



Economic and Social Council

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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Zimbabwe*

1. The Committee considered the second periodic report of Zimbabwe¹ at its 44th and 45th meetings,² held on 17 and 18 September 2025, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 58th meeting, held on 26 September 2025.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission by the State Party of its second periodic report and the supplementary information provided in the replies to the list of issues.³ The Committee appreciates the constructive dialogue held with the State Party's high-level delegation.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the legislative, administrative and policy measures taken by the State Party to strengthen the protection of economic, social and cultural rights, including its accession to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in 2024, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto in 2013, as well as the adoption of the Labour Act (as amended in 2019), the National Development Strategy 2021–2025 and other measures referred to in the present concluding observations.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Domestic application of the Covenant

4. The Committee is concerned about the lack of information on cases in which the Covenant has been invoked before or directly applied by domestic courts and the lack of specialized training on the Covenant and the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee regrets that the Supreme Court ruled in 2021 that the constitutional provision on the right to housing is aspirational in nature and therefore not legally enforceable (art. 2 (1)).

5. **Recalling its general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant, the Committee recommends that the State Party take the legislative measures necessary to fully incorporate the Covenant into domestic law and ensure the applicability of all rights enshrined in the Covenant in domestic courts. It also**

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-eighth session (8–26 September 2025).

¹ E/C.12/ZWE/2.

² See E/C.12/2025/SR.44 and E/C.12/2025/SR.45.

³ E/C.12/ZWE/RQ/2.



recommends that the State Party intensify its efforts to familiarize judges, lawyers, public officials, civil society organizations and the general public with the Covenant and the justiciability of the rights therein.

National human rights institution

6. The Committee is concerned about the challenges faced by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission that prevent it from fulfilling its mandate effectively and independently, including its limited human and financial resources, its financial and operational reliance on the executive branch and the lack of transparency around the procedure for appointing the senior leaders of the Commission (art. 2 (1)).

7. **The Committee recommends that the State Party ensure the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission has sufficient resources and the independence to be able to effectively fulfil its mandate, in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), including financial and operational autonomy and direct reporting to Parliament. It also recommends that the State Party ensure a transparent, participatory and merit-based process for appointing the Commission's senior leaders.**

Human rights defenders

8. The Committee is concerned about the reported incidents of threats made to and harassment, intimidation and assaults of journalists and human rights defenders during the reporting period, including anti-corruption activists and defenders of economic, social, cultural, environmental and land-related rights. It is further concerned about the lack of adequate measures to protect human rights defenders and the continuing impunity and lack of redress in such cases.

9. **Recalling its statement on human rights defenders and economic, social and cultural rights,⁴ the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Take all measures necessary to promptly, impartially and thoroughly investigate attacks against human rights defenders, to ensure that those responsible receive sentences commensurate with the gravity of their acts and to guarantee the victims' access to justice and effective remedies;**

(b) **Adopt a clear normative framework for the protection of human rights defenders that meets international standards and ensure that civil society and human rights defenders themselves are involved in its development and implementation.**

Business and human rights

10. The Committee is concerned that some large development projects and the activities of some business entities, including in the extractive sector, adversely affect local communities' enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, notably by causing displacement, forced evictions, environmental pollution and the exploitation of workers through unsafe conditions, below-minimum wages and the absence of formal contracts (arts. 2 (1) and 7).

11. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Establish a clear regulatory framework for business entities operating within its jurisdiction to ensure that they exercise human rights due diligence so as to guarantee that their activities do not negatively affect the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights;**

(b) **Accelerate efforts to adopt a national action plan for business and human rights, in consultation with civil society, referring to the guidance on national action plans on business and human rights from the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises;**

⁴ E/C.12/2016/2.

(c) Conduct a review of its regulatory framework and licensing processes to ensure that comprehensive, transparent, independent and systematic environmental and human rights impact assessments are carried out in the context of development projects and business activities, and that broad and participatory consultations are held with affected communities;

(d) Ensure that business entities are held accountable for violations of economic, social and cultural rights, paying particular attention to labour rights, land-related rights, environmental impact and expropriation in the context of mining, logging and development projects;

(e) Ensure that all investments, including those linked to natural resource exploitation, comply with obligations under the Covenant, bearing in mind that economic development cannot be pursued at the expense of human rights or the environment;

(f) Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the Covenant in the context of business activities.

Indigenous and tribal peoples

12. The Committee is concerned about reports of the dispossession, displacement and relocation of Indigenous and tribal peoples, including the Tshwa, the Doma and other Indigenous and tribal peoples, from their customary lands and territories as a result of development and projects for natural resource exploitation, without sufficient meaningful consultations having been conducted or their right to free, prior and informed consent having been adequately respected (arts. 1 and 2).

13. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) Ensure that Indigenous and tribal peoples can fully exercise their rights to own, use, control and develop the lands, territories and resources that they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired;

(b) Establish systematic and transparent procedures for prior consultation, with the aim of obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous and tribal peoples in the context of decisions likely to affect them, notably before granting licences for development projects and business activities, including extractive operations, on such lands and territories;

(c) Consider ratifying the International Labour Organization Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).

Climate change mitigation

14. While welcoming the information provided by the State Party regarding the development of national plans and strategies to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, the Committee is concerned that the State Party's current industrial and energy policies, including fossil fuel extraction projects, may be insufficient to meet its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement, particularly as its largely conditional emission-reduction goals depend on fluctuating international assistance (art. 2 (1)).

15. **Recalling its statement on climate change and the Covenant,⁵ the Committee recommends that the State Party take all measures necessary:**

(a) To meet its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement and to accelerate its efforts to implement its national plans and strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;

(b) To increase its efforts to obtain international support, including financial and technical assistance, to secure funding for the implementation of emission reduction targets.

⁵ E/C.12/2018/1.

Maximum available resources

16. The Committee notes the allocation of substantial resources to servicing debt and expresses concern that public expenditure on the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights is persistently low. The Committee also notes that the continued reliance on regressive tax policies undermines poverty reduction efforts and limits the State Party's capacity to achieve equitable redistribution of wealth and income through its fiscal policy (art. 2 (1)).

17. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Coordinate with international financial institutions and other creditors to ensure that public debt and servicing do not constrain the fiscal space needed to fulfil obligations under the Covenant or divert the resources necessary for that purpose;**

(b) **Assess the effect of fiscal and budgetary adjustments on the enjoyment of the rights under the Covenant and take measures to mitigate any adverse effects, including by increasing social spending as a percentage of gross domestic product, with a focus on social security, housing, healthcare and education, and by paying particular attention to disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and regions with high levels of poverty;**

(c) **Review taxation and fiscal policies to make them more efficient, progressive and equitable, strengthening efforts to mobilize domestic resources for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights and to enhance the redistribution of the benefits of economic growth;**

(d) **Take into account the Committee's statements on public debt, austerity measures and the Covenant⁶ and on tax policy and the Covenant.⁷**

Corruption

18. While welcoming measures taken to combat corruption, such as the adoption of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2020–2024), the Committee is concerned about the persistence of corruption affecting both the public and private sectors, including with regard to public procurement and the allocation of licences and mining rights in the extractive sector. It is also concerned about the prevalence of petty corruption, extortion and bribery, which hinders access to public services. It further notes with concern the limited transparency and accountability in the management of public funds and revenues from natural resources, the inadequate enforcement of anti-corruption laws, and the limited capacity and independence of anti-corruption bodies and oversight institutions (art. 2 (1)).

19. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Intensify its efforts to combat corruption and adopt measures to ensure transparency and accountability in public administration, with a focus on public procurement processes and the allocation of licences and mining rights in the extractive sector;**

(b) **Ensure that all cases of corruption, including those involving high-level officials, are thoroughly and independently investigated, prosecuted and punished with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence;**

(c) **Strengthen the powers, independence and resources of anti-corruption bodies and oversight institutions, including the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Prosecuting Authority and specialized anti-corruption courts, to ensure that they can effectively and independently carry out their mandate;**

(d) **Take all measures necessary to protect anti-corruption activists, whistleblowers, witnesses and journalists who report on corruption, and ensure safe and accessible channels for reporting corruption;**

⁶ E/C.12/2016/1.

⁷ E/C.12/2025/1.

(e) **Raise awareness among politicians, parliamentarians, government officials and the public of the economic and social costs of corruption.**

Non-discrimination

20. Acknowledging that the State Party's Constitution prohibits discrimination, the Committee is concerned that:

(a) The State Party does not have comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that prohibits all forms of discrimination on the basis of all prohibited grounds;

(b) Despite efforts to implement the National Disability Policy, persons with disabilities continue to experience direct, indirect and multiple forms of discrimination, hindering their equal participation in economic and social life and their access to public services;

(c) Indigenous and tribal peoples continue to face systemic discrimination in the enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights, which manifests in disproportionately high levels of poverty and limited access to quality education and healthcare;

(d) Discrimination, social stigma and prejudice persist on the basis of individuals' actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as HIV status, hindering their access to employment, social services, housing, education and healthcare, in the light of reports of bullying, violence and expulsions in schools, evictions and denial of medical care (arts. 2 (2) and 9–14).

21. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Enact comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that provides full and effective protection against discrimination in the public and private spheres and explicitly covers all prohibited grounds of discrimination;**

(b) **Strengthen its efforts to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy equitable access to employment, social services, housing, education and healthcare, allocating sufficient human, technical and financial resources to the implementation of the National Disability Policy and regularly monitoring and evaluating implementation efforts together with organizations of persons with disabilities and relevant social partners;**

(c) **Adopt policies to prevent and combat discrimination against and social and economic exclusion of Indigenous and tribal peoples effectively, with the aim of ensuring their enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights on an equal basis with others;**

(d) **Take effective measures, including legislative measures, to combat discrimination, social stigma and prejudice against individuals on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status;**

(e) **Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights.**

Equality between women and men

22. The Committee is concerned about the barriers to women's economic and social empowerment, including: the enduring gender pay and pension gaps due to vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labour market; the underrepresentation of women in senior decision-making positions in the public and private sectors; the disproportionate concentration of women in the informal economy and in subsistence agriculture, with limited support to enhance their productivity and income; their limited access to and ownership of land and other essential economic resources; and their inadequate access to the benefits of science and technology and participation in technological innovation (arts. 3, 7, 9, 13 and 15).

23. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

- (a) Adopt and implement comprehensive strategies to close the gender pay and pension gaps, including taking measures to reduce occupational segregation and to promote women's economic and social empowerment in all sectors of the economy;
- (b) Create conditions enabling women's effective representation in decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors;
- (c) Accelerate women's transition to formal work and provide targeted support for women in the informal economy and subsistence agriculture, such as access to local markets, credit, training and social security;
- (d) Take affirmative measures to facilitate women's access to land and other essential economic resources;
- (e) Step up efforts to enhance women's access to the benefits of science and technology, including by strengthening digital literacy, and promote their participation in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics by expanding opportunities for education, research, training and professional development;
- (f) Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights.

Right to work

24. The Committee is concerned about the persistently high unemployment and underemployment rates, which disproportionately affect young people, women and persons with disabilities (art. 6).

25. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

- (a) Intensify efforts to reduce unemployment and underemployment, in collaboration with social partners, including by adopting job creation policies and targeted strategies and programmes for young people, women and persons with disabilities;
- (b) Strengthen efforts to provide vocational and technical training in order to promote acquisition of the skills needed in the labour market;
- (c) Improve its system for the collection of disaggregated data on employment, underemployment and unemployment and provide updated disaggregated data in its next periodic report;
- (d) Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 18 (2005) on the right to work.

Informal economy

26. The Committee is concerned about the disproportionately large share of the population engaged in the informal economy, often earning low wages and working without formal contracts, thereby without access in practice to labour rights protections or social security (arts. 6, 7 and 9).

27. **The Committee recommends that the State Party strengthen legal protections for workers in the informal economy and intensify enforcement measures to progressively ensure the exercise of their labour rights and access to social security. It also recommends that the State Party take the effective measures necessary to gradually formalize the situation of workers in the informal economy, taking into consideration the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), of the International Labour Organization.**

Right to just and favourable conditions of work

28. The Committee is concerned about:

- (a) Reports of poor working conditions across both the formal and informal sectors, including education, health, services, construction, mining and agriculture, in particular with regard to excessive working hours and inadequate wages;
- (b) Insufficient labour rights protections for workers who are self-employed, engaged in the informal sector or working under ambiguous employment relationships without formal contracts, as they do not have access to legal protections under the Labour Act;
- (c) Reports that workers in high-risk sectors, such as construction and mining, continue to suffer occupational accidents due to unsafe conditions, which result in injuries and fatalities; and reports that many workers in agriculture and mining are exposed to hazardous substances that reportedly cause respiratory illnesses and pose other long-term occupational health risks (art. 7).

29. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

- (a) **Take measures to ensure effective protection under the Labour Act across all sectors of the economy, guaranteeing just and favourable working conditions for all workers, including through clear regulations on working hours and rest periods;**
- (b) **Strengthen its efforts to reduce occupational diseases, injuries and fatalities, focusing on sectors in which workplace accidents and occupational diseases are more likely to occur, including by expediting the adoption and implementation of its Occupational Safety and Health Bill, raising awareness among employers and workers about workplace safety and ensuring that enhanced protection measures are put in place in the workplace;**
- (c) **Carry out regular safety and health risk assessments and strengthen labour inspection mechanisms, providing them with sufficient human, technical and financial resources to monitor conditions of work in all sectors of the economy effectively and systematically;**
- (d) **Provide accessible remedial mechanisms that enable workers to file complaints about labour rights violations safely and without intimidation; and take effective action against employers and enterprises found to be in breach of labour rights, including by providing dissuasive sanctions;**
- (e) **Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work;**
- (f) **Consider ratifying the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), the Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), of the International Labour Organization.**

Minimum wage

30. While welcoming that the State Party established a minimum wage through the Labour Relations (Specification of Minimum Wages) (Amendment) Notice, 2024, the Committee is nevertheless concerned that domestic and agricultural workers are excluded from its scope and may therefore be paid below the minimum wage. The Committee is also concerned that the minimum wage is insufficient to enable a decent living for workers and their families, in the light of the rising cost of living, as exacerbated by high inflation (art. 7).

31. **The Committee recommends that the State Party establish a minimum wage applicable to all workers in all sectors, including domestic work and agriculture, and ensure that it is periodically reviewed, in consultation with social partners, and indexed to the cost of living so as to guarantee all workers and their families a decent standard of living.**

Trade union rights

32. The Committee is concerned about reports of harassment, kidnapping and enforced disappearances of and other incidents of violence against trade union leaders and members during the reporting period. It is also concerned about reports of excessive restrictions placed on the exercise of trade union rights by public sector employees, including provisions in the Health Services Amendment Act and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Amendment Bill that criminalize the right to strike for healthcare workers, imposing penalties of up to six months' imprisonment. It is further concerned that the State Party's legislation does not prescribe a statutory list of essential services in which the right to strike is restricted, leaving it instead to the discretion of the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare to determine which services are deemed essential (art. 8).

33. Recalling its joint statement with the Human Rights Committee on freedom of association, including the right to form and join trade unions, the Committee recommends that the State Party take the measures necessary to ensure that the trade union rights of workers are fully respected and that trade union leaders and members are able to carry out their activities in a climate free from intimidation, violence, harassment and risk to their personal safety. It also recommends that the State Party adopt legislative measures to establish a statutory list of essential services, based on a definition that safeguards the effective exercise of the right to strike without undue restrictions and ensures that public servants whose services cannot reasonably be considered essential are fully entitled to exercise that right.

Right to social security

34. The Committee is concerned at the persistently inadequate budgetary allocations for social security – noting that actual disbursements have often been lower than the amounts allocated – and the limited coverage and low level of social security benefits, which together undermine the effectiveness of the social security system in reducing poverty. In particular, the Committee is concerned that only a very small proportion of the workforce is covered by contribution-based social insurance, which largely excludes workers in the informal economy, and that social assistance benefits remain insufficient in the light of the rising cost of living, as exacerbated by high inflation (art. 9).

35. Recalling its general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security and its statement on social protection floors as an essential element of the right to social security and of the Sustainable Development Goals,⁸ the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Update its National Social Protection Policy Framework and establish a social protection floor that includes basic universal social guarantees, redoubling its efforts to develop a social security system that guarantees universal coverage and provides sufficient benefits for all persons, in particular those in the informal economy and those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, to ensure that everyone has a decent standard of living;
- (b) Increase its budget allocation and disbursements for social security;
- (c) Ensure that social benefits are regularly indexed to the cost of living through an independent and transparent mechanism to provide recipients with an adequate standard of living, ensuring that benefits are protected from the effects of inflation.

Parental leave

36. While acknowledging the statutory provision of fully paid maternity leave for working mothers under article 65 (7) of the Constitution, the Committee is concerned that in practice many women, particularly those employed in the civil service and the informal economy, are

⁸ E/C.12/2015/1.

unable to fully exercise that right. The Committee is also concerned that there is no statutory provision for paternity leave (arts. 2 (2), 3 and 10).

37. The Committee recommends that the State Party adopt measures to guarantee statutory entitlement to all family care-related leave, including parental leave, in order to promote the equitable sharing of caregiving responsibilities between women and men. It also recommends that the State Party take all steps necessary to ensure that working parents, across all sectors, can fully exercise their rights.

Protection of the family and children

38. While welcoming the amendments to the Labour Act increasing the penalties for forced and child labour from 2 to 10 years' imprisonment, the Committee remains concerned about the prevalence of child labour, including in agriculture and mining and especially in artisanal and small-scale mines, and commercial sexual exploitation. It is particularly concerned at reports that large numbers of children are engaged in the production of tea, tobacco, cotton and sugar cane and in hazardous mining activities where they are exposed to dangerous chemicals, such as cyanide and mercury. The Committee is further concerned about the persistently high prevalence of child marriage (arts. 7 and 10).

39. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Take urgent measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour through a comprehensive approach that addresses its root causes, including poverty, material deprivation and social exclusion; strengthen labour inspection mechanisms that focus specifically on child labour, paying particular attention to agriculture, mining and commercial sexual exploitation; impose effective administrative and criminal sanctions on perpetrators; and ensure rigorous enforcement of child labour laws and regulations in both the formal and informal economy;**

(b) **Strengthen efforts to eliminate child marriage, through the enforcement of legislation and the adoption of a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of child marriage, including by providing social benefits to alleviate poverty, ensuring access to and continuation of education, enhancing food security, raising awareness of the relevant legal framework and carrying out broad-based community education campaigns on the harmful effects of early marriage.**

Poverty

40. Noting the information on the negative impact of high inflation, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and recurrent droughts on poverty reduction efforts, the Committee remains concerned about the persistently high rates of poverty and extreme poverty in the State Party (arts. 9 and 11).

41. Recalling its statement on poverty and the Covenant,⁹ the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Adopt a comprehensive multidimensional action plan to eradicate poverty, which sets out clear and measurable targets, addresses the root causes of poverty and ensures the allocation of sufficient resources for its effective implementation and monitoring;**

(b) **Through that action plan, effectively respond to the needs of populations disproportionately affected by poverty, including children, women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous and tribal peoples and persons living in rural, remote or deprived urban areas.**

Right to food

42. While noting the information on the State Party's efforts to address food insecurity, including measures to support farmers, the Committee is nevertheless concerned about the widespread prevalence of food insecurity and the persistently high rates of stunting, which

⁹ E/C.12/2001/10.

reportedly affects one quarter of children, and the increasing rates of wasting. It also expresses concern that climate change is adversely affecting agricultural production and farmers' incomes, as recurrent climate-related disasters, including cyclones, flooding and subsequent extreme droughts, combined with economic instability, are contributing to a high proportion of the population not having secure access to nutritious food (art. 11).

43. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Adopt a comprehensive national strategy for the protection and promotion of the right to adequate food, developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, which addresses food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition, establishes clear and time-bound targets and provides for effective mechanisms to monitor and assess progress;

(b) Intensify efforts to improve food security in those regions and communities most affected by hunger and malnutrition, including by increasing access to a diverse diet through the development of resilient and nutrition-sensitive food systems; investing in local agricultural production and providing targeted support, such as seeds, greenhouses and livestock; and strengthening the resilience of subsistence farmers and female-headed households through income diversification and disaster preparedness measures;

(c) Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 12 (1999) on the right to adequate food and the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security.

Right to adequate housing

44. The Committee is concerned about reports of inadequate housing conditions in rural, remote and deprived urban areas, including overcrowding and insufficient access to safe water, sanitation and electricity. The Committee is also concerned about reports of mass forced evictions during the reporting period, carried out without prior consultation with the communities affected and without the provision of sufficient compensation or alternative housing (art. 11).

45. Recalling its general comments No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing and No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions, the Committee recommends that the State Party intensify its efforts to increase housing supply and improve housing conditions, paying particular attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized communities. It also recommends that the State Party take legislative and administrative measures to provide legal safeguards against arbitrary forced evictions, while incorporating provisions for compensation and alternative housing into those safeguards, and ensure that house demolitions and forced evictions are only used as a last resort.

Rights to water and sanitation

46. The Committee is concerned that many communities continue to face serious difficulties in accessing safe water and adequate sanitation, reportedly relying heavily on unprotected sources for domestic use, which exposes them to waterborne diseases, and having limited access to basic sanitation facilities (art. 11).

47. Recalling its general comment No. 15 (2002) on the right to water, the Committee recommends that the State Party strengthen its efforts, including by expediting the adoption and effective implementation of the National Water Policy (2013) and Sanitation and Hygiene Policy (2024), to improve access to safe, affordable water for domestic use and provide access to improved sanitation services for all, including in informal settlements, deprived urban and rural areas, schools and healthcare centres.

Adaptation to climate change

48. The Committee is concerned that the existing adaptation measures are not sufficient to address the increasing negative impact of climate change on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in the State Party, including as a result of the loss of livelihoods,

displacements and food insecurity following periods of heavy rain and floods, prolonged droughts and soil degradation (art. 11).

49. **Recalling its statement on climate change and the Covenant,¹⁰ the Committee recommends that the State Party strengthen its national climate change adaptation efforts to address the adverse impacts of climate change on economic, social and cultural rights, with enhanced disaster management measures and adequate human, technical and financial resources. It also recommends that the State Party continue taking measures to strengthen the resilience of its economy and society in the face of environmental shocks and the long-term effects of climate change.**

Right to physical and mental health

50. The Committee is concerned about the emigration of medical professionals owing to low salaries and poor working conditions, the persistent underfunding of healthcare and services and the reliance – albeit recently reduced – on donor contributions for funding healthcare services, noting reports of shortages of essential medicines and medical equipment (art. 12).

51. **Recalling its general comment No. 14 (2000) on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the Committee recommends that the State Party take urgent measures to strengthen its healthcare system by increasing public budget allocations to healthcare and services, increasing the number of medical professionals and improving working conditions to retain them, and ensuring the availability of essential medicines and medical equipment.**

Persons living with HIV/AIDS

52. While welcoming the efforts to mobilize public resources through the National AIDS Trust Fund, the Committee remains concerned that limited funding, including as a result of a decline in donor contributions, has rendered many HIV/AIDS programmes ineffective or defunct, creating significant protection and service gaps. It also expresses concern that, despite preventive measures and expanded access to antiretroviral therapy, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS remains high, and persons living with HIV continue to face persistent stigma and discrimination (arts. 2 (2) and 12).

53. **The Committee recommends that the State Party intensify its efforts:**

- (a) **To allocate adequate resources for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment to ensure that funding shortages do not impede access to treatment and care for persons living with HIV/AIDS;**
- (b) **To strengthen measures to prevent new HIV infections;**
- (c) **To expand HIV testing and ensure the timely initiation of antiretroviral therapy;**
- (d) **To combat stigma and discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS;**
- (e) **To ensure that medical professionals fully respect the confidentiality of HIV-related information.**

Drug policy

54. The Committee is concerned about the negative impact of the State Party's punitive approach to drug use on the right to health, noting the limited availability and accessibility of harm reduction and rehabilitation programmes, which further contributes to the continued transmission of HIV and hepatitis C among those who use drugs (art. 12).

55. **The Committee recommends that the State Party review its legislative framework to adopt a human rights-based approach to drug use, including by:**

¹⁰ E/C.12/2018/1.

(a) **Conducting preventive awareness-raising on the serious health risks associated with drug abuse, particularly among young people;**

(b) **Ensuring the treatment of drug use disorder and the provision of healthcare services, psychological support, rehabilitation services and harm reduction programmes for persons who use drugs, and considering the adoption of alternatives to the punitive approach and criminal penalties for drug use.**

Right to sexual and reproductive health

56. The Committee welcomes the 2024 decision of the Supreme Court concerning section 2 (1) of the Termination of Pregnancy Act, which held that denying access to safe and legal abortion services in cases of marital rape and the sexual abuse of children is unconstitutional. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned that the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, coupled with stigma, high direct and indirect costs and the limited availability of sexual and reproductive healthcare services in rural and disadvantaged urban areas, continue to undermine women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health. The Committee is also concerned about reports of the prevalence of unsafe abortions and persistently high rates of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (art. 12).

57. **The Committee recommends that the State Party take all measures necessary to ensure the full realization of women's and girls' right to sexual and reproductive health, including by:**

(a) **Revising its legislation on termination of pregnancy in the light of the 2024 Supreme Court decision to make it compatible with women's right to life and health;**

(b) **Expanding the availability and accessibility of quality sexual and reproductive healthcare services and improving access to affordable, safe and effective contraceptive methods and emergency contraception;**

(c) **Providing education on sexuality and reproduction that is comprehensive, non-discriminatory, evidence-based, scientifically accurate and age- appropriate;**

(d) **Developing comprehensive programmes to address the root causes of sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls, and to reduce the high prevalence of unwanted pregnancies, teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, further ensuring that those programmes tackle stigma and harmful gender stereotypes;**

(e) **Taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health.**

Right to education

58. The Committee is concerned about the high rates of school dropout driven primarily by poverty, child labour, child marriage and teenage pregnancy, particularly in rural areas, and the seriously limited access to education for children with disabilities. It is also concerned about the significant underfunding of education in the national budget, the emigration of teachers due to low salaries, overcrowded classrooms and inadequate school infrastructure, including unreliable access to electricity, water and sanitation facilities. The Committee is further concerned about the inadequate quality of education, as schools reportedly lack sufficient funding for essential learning materials, such as desks, chairs and textbooks. The Committee is concerned by reports indicating that students and teachers have been compelled to participate in political rallies and that school premises have been used for political purposes during the reporting period (arts. 2 (2), 13 and 14).

59. **The Committee recommends that the State Party take effective measures:**

(a) **To ensure access to inclusive and quality education for all children, including children with disabilities, by increasing public investment in education, improving school infrastructure and access to electricity, water and sanitation facilities and providing adequate learning materials;**

- (b) To address teacher shortages and emigration through improved salaries and working conditions;
- (c) To address the root causes of dropout, including by expanding school feeding programmes, providing free school transportation and developing a school readmission policy to safeguard the right to education for pregnant and parenting students;
- (d) To prevent the use of school for political or military purposes and ensure the implementation of the 2018 ruling of the Zimbabwe High Court to prohibit schoolchildren or teachers being encouraged or compelled to participate in political rallies and school premises or equipment being used for political activities;
- (e) To take into account the Committee's general comment No. 13 (1999) on the right to education.

Cultural rights

60. While welcoming the State Party's formal endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Committee is concerned that Indigenous and tribal peoples, including the Tshwa, the Doma and other Indigenous and tribal peoples, as well as minority groups, are not officially recognized and consequently do not benefit from any legal or policy frameworks that protect their cultural rights or enable them to maintain their culture, way of life and traditional livelihoods. The Committee is further concerned that, despite all 16 official languages being taught in schools, Indigenous and tribal children and children from minority groups are in practice unable to access education in their own language (arts. 2 (2) and 15).

61. The Committee recommends that the State Party establish a legislative and policy framework that recognizes and protects the legal status and rights of communities identifying as Indigenous and tribal peoples or minorities, enabling them to preserve, develop, express and share their identity, history, culture, languages, traditions and customs, and to maintain their spiritual relationship with their lands, territories and resources. The Committee also recommends that the State Party take the measures necessary to facilitate access to education for Indigenous and tribal children and children from minority groups in their own language, including through the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula, teacher training and learning materials in children's mother tongues.

Right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications

62. The Committee is concerned that the number of Internet users remains low due to high costs, limited infrastructure and poor connectivity in rural areas. The Committee is also concerned that many persons, particularly those living in rural areas, those from low-income households and persons with disabilities, lack the digital skills needed to benefit from information and communications technology, which exacerbates the digital divide and limits access to essential services and economic opportunities (art. 15).

63. Recalling its general comment No. 25 (2020) on science and economic, social and cultural rights, the Committee recommends that the State Party take measures to bridge the digital divide by expanding affordable and high-quality Internet access, particularly in rural areas, and improving digital infrastructure nationwide. The Committee also recommends that the State Party promote digital literacy and skills development, paying special attention to marginalized and disadvantaged communities, to ensure that all individuals can fully benefit from information and communications technology and access essential services and economic opportunities.

D. Other recommendations

64. The Committee encourages the State Party to accede to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

65. The Committee recommends that the State Party consider acceding to the core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a Party, namely the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

66. The Committee also recommends that the State Party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, including in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, with international assistance and cooperation when needed. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be significantly facilitated by the State Party establishing independent mechanisms to monitor progress and treating beneficiaries of public programmes as rights holders who can claim entitlements. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State Party support the global commitment of the decade of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementing the Goals on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind. In this regard, the Committee draws the State Party's attention to its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind.¹¹

67. The Committee further recommends that the State Party take steps to progressively develop and apply appropriate indicators on the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in order to facilitate the assessment of progress achieved by the State Party in complying with its obligations under the Covenant for various segments of the population. In that context, the Committee refers the State Party to, *inter alia*, the conceptual and methodological framework on human rights indicators developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹²

68. The Committee requests that the State Party disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, including at the national, provincial and local levels, in particular among parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee emphasizes the crucial role that Parliament plays in implementing the present concluding observations and encourages the State Party to ensure its involvement in future reporting and follow-up procedures. The Committee encourages the State Party to engage with the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and with non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and in the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

69. In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State Party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations (30 September 2027), information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 17 (b) (maximum available resources), 41 (a) (poverty) and 43 (a) (right to food) above.

70. The Committee requests the State Party to submit its third periodic report, to be prepared in accordance with article 16 of the Covenant by 30 September 2030, unless otherwise notified as a result of a change in the review cycle. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words.

¹¹ E/C.12/2019/1.

¹² HRI/MC/2008/3.