

COMMUNIQUE FROM THE 2024 PEACE INDABA HELD AT THE SALVATION ARMY CHURCH IN BULAWAYO FROM 15 TO 16 OCTOBER 2024

Cultivating a Culture of Peace

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) representing 31 member Churches and as a member of the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denomination (ZHOCD), in collaboration with the Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum (ECLF) and the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) convened the inaugural 2024 Peace Indaba on 15 to 16 October 2024 in commemoration of the international day of peace. This Peace Indaba brought together 60 participants from the Church, Independent Commissions, Government Departments, Community leaders and Civil Society Organizations coming from all the 10 Provinces of the country. The Peace Indaba was held under the theme **'Cultivating a Culture of Peace'**.

1. Participants reflected on the state of peace in Zimbabwe and agreed that all stakeholders must work together in cultivating a culture of peace across the length and breath of Zimbabwe. Participants further reflected on the need to promote women peace and security agenda in the implementation of the national action plan on women peace and security. During the deliberations, participants at the Peace Indaba noted and:

1.1 Understand that Section 10 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe compels that "the State and every person including juristic persons, and every institution and agents of government at every level, must promote national unity, peace and stability."

1.2 Appreciate the current efforts by the Government and other critical stakeholders in promoting and cultivating a culture of peace in the country as provided in the Constitution of Zimbabwe whose Preamble and National Values (Section 3(1)) provides for respect of people's freedoms, equality, peace, justice, and tolerance.

1.3 Applaud the Government's efforts in working towards national healing and reconciliation by launching the Gukurahundi Community Outreach Programme in March 2024. We believe that this national initiative which is led by traditional leaders must also include religious leaders since the Church is a central institution in promoting social cohesion and community healing.

1.4 Affirm that the Church has a divine mandate to faithfully promote unity, peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the land as the Scriptures declare that God has committed to the Church, the Ministry of peace-making (Matthew 5 verse 9) and reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5 verse 19). Just as Jesus Christ has given His Peace to believers (John 14 verse 27), the Church is called upon to be the Light of the World – an agent of peace and reconciliation – to build peace and to make peace possible for all creation.

1.5 Reiterate the work of the Church and other stakeholders in promoting national values, peace, and social cohesion in the country. Of particular significance, we note the work of the Church in promoting good governance,

electoral monitoring, the publication of the National Vision Document: The Zimbabwe We Want, the Principles of Engagement on Gukurahundi; and the ongoing national dialogue efforts.

1.6 Underscore our commitment to work towards eliminating political related violence and the violation of people's rights, eradication of corruption and economic inequalities, as well as playing a critical role in promoting a healthy environment, were all citizens celebrate peace and unity.

2. Cognisant of the national agenda for peace and security in moving the country towards a desired future where all citizens leave in peace and unity, we assert the following actions:

2.1 Government must open room for inclusion of Church and other stakeholders in such national Programmes, such as the Gukurahundi Community Outreach, so that there is no room for issues of trust versus mistrust. This will enable all stakeholders to work for a common good.

2.2 Government must work towards strengthening the Peace Infrastructure by enacting the law that will reconstitute the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) or its successor body that would strengthen the implementation of the national peace initiatives.

2.3 Citizens should uphold our national values as enshrined in the Constitution for peace and social cohesion to be attained.

2.4 Citizens in communities that were affected by the Gukurahundi should take advantage of the government initiative to freely participate and make their propositions so that genuine healing and reconciliation is realised.

2.5 The Media must play a positive and non-partisan role in educating the public on the importance of national reconciliation, mutual respect, and tolerance of diversity towards the promotion of the culture of peace in the country.

2.6 The Church and Civil Society must support the Public Hearings on Gukurahundi and create spaces that strengthen dialogue and friendly social engagement on all national issues.

2.7 The Church must always be part of National initiatives and Social Institutions which seeks to address historical experiences that relate to peacebuilding, reconciliation, and healing.

2.8 All Stakeholders to build awareness on the women, peace, and security agenda.

3. 1.The Peace Indaba participants *reaffirm* the need for collective concerted efforts towards cultivating a peace culture in Zimbabwe by drawing from the spirit of the Constitutional Preamble and National Values. All stakeholders, Church, and Civic Society, commit towards complementing the Government initiatives of promoting sustainable peace, social cohesion, and national reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

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