

*INTERVENTION BY AMBASSADOR C CHIPAZIWA AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL : 15 MARCH 2007*

Mr President,

We are concerned by the change of tone for the worse as we join others at the commencement of this session of the Human Rights Council. We do, however, welcome the High Commissioner for Human Rights's report in which among other noteworthy points, she indicates the appointment of a Human Rights Officer within the United Nations structures in our country. We have nothing to hide and will work cooperatively with that officer should a professional disposition be evident.

Some members of this august body yesterday took it upon themselves to pass judgement on the developments around the attempt to hold an illegal political rally on 11 March 2007 in Harare, the Zimbabwe capital. The facts, simply put, are that the leaders of the main opposition grouping, the MDC, led their riotous devotees in a march to disrupt peace and prove to their foreign sponsors that they were a force to be reckoned with. The mob overpowered a small police outpost and reinforcements were called in. There ensued physically violent exchanges and many, including some police officers, were hurt and subsequently hospitalised. The opposition leaders, Messrs Arthur Mutambara and Morgan Tsvangirai, were among those injured. Regrettably one demonstrator lost his life. In any event, the matter is now sub judice.

We witness in Zimbabwe the reemergence of "undertaker diplomacy" wherein some Western envoys pay Africans to turn on one another and this then allows them to shout "see how savage these Africans are". The people of Zimbabwe will not allow paid mobs to substitute the ballot box. No one will be allowed to be above the law.

While the opposition called their sponsored street thuggery and mayhem, a "prayer meeting", a real prayer meeting did take place in another part of Harare without incident.

Mr President,

We look forward to full engagement in the work of the Human Rights Council. Just to reach-out to my United Kingdom colleague who characterised as "extraordinary" my Minister's statement, what I find extraordinary is that he is not aware of the "extraordinary deeds of his government's agents in my country" and elsewhere .... Disingenuous?

Thank you