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**National Peace and Reconciliation Commission**

**Press Briefing 22 June 2018: Peace Pledge**

Zimbabwe has taken an important and bold step towards addressing the societal impacts and legacies caused by long periods and different episodes of conflict by gazetting the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission Act (herein after referred to as the NPRC Act) on 5 January 2018. The overall objective of the NPRC Act is to lay a foundation for sustainable peace and stability; assist the country to deal with its past by initiating inclusive healing and reconciliation processes – as well as enhancing national and sub-national capacities for the peaceful prevention of future conflicts as pathways for sustaining peace and deepening social cohesion in the country.

Besides dealing with the past mandate, the NPRC is also required to support efforts geared towards inclusive prevention of conflict as a strategy for promoting lasting peace in the country.  More specifically, the NPRC is mandated under function

 (d) *to develop procedures and institutions at a national level to facilitate dialogue among political parties, communities, organisations and other groups, in order to prevent conflicts and disputes arising in the future*;

(g) *to develop mechanisms for early detection of areas of potential conflicts and disputes, and to take appropriate preventive measures*

(i) *to conciliate and mediate disputes among communities, organisations, groups and individuals.*

(h) to *do anything incidental to the prevention of conflict and the promotion of peace.*

**2018 Harmonised Elections**

The upcoming 2018 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe provide an opportunity for the NPRC to launch its Preventative and Peace Building Mandate and in doing so, collaboratively contribute towards a peaceful electoral environment through timely anticipation and response to conflicts before they escalate into violence. Peaceful elections are a key ingredient for long term peace and development in the country and the NPRC has a key role to play in contributing towards this goal.

Towards this end, the NPRC has developed an integrated NPRC Election Strategy which is built on the foundations of the Commission’s constitutional mandate above and committed to leverage on the competences, expertise and experiences of ongoing peace building initiatives and collaboratively mobilize for peace during this electoral period. This is in recognition of the fact that the country has historically been characterized by episodes of conflict during elections – constraining prospects for credible and legitimate transitions.

In its work towards creating a peaceful environment for elections, the NPRC has so far made the following efforts;

1. Set up a conflict early warning early response platform. This is a platform where members of the peace building ecosystem who have early warning mechanisms at the community level meet to share information on conflict early warning signs with a view to mobilize for timely response. The platform meets every Thursday.
2. Engagement of political parties to promote peace and adhere to the political parties’ code of conduct which is now part of the electoral law.
3. Dialogue with stakeholders such as traditional, churches, civil society, women, people living with disabilities and youth.

**The Peace Pledge**

The Commission has plans to bring together political leaders contesting in the elections to make a public commitment to peace by signing a Peace Pledge. The Signing of the Peace Pledge will be a demonstration of the political parties’ commitment to seeking peaceful redress of possible disputes arising before, during and after elections as provided for in the Constitution and the Electoral laws of the country and in particular the Code of Conduct which is now law.

The NPRC is coming into a space where various initiatives towards promoting peace have been taking place. One of these initiatives is the work that has been done over the years by the political parties in parliament in crafting the code of conduct for political parties and ensuring that it became part of the law. The Code of Conduct plays an important role in setting the tone for a peaceful environment for the elections as it lays down key principles that the political players, their supporters and other stakeholders should abide by. The political actors have already made their commitment to the Code of Conduct which they have acknowledged and signed as part of the nomination process.

The Peace Pledge is building upon this commitment by creating a platform for and encouraging the political players to make a public commitment to peace before, during and after the elections. The Peace Pledge presents a new dawning in Zimbabwe’s political party engagement as the nation makes way for the 2018 Harmonised Elections; and the occasion signifies the willingness by political players to creating a peaceful election environment– thus providing an enabling environment for Zimbabweans to exercise their right to vote in peace. The Peace Pledge also presents a learning opportunity by the citizenry in understanding the Code of Conduct that political parties and players adhere to and at the same time enabling the citizenry to hold the political parties and players accountable to their public commitment.

The Peace Pledge presents the following key issues among others

* Diversity in politics is a reality which must be embraced
* Elections are a process and continuous emphasis on peace and reconciliation is part of political dialogue processes
* Leadership by political contestants is important in setting the environment for peaceful elections;
* Citizens play a role as key players to supporting respective political parties and players
* While conflict is inevitable, violence is a choice, and as Zimbabweans we have the power to shape the peaceful environment for elections that we desire

Details of the Signing Ceremony

* All political parties and independent candidates contesting in the 2018 Harmonized Elections are invited to be part of this historic process
* Stakeholders including academia, business community, churches, civil society, diplomatic community, independent commissions, international observers, judiciary, media, people living with disabilities, security sector, traditional leaders, youth organisations, women’s organisations are all invited to witness this event.
* Date: Tuesday 26 June 2018
* Time 0830- 1400 hours
* Venue: HICC

For futher details contact the NPRC

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***Peace: Our collective responsibility.***

***Runyararo: basa rako neni
Ukuthula: ngumlandu wakho lami***

***Rtd Justice Selo Masole Nare***

***Chairperson***

***National Peace and Reconciliation Commission***