

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY HON. O. MUCHINGURI
DURING UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING
MINISTERIAL MEETING ON STRENGTHENING
UNIFORMED CAPABILITIES, PERFORMANCE AND THE
PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN UN PEACEKEEPING
HELD IN NEW YORK ON 29TH MARCH, 2019**

Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking you most sincerely for convening this important meeting on Strengthening Uniformed Capabilities, Performance and the Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping. This forum presents us with an opportunity to discuss and generate the specialized capabilities necessary for contemporary United Nations Peacekeeping.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his ongoing efforts to strengthen peacekeeping operations through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative (A4P). The Declaration of Shared Commitments on Peacekeeping Operations, which most of us here signed in September last year, provides a basis on which we can assess progress made so far on commitments made by Member States and the gaps and challenges ahead. We applaud the objectives of the initiative, which include refocusing peacekeeping with realistic expectations and mobilizing greater support for political solutions to conflicts.

Mr. President,

Before I deliver my delegation's remarks on this important matter, allow me to thank the Community of Nations for standing with us following the devastating effects of Tropical Cyclone Idai, which resulted in the loss of lives and destruction of property and infrastructure. We continue to count on your support as we progress with the reconstruction process.

Mr. President,

The most effective way to protect civilians is to end and prevent conflicts. This is why conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding are, and will remain our highest priorities. Conflicts around the world are unleashing relentless horror and suffering to millions of civilians. Women and girls particularly bare the brunt of armed conflicts. Two decades after the Security Council first observed that a lack of gender equality affects the maintenance of international peace and security, a lot still needs to be done to increase women's participation in peace processes. Although significant strides have been made in implementing Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, regrettably, violence committed against women and girls has not abated.

To close the implementation gap on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, financial support to gender equality in conflict and post conflict countries needs to be increased. It is heartening to note that the Declaration of Shared Commitments, which Zimbabwe endorsed, include a commitment to implement the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and its priorities. There is no doubt that the role of women in peace operations is important and must be prioritised by increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women at all levels and key positions in peacekeeping contingency.

Despite numerous challenges, the Government of Zimbabwe has prioritised and made great strides in implementing resolution 1325 (2004). Government has created a stand alone Ministry responsible for Women's Affairs and Gender issues. We have also crafted a national gender policy in line with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and the AU Gender Policy.

My Government is cognizant of the fact that the military has always been a traditionally male dominated sphere and has taken deliberate steps to increase the enrolment of women and girls in the military. However, this is not an easy task given the high risk related to a military career.

At the national level, guided by UN resolutions, national legislation and policies on gender, and as a signatory of the Declaration of Shared Commitments on Peacekeeping Operations, Zimbabwe ensures, among others:

- a) Increased participation and representation of women at all decision making levels;
- b) Gender balance in post-conflict processes, and in United Nations and African Union peace support missions; and
- c) Gender mainstreaming in all line Ministries.

Mr. President,

We all have an obligation and moral duty to protect civilians in armed conflict. It is critical that all Member States do their utmost to protect civilians; we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles and objectives of the UN Charter. Peacekeeping Missions must be evaluated so that we are able to improve their capacities to protect civilians.

Zimbabwe stands firmly behind the commitments enunciated in the Declaration of Shared Commitments on Peacekeeping Operations which are designed to help peacekeepers effectively implement the protection of civilian mandates. We also strongly support the UN zero tolerance policy on all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.

I Thank You.