by the United Kingdom, will not succeed. Everything is being done to safeguard everyone's human rights beyond the elections. We make no claims to perfection

in human rights matters. What we do reject vehemently are lectures from those who disregard international law and violate the territorial integrity of sovereign states and brutalise their people under the bogus claim that a liberation mission is being accomplished. Zimbabwe today is demonised by the United Kingdom because we refuse to bend to their will. That is why we count on all peace-loving friendly countries in this esteemed Commission to uphold the right to all countries to be left alone to chart their destinies without the bullying from powerful but rogue states such as the United Kingdom.

Mr Chairman,

Zimbabwe is at one with the values espoused by the Commission on Human Rights. It is for this reason that we have followed and fully participated and engaged other members in the discourses attendant to the report of the High-Level Panel on "Threats, Challenges and Change" to the United Nations system. Some important issues have been raised on the changes, which might make the Commission better. We humbly submit that our fullest collective and critical attention should be given to this exercise. We are not yet convinced of the benefits to be derived from the so-called "universal membership" of the Commission on Human Rights. Nothing can surely be derived from a mere duplication of the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee, here in Geneva or elsewhere. The costs attendant to such a move could not be easily borne by the preponderant majority of the United Nations membership.

There is also the mooted new remit for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to report on the "situation of Human Rights worldwide". This is problematical on many fronts. We are already burdened by the seemingly prejudicial reporting of alleged human rights violations in almost exclusively developing countries. Wherefrom would come those impartial sources of information on the

alleged violations when the same are distinguished by their paucity right now? Why should the High Commissioner suddenly depend on these new warriors? Moreover, we should like the High Commissioner to report to the General Assembly and not the Security Council presently dominated by a few countries and in which the rest of humanity is not represented except for those serious cases such as genocide and war crimes.

Mr Chairman

Many countries do not see any serious attempt by the Panel to address the perennial double standards, which bedevil the operations of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Our currently flawed Office would surely need to be drastically reformed and tested before it can be proposed as a new Charter body of the United Nations. We say these things only to highlight how closely we are engaged in the exchanges which we trust will result in better observance and enjoyment of human rights for all without prejudice. The Commission on Human Rights would then be able to carry out its duties with proficiency and satisfaction for all concerned. The Office should not be amenable to manipulation by the powerful as is currently the case. The spotlight is only and always discriminately turned on those countries which are perceived not in good favour with powerful countries.

Mr Chairman,

My country welcomes constructive criticism from any quarter. We do however take exception to any attempt by anyone to shape us to their liking. We are who we are. Some chastise us for our falling health standards, for example. But, these same chastisers are the first ones to entice our young and bright newly graduated doctors and nurses out of our country by offering what I can only term bribery wages.

These same detractors go further deliberately to degrade other service deliveries in our country only to turn around and bleat that Zimbabwe has become a "basket case". We have faced many challenges recently but we have not failed our people. Our people have faith in their government, which works for their interests. It is this oneness with our people, which continues to blunt all those falsehoods you hear about Zimbabwe on human rights as much as on other issues. That is also why we are not moved by malevolent forces who seek to influence our elections by sponsoring so-called trade unionists to demonstrate at our borders or non governmental organisations to interfere in our internal democratic processes

Mr Chairman,

In conclusion, let me reiterate the commitment of my Government to work for the betterment of human rights in our own country first. Well-wishers in the international community are welcome to assist us in that endeavour. However, we shall work with our friends to defeat any chastising resolutions against us whose origin is in falsehoods about the obtaining situation of human rights in our country.

Thank you.

17 March 2005  
GENEVA