

**NATIONAL PEACE AND RECONCILIATION COMMMISSION STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE: 21 SEPTEMBER 2021**

1. The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission; a mechanism for resolving past conflicts and building national and subnational capacities that guarantee a future of peace and reconciliation; established under Section 251 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) of 2013; joins the rest of the world in commemorating the **2021 International Day of Peace**. This World Peace Day was designated as the day to commemorate the call for global harmony, strengthening the ideals of peace and non-violence, alleviation of conflicts, cessation of intra and inter-state hostilities; and for mankind to make a pledge to peace; even despite our unique differences;
2. This year’s commemorations run under the theme: ***“Recovering Better for an Equitable and Sustainable World.”*** This theme is premised on the fact that as the world heals from the COVID-19 pandemic, nations are inspired to think creatively and collectively about how to help everyone recover better, how to build resilience, and how to transform our world into one that is more equitable, just, inclusive, sustainable and healthier. As the Commission we are compelled to support this cause as one of our functions enjoins us ‘to recommend legislation to ensure that assistance, including documentation, is rendered to persons affected by conflicts, pandemics and other circumstances’ (Section 252(j) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe);
3. It is for this reason that in this year’s commemorations, the NPRC is keen to:
   1. Reflect on the value of peace building in times of disasters and pandemics and make a commitment to building a peaceful Zimbabwe for all generations;
   2. Raise public awareness and generate public interest in the IDP commemorations and the role of citizens in promoting national unity and cohesion despite the challenging situations;
   3. Strengthen infrastructures for peace through building of capacities around the ecosystem of peace while tackling the drivers of exclusion of persons affected by shocks, disasters and pandemics, women, youth and persons with disabilities among others.
4. Invariably, the Commission has noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly become a conflict multiplier in that worldwide; there is an increasing relational inquiry about trust between citizens and institutions; access to life saving vaccines by rich countries matched against developing nations; livelihood insecurities for citizens during lockdowns; rise in domestic and gender based violence; civil and political unrests; cross border and inter-state tensions; criminal related incidents and cases of stigma and discrimination all of which can easily become drivers of conflict;
5. It is for this reason that the Commission makes a national call to renew our collective commitments to peaceful nation-building, strengthened by the efforts being made by state and non-state stakeholders to even out access to life saving services, including the much-needed vaccinations;

1. In his World Peace Day message, the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, makes a rallying call for everyone to choose peace and shun hostilities:

“Covid-19 has turned our world upside down. Conflicts are spinning out of control… Inequality and poverty are deepening. And mistrust and division are driving people apart at a time when solidarity and collaboration are needed more than ever. As a human family, we face a stark choice- peace or perpetual peril. We must choose peace.”

1. This call to peace has been repeated many times by His Excellency the President of Zimbabwe, Cde E.D. Mnangagwa, who at many forums has urged Zimbabweans to be united, peaceful and loving to one another. In one of his messages, he exhorts Zimbabweans to cherish peace and unity; “The values of unity and peace cherished by all Zimbabweans are the enduring foundations for the desired goal of development, itself the pillar of the trinity of unity, peace and development…” (President’s Inauguration Speech: 24 November 2017). The Commission takes a leaf from this and other similar messages, urging all Zimbabweans, irrespective of our political, religious, ethnic or tribal affiliations, to cherish the one-ness that our Ubuntu compels us to do when we are facing calamities as has been brought upon us by Covid-19;
2. The Commission remains alive to the echoing calls from all corners of the country for Zimbabweans to unite; reduce polarization; minimise hate speech against each other; respect traditional values of Ubuntu; celebrate our dynamism, differences and preferred affiliations; reduce divisive political and resource based conflicts; secure closure over past national conflicts and restore trust and confidence in public institutions. These are the bedrock upon which true peace, healing and reconciliation can be founded. As a Commission we are aware of the people’s peace-related needs and commit ourselves to working with all Zimbabweans to create a sustainable path towards true unity, healing, reconciliation and to building a culture of unity, tolerance and harmonious co-existence;
3. To make the services of the Commission accessible to citizens, we are finalizing the process of devolving our structures and to date, regional offices have been set up in the Southern Region (covering Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South Provinces); Central Region (covering Midlands and Masvingo Provinces); Eastern Region (covering Manicaland and border areas of Mashonaland East and Masvingo Provinces) and Northern Region (covering Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East and Harare). The desire is to have provincial offices and we are working on mobilizing financial and material resources to make this possible;
4. As you may be aware, the Commission’s mandate speaks to securing closure for conflicts that happened in the past and we remain open to supporting all efforts aimed at national healing and reconciliation. We acknowledge the efforts being made under the Presidential Program on Gukurahundi and register our satisfaction that efforts being made are a fulfilment of the recommendations we submitted to Parliament in our 2019 and 2020 Annual Reports;
5. The Commission is cognizant that elections are around the corner as 2023 beckons; and also; as there are possibilities of conducting by-elections necessitated by vacancies created in the House of Assembly and in local authorities. We are therefore working on a broad based and stakeholder-driven consultation process around the country to work on and develop mutually edifying strategies for this process to be peaceful and free from disputes. Our internal Dispute Resolution Mechanisms are also being strengthened to reinforce our capacity to deal with conflicts;
6. The NPRC is a victim-centred Commission. We pride ourselves in developing robust victim protection mechanisms which we are confident will safeguard those affected by conflicts especially women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly from further injury, harm or revictimization by ensuring that appropriate counselling, palliative support and referrals are rendered to them;
7. In sync with the National Development Strategy 1, it remains pertinent that for impactful social cohesion to take place, local level structures should be strengthened to promote inclusive dialogue and tolerance and fortify citizens’ engagement platforms. We are thus working on energizing our local level infrastructures for peace so that locals are empowered to deal robustly with conflicts that affect their provinces, districts, constituencies, wards and villages around the country. This is also being supported by efforts being made to develop a national social cohesion and reconciliation index which will help us assess from time to time the level of our willingness to work together, integrate and collaborate for the good of the nation;
8. The Commission, in line with its mandate, has, and continues to receive conflicts from members of the public, most of which have been successfully resolved while some are still under investigations; the goal being to ensure an amicable resolution of conflicts and cessation of hostilities. We urge Zimbabweans who may wish to report any conflicts, or those who may seek mediation or conflict resolution services to approach us through our regional offices or directly at the national office;
9. We have increasingly been witnessing conflicts arising in communities as a result of natural resource distribution and extraction. We are thus making inquiries about how extractive investments can be a source of division and disunity among communities hosting investors. A peace-conflict impact assessment model is being explored to protect both communities and investors from divisive conflicts which negate development and leave host communities disgruntled and unhappy;
10. We acknowledge the support and feedback that we continue to receive from our stakeholders, including the media; and commit ourselves to continue to partner with everyone as we seek to unite our nation even in times of disasters and pandemics. The NPRC Act (Section 6(3)(b) empowers us to work with a multiplicity of stakeholders as long as this does not compromise our independence and we thus remain open to the views, offers of collaboration and other partnerships that advance our mandate as the nation gravitates to achieve Vision 2030. We restate our assurance to work with the Executive, the Legislative Arms of Government and other non-state actors to strengthen key pillars that build peace in Zimbabwe and beyond;
11. As I sum up, I wish to thank members of the Fourth Estate for the support you give to the Commission and urge that together we can achieve unity and cohesion by promoting conflict sensitive reporting. We have often noted a rise in divisive messaging in the print and digital media, particularly social media and implore on our partners in journalism and individual users to learn from experiences elsewhere in the region and beyond where inciteful reportage has had very detrimental consequences on society;
12. In the words of the United Nations Secretary General;

“We need peace to urgently deliver lifesaving vaccines and treatment for Covid-19. We need peace to recover from the pandemic and rebuild shattered systems and shattered lives. We need peace to level the playing field and reduce inequalities. We need peace to renew trust in one another- and faith in facts and science… Let’s walk the pathways of peace as if our lives depended on it.”

1. We invite the nation across the divide to join the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission in commemorating this International Day of Peace as we set the path for sustainable development in a peaceful, united and reconciled nation and envision a **Peaceful Zimbabwe for all Generations**.

**Runyararo runotanga neni;**

**Peace begins with you;**

**Ukuthula kuqala ngathi sonke!!!**

Happy International Day of Peace!!!

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