

# ZIMBABWE HEADS OF CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

*“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly, (John 10:10)”*



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***“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called Children of God” (Matthew 5 Verse 9)***

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## **Communiqué: The Zimbabwe We Want – Taking the process forward**

### **Preamble**

This communiqué is a discussion on the way forward on the Zimbabwe We Want document (ZWW) which was originally agreed in 2006. Over the past nine years, the situation in our country has changed and this communiqué offers a reflection on the current situation, the challenges and ways forward to address some of the pertinent issues.

This communiqué is an invitation to all Zimbabweans and all friends of Zimbabwe to dialogue with us, so that we can reconvene around the Zimbabwe We Want and agree on strategies on how to get there. The document holds no brief for any political party or preconceived political agenda. It reflects an ecumenical vision of the four mother bodies (EFZ, ZCC, ZCBC and UDACIZA)<sup>1</sup> regarding the Zimbabwe We Want. This communiqué is not an exhaustive prescription for all our troubles as a nation, but merely our humble contribution to the search for a solution to the challenges, in order to achieve the vision we originally ascribed in 2006.

May God Almighty bless the nation of Zimbabwe and grant it the faith, the vision and the courage to build a Zimbabwe that is free, tolerant, peaceful, prosperous and God fearing.

### **Mandate of the church**

As outlined in the ZWW document, the church, as the body of Christ is the divine institution in the world, comprising men and women called to serve God and humanity through the preaching of a liberating Gospel and service to alleviate human suffering in this world. As ambassadors of Christ, the church has a God given role to speak for the voiceless (Proverbs 31.8), engage in the ministry of reconciliation, be the conscience of society and to bring hope to the hopeless. This mandate compels us to engage redemptively in a loving way in national issues especially when the political and social conditions bring suffering to humanity. This is the same today as it was when we originally agreed the ZWW document in 2006. We therefore seek to invite the church to unite and seek a way forward for our nation as we take it to other stakeholders.

### **The Current Situation**

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<sup>1</sup> The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC), Union for development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe (UDACIZA).

In the last few years Zimbabwe has suffered from a protracted economic, political and social crisis, at least in the considered view of many of our nationals. The current political landscape in Zimbabwe is characterised by polarisation, intolerance to opposing political views and ideologies, intra and inter party fighting and succession issues, further weakening the political discourse. On the economic front, economic recovery is severely challenged by reduced industrial productivity, poor delivery of basic social services at local level and corruption that has escalated to the point where it is affecting aggregate economic growth. Socially, the country continues to experience a rise in unemployment which is contributing to increase in poverty level and the widening of the inequality gap. Additionally, even though the country now has a new constitution, the call is for expedience in the realignment of laws to the new constitution.

### **The Vision of the Zimbabwe We Want**

As a church we have a vision for a different Zimbabwe to the one we experience now. In 2006 we outlined our vision as the following;

*Our vision of the Zimbabwe we want is that of a sovereign, inviolable and unitary member state of the international community; a nation that is democratic and characterized by good governance as reflected in all its structures, institutions and operations at all levels; a nation united in its diversity, free, tolerant, peaceful, and prosperous; a nation that respects the rights of all its citizens regardless of creed, gender, age, race and ethnicity as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with a leadership that puts the interests of the people of Zimbabwe above all personal gains; a nation where all citizens enjoy equal protection of the law and have equal opportunity to compete and prosper; and above all a nation that is God-fearing.*

Overall, this vision remains unchanged, but we want to invite members of churches from the four mother bodies to join together to refine, operationalize and ultimately realise this vision.

### **The Values of the Zimbabwe We Want**

Our national vision must be underpinned by certain core values. Those we outlined in 2006 continue to be crucial and we need the church, and society as a whole to fully embrace these if we are to realise the vision. We encourage churches to discuss how to embed these eighteen values into everyday life.

1. Spirituality and morality
2. Unity in diversity
3. Respect for human life and dignity
4. Respect for democratic freedoms
5. Respect for other persons
6. Democracy and good governance
7. Participation
8. Sovereignty
9. Patriotism
10. Gender equity
11. Social solidarity and promotion of the family
12. Stewardship of creation
13. Justice and the rule of law
14. Service and accountability
15. Promotion of the common good
16. Preferential option for the impoverished and marginalised
17. Excellence
18. Subsidiarity

## **The achievements so far**

As a church we want to celebrate the achievements made so far in fulfilling the ZWW. There are several things of notable progress including; the new Constitution (particularly the inclusion of the Bill of Rights, Devolution, the reference to God in the preamble, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission and the Land Commission), the reduction in violence in the 2013 elections in comparison to previous elections, improvements in relations between Zimbabwe and the international community, periods of marginal economic growth and a stable currency, although it is not our own.

## **The challenges we face as a nation**

Despite the achievements Zimbabwe continues to suffer from enormous challenges. Below are a summary of some of the greatest issues facing our nation which need addressing if the nation is to prosper.

### **1. *Lack of a shared national vision and values***

Zimbabwe, for lack of a consensus based national vision and values does not have a rallying point for national unity and cohesion. This is the reason why Zimbabwe continues to grapple with political polarisation, intolerance, racism, inequality and violation of basic human rights. The lack of values leads to inconsistency in terms of the quality of services that people receive and affects the general quality of life in Zimbabwe.

### **2. *Insufficient implementation and adherence to the 2013 Constitution***

The new constitution was overwhelmingly endorsed and provides a positive framework for the nation going forward. It is therefore of concern that after two years there remains a lack of alignment of many national laws to the new constitution, gaps in implementation of the constitution and a general lack of constitutionalism alongside ignorance and insufficient understanding. This therefore leads to the lack of accountability and respect for it as the supreme law of Zimbabwe, further weakening the rule of law.

### **3. *Economic challenges***

The country continues to reel under a huge debt overhang which needs to be resolved. Additionally, the country is facing declining agriculture and manufacturing productivity, lack of foreign investment, high unemployment and a shrinking tax base. Related to the rise in unemployment is the fact that generality of our people are now living in abject poverty as the country continues to lose out from the exodus of much needed skills and the ballooning of the informal sector. Also, the negative effect that climate change has on our economic output cannot be understated. Further, the banking sector lacks the lender of last resort and this is weakening its contribution to macroeconomic development.

### **4. *Political intolerance***

Zimbabwean politics has been characterised by the inability to embrace and respect political differences which manifests through the trading of insults, violence with impunity, lawlessness and hate speech within and between political parties. Political leadership and the media have contributed to this polarisation.

### **5. *Contentious laws***

Some contentious pieces of legislation continue to exist in our statute books, with POSA and AIPPA being of particular concern,<sup>2</sup> especially as some of the provisions of these laws contravene the national constitution.

#### **6. Corruption**

Lack of accountability and corruption has gradually become endemic at all levels of Zimbabwean society. Individuals in positions of trust have excessively abused their position for personal gain, meaning that resources meant for the poor or for the common good have not been used appropriately. This corruption has stemmed from patronage, greed, fear, economic survival and a lack of shared values. It has derailed economic progress, undermined fair access to crucial public services and produced social and physical misery.

#### **7. Unresolved land issues**

As churches we have repeatedly supported land redistribution. But the land redistribution process has not been transparent, orderly, nor followed Jubilee principals which favour the poor and has not yet resulted in efficient use of the land benefiting the population at large. The constitutional provisions regarding land have not been implemented and a land audit has not been conducted. Further issues that hinder productivity include profitability constraints, water, lack of energy, accessibility of inputs, limitations in agricultural machinery, output marketing controls, ineffective technology and skills, insufficient farm finance and drought.

#### **8. Strained international relations**

Zimbabwe over the past decade became the target of sanctions from Western countries mainly due to her domestic policies which the West found unfavourable. This resulted in the international isolation of Zimbabwe as well as capital flight. Even though some of the sanctions have been lifted, Zimbabwe still does not enjoy mutually beneficial relations with the West and many sanctions still continue, such as those instigated by the United States through ZIDERA.<sup>3</sup> Zimbabwe has also violated Bi-Lateral Partnership Agreements which has further strained the country's relations with the international community.

#### **9. The voice of the church on national issues is inconsistent**

The failure of the church to be proactive and speak with influence on political, social and economic issues has led to the powerful not being held accountable, and Christian values and Biblical principles not being upheld. Furthermore, some church leaders have wrongly acted in a partisan manner and distorted the voice of the church. Where the church has spoken collectively, it has spoken mainly on less contentious issues rather than many of the key issues facing our nation.

#### **10. A leadership crisis and a lack of political will to implement agreed positions and policies**

Deficiency in leadership, governance and leadership succession issues have resulted in lack of direction, policy inconsistencies, stagnation, and absence of political will to tackle current challenges.

#### **11. Policy inconsistency**

Political fragmentation and insufficient political will has led to policy inconsistency. Different Government Ministries have taken different policy approaches, leading to ineffectual use of government revenues and poor policy implementation.

#### **12. Poor service delivery**

The economic meltdown, corruption and ineffective use of national revenues has led to poor service delivery – including healthcare, education, water provision and road maintenance. This is having a

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<sup>2</sup> Public Order and Security Act (POSA), Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).

<sup>3</sup> The Zimbabwe Democratic and Economic Recovery Act of 2001

devastating impact on Zimbabweans across the country and further makes it difficult for businesses to operate.

### **The way forward – some recommendations**

As a church we outline our recommendations on the way forward as a nation. We invite church members to further input and enhance these ideas and to stand united in taking forward these recommendations.

1. For the church to initiate and facilitate a process of defining a 'national vision and values'.
2. For the legislature to ensure the swift realignment of the laws to the Constitution – in particular addressing the death penalty, the Children's Act, POSA and AIPPA.
3. For the government to activate essential Constitutional Commissions such as the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, the Land Commission, and to effectively resource the National Human Rights Commission.
4. For the spirit of the Constitution to be adhered to by people across Zimbabwe – for respect of the Bill of Rights and for the Constitution to be regarded as the supreme law of Zimbabwe.
5. For immediate steps need to be taken by the Executive to improve the economy, reduce poverty, improve international relations, reduce, repay and restructure debt, increase the capacity to borrow, support the informal sector and create genuine wealth.
6. For the political leadership, the media and church leaders to help promote and pursue harmony and tolerance within the nation through their language and actions.
7. For government, the private sector and churches to take collective action to address corruption at all levels – from refusing to engage in petty corruption through bribes, to addressing macro-level corruption and looting of funds.
8. For the Land Commission to be operationalised and to conduct a land audit that should be published.
9. For the government to build bridges with the international community by addressing issues that caused the strained relations and lobbying for the removal of sanctions such as ZIDERA. The government should also rectify the violations to Bi-Lateral Agreements.
10. For there to be leadership renewal across the board and for increased political accountability.
11. For the Executive to adhere to the rule of law and for the removal of political patronage and factionalism.
12. For greater accountability in local service delivery – for increased transparency and access to information on local service delivery, for increased citizen demand for improvement and greater government responsiveness to citizen requests.

As the four church mother bodies, we commit to be more audible, visible and consistent on national issues. We pledge to take forward these recommendations – to both support our churches and church members to play their part, whilst also advocating for change on issues where needed. In particular, we believe the need for a national vision, political tolerance, the implementation of the Constitution and addressing economic challenges are of crucial importance in 2016 and for improving investor confidence. We therefore call on stakeholders to implement these recommendations with expediency in order that Zimbabwe can be a nation that is free, tolerant, peaceful, prosperous and God fearing. This we do because of our Christian faith and the church must do everything it can to protect our Christian values.