

SADC PEOPLE'S SUMMIT

SYMPOSIUM ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

HARARE, ZIMBABWE

16 AUGUST 2024

OUTCOMES STATEMENT

- 1.0 We, the people of Southern Africa, participating in the Symposium on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance in Southern Africa, convened from 15 to 16 August 2024 in Harare, Zimbabwe, in a period of increased violent and disenfranchising electoral processes, poor service delivery, shrinking civic space and continued marginalisation of vulnerable communities across the SADC region.
- 2.0 The symposium, which was convened ahead of the 44th Ordinary SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government, occurred in a context where citizens expressed growing dissatisfaction with service delivery, inadequate infrastructure, increasing poverty and inequality and shrinking civic space in the region.
- 3.0 This communication reflects our collective resolve to confront these challenges by advocating for stronger democratic institutions, human rights protection, effective devolution, effective implementation and enforcement of the SADC Treaty and sustainable development practices that meet the needs of all citizens.
- 4.0 We acknowledge the commitments made by SADC Heads of State and Government under the following instruments:
 - a. Treaty of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC Treaty)
 - b. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development
 - c. The SADC Protocol on Democratic Elections
 - d. The SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections
 - e. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)
 - f. The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG)
 - g. The African Union Agenda 2063 particularly Aspiration 3 which envisions an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, and the rule of law.
- 5.0 We celebrate the adoption of the SADC Vision 2050, which emphasises strengthening democratic governance, protecting human rights, and promoting transparency and accountability to ensure regional stability and sustainable development.

6.0 We acknowledge that the SADC Vision 2050, along with other regional instruments, is crucial in our quest for a region where all individuals enjoy their full rights and freedoms, and governance is inclusive, transparent, and accountable.

7.0 We affirm our commitment to:

- a. Defending civic space and promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance across the SADC region especially protection of vulnerable and marginalised communities.
- b. Advocating for the devolution and decentralisation of governance to empower local communities and ensure meaningful citizen participation in decision-making processes.
- c. Promoting sustainable development practices that protect the environment, support livelihoods, and address the root causes of poverty and inequality.
- d. Strengthening electoral institutions and ensuring that electoral processes are free, fair, and credible.

8.0 We urge SADC Heads of State and Government to:

1. *Uphold Fundamental Freedoms by:*

- a. Ensuring that SADC member states to commit to the protection of civic space by repealing laws that restrict freedom of expression, assembly, and association.
- b. Safeguarding the rights and safety of human rights defenders to ensure they can operate without fear of harassment, violence, or prosecution, both online and in person.
- c. Establishing a dedicated task force to review and revise laws that restrict civil society organisations and human rights defenders, aiming to remove restrictive measures and foster an enabling environment for their work.
- d. Ensuring the implementation, enforcement, and monitoring of member states' with the SADC Treaty obligations and related instruments.

2. *Strengthen Democratic Governance by:*

- a. Strengthening regional electoral systems to encourage participation especially of marginalised groups (including the SADC diaspora community, women, youth, persons in detention, persons with disabilities), combat violence and polarisation, improve dispute resolution and conflict transformation, and to restore the people's confidence in democracy.
- b. Strengthening legal and institutional frameworks that protect human rights and support democratic governance, ensuring judicial independence and effective accountability mechanisms.
- c. Countering the erosion of democratic institutions and the rise of authoritarianism in the region by safeguarding electoral integrity, combating corruption, advancing constitutionalism, and enhancing transparency and accountability.
- d. Restoring the SADC Tribunal and empowering it to act as a regional electoral dispute resolution platform.

3. *Empower Local and Marginalised Groups by:*

- a. Supporting local communities with resources and authority through devolution and decentralisation.
- b. Including women, youth, informal workers and people with disabilities in governance processes and ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making.
- c. Creating more avenues for citizen involvement in governance to enable community leadership in shaping policy decisions and implementation.

4. *Ensure Access to Essential Services by:*

- a. Guaranteeing universal access to water, sanitation, and health services through increased investment in infrastructure to close gaps in service delivery.
- b. Reforming public sector institutions by streamlining processes and reducing bureaucracy to improve service delivery.

5. *Promote Sustainable Development by:*

- a. Making human rights protection and sustainable development central to the SADC 2050 vision by aligning regional development plans with policies that promote economic growth, create job opportunities, reduce poverty, and invest in education and training.

9.0 Adopted in Harare, Zimbabwe, on 16 August 2024 and endorsed by:

1. Bulawayo Progressive Residents' Association
2. Foundation for Socio-Economic Justice
3. Multi Stakeholder Forum
4. Platform for Concerned Citizens
5. Research and Advocacy Unit
6. Southern African People's Solidarity Network
7. Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network
8. Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation
9. WeLead Trust
10. Women's Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence
11. Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust
12. Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development
13. Zimbabwe Council of Churches
14. Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum
15. Zimbabwe Human Rights Association
16. Zimbabwe Peace Project

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