

**NATIONAL PEACE AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION**

**REMARKS BY COMMISSIONER GWERE**

**BULAWAYO PROVINCIAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON THE ZIMBABWE NAP ON YOUTH, PEACE, AND SECURITY**

**31 OCTOBER 2022**

**BULAWAYO, CHURCHHILL**

1. **Salutations**
2. *The Director in the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation;*
3. *Representatives from the various Government Ministries and Departments;*
4. *Representatives from the Zimbabwe Youth Council;*
5. *Representatives of UN Women*
6. *Representatives from the Zimbabwe National Steering Committee on YPS NAP*
7. *Representatives from the NPRC and the Bulawayo Peace Committee*
8. *Representatives from Youth organisations;*
9. *Young women and men here present*
10. *Distinguished Guests Ladies and Gentlemen;*
11. It is a pleasure for me to give these remarks and be part of the Bulawayo Province consultative and engagement meeting on the development of the Zimbabwe Youth, Peace and Security National Action Planwith the objectives to -;
12. Obtain inputs from sub-national level youth representatives and other key stakeholders on the **issues, interventions, and strategies** to be incorporated in the Zimbabwe Youth Peace and Security National Action Plan.
13. Build partnerships and ensure buy-in by stakeholders in the implementation of the Youth Peace and Security National Action Plan.
14. Sensitise key youth community actors on the need to promote peace and prevent conflicts in their communities.
15. The NPRC as the National Institutional mechanism for peacebuilding in Zimbabwe, is assured of the able Government leadership through the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts, and Recreation, the parent Ministry responsible for advancing and promoting the rights and concerns of Zimbabwean youths as it facilitates the development of the Zimbabwe Youth, Peace and Security National Action Plan.
16. This bold step of accountability in developing a Youth Peace and Security National Action Plan is a clear testimony of the Government’s commitment to young people’s full and equal participation in peace and security processes in Zimbabwe.
17. The development of the National Action Plan on Youth Peace and Security is an aspiration that has come true for the NPRC as this process culminated from several advocacy efforts by the NPRC and other Stakeholders, calling for the need to strengthen youth participation in peacebuilding processes.
18. Of note is the National consultative and engagement meeting with the Youth on Youth, Peace, and Security which took place on the 8th of April 2022. Informed by youth-led recommendations, the meeting rallied momentum on the need to develop the Zimbabwe Youth Peace and Security National Action Plan.
19. The call to develop the Zimbabwe Youth Peace and Security National Action Plan was further cemented by the outcomes of the High-level Inter-Ministerial Conference on Youth Peace and Security held in Harare from 25th-30th of July 2022 with the key outcome of the conference being commitment by the Government of Zimbabwe, through the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation to develop a National Action Plan on Youth Peace and Security.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. Without going any further and for the benefit of the Youth who are not aware of the Mandate of the NPRC, allow me to share with you in brief the Mandate of the NPRC.
2. The NPRC is one of the 5 Independent Commissions established under Chapter 12 of the Constitution and operationalised through the NPRC Act Chapter 10:32 as mechanism for resolving the burdens of past conflicts and building national and sub-national capacities to guarantee a future of peace and reconciliation.
3. The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) is also constitutionally mandated to develop mechanisms for early detection of areas of potential conflicts and disputes, and to take appropriate preventive measures.
4. In the execution of its Constitutional mandate, the NPRC, Section 9 mandates the Commission to develop strategies to mainstream gender imperatives into every aspect of the Commission's work including, adopting inclusive approaches for the participation of all diverse groups, particularly, the Youth in peacebuilding.
5. Allow me also to recite the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission vision which is a **‘Peaceful Zimbabwe for all Generations’**.

**Ladies and gentlemen**

1. Considering the plight of all generations is about securing a peaceful future. As Nelson Mandela said *‘ The future belongs to our youth, the Youth must therefore seek and cherish the most basic condition for peace, namely unity in our diversity, and find lasting ways to attain that goal."*
2. This is also evidenced by statistics form 2022 Population census which indicates that 68 percent of Zimbabwe’s population is under the age of 35. This calls for the need to recognise the Youth as a force to reckon with for the sustainability and durability of all peace and social cohesion processes in Zimbabwe
3. The perspectives of the youth in all their diversity must be integrated in peace-building and conflict-prevention efforts at all levels. The Youth have distinct contributions gathered from their lived experiences and identities that are important in constructing and implementing successful peace building initiatives.
4. It is therefore important to proactively include the young people in peacebuilding so that young people’s energies, innovativation, and creativity is directed towards the implementation of constructive peace initiatives rather than on activities that threaten the achievement of peace in our Country.
5. You will agree with me that there is a growing trend of young people being involved in activities that are a threat to Peace. This includes amongst others- high levels of drug abuse and crime while in some instances, the youth are manipulated to instigate conflicts and violence.
6. There are also several structural drivers of conflict emanating from global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, as well as the global economic crisis that are a threat to peace and disproportionately impact the youth.
7. According to the 2022 First quarter labour force survey results (ZimStat), the age group (15-19) years had the highest expanded unemployment rate of 72 percent. Youths (15-24) years had a national expanded unemployment rate of 66 percent while the national expanded unemployment rate for youths (15-34) years was 57 percent . This may present a threat to peace and social cohesion as many of the Zimbabwean youth then egage in violence, drug abuse and crime as coping mechanisms.
8. Above that, the Youth are often excluded from the general peacebuilding initiatives and they remain significantly underrepresented in peacebuilding decision-making with young women bearing the largest brunt. Traditional and religious norms, practices, and beliefs about the youth's roles in decision-making hinder the youth's participation in decision-making. Often, youths are relegated to self-initiated local peace-building structures while decision-making spaces are deemed adult spaces.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. Youth participation in peace and reconciliation processes must go beyond their participation at the local level process while relevant institutions should support youth’s substantive participation and agency in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution.
2. To address those imperatives, the development of the Youth, Peace, and Security National Action Plan becomes fundamental.
3. The Youth Peace and Security National Action Plan will help to **put youth at the centre of peace and security processes,** help to **identify and prioritize key peace and security issues facing the youth, determine key activities for implementation at the country level as well facilitate collaboration among stakeholders**, (Government, civil society organizations (CSOs), Independent Commissions, donors, academia, local communities, and the private sector) on youth, peace and security issues.
4. What is critical is the development of an inward-looking framework that identifies key domestic and context specific issues and priorities on youth, peace, and security .
5. Having gone through the programme for the day, I am happy that conversations will be led by the youth themselves as they identify key priorities and activities under each of the 5 Youth Peace and Security Pillars namely Participation, Prevention, Protection, Partnerships, Disengagement, and Reintegration.
6. I am confident that the young people will profer innovative and brilliant strategies that will address the gaps, and strengthen the advancement of the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda in Zimbabwe.
7. As you are aware that the 2023 harmonized elections are imminent, it is important that young people identify key actions that help raise their voices, agency and leadership in electoral conflict prevention.
8. I encourage you to nullify the stereotype and belief that the youth are the instigators and pepetrators of electoral violence and conflicts during electoral processes.
9. I also urge you to reject being manipulated by bad apples and individuals who take advantage of electoral and other national programmes to instigate violence. And rather take advantage of processes that enhance youth participation in conflict prevention and peace building .
10. The NPRC National Conflict Early Warning and Early Response system (CEWER), which informs strategic early detection and early response to potential conflicts present such an opportunity where young people can add their voice and be visible in conflict prevention and peace building processes.
11. While we acknowledge that the youth participated in development of CEWER indicators, the youth should further participate in the implementation of the system through;
12. detection, monitoring, analysis and forecasting of conflicts and possible consequences;
13. Ensuring preparedness to respond to the warnings received at all levels at all levels; and
14. Providing reccommendations on appropriate actions to be taken to minimise impacts of conflicts detected at local level.
15. As I conclude I urge you all our esteemed Youth and youth representatives in this room to make this meeting worthwhile and seize this opportunity to place the enjoyment of Youth’s rights at the core of the peace and security issues in the Country.
16. I invite you to help me recite the NPRC Mantra

***Peace Begins with me,***

***Peace begins with you,***

***Peace Beigns with all of us***