

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE ZIMBABWE
MINISTER OF JUSTICE, SENATOR THE HONOURABLE
PATRICK A. CHINAMASA AT THE HIGH-LEVEL
SEGMENT OF THE 10TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN
RIGHTS COUNCIL: 4TH MARCH, 2009**

Mr President

Excellencies

Madam High Commissioner Pillay

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure and satisfaction to see a distinguished African presiding over this august assembly. Our sincere felicitations, Mr President and may the business of the 10th Session of the Human Rights Council be crowned with success under your leadership. May we also extend our warm words of gratitude to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the most able staff who are facilitating our work.

My country joined the entire United Nations family of nations in commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this past year. That was, indeed, a milestone. It was fortuitous also that we marked that event when the Human Rights Council was well on its way to finding its roots and promising of juicy fruit in the realisation of better engagement by all states through the utility of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). That cooperative mechanism should usher in an era in which all states will have their human rights records examined and, where necessary, useful recommendations for better promotion and protection of human rights would be brought forward. This mode of engagement is more preferable to the previous adversarial practice in which we all suffered rampant politicisation and selectivity in the demonization of only a select few member states by the few powerful members

whose own records were no better. Yet, as the wise have said often enough, bad habits die hard.

Mr President,

My country has too often been the cible for condemnation and shaming on matters of human rights at the hands of a few members of the United Nations who have sought to achieve other ends through the artifice of human rights. We have heard them this week as we have heard them over the past several years. Our response remains that we are no worse than any other state; we shall endeavour to improve.

Mr President,

While the UPR process has now taken root, Zimbabwe is very concerned by the Office of the High Commissioner for a seeming determination to put Zimbabwe on the spot-light over alleged serious and systematic violations of human rights (Reference is made to the Press release titled "Strengthening ties i.e. the High Commissioner's Meeting with some African leaders at the recent AU Summit in Addis Ababa 2 – 3 February) and also the Press Release of 12 February 2009.

The issues commented on were subjudice. We read this as an attempt to undermine the new political dispensation as well as undermining Zimbabwe's judiciary. It may be recalled that her office never issued a press statement on the carnage in Gaza when it was necessary.

Sure, Mr President, we are not without blemishes on the issue of human rights. It is the selectivity, partiality, bias and lurking politicisation that is of concern. The UPR is clear testimony that a lot still has to be done and achieved by all of us and yet the Office decides to name and shame only some. Lack of mention of sanctions that have brought a lot of suffering on Zimbabwe's people baffles us. We are not saying be silent if you see us not promoting and

protecting human rights. We are only saying we need to hear you loud and clear on all without favour in respect of human rights violations.

Zimbabwe would like to assure the High Commissioner that the Zimbabwe Government will fully cooperate with her office. We also want to assure her, in this august house, that her request to visit Zimbabwe will be honoured in the near future. The Government of National Unity is just beginning to settle down. We need time and may we appeal to Madam High Commissioner to be patient until appropriate time is scheduled for her visit.

Mr President,

Allow me to reiterate that things are moving forward in Zimbabwe with a Government of National Unity in place. That government deserves the support of all instead of the unrelenting attempts from some quarters to undermine it. This Government was born out of the choice of Zimbabweans by Zimbabweans and for Zimbabweans with the facilitation of former President Mbeki of South Africa as mandated by the SADC and the AU. We remain indebted to these distinguished African Statesmen who are helping us to hew a path to a brighter future for our nation.

In conclusion, Mr President allow me to say once again the promotion and protection of human rights is the responsibility of all of us without exception. Zimbabwe holds that sacred belief and will remain seized with efforts to close existing gaps on legislation and its application with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights. This is why we recently enacted Constitutional Amendment No. 19 that enables us to create a national Human Rights Commission. We foresee the Commission fully functioning during this year.

I wish the 10th Session of the Human Rights Council successful deliberations.

I thank you.