



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General
19 March 2025

Original: English

Human Rights Committee 143rd session

Summary record of the 4192nd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 7 March 2025, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Soh

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant
(continued)

Second periodic report of Zimbabwe (continued) (CCPR/C/ZWE/2;
CCPR/C/ZWE/QPR/2)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Zimbabwe joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Zimbabwe**, resuming his delegation's replies to the questions raised at the previous meeting, said that the overall aim of the Private Voluntary Organisations (Amendment) Bill was to regulate the operations of private voluntary organizations and bring his country's standards for the governance of such organizations into line with global standards. The more specific aims of the Bill were to combat financial crime, enhance transparency and accountability, transpose into law recommendations made by the Financial Action Task Force and limit foreign influence. Shortcomings in respect of terrorist financing and money-laundering were addressed in the Bill.
3. Correspondence with foreign entities, including civil society organizations, was not punishable under the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. Conduct that represented a threat to his country's interests, public order and public morals was, however, made a criminal offence in the Act, which had been designed to protect his country from isolated individuals or groups that connived with foreign Governments to inflict suffering on its people. Lawbreakers alone, not journalists or activists, were the focus of the Act, which did not in any way interfere with the freedom of expression.
4. Cyberbullying and online harassment were criminalized pursuant to the Cyber and Data Protection Act, which also established mechanisms for reporting breaches of data protection laws. Activities had been organized to raise awareness of the new Act.
5. His country was committed to the rule of law. Torture and inhumane treated were explicitly prohibited in the Constitution, and the legal framework ensured that all the country's people, including politicians and activists, were afforded due process and legal protections. Statements made under torture were not admissible as evidence. Everyone was equal before the law, and all claims of rights violations were thoroughly investigated. Allegations of torture and enforced disappearance, including those made by Jacob Ngarivhume, who had been arrested for breaches of the peace and disorderly conduct and later released, were wholly unfounded.
6. The Government remained committed to ensuring a safe environment for the participation of women in public life. He was not aware of any reports of online violence against women in politics. The Zimbabwe Gender Commission and law enforcement agencies would thoroughly investigate any reports of online violence against women. The Cyber and Data Protection Act was a major part of the robust legal framework for protection from harassment online. Due process was followed, as with any crime, to investigate hate speech. In accordance with the Constitution, children were detained only as a last resort.
7. **Ms. Bassim** said that she wished to know what measures were being taken to address overcrowding and poor material conditions in the State Party's prisons. In particular, she wondered what was being done to ensure that persons deprived of their liberty, including jailed opposition figures and activists, had access to water, food and healthcare. She wondered, too, whether pretrial detainees were held separately from convicted prisoners and whether juvenile offenders were held separately from adults. She would welcome further information on the monitoring visits made to prisons and places of detention, including by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, and on the measures taken in follow-up to the Commission's recommendations.
8. In view of the State Party's restrictive media laws and other reported threats to independent journalism, it would be helpful to learn whether the legal and regulatory framework governing the right to freedom of expression was compatible with the Covenant and what was being done to protect journalists from attacks, intimidation and arbitrary detention, and to investigate all allegations of violence against journalists. A comment from the delegation on reports that the authorities continued to exercise excessive control over the

broadcast media, including by refusing to grant licences to community radio stations, would also be helpful. Internet shutdowns during and after protests were another instance of excessive control on which the delegation's comments would be welcome.

9. In view of troubling reports that human rights defenders and opposition leaders had been prosecuted for their involvement in the organization of protests, she wished to know what progress had been made towards ensuring that laws governing the right to freedom of assembly were fully compatible with article 21 of the Covenant. She would welcome the delegation's comments on continued allegations that the military presence at peaceful assemblies was disproportionately large, that criminal proceedings were instituted against protesters, that human rights defenders were denied their right to freedom of assembly and that reported violations of that right were not properly investigated.

10. She would also welcome a response to reports that excessive force had been used to disperse peaceful assemblies, resulting in serious injuries and killings in August 2018 and January 2019. In that connection, she wondered whether the State Party's legal framework for the use of force to police assemblies was compatible with the Covenant. She wondered, too, how many allegations of excessive use of force had been made in the past eight years, how many investigations had been carried out, whether any criminal proceedings had been instituted, whether any perpetrators had been punished and what form of redress, if any, the victims had obtained.

11. The persistence of violations of the rights of the child in the State Party was another area of concern. She therefore wished to know what was being done to combat child abuse, including sexual abuse, end harmful traditional practices, such as early and forced marriage, and prohibit corporal punishment. She wished to know, too, what concerted efforts the Government, civil society, the media and opinion and religious leaders made to change cultural and traditional mindsets, what steps had been taken to assess the situation of orphaned and homeless children and children with disabilities and address their particular needs, what the minimum age of criminal responsibility was and whether there were any plans to raise it.

12. **Mr. Helfer** said that he wished to know what measures the State Party was taking to eliminate the barriers to accessing the Integrated Electronic Case Management System, which had been developed to expedite judicial processes, and whether there were any plans to review how the system worked. He also wished to know what steps were being taken to ensure timely and efficient access to justice, including in high-profile cases involving human rights violations, corruption and other politically sensitive matters.

13. The State Party's efforts to strengthen its legal aid system were commendable, but he wondered whether additional resources would be set aside for the provision of legal aid. In that connection, he wondered whether reports that legal aid was available only at the trial stage of murder cases were accurate and, if so, whether consideration might be given to offering it at all stages of the criminal process. It would be helpful to learn what efforts had been made to ensure that judicial facilities, in particular in rural areas, were accessible to persons with disabilities.

14. He would welcome an explanation of how constitutional amendments adopted in 2017 and 2021, pursuant to which the President had been given increased authority over judicial appointments, were compatible with article 14 of the Covenant and what steps were taken to ensure that the standard merit-based process was followed to promote judges. He would also welcome a comment on reports that judges had been threatened or dismissed for issuing rulings unfavourable to the Government. In other instances, judges hearing high-profile cases involving the Government had reportedly received housing loans and land grants. An explanation of the measures taken by the State Party to ensure that judges were fully independent would thus be helpful.

15. In view of reports that the State Party had engaged in intrusive surveillance, he wondered how it prevented abuses of its broad surveillance powers, protected personal data and avoided arbitrary interference with privacy. In particular, he wondered how the reported surveillance of journalists and political opponents – the investigative outlet *The NewsHawks*, for example, or the journalist Blessed Mhlanga – was compatible with the right to privacy enshrined both in the State Party's Constitution and in the Covenant. Lastly, he asked whether

a legal framework to govern the deployment of the Chinese surveillance technologies acquired by the authorities had been put in place, whether the likely impact of the deployment of those technologies had been assessed, whether there were any safeguards to protect the people's right to privacy and what remedies, if any, were available to people whose privacy had been violated through the use of those surveillance technologies.

16. **Mr. Teraya**, noting that the Trafficking in Persons Act defined trafficking in persons as primarily a movement-based crime and did not define the term "exploitation" clearly enough, said that he wondered how the Act was used to effectively combat trafficking in persons, given its limitations, and whether there were plans to align it more closely with international standards to ensure comprehensive protection for all victims. He would welcome information on the human and financial resources allocated for the implementation of the National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, as well as on the content and scope of the anti-trafficking training provided to law enforcement officers, border guards and other public officials.

17. It would be helpful if the delegation could provide more information on the rehabilitation and reintegration services, protection and reparation provided to victims of trafficking, including on the number of shelters available and the measures taken to combat child labour, particularly in the areas of commercial sexual exploitation, mining and tobacco production. He would appreciate more detailed statistical data on the number of complaints of trafficking in persons that had been received in recent years, as well as the number of investigations that had been conducted and their outcomes. He would be interested to know what policies were in place to address trafficking in persons from countries other than Kuwait.

18. It would be helpful if the delegation could elaborate on the legal and factual elements that were taken into account in the assessment of asylum applications, as well as on the safeguards in place to ensure that such assessments were conducted in accordance with international human rights standards, especially the principle of non-refoulement. The Committee had received reports that refugees and asylum-seekers in places of detention were subjected to ill-treatment by other prisoners. He wondered whether the delegation could comment on those reports and describe any measures in place to ensure the safety and dignity of refugees and asylum-seekers in places of detention, in accordance with international human rights standards.

19. He would appreciate statistical data on the number of stateless persons, the number of asylum-seekers whose applications and appeals had been unsuccessful and the number of migrants who had been expelled from the country. In the light of reports that birth registration was not yet guaranteed by law for children born to parents at risk of statelessness and that children born to asylum-seekers whose asylum applications had been rejected were not issued with birth certificates but only with birth notification records, he would like the delegation to clarify the situation and to describe any measures being taken to address those concerns.

20. He would like the delegation to comment on allegations that the Government monitored some public events, prayer rallies, church congregations and religiously affiliated non-governmental organizations perceived as critical of the Government. He would appreciate statistical data on the number of cases of child marriage that had been prosecuted under the Marriages Act and the penalties imposed in those cases. He wondered how the prohibition on child marriage was enforced in the face of religious groups that specifically promoted early marriage. Lastly, he would be interested to know whether the National Service Act of 1979, which allowed for exemption from military service on the basis of religious belief, remained in force.

21. **Mr. Yigezu** said that he would like to know what steps would be taken to amend electoral legislation to better protect the freedoms enshrined in the Covenant; and what measures would be taken to ensure that human rights defenders and civil society actors could carry out their legitimate activities freely, without undue restriction or fear of harassment or intimidation. The Electoral Act contained provisions that appeared to compromise the independence of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and lacked provisions on the right to vote of some population groups, such as prisoners and Zimbabweans in the diaspora. He

wondered what would be done to address those shortcomings and to fully align the Act with the Constitution.

22. He wished to know whether the State Party planned to adopt comprehensive campaign finance legislation that would require candidates and political parties to disclose information on assets, donations, sources of funding and campaign expenditure. He would like the delegation to comment on reports of serious flaws in the 2023 harmonized election, including arrests of citizen observers, biased media coverage and voter intimidation, and to explain what measures would be taken to improve future electoral processes. Lastly, he would like to know whether the alleged abduction and torture of three political opponents, Joana Mamombe, Cecelia Chimhiri and Netsai Marova, in May 2020, and of the human rights defenders Tatenda Mombeyarara and Tawanda Muchehiwa, had been investigated and, if so, whether the perpetrators had been brought to justice and the victims provided with redress.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.

23. **A representative of Zimbabwe** said that several measures were being taken to reduce prison overcrowding. New regulations on parole were being drafted following the adoption of the new Prisons and Correctional Service Act. Open correctional facilities had been established and efforts had been made to increase the granting of amnesties and to promote the use of non-custodial sentences. Rehabilitation activities were organized for prisoners to facilitate their reintegration into society and reduce recidivism.

24. The Government had invested in the renovation and expansion of existing prisons and the construction of new prisons, for example in Gwanda. Efforts were being made, with support from development partners, to improve prisoners' access to medical care, including mental health services; to mitigate food shortages in prisons, including through the establishment of prison farms; and to improve the nutritional quality of the meals provided to prisoners. Over 60 boreholes had been drilled in prisons in 2024, and irrigation systems had been installed in almost all prisons.

25. The prison administration did not discriminate against any prisoners on the basis of their political affiliation or opinions. Prison resources were distributed in such a way as to maintain equality, accountability and order. Prisoners awaiting trial and convicted prisoners were not housed in the same facilities. Visiting justices monitored compliance with rules and standards, investigated complaints made by inmates and checked the quality of prison food. Conditions in places of detention were also monitored by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, which had conducted some 20 visits in 2024. The Commission's recommendations were implemented to the extent that resources allowed.

26. Young persons in conflict with the law were held in the Whawha Young Offenders Prison, where the focus was on rehabilitation. They were detained separately from adult prisoners while awaiting transfer to that institution. Juvenile reform institutions did not house young offenders.

27. The Government was working with civil society organizations to combat child marriage. According to the Constitution, only persons who had reached 18 years old had the legal capacity to marry and were considered able to consent fully to marriage. Persons under 18 years old had a fundamental right not to be subjected to any form of marriage. The new Marriages Act of 2022 established that the minimum age for marriage applied not only to marriages but also to unregistered customary law marriages and civil partnerships, the aim being to protect children from being forced into relationships that were, to all intents and purposes, marriages. The Act also criminalized participation of any kind in child marriage.

28. Several laws and policies had been adopted to protect children from exploitation, abuse and the sale of children. For example, the Children's Amendment Act established the production of child sexual abuse material as a criminal offence. Child protection committees had been set up at various levels under the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Steps had been taken to incorporate the provisions of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, into national law; for example, section 87 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act prohibited

parents and guardians from allowing children to associate with prostitutes, work as prostitutes or reside in a brothel.

29. The Cyber and Data Protection Act addressed the use of technology in relation to child sexual abuse material and the exposure of children to pornography online, establishing severe punishments for offenders. The recently established Child Online Protection Task Force worked to combat child sexual exploitation in the digital space. Coordination between social welfare and justice institutions in addressing child sexual abuse had been enhanced. The child protection system had been further strengthened by the development of the National Case Management System for the Protection and Welfare of Children, the recruitment of community childcare workers and the establishment of the National Taskforce to Address Child Sexual Exploitation. The age of criminal responsibility was currently 7 years, but a new bill on child justice proposed to raise it to 12 years.

30. The country's anti-trafficking laws were under review to improve victim services and update the definition of trafficking in persons to ensure it comprehensively addressed all forms of the offence, in line with international standards. Law enforcement personnel and members of the Judicial Service Commission received training on the identification of victims, investigation techniques and the applicable legal framework to strengthen their capacity to combat trafficking and ensure effective justice in cooperation with international partners.

31. Under section 180 (2) of the Constitution, the Chief Justice, Deputy Chief Justice and Judge President of the High Court were appointed by the President in consultation with the Judicial Service Commission, which functioned independently. The Commission had financial and administrative autonomy, with its own budget, allowing it to pay judicial officers and support staff, protecting them from external influence. The decentralization of the courts had significantly enhanced judicial autonomy, shifting judicial management from the two main cities to the provinces and districts. The introduction of an e-management system for cases had further strengthened judicial independence by ensuring that the judiciary had full control over the administration of justice, including in the allocation of cases to judges. There was thus no opportunity for the executive to influence case assignments.

32. There were currently 14 licensed community radio stations, 8 licensed campus radio stations and 6 licensed national free-to-air television stations, providing universal access to information for all citizens. There was no monopoly with respect to media access in Zimbabwe.

33. The Legal Aid Directorate provided free legal assistance not only for murder cases but also for civil matters, particularly those handled by magistrates' courts involving indigent individuals. The ongoing decentralization of the Directorate, which had established offices in all ten provinces, aimed to bridge the gap in access to justice for financially disadvantaged persons. The Directorate received an annual budget approved by Parliament. To further enhance accessibility, legal aid services were being decentralized to the district level, allowing people to access legal assistance closer to their communities.

34. Under section 50 (5) (d) and (e) of the Constitution, all detained individuals had the right to conditions of detention consistent with human dignity, including access to physical exercise, adequate accommodation at the State's expense, proper sanitation facilities, personal hygiene products, nutritious food, appropriate reading materials and medical treatment and the ability to challenge the legality of their detention in court. Persons found to be unlawfully detained must be promptly released. Human rights training for the Prisons and Correctional Service and the police was conducted in collaboration with the Legal Resources Foundation.

35. While the Constitution protected the right to peaceful assembly and demonstration, law enforcement agencies were responsible for maintaining a balance between that right and the rights of other citizens. The police were authorized under the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act to use minimal force when dispersing unauthorized gatherings. Section 42 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act provided guidelines on the use of force by law enforcement agencies in compliance with international human rights standards. The Maintenance of Peace and Order Act required the organizers of gatherings and protests to notify the police in advance of their event to allow for the allocation of resources for public

protection. The law provided for mechanisms for dialogue between protest organizers and law enforcement agencies, to clarify any potential issues. Organizers who disagreed with police decisions had the right to seek urgent relief from the courts, which must respond within a reasonable time frame. While the Government was aware of allegations of an excessive military presence at protests, only security personnel authorized under the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act were deployed. As long as a gathering had been lawfully sanctioned, there should be no interference or harassment from the law enforcement authorities.

36. Regarding Joana Mamombe and Cecelia Chimbiri, on 13 May 2020, one or both of those individuals had unlawfully and intentionally communicated false statements to their relatives, friends and legal representatives, claiming that they had been abducted by the police, with the intention of, or at least with the awareness of the risk of, undermining public confidence in law enforcement. The available evidence indicated that those allegations were false. If credible evidence emerged regarding any similar incidents, the Government would be willing to investigate the matter thoroughly. Blessed Mhlanga had recently been arrested under the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, for the transmission of data messages inciting violence or property damage. Journalistic privilege was important but must be exercised within the framework of Zimbabwean law. Since the matter was still before the courts, it would be inappropriate to pre-empt judicial proceedings. Once the case had been adjudicated, the Government would be in a position to provide a more detailed account.

37. Regarding the diaspora vote, the Government was bound by a constitutional judgment in the case of *Shumba and Others v. Minister of Justice and Others*. That ruling had been upheld by the African Union Commission in the case of *Gabriel Shumba and Others v. The Republic of Zimbabwe*.

38. On the matter of judicial tenure, the extension of judges' tenure was not exclusive to the judiciary. Similar extensions had been granted to civil servants. For judges, tenure extension was not automatic but subject to constitutional provisions, including the submission of a medical report confirming that the judge was fit to continue serving. Judges who were promoted would have previously undergone public interviews before joining the High Court. Those interviews enhanced public confidence, transparency and judicial independence. The Constitution provided a clear procedure for the dismissal of judges. The executive branch did not have authority over the investigation or removal of judges. If concerns arose, the Judicial Service Commission referred the matter to the President, who then established a commission of inquiry. Any decision to remove a judge was ultimately based on the recommendations of that commission.

39. **A representative of Zimbabwe** said that children born in Zimbabwe to immigrant parents were issued birth certificates if specific criteria were met. Stateless parents must provide proof of the child's birth and must demonstrate their statelessness clearly through affidavits from or verification by relevant authorities. Proof of residence in Zimbabwe was also necessary. Although registration was more complicated for children born outside Zimbabwe, it remained possible if the conditions were satisfied.

40. The Cyber and Data Protection Act was aimed at safeguarding sensitive personal and institutional data from cyberthreats and breaches. Awareness-raising workshops had taken place. The Act regulated how organizations collected, stored and processed personal information, addressing cybersecurity and cybercrime, which was essential as Zimbabwe accelerated digital transformation to support e-government, e-commerce and digital financial services.

41. **A representative of Zimbabwe** said that the introduction of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System was a necessary development in facilitating access to justice. Special centres had been set up in every district court and in dedicated community centres throughout the country to enable citizens to file court proceedings electronically using the System. Plans to divide the judicial district of Harare into two divisions were intended to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, given the province's expanding size. The split was primarily administrative and would not affect staffing.

42. Restrictions on foreign funding for the Electoral Commission were necessary to maintain the Commission's independence. Allowing foreign funding could expose the Commission to external influence. Electoral Commission regulations required approval by

the Minister of Justice because the Commission itself did not create laws. Lawmaking power belonged to the Parliament and the President. Regulations must pass parliamentary scrutiny, including consideration by the Parliamentary Legal Committee and parliamentary debate, before becoming law.

43. **A representative of Zimbabwe** said that the Government was planning to convert existing post offices into Internet hubs so that citizens living in the remotest parts of the country could access the Integrated Electronic Case Management System, bringing justice closer to the people and ensuring that no one was disadvantaged in the quest for justice.

44. He was not aware of the use of Chinese surveillance technologies in Zimbabwe.

45. **Mr. Yigezu** said that the new provisions of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Amendment Act, in particular section 22A (Wilfully injuring the sovereignty and national interest of Zimbabwe), restricted freedom of expression and freedom of assembly on the basis of national interest. State Parties could not derogate from their obligations under the Convention on grounds of national interest. Such provisions could be used to stifle criticism of the Government. Furthermore, the penalties prescribed under that section seemed disproportionate to the offences covered and applied to too wide a range of activities. The prohibition on registering as a voter or voting in an election, which was one of the penalties provided for under the section, also seemed incompatible with international human rights law. He therefore wondered whether the State Party would consider amending the provisions of the section so that they did not result in undue restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association. If the provisions were not annulled, what measures would be taken to ensure that human rights defenders and civil society actors could carry out their legitimate activities without fear of harassment or intimidation?

46. Lastly, the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Bill seemed to address a problem that did not exist – namely, the involvement of civil society organizations in terrorist or other extremist activities in the country. While he understood that the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force were aimed at protecting non-profit organizations from being used to finance terrorism, there was no evidence from previous national risk assessments that such organizations in Zimbabwe had been used for money-laundering or for that purpose. Furthermore, Zimbabwe had been removed from the list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring, or “grey list”. He would therefore appreciate clarification of the reference to the Task Force’s recommendations.

47. **Mr. Helfer** said that the Committee had received reports that some judges who had failed or performed poorly in interviews had nevertheless been appointed to the High Court as recently as June 2024 and that the interview process had not been fully respected. Any information on that matter would be appreciated. He would appreciate an answer to his earlier request for information on reports that judges had received housing loans, land grants, farms and other benefits in cases in which the Government had been interested in favourable rulings by the judiciary.

48. He would encourage the State Party to investigate the allegations of the use of Chinese surveillance technology and to report on the results of any investigations into the matter. The issue had been raised during the universal periodic review process in 2021, and there was also a recent report by Humboldt University in Berlin that had discussed the issue and raised a number of concerns.

49. **Mr. Teraya** said that he wished to know whether the State Party had a timetable for introducing amendments to the Trafficking in Persons Act with a view to bringing the domestic legal framework into line with international standards and what legislative or procedural steps were required to that end. He would appreciate further details on the efforts made to combat child labour in the country, including in the mining and tobacco industries. Further information on the difficulties encountered in registering all children at birth and the measures taken to overcome them would also be appreciated. Lastly, he would like to know whether the law provided for conscientious objection to military service.

50. **A representative of Zimbabwe** said that every country in the world had a duty to protect its sovereignty and Zimbabwe was no exception. The penalties provided for in the relevant section of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Amendment Act were not

disproportionate to the offences covered by that section, as the acts concerned were harmful to the nation and affected the entire population. There was no suppression of freedom of expression. Penalties were applied to calls for harm to the country. Zimbabwe continued to suffer from the unilateral coercive measures, which had been imposed as a result of persons abroad causing harm by calling for sanctions against the country. Such measures meant that the people of Zimbabwe could not fully enjoy their rights under the Covenant. His Government would nonetheless give further consideration to striking a balance between ensuring freedom of expression and the right to protect the country.

51. Investigations had been carried out into the alleged abduction of Joana Mamombe and others. State investigators had been able to trace their movements and conversations during the time they had claimed to have been abducted. They had also been seen in a particular restaurant at that time. The State had therefore taken the position that the incident had been stage-managed. Such incidents took place during national events in order to cause alarm.

52. **A representative of Zimbabwe** said that, in addition to birth certificates that were issued by hospitals, affidavits from the persons who attended or were present at the birth, or from the next person encountered after the birth, could serve as confirmation, for registration purposes, that the child belonged to the parents and had been born in Zimbabwe. The recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force had indeed stated the need to adopt laws with objectives such as those of the Private Voluntary Organisations (Amendment) Bill. The removal of Zimbabwe from the grey list did not mean that the country had complied with all of the recommendations of the Task Force, which required States to be proactive and put in place the necessary regulations. The Bill was a means of introducing such regulations.

53. **A representative of Zimbabwe** said it was not true that judges who had failed the relevant interviews and assessments had been appointed to the High Court. As an official in the Ministry of Justice, he had never come across such a situation. While a list of judges who qualified for positions on the Court was submitted to the executive from the Judicial Service Commission, the judges had to be screened to determine their suitability for the position.

54. With regard to housing loans for judges, judges were entitled to enjoy the same property rights as other Zimbabwean citizens, as enshrined in section 71 of the Constitution. The provision of housing loans was part of the conditions of service of judges. It was untrue that loans were attributed to them in order to influence their decisions. Judges also had the right to own agricultural land.

55. **A representative of Zimbabwe** said that there were laws prohibiting child labour, including the Labour Act and the Children's Act, which set the minimum age for employment at 15 years. The Government had ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). However, enforcement remained weak due to limited resources, corruption and lack of public awareness. To remedy that situation, the Government had implemented programmes to improve access to education through the Basic Education Assistance Module, which covered school fees for vulnerable children. Efforts were being made to raise awareness about the rights of the child, and international and non-governmental organizations were helping to rescue children from exploitative labour. There were also programmes to empower families through income-generating activities to reduce the reliance on child labour. In addition, local communities had established child protection committees to monitor and report on cases of such labour.

56. **A representative of Zimbabwe**, thanking the Committee for the opportunity to present its long-overdue periodic report, said that the meeting had been an invaluable platform for constructive dialogue. The Government would take into account the Committee's feedback and would endeavour to take the necessary steps to ensure that the rights enshrined in the Covenant were fully realized by all Zimbabweans.

57. **The Chair** said that he wished to thank the high-level delegation for its detailed responses and to acknowledge the valuable contributions of civil society organizations and all those who had contributed to the constructive dialogue.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.