



Press Release

Zimbabwe's Spotlight Initiative launches High-Level Political Compact to end gender-based violence, harmful practices

27 October 2021, Harare – Today, the Government of Zimbabwe, the European Union Delegation to Zimbabwe, and the United Nations in Zimbabwe launched the *High-Level Political Compact (HLPC) on Ending Gender-based Violence and Harmful Practices in Zimbabwe* under the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls.

The HLPC launch and signing ceremony, presided over by His Excellency President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, brought together various partners including Senior Government Officials, Head of EU Delegation and team, Development Partners, Heads of UN entities, representatives from traditional and religious leaders as well as Civil Society, to promote continued political commitment and engagement of leaders at the highest level to end violence against women and girls and harmful practices.

Of the 22 countries implementing the global joint EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, Zimbabwe becomes the first country to launch a High-Level Political Compact, showing an admirable effort to eliminate violence against women and girls and harmful practices.

Noting the Government of Zimbabwe's strong commitment to ending gender-based violence and promoting gender equality and women empowerment, H.E. Emmerson Mnangagwa said, "Today, we recommit ourselves by making a declaration through the High-Level Political Compact (HLPC) on ending gender-based violence and harmful practices. As we do so, it is my conviction and hope that accelerated, adaptive and innovative implementation of global, regional and national commitments as outlined in the Action Plan of this HLPC will lead to our ultimate aspiration of a Gender Based Violence free society by 2030."

The HLPC was developed as a strategic initiative for an effective response by the Government of Zimbabwe, in partnership with a range of key stakeholders and partners, towards the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls at the national and subnational levels.

Acknowledging positive steps taken by the Government of Zimbabwe under the Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls, EU Ambassador, His Excellency Timo Olkkonen said, "The Spotlight Initiative, entirely funded by the European Union, takes our commitments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and particularly SDG 5 on gender equality, to the next level. The High-Level Political Compact adopted today by Zimbabwe is the first of its kind among all the Spotlight Initiative implementing countries around the world. Gender-based violence has become a national emergency and I would like to congratulate His Excellency, the President, for boldly declaring it as one with this High-Level Compact."

Gender-based violence and harmful practices, such as child marriages, continue to be a huge societal problem affecting women and girls of different socio-economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, which infringes upon their ability to have a voice, choice, and control over their own lives.

The 2019 Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) estimated that 39.4% of women in Zimbabwe aged 15-49 experience physical violence at least once in their lifetime, while 11.6% of women within the same demographic reported experiencing sexual violence. The same document also indicates that, in Zimbabwe, 1 in 3 women in the country between 20-49 were married before the age of 18.

In her address at the HLPC launch, the UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Maria Ribeiro commended the HLPC launched taken by the Government of Zimbabwe as a platform to foster political will and ensure adequate policy reform and resource prioritisation for national prevention and response to end violence against women and girls. “The HLPC can help to increase budget on gender-based violence prevention services, which is critical reduce the immense health, legal and productivity costs that the country continues to incur because of the scourge of violence against women and girls,” said the UN Resident Coordinator.

The HLPC, developed on the vision of a just society free from all forms of violence against women and girls, aims for increased high-level political will, commitment, and accountability to eliminate violence against women and girls, accelerate action to address violence against women and girls at the grassroots, subnational and national levels, as well as the effective monitoring and evaluation of the progress made towards ending these social ills.

The implementation of the HLPC under the Spotlight Initiative will advance gender equality and women empowerment, mainstreaming of women’s rights, foster multi-sectoral collaboration and grassroot engagement, including with private sector, and civil society in ending violence against women and girls in Zimbabwe. **END**

Note to the Editor:

The Spotlight Initiative is a global multi-year partnership initiated by the European Union and the United Nations, in partnership with Governments, to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030.

Launched in Zimbabwe in 2019, the implementation of the programme is led by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, in partnership with 6 UN agencies – namely ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN WOMEN, the European Union Delegation and civil society organizations.

With a funding commitment of USD30 million from the EU, the Spotlight Initiative in Zimbabwe is being implemented in five provinces across Zimbabwe, including Mashonaland Central, Harare, Manicaland, Mashonaland West, and Matabeleland South under the following six pillars: Legislative and Policy Framework; Strengthening Institutions; Prevention and Social Norms; Delivery of Quality Services; Data Availability and Capacities, and Women’s Movement and Civil Society.

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