

PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE

Wednesday, 17th June, 2026

The Senate met at Half-past Two o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS

(THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE *in the Chair*)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE

SWEARING IN OF A NEW MEMBER

THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE: I would like to inform the Senate that in terms of Section 44 (8) of the Electoral Act [Chapter 2:13], Parliament was notified by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), that Chief Makoni Simbai Kogan was duly elected to represent Manicaland Province in the Senate with effect from the 11th of June 2026. This follows the death of the Hon. Senator Chief Mapungwana in April 2026. Section 128 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe provides that before a Member of Parliament takes his or her seat in Parliament, the Member must take the oath of a Member of Parliament in the form set out in the 3rd Schedule. Section 128 (2) states that the oath must be taken before the

Clerk of Parliament. I, therefore, call upon the Clerk of Parliament to administer the oath of a Member of Parliament to Chief Makoni Simbai Kogan. Thank you.

NEW MEMBER SWORN

HON. CHIEF SIMBAI KOGAN GWASIRA subscribed to the Oath of Loyalty as required by the Law and took his seat – [HON. MEMBERS: *Hear, hear.*] –

HON. SEN. MLOTSHWA: Thank you Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity. I rise on a point of national interest regarding hundreds of young people employed under the government-funded independence legacy projects in Matopo District who have not received full payment for the works completed several months ago. These young women and men were encouraged to participate in projects aimed at improving schools, clinics and public infrastructure in preparation for the Independence Day Celebrations held in Mapisa. They worked believing that Government would honour its obligations.

Many reportedly worked for months and provided their own food while working. Some sustained injuries during construction. Yet

today, several months later, they remain unpaid. If these allegations are true, the matter goes beyond unpaid wages. It touches on public trust, it touches on youth employment, it touches on government's credibility. Most importantly, it touches on the dignity of labour.

Mr. President, we cannot encourage young people to participate in national development programmes, then leave them uncertain about whether they will be paid for their work. I, therefore, call upon the responsible authorities to urgently investigate these allegations, establish the status of the outstanding payments and ensure that all workers who rendered services are paid without delay. The development of infrastructure must never come at the expense of those who built it. I so submit.

THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE: Thank you Hon. Sen. Mlotshwa. I would like to advise you to submit your written question to the responsible minister. It must be in written form so that it is responded to.

**ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF
SENATE**

SWITCHING OFF OF CELLPHONES

THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE: I would like to remind the Hon. Senators once again to put your gadgets on silent and if you want, you may switch them off, but please put them on silent.

MOTION

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**THE MINISTER OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS AND
DEVOLUTION FOR HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE**

(HON. SEN. TAWENGWA): I move that Orders of the Day, Numbers 1 to 2 on today's *Order Paper* be stood over until the rest of the Orders of the Day have been disposed of.

Motion put and agreed to.

MOTION

**REPORT OF THE 152ND ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-
PARLIAMENTARY UNION AND RELATED MEETINGS HELD
IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY**

HON. SEN. MUZENDA: I move the motion standing in my name that this House takes note of the delegation Report of the 152nd

Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and related meetings held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 18th to 23rd October, 2025.

HON. SEN. MATIBIRI: I second.

HON. SEN. MUZENDA: Thank you very much Mr. President Sir. I rise to give a Report of the 152nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) which was held in Istanbul, Turkey, from the 14th to the 19th of April. The theme was ‘Nurturing Hope, Securing Peace and Ensuring Justice for Future Generations. Our Parliament of Zimbabwe was ably led by Hon. Advocate J. F. N. Mudenda, the Speaker of Parliament. Hon. M. M. Chinomona, President of the Senate, was also in attendance and six Members of Parliament accompanied that delegation; Hon. Chief Khumalo, who is a member of the IPU Standing Committee on Sustainable Development; Myself representing the Committee on Democracy and Human Rights and also the Forum for Women Parliamentarians; Hon. Tshabangu who is a member of the IPU Health Committee and also the IPU Standing Committee on Sustainable Development; Hon. Nyelele, a member of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians is standing for United Nations Affairs; Hon. M. Kademaunga, member

of the Working Group on Science and Technology, the Forum for Young Women Parliamentarians and also a member of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs; Hon. J. Nyevera, member of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians and also the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security. Lastly, Hon. T. Karikoga, member of the IPU Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights.

Mr. President Sir, this was a very important time because the members of the IPU looked at issues that were happening at that time, the Middle East and other related meetings. We were met by the Ambassador to Turkey, Ambassador Alfred Mutiwazuka, who briefed the Speaker and the delegation on the happenings of the important issues to be discussed and also our relationship as a country with Turkey. I am going to indicate the outcomes of the meetings that were held with the SADC group and also the African geopolitical meetings. The SADC meetings were chaired by our Speaker, Hon. Mudenda, affectionately known there as 'Dean of Deans' because the Chairman of the SADC group was not present due to other commitments who is from Madagascar.

This group looked at the theme as the urgent need for concerted parliamentary efforts to preserve ceasefires and support peacebuilding. We also looked, because it was very important at that meeting, to agree as the SADC group on the candidature of Ambassador Filip of Romania for the position of Secretary General, because the outgoing Chairman had served his term. As the SADC group in Africa, we needed to agree together because in the past, if we did not agree, it caused challenges or problems when it came to voting. For the first time, we all agreed that we are going to support the candidature for Madam Filip to become the Secretary General. Let me now look at the forum of women parliamentarians. This was presented by the President of the Senate, Hon. M. M. Chinomona.

The main issues discussed were especially related to women and the youth. She highlighted in a presentation that Zimbabwe, as a country, is very forthcoming when it comes to peace processes because excluding women, if so done, would bring a disastrous ending. She also indicated that as a country, Zimbabwe's Constitution is very clear on making sure that gender-based violence is dealt with. She also enunciated on our Gender Policy, which is from 2025 to

2030. As I indicated earlier, all the Standing Committees were represented and they had various meetings. I am not going into detail about how the meetings were held, but I am just going to look at the outcomes of those related meetings.

As earlier indicated, in a historic first, Ambassador Filip of Romania was overwhelmingly elected as the 9th Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, becoming the first woman to hold the post in the IPU's 137-year history. She is also the first Eastern European to hold the distinguished position. Of course, she brings a wealth of experience because she has been working with the IPU for a long time. The Assembly also adopted the outcome document, the Istanbul Declaration on a “Nurturing Hope, Securing Peace and Ensuring Justice for Future Generations”. The other important resolution was the urgent need for concerted parliamentary efforts to preserve ceasefires and support peacebuilding in the Middle East and other regions.

Again, to take note, this was the first time in three years that Members of Parliament found common ground when it came to the issue of the Middle East and we are very happy about that. There was

also a resolution on sustainable development entitled ‘Building a Fair and Sustainable Global Economy, the role of Parliaments in Combating Protectionism, Reducing Tariffs and Preventing Corporate Tax Avoidance’, which urges parliaments to fight tax dodging by multinationals and inequality.

The meeting also looked at the Committee on Human Rights and advancing artificial intelligence (AI). The parliaments looked at the policy of member states regarding AI. What are parliaments doing in their respective countries, because it is important that we safeguard what AI might do. It has to be embraced because we cannot run away from the advantages, but we also need to look at the disadvantages.

I now want to go to the recommendations. The Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, that is now coming from what was discussed and these are now recommendations to our Government, should follow up on the engagements the Hon. Speaker had with his counterparts from Australia and Egypt.

The exchanges unlocked unlimited opportunities to enhance existing relations and exchange parliamentary best practices within the framework of parliamentary friendship associations. I think it is

very important because sometimes when we discuss ratifications here in this House, we have wondered on several occasions why it is taking 10-20 years to ratify agreements. So, we hope that the Minister of Foreign Affairs will look at that seriously.

We also looked at adopting the strategy for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2027 to 2031). The Parliament of Zimbabwe should proactively position itself to benefit from IPU technical support, the capacity-building and knowledge-sharing platforms. The Parliament should align its legislative oversight and representative functions with the resolutions adopted at the 152nd IPU Assembly, especially those relating to post-conflict peace building, sustainable economic systems and the regulation of Artificial Intelligence.

In light of the emergency resolution on ceasefire and peace building, Parliament of Zimbabwe should intensify its role in parliamentary diplomacy by advocating for peaceful conflict resolution through regional and international platforms such as SADC PF, the African Parliamentary Union (APU) and Pan-African Parliament (PAP).

Parliament should strengthen the institutional capacity of Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, to ensure inclusive participation in governance processes in line with the outcomes of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians. There is a need for enhanced domestication of international frameworks such as the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, as well as strengthened oversight on gender-based violence interventions in line with the Zimbabwe National Gender Policy (2025-2030).

The Parliament of Zimbabwe should ensure timely settlement of financial obligations to the IPU. I think to date, we are not in arrears and we are very thankful to the Government of Zimbabwe for that. The delegation expresses its gratitude to the Government of Zimbabwe and Parliament for allowing us to represent the institution at this high-level assembly.

Accordingly, the delegation calls on Thematic and Portfolio Committees and caucuses to implement, to an extent possible, the resolutions under their purview. I thank you.

HON. SEN. MATIBIRI: Thank you very much. I rise to second this report on the 152nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and related meetings held in Turkey between 14th and 19th of October 2025. Allow me to thank the delegation from Zimbabwe, led by the Hon. Speaker of this Parliament, Adv. J. Mudenda and the President of Senate, Hon. M. Chinomona.

Allow me, in the same vein, to thank the sterling efforts of the Speaker in chairing the SADC group, which earned him the name - Dean of Speakers. I think when Zimbabwe's leaders of Parliament are outside the country, we find pride because they represent us very well and this is testimony to that. It speaks volumes to the integrity of our Parliament and our country at large.

Furthermore, allow me to take note that it was this Southern African Development Community (SADC) group, which resolved to support an emergency item submitted by the delegation from Qatar, which focused on the urgent need for concerted parliamentary efforts to preserve ceasefires and support peace-building. The commitment to peace-building and conflict preservation in Zimbabwe is well documented. Mr. President, the reports note that Zimbabwe has a rich

history of extending efforts in conflict resolution and conflict management.

Following a protracted war, which brought independence to this country, the then Prime Minister of the Republic made a historic pronouncement that we needed to turn our swords into blades. The historic signing of the Unity Accord in 1987 was yet another milestone to actuate peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. You will remember again Mr. President, that following the March 2008 election in this country, we unfortunately descended into politically motivated violence. From it, we consummated the Government of National Unity and dedicated an initiative led by the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee to try and bring our people together to dialogue and to promote peace. So, the world has a lot to learn from us in terms of peace-building, reconciliation and dialogue. This report, in my view, challenges this Senate to amplify its voice in solidarity with the victims of senseless wars in the Middle East. In particular, the war between Israel and Lebanon and the war between Iran and the United States of America. We must stand firmly in solidarity with the victims of this war.

Only yesterday in this Senate, we were talking about children without homes who live in the streets. Why are we not even talking about children who get displaced as a result of these senseless wars? Victims that suddenly find themselves without shelter, without anywhere to stay, we see the images daily. I think this Parliament must add its voice to the call to cease all forms of hostilities, not only in the Middle East, but wherever violence is rearing its ugly head.

In addition, allow me also to read from this report, one of the key recommendations that challenges this Parliament to do something. In light of the emergency resolution on ceasefires and peace-building, Parliament of Zimbabwe should intensify its role in parliamentary diplomacy by advocating for peaceful conflict resolution through regional and international platforms such as SADC PF and the African Parliamentary Union and the Pan-African Parliament. This is because we have earned ourselves a good name in terms of representation. We must also utilise the same influence to make sure we are ahead in terms of condemning violence and condemning those who break ceasefires willingly.

There is a lot of experience from this Parliament and from the history of this country that we can share, that can be used to contribute to a peaceful world. I want once again to thank the delegation for serious deliberation that focused on something that is relevant to us today and where we can share experiences with other countries so that we can make this world a better place. I thank you.

***HON. SEN. GOTORA:** Thank you Mr. President. Let me add some words on the report which was presented by the Hon. Sen. Muzenda. Unfortunately, some ideas which I wanted to express were already said by Hon. Sen. Matibiri. However, be that so, let me add my voice. Firstly, I want to thank the attitude of our Government and Parliament, which allows people to go out and learn from others. In Shona, we have a proverb, which says, *zvikomo zvinombumirirana mhute*. In Ndebele it says *izintaba ziyapana inkungu*. - [HON. MEMBERS: *Hear, hear.*]- So, you clapped because you know that I am fluent in isiNdebele.

Going to learn from others does not show a sign of foolishness. Learning from others or sharing ideas with others is not being foolish. I know that when we amended the Constitution in 2023, there is a lot

of information, which we adopted from other countries. We were weighing whether to implement that in our country and what then would happen. So, it is my view that if we continue going to meet with others in places like the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), our minds will be sharpened so that when we have new minds and when amending our laws, we will not have problems because we will know that it has been done again. It will not be reinventing the wheel because it would have already been implemented.

I want to thank the Hon. President of the Senate and the Speaker of Parliament who went out and brought us knowledge. When I was hearing everything that she was narrating, all was knowledge. For example, the person who was elected as the new Secretary General for the IPU was seen fit, the knowledge that he has and the years which he had waited for the IPU, those must not just be wiped away.

We now know that as Zimbabweans, if a person conducted some tasks for quite a long time, that person must not just be thrown away because we need the ideas that they have. I am very grateful that this report is a good report. May it be printed out? If there is a soft copy,

may it be shared with us so that we read and that when we are going out for different meetings, we will be copying ideas from other countries from IPU? That is what made us maintain peace, just as Hon. Sen. Matibiri said. The ceasefire, which was said by Hon. Sen. Matibiri, we learnt a lot from other countries. If you still remember, we went and assisted in DRC for them to have peace. In Equatorial Guinea, we also assisted twice. We also assisted in Mozambique for them to have peace. That alone gives us a good name amongst other nations. That is why we were elected in the Security Council. We acquired a non-permanent member position.

It means that they have seen that these people have some knowledge which can assist us. Everything that we are doing, we learnt from others. So, I want to thank especially the leaders who went there, the Hon. Speaker and the Hon. President of the Senate that indeed they did a good job. Let us also learn what they got from Turkey and find where we can implement. Thank you Mr. President.

HON. SEN. MUZENDA: I move that the debate do now adjourn.

HON. SEN. MATIBIRI: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 18th June, 2026.

MOTION

LEGISLATION TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ABUSE

HON. SEN. MAVENYENGWA: Good afternoon Mr. President of the Senate. I move the motion standing in my name.

That this House—

ALARMED by rampant cases of child abuse among communities;

DISTURBED that such abuse violates the fundamental rights, dignity and wellbeing of children;

COGNISANT of the existing legislative lacuna and lack of enforcement mechanisms in curbing such crimes;

NOW, THEREFORE, calls upon—

(a) the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs to strengthen existing legislation on the protection of children, with a view of introducing deterrent penalties for perpetrators.

(b) the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare to establish a child protection policy that strengthens community-based protection mechanisms to safeguard the children.

(c) the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare to embark on awareness campaigns to educate parents, guardians and communities at large on children's rights, good parenting and the far-reaching effects of abuse.

HON. SEN. SHIRI: I second.

HON. SEN. MAVENYENGWA: Mr. President, I rise to debate a motion on the rising incidence of child abuse and the need to strengthen legal and institutional mechanisms for child protection in Zimbabwe. This matter weighs heavily not only upon my conscience, but as a legislator, the conscience of this entire nation, I speak today of children, the most defenceless among us, who are being subjected to unspeakable cruelty within the very households and that should be their sanctuaries of love, nourishment and safety. The Constitution of Zimbabwe under Section 81 unambiguously declares that every child has the right to family or parental care, to be protected from maltreatment, neglect and abuse. Yet, Hon. Senators, we are

witnessing increasing regularity and with increasing horror scenes that mock those constitutional guarantees. We are witnessing children starving, beaten, bent and broken in two main cases by the very women entrusted with their care. This is not a motion born on prejudice against any gender. It is a motion born on documented fact, verified police records, credible media reporting and an urgent moral obligation that the Senate cannot defer, delay or diminish.

I wish to state clearly for the record that the cases I shall cite today are not social media gossip recycled into parliamentary Chamber. They are cases confirmed by the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) through official press statements. They are cases reported by established Zimbabwean media institutions. They are cases whose suspects have been named, arrested and actively sought. Mr. President Sir, the ZRP launched an urgent investigation after a shocking video surfaced on social media showing a woman brutally assaulting a child whose hands and legs were tied.

In an official statement, the ZRP confirmed it had taken note of the disturbing video circulating on social media platforms and strongly condemned what it described as the inhuman and degrading

treatment of children. According to the subsequent ZRP statement, the assault occurred on 13 November 2025 at Village 28, Mount Zone, under Chief Marange in Odzi. Police confirmed the child had been attacked over an allegation that she had stolen USD11. The ZRP confirmed the arrest of the accused named Idah Mashavi aged 27, who is the biological mother of the victim. Directly contradicting earlier online speculation that the perpetrator was a stepmother, the incident sparked national outrage and prompted a swift police response following a press statement released on 22 November 2025.

Mr. President Sir, again, the ZRP launched an investigation into a deeply disturbing child abuse incident captured again on a viral social media video in which a woman is seen assaulting a minor and forcing the child to touch a blazing gas stove. Police appealed to the public for information leading to the identification and arrest of the suspect and urged the child's relatives and guardians to come forward to facilitate their investigations. In the footage, the accused, Mercy Kawesa, was seen beating the child with a cooking stick before forcing his hands onto an open gas flame, an act that drew strong condemnation from the public and child protection advocates.

According to police, Kawesa told investigators she was punishing the son for allegedly stealing items from a local tuck-shop. The case occurred in March 2026, three months before this motion was tabled before the Senate. The child's hands were forced onto the burning gas stove.

The third case - I just want to cite only three cases. The third case carries its own distinct significance. The victim was a child living with an aunt, a child of separated parents, effectively in an informal guardianship arrangement of the kind that encompasses tens of thousands of orphans and vulnerable children across Zimbabwe. There was no formal monitoring of that household. There was no social worker assigned. There was no community committee with authority to intervene. A child was beaten for eating bread at a neighbour's house.

The only mechanism that brought this to national attention was a bystander with a mobile phone. Mr. President Sir, across all these cases, a single deeply troubling pattern emerges. In every instance, it was not a social worker who intervened first. It was not a teacher, a

community committee or a Government hotline. It was a video on a mobile phone. The videos you always see on social media.

UNICEF's 2024 Annual Report on Zimbabwe records that 64% of children enjoy violent discipline, with registration stagnating at 51%, meaning vast numbers of Zimbabwe's children are not only unprotected but legally invisible to the very State system mandated to protect them. As UNICEF has observed, unregistered children are particularly vulnerable to abuse as they are invisible to the State and therefore, unreachable by its protections.

The Senate exists precisely to convert extended or informal and inconsistent public vigilance into permanent, funded and legally empowered institutional protection. That is what these three children and the thousands whose suffering no camera has ever captured deserve. Zimbabwe's Child Protection framework rests primarily upon the following instruments. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013), Section 801, Rights of Children, the Children's Act [Chapter 5:06], the principal statute governing child welfare and protection, the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act [Chapter 9:23], governing children's offences including assault, murder and cruelty. The

Domestic Violence Act [Chapter 5:16], addressing violence within domestic settings.

Mr. President Sir, the Guardianship of Minors Act; the Senate acknowledges that Zimbabwe has made legislative strides in recent years. UNICEF has noted that eight laws and policies were enacted to strengthen child protection, including the Children's Act, the Child Justice Bill and the Legal Aid Amendment Bill.

Furthermore, in 2024, Zimbabwe raised the age of consent from 16 to 18 years, imposing a 10-year jail term for sexual relations with persons under the age of 18, a reform that demonstrated this nation's capacity for legislative boldness when protecting children. There is no stand-alone offence of aggravated child physical abuse under Zimbabwean law. The Children's Amendment Act strengthened provisions relating to child grooming, child sexual abuse, material and exploitation, but it did not create a specific offence targeting severe physical abuse of children by persons entrusted with their care. Consequently, cases involving the torture, banning, starvation, binding, or prolonged assault of children are often prosecuted under

general assault provisions contained in the Criminal Law Codification Act.

Secondly, the law lacks a comprehensive statistical definition of child abuse. While existing legislation addresses certain forms of maltreatment, it does not adequately capture the full spectrum of abuse experienced by children in contemporary society. Severe physical abuse, deliberate starvation, emotional and psychological torture, coercive control, economic deprivation, and neglect used as a weapon of punishment are not comprehensively defined in the Unified Child Protection Framework. Also, the current sentencing framework does not sufficiently reflect the seriousness of aggravated child abuse.

The law provides sanctions for various...

THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE: Order Hon. Member! There is an Hon. Member who has not switched off their cell phone. So, we will wait for you to decide when you want to switch off your cell phone.

HON. SEN. MUZODA: I am sorry.

THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE: Having been disturbed by the Hon. Member there, you may continue.

HON. SEN. MAVENYENGWA: Thank you Mr. President. Mr. President Sir, the current sentencing framework does not sufficiently reflect the seriousness of aggravated child abuse. The law provides penalties for various offences against children but there is no dedicated sentencing regime for extreme physical cruelty committed against a child by a caregiver.

Recent cases involving children being tied up, burnt with fire, or subjected to prolonged physical torture expose a gap between the severity of the offence and the available child-specific penalties. Mr. President, there remains a significant gap in the protection of children living under informal guardianship arrangements. Thousands of Zimbabwean children live with their aunts, uncles, grandparents, step-parents, family, friends or other relatives due to orphanhood, parental separation, migration or economic hardship. Yet, these arrangements are largely unregulated and receive little or no welfare monitoring. The recent abuse cases involving children residing outside the care of their biological parents expose the vulnerability of children in

informal care settings and highlight the need for strong legal mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and intervention. Also, although the Children's Amendment Act introduced reporting obligations for certain professionals, the reporting framework remains limited Mr. President.

Finally, the law places a significant emphasis on child welfare and protection mechanisms but provides insufficient legislative safeguards for early detection and intervention in high-risk households Mr. President.

Amendment to the Children's Act on Aggravated Child Abuse and Enhanced Sentencing, I call for the amendment of the Children's Protection Act, [Chapter 5:06], to create a stand-alone offence of aggravated child abuse, applicable where a parent, guardian, caregiver, or any person entrusted with the care of a child deliberately inflicts severe physical harm, torture, burning, starvation, prolonged assault, or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment upon children.

The Act should further provide enhanced sentencing guidelines where such abuse results in serious bodily injury, permanent disability, psychological trauma or death. Modernisation and harmonisation of statutory definitions of child abuse; I call for the review and strengthening of definitions contained within the Children's Act to establish a comprehensive and uniform statutory understanding of child abuse.

Such definitions should expressly encompass physical abuse, including assault, burning, scolding, torture and any deliberate infliction of bodily harm, deliberate deprivation of food, water, shelter or medical care as a form of punishment, emotional and psychological abuse, including intimidation, humiliation, isolation and persistent verbal degradation.

Mr. President Sir, at its heart, this motion is not about statistics, legislation or policy alone. It is about children whose cries often go unheard behind closed doors, whose suffering is too frequently discovered only when tragedy has already occurred. The cases that have been placed before the Senate are a stark reminder that while Zimbabwe has made commendable progress in strengthening child

protection laws, more must be done to ensure that every child is safe in the home, family and community. No child should be tied up, burnt, starved, beaten or subjected to cruelty by those entrusted with their care.

Section 81 of our Constitution places a solemn obligation upon the State and all its institutions to ensure that the best interests of the child are paramount in every matter concerning the child. That constitutional promise must not remain a principle on paper; it must be reflected in laws that protect institutions that respond and communities that refuse to remain silent in the face of the abuse.

Today, this Senate is an opportunity to strengthen existing protections, close the gaps that have been identified and send a clear message that violence against children has no place in our society. We owe it to every child who has suffered in silence, every child who has been failed by those entrusted with their care and every child whose future depends on the decisions we make in this House.

Lastly, and in conclusion, the true measure of a nation's humanity is found not in how it treats the powerful but in how it

protects the vulnerable. Today, this Senate is an opportunity to strengthen that protection and give practical effect to the constitutional promise contained in Section 8.1. Let us therefore, act with urgency, compassion and resolve so that every child in Zimbabwe may grow up free from fear, violence and abuse. So, I submit and I thank you Mr. President Sir. – [HON. SENATORS: *Hear, hear.*] –

HON. SEN. SHIRI: Thank you Mr. President...

THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF SENATE (HON. KAMBIZI): Order! Right, there is a slight correction. From the records here, Hon. Sen. Ncube is the seconder. So, you will speak first and then Hon. Sen. Shiri will follow suit. So, Hon. Sen. Ncube, you can proceed.

HON. SEN. M. NCUBE: Thank you Mr. President, for that correction. Mr. President, I rise to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to this very important debate on child abuse. I wish from the outset to commend Hon. Sen. Mavenyengwa for

moving this important motion and bringing before this august Senate, a matter that requires urgent national reflection and collective action.

Mr. President, the protection of children is one of the greatest responsibilities entrusted to any society. Children represent the hopes, dreams and future of our nation. They are the generation that will inherit Zimbabwe which we are building today. Therefore, when a child is abused, when a child is neglected, when a child is exploited or denied an opportunity to develop, we are weakening the foundation of our future society.

Mr. President, the Constitution of Zimbabwe provides a clear and strong foundation for the protection of children. This section has been heavily interrogated by Hon. Sen. Mavengwa. I also bring to your attention Section 19 of the Constitution, which places an obligation on the State to adopt policies and measures to ensure that children enjoy appropriate care and protection.

Specifically, Section 19 (2) (c), provides that the State must take measures to ensure that children are protected from abuse, neglect, harmful cultural practices and all forms of violence and exploitation.

Mr. President, Hon. Sen. Mavenyengwa has spoken to Section 81, but also note Section 81 (1) (e), which recognises that every child has the right to be protected from economic and sexual exploitation and from work that is hazardous or interferes with their health, growth and development, as well as education.

These constitutional provisions demonstrate that the protection of children is not optional, but rather a national obligation. It is a responsibility that requires action from all of us. At this juncture, Mr. President, allow me to digress a bit. Around COVID times, at that particular time, I used to travel a lot to Dubai, every four to six weeks, and I used to go and get that COVID clearance certificate from Lancet Laboratory, particularly at night, around 5th Avenue, just at the back of Avenues Clinic. That place is actually a hotbed for those ladies who roam around in the evening.

Of particular worry was that some of the girls, school-going girls, very young, you would see them giggling around that place and then, top-of-the-range vehicles like the one you drive, Mr. President, - *[Laughter.]* - I am not saying it was yours, but would come every 10- to 15 minutes to pick up these young school-going girls. The

Constitution enjoins us to protect them, not to exploit them, Mr. President.

Allow me to acknowledge though, the Government's efforts to strengthen child protection systems. The Government has taken important steps, including the development and implementation of the revised Clinical Care Guidelines for survivors of sexual violence by the Ministry of Health and Child Care. The Government has also approved the National Child Online Protection Policy to respond to emerging threats associated with technology, including cyber-bullying, online exploitation and sexual abuse of children in digital spaces.

Furthermore, the Government has taken steps to ensure that children affected by early pregnancy and child marriages are not excluded from education. Mr. President, I go further and say, despite these commendable interventions, cases of child abuse continue to persist and remain a serious concern within our communities and they have been ably articulated by Hon. Sen. Mavenyengwa.

As we debate this motion, I wish to make a point of departure. When society discusses child abuse, our minds often immediately focus on child sexual abuse, as I said previously. While sexual abuse remains one of the most serious and traumatic forms of violation against children, we must recognise that abuse takes many different forms. A child can be abused physically, emotionally, psychologically and sometimes economically. A child can also be abused through exploitation, child labour, online harassment and exposure to harmful environments.

Protecting children, Mr. President, requires looking beyond child sexual abuse and addressing different ways in which children's rights are violated, within homes, schools, communities and public spaces. In recent times, Zimbabwe has witnessed several horrifying videos circulating on social media that has been articulated by Hon. Sen. Mavengwa and I will skip that.

Another area, Mr. President, requiring urgent attention is emotional and psychological abuse. Some children suffer silently from neglect, humiliation, constant criticism, abandonment or being

made to feel unwanted. Emotional abuse can affect a child's esteem, confidence and mental wellbeing.

As a society, we must understand that protecting children means protecting their physical safety, as well as their emotional and psychological development. To that end Mr. President, allow me to point to the growing trend around children being exposed to economic exploitation through street vending and begging. We must acknowledge that some families are facing economic challenges. That is a given. In some cases, children become involved in vending activities because households are struggling. However, the difficult economic environment cannot justify placing the burden of survival on children. A child spending long hours selling goods on the streets is exposed to numerous risks. Such children may face traffic dangers, harassment, exploitation, abuse and may lose valuable time meant for education and recreation.

Children should not be the solution to household economic challenges. Instead, our social protection system must be strengthened to support vulnerable families and ensure that children remain in school and are protected. The issue of child begging also requires

urgent attention, particularly the exploitation of children with disabilities and children accompanying adults with disabilities for the purposes of begging. These are growing concerns that some children with disabilities are being used by adults as instruments to generate income, a practice that undermines their dignity, violates their rights and exposes them to multiple forms of vulnerability.

These children are subjected to harsh conditions, including exposure to extreme weather, neglect, abuse and various health and safety risks. In some cases, such practices involve organised networks that exploit the vulnerability of children for personal gain. Similarly, children who accompany adults with disabilities while begging are also exposed to risks that affect their wellbeing, development and access to essential services.

While recognising the socio-economic challenges faced by persons with disabilities, there is a need for a balanced and rights-based approach that ensures support is provided to families and persons with disabilities without compromising the protection, dignity and prospects of children.

Mr. President, a child with a disability should not be seen as a means of attracting sympathy from members of the public. Such children require rehabilitation, education, healthcare support and opportunities to participate fully in society. To that end, I call upon the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare to amend the existing children protection legislation, particularly the Children's Act, to provide specific clauses that criminalise the exploitation of children with or without disabilities for begging or for vending purposes.

The legislative framework should be strengthened so that all forms of child abuse are clearly addressed and perpetrators face meaningful consequences. Furthermore, the Government, through the Treasury, must also ensure that social protection programmes such as BEAM, social cash transfers, disability support and healthcare assistance are adequately funded to reduce child vulnerability to economic abuse.

As I conclude Mr. President, let me point out that a nation that protects its children protects its future. The responsibility before us is to ensure that constitutional obligations to children become a lived reality. Let us therefore strengthen our laws, improve enforcement,

support vulnerable families and create an environment where every child in Zimbabwe, regardless of background or circumstance, has the opportunity to grow, learn and reach their full potential. Thank you Mr. President.

HON. SEN. SHIRI: Thank you Mr. President, for allowing me to add my voice to this motion on the rising incidence of child abuse and the need to strengthen legal and institutional mechanisms for child protection in Zimbabwe.

Mr. President, children's rights are the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights guaranteed to every person under 18 by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 and ratified by 196 countries. These include rights to education, health, protection from violence, identity, participation and a standard of living adequate for development. Allow me also to cite Section 81 of the Constitution of our country, Zimbabwe, that guarantees every child the right to protection from maltreatment, neglect and all forms of abuse. It also states that the best interests of the child are paramount in every matter concerning the child. Despite these

protections, cases of child abuse continue to increase, showing gaps in implementation and enforcement.

I wish to draw special attention to children with disabilities, who are among the most vulnerable members of our society. Abuse is particularly common among children with visual, physical, intellectual, speech and hearing disabilities. Those with mobility challenges often struggle to escape abusive situations because assistive devices are expensive and not easily accessible. Madam President, children with intellectual and speech disabilities are often targeted by perpetrators who know that they may have difficulties in reporting abuse or giving evidence.

In many cases, service providers lack sign language skills and other communication methods needed to assist children with hearing impairment. Reporting mechanisms also remain a challenge, especially in rural areas where children and families must travel long distances to access police stations, social welfare offices or health facilities. Many cases, therefore, go unreported for children with disabilities.

Furthermore, some children suffer in silence because of poverty. Where perpetrators are also the caregivers or providers of basic needs, victims and their families may fear reporting abuse because they depend on them for their support. This highlights the need for stronger social protection and safety nets for the vulnerable children, including children with disabilities. Even globally, child abuse remains a serious concern. Cases such as Victoria Klein in the United Kingdom and Gabriel Fernandez in the United States exposed weaknesses in child protection systems and led to major reforms. Our country, Zimbabwe can also learn from such experiences by strengthening our community-based child protection structures, improving reporting systems, increasing the number of social workers and ensuring services are accessible to children with disabilities.

Madam President, protecting children is both a legal obligation and a moral duty. Every child, including children with disabilities, deserves to grow up in a safe environment free from violence, neglect and abuse. With these remarks, I therefore submit. Thank you.

HON. SEN. S. MOYO: Thank you Madam President. I will put my views on this good and painful motion about the abuse of our children, which was raised by Hon. Sen. Mavenyengwa. I rise this today because our children are not safe. In 2025 alone, the ZRP Victims' Friendly Unit recorded over 6 000 cases of children abused in Zimbabwe. That is 16 children every single day and for every case reported, the experts tell us three more happen in silence, in homes, in schools and in communities we represent. This is not just a social issue, or something that we hear from the media. It is a failure of our government.

Where are we failing Madam President? Our local authorities are blind and broke. Child protection committees exist on paper in most districts but they have no vehicles to investigate, no safe housing to shelter victims and no counsellors to help children heal. Our justice system is too slow. A child who is abused today will wait for two to three years for their case to be concluded. By then, evidence would have been lost. Witnesses relocate, and the child has been traumatised by the abuser, by the government process and we fund action, not prevention. We wait for a child to be harmed before we act. We spend

millions treating the wound but almost nothing towards stopping the knife.

Madam President, I propose that let us ring fence funding to every local council specifically for child protection units with quality audits to ensure it reaches the ground. Establish fast-tracking children courts in all 10 provinces within 12 months so that no child waits more than six months for justice. There should be child protection training for all teachers, nurses and police officers because they see the signs first. Hon. Senators, a nation is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable people. If we cannot protect a seven-year old in Mbare, Zvimba, Lupane, Plumtree or Bulilima, then what is the purpose of the law we pass here? Madam President, our accountability is not to the next election but to the next generation. I so move. Thank you very much.

+HON. SEN. R. M. NDLOVU: Thank you Madam President for affording me this opportunity. I would like to thank the mover and the seconder of the motion. Children are being ill-treated. The bad part is that the parent are the ones ill-treating their children. In the African custom, we take children as gifts. When people give birth, we

say congratulations, meaning that God has blessed you but you find that a parent is now burning a child, chastising or hitting a child. If this is being caused by hunger, what could the child have done to deserve such treatment? There are children, street kids and other children who live in the streets. It means that these children are not being looked after properly at their homes. They are being ill-treated. That is why they prefer to go and stay in the streets, running away from their parents.

We have seen it even on television, where mothers beat up children, especially when they are stepchildren or they are husbands' children. Those children suffer. The child does not know anything and did not beg to be born in that family. Instead of the child being treated properly, the child is being ill-treated by a stepmother who should be feeling sorry for that child. Madam President, I wish the Government should take steps or rather take harsh measures towards people who do that. We can all try. As parents, we should blame ourselves for ill-treating the children.

We must also try and find out what is causing that. Could it be hunger? Yes, we know there is hunger but what would the child have

done? Whenever we dismiss it in the evening, you will find that in the streets there is a lady or a woman pushing a child in a pushcart but there are so many vehicles along that road. I think we need to talk about this because this is not a good thing. An accident can happen. Yes, the Ministry of Public Service tries to assist at homes, not in the streets. If these children have homes, they should go back. I think we have debated a lot about these children who are being ill-treated. These children are not at home because they are not there in the villages but are here in towns and they are assaulted here in towns.

We must try to find out the number of homes where those children are being ill-treated. I think we need to assist them whilst they are staying at their homes instead of the streets because we have seen that it does not work.

They must have a proper place where they are looked after and treated well. We can talk and talk about it. How many children are here in Harare and being ill-treated in their homes? There should be proper homes where children can be kept and the Government can assist those children's homes properly. Everyone wishes they had a

child. What I would like to say especially to those parents who are ill-treating children, is that it is not good.

Just this week, I read somewhere that there is a *hwindi* who operates a kombi who proposed love to a girl, took the girl to a *shebeen* and asked the owner of that place to look after the girl, promising to come collect her the following day. He did not come back. So, the following day, the girl was looking after a baby but when she was sent to the shops to buy bread, she disappeared with the baby and now they are looking for the baby. This boy who brought this girl does not know where the girl comes from. He just came to ask if they could look after her for him but he does not know where to find the girl who disappeared with the baby and no one knows where the baby is.

This motion that was brought by Hon. Sen. Mavenyengwa is very touching and it really hurts that, as human beings, how can we treat children like that? I have never heard of whites ill-treating children like that but why is it that it is us Black Africans who are doing that? I would like to thank you Hon. Member for this motion.

^HON. SEN. MOHADI: Thank you Madam President for giving me this opportunity to add my voice on the motion brought into this Senate by Hon. Mavenyengwa, supported by Hon. Dr. Ncube, regarding the issue of the ill-treatment of children. Kids need our support because as kids, all they do is just cry without doing anything. This is why most of them end up getting into the streets as a way of trying to get help.

Madam President, when talking of children, especially for us staying in the borderline areas where there are rivers like Limpopo, if we are to have statistics of those that are being swept away by the river tides, we were going to be astonished. This is because most of them are using illegal crossing points in search of greener pastures. Some of them are helped to cross illegally but not all of them reach their destinations. Some of them just vanish along the way without any records indicating what happened to them and this remains silent.

Looking at migration, -

*Hon. Sen. Maluleke having crossed between the Chair and the
Hon. Senator on the floor*

THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF SENATE (HON.

DUBE): Hon. Sen. Maluleke, you are not allowed to cross between the Chair and the Hon. Member debating. You can come this side.

^^HON. SEN. MOHADI: The day before yesterday, before I left Beitbridge, I was told there was a certain woman who wanted to see me and she has four children. I asked what the problem was and she told me that she was staying in Polokwane together with her husband while the kids were in Beitbridge. She wanted to relocate the children to Polokwane and among the children, one was in Grade 1 and another in Grade 3.

I asked her about the legal papers that indicate that when the children get to that side they would continue with their education. There was no paperwork in that regard. I asked her why she does not relocate from South Africa back to Zimbabwe to stay with the kids. She said she could not leave her husband to stay with the kids. When I asked her relationship with the kids, she could not give me any response. So, this is a challenging issue.

Yesterday, in my debate, I focused on BEAM, indicating that Government is trying everything possible to ensure that children go to school, especially the vulnerable. However, you find that the BEAM funds are being accessed by those people who can take their children to school without any challenges who are some of us in here. There is another issue that I heard at the orphanage. Some people are just in the habit of marrying women, divorcing them and remarrying, divorce again, while leaving them with children.

There is this second wife who when she came into this family, she ill-treated the stepchild that she had found in the home. She would cook *sadza*, put a stone into a plate and cover the stone with a little *sadza* and then give the plate to the kid. This is what would happen. When the child got home, she would have to share the plate with a dog eating from the other side while the kid ate from the other side. This continued to happen until someone alerted the husband to what was happening. The husband was encouraged to go back home unannounced to see what was happening and he did that.

When the husband got home, he heard the woman calling the dog named Sport to eat with the kid from the same plate on the other

side. So, it is the little sadza that the kid would eat, sharing the same plate and sadza with the dog called Sport. The rest would be a stone on that plate. So, this requires all of us in here to work together in ensuring that our children get a better life. They manage to go to school because someone indicated that some of these children do not even go to school because no one is responsible for their school requirements. Therefore, it is our duty to ensure that we help them.

Madam President, with these few words, this motion submitted into this House by Hon. Mavenyengwa is touching. Therefore, with these few words, I thank you. Have a great day.

HON. SEN. MAVENYENGWA: I move that the debate do now adjourn.

HON. SEN. DR. NCUBE: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 17th June, 2026.

MOTION

REPORT OF THE JOINT PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE AND THEMATIC COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE PETITION BY THE

POWER OF TOUCH INSTITUTION ON THE REVIEW OF LAWS
AND REGULATIONS THAT HAVE A BEARING ON THE
SENIOR CITIZENS

Sixth Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on the report of the Joint Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and Thematic Committee on Human Rights on the petition by the Power of Touch Institution on the review of laws and regulations that have a bearing on the senior citizens.

Question again proposed.

HON. SEN. ADV. PHULU: Madam President, I rise to support the adoption of the Report of the Joint Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and the Thematic Committee on Human Rights of which I am a member, on the petition by the Power of Touch Institution concerning the review of laws and regulations that have a bearing on the senior citizens.

At the outset, Madam President, I wish to commend both committees for undertaking this important inquiry and for bringing before this House, an issue that speaks directly to our humanity, our constitutional values and our collective understanding of justice. It is

not a trivial issue, but an important issue, which has a theme that cuts across the values that make up our Constitution.

The true measure of society is defined in how it fits the rich or the productive. This, we will say over and over again. Every time we debate this, it is a little bit more difficult, but it is important to repeat. It is found in how it treats those who are vulnerable, those who have become dependent upon others and those whose contributions are often forgotten because they no longer occupy the centre stage of economic life. The treatment of older persons is therefore not really a social welfare issue. It is a moral issue. It is a constitutional issue. It is a developmental issue. Most importantly, Madam President, it is an issue that calls to the very heart of who we are as a people.

As Africans, we traditionally understand that a society is built upon reciprocity between the generations. The elderly cared for us when we could not care for ourselves. The rains falling, till the land, built communities, established institutions and made sacrifices that created opportunities enjoyed by the succeeding generation. The schools we attended, the roads we used, the farms we invented, the businesses we operated in the day; the nation we now govern were

built upon the labour and sacrifice contribution of those who came before us.

The debt that we owe as society, to our elderly senior citizens can never be fully repaid. What we can do, however, is to ensure that they live their later years in dignity, security and comfort. So, I would like to applaud those who brought the petition in order to bring this urgent matter to our attention.

Our traditional African philosophy of '*ubuntu*' - we like *ubuntu* these days but we do not like the things that accompany it. I would like to emphasise that we cannot just have '*ubuntu*' as an abstract concept. The real concept seems to be the real concept. We can say in Shona, you cannot want '*hunhu iwe usingadi chivanhu*'. You must want '*chivanhu*'. We are abused by those who tell us about '*ubuntu*' all the time but they never want to hear about '*isintu*'. '*Isintu*' teaches us that our equality is realised through our relationship with others. '*Ubuntu*' does not abandon the elderly when they cease to be economically productive.

In fact, the elderly in our societies rise to become sages and the custodians of wisdom and the custodians of our values. In fact, they

become our constitutions in ‘*ubuntu*’ or in ‘*isintu*’. Let me abandon the concept of ‘*ubuntu*’ altogether. *Ubuntu* or rather *Isintu*, does not measure human worth by ending incapacity. *Isintu* recognises that every person possesses inherent dignity simply by virtue of being human. So human rights are not a Western concept, we have always had them. We have our own version of human rights and they have their own version. Unfortunately, we are increasingly witnessing the erosion of these values, which is why we are talking about how to treat the elderly in the first place. We should not be talking about it. The growth of urbanisation, migration, economic hardship, and changing family structures has weakened many traditional support systems. That historically protected older persons. Increasingly, elderly citizens find themselves living alone. This is a reality; you can go to any of the constituencies from where we come from, you will find that they are living alone. If they are not living alone, it is even worse. They are living with grandchildren. They are living with our children. We abandon them. Then, when we go wherever we are going, and send parcels to seven children. Many struggle to access health care. Many survive without adequate income. Some endure

neglect, isolation, and in many cases, abuse. Others are forced to continue working under very difficult circumstances simply because they cannot afford to retire. This is very sad, given that we eventually raised the retirement age in this country.

Unfortunately, some people cannot afford to retire. For a society that prides itself on the respect of elders, this trend should concern us deeply. The Constitution of Zimbabwe provides a clear framework for addressing these challenges. Section 82 recognises the rights of elderly persons and places an obligation on the State and family to take reasonable measures to ensure their wellbeing. The Constitution further requires the State to provide social security and social care to those in need. One of the things we should do during this term, no matter how long it is, is to ensure that we address those pieces of legislation that deal with these issues in order to align with the Constitution.

An example is the Elderly Persons Act, the Act on Social Welfare, which has provisions on how we could give our elderly grants. I think it has arisen in this House before, but all these issues are not being actioned. We should move to a position where the Act

positively requires measurable progress in ensuring that we deal with the rights of the elderly. These constitutional provisions are therefore, not ornamental. They are not aspirational, and they do not merely decorate the Constitution. They are binding and impose positive obligations upon the State. As I have said, they require deliberate action, they require legislative reform, and they require budgetary commitment. We talk about the rights of the elderly very nicely all the time, but nothing is ever done. This House must find a way, I suppose even through this motion of moving beyond rhetoric to ensure that we find a key point or a button that we can press to push the Government into action as far as this issue is concerned. Zimbabwe is part of a broader continental and international consensus concerning the rights of older persons. Across Africa, there is growing recognition that ageing populations require dedicated legal...

THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF SENATE: Order!

Hon. Members, can we be quiet while the other Member is debating, please! There is too much movement, too much talking. Please, let us respect each other.

HON. SEN. ADV. PHULU: Thank you Madam President. The African Union has adopted important instruments recognising the rights, dignity and protection of older persons. Similarly, international human rights standards increasingly emphasise the need for social protection, healthcare, participation, independence and the dignity of citizens. In fact, in many of these countries where people migrate to, when they come back, people report that one of the things that they admire is the manner in which some of these countries internationally provide and treat their elders. These developments recognise the simple reality that ageing is not a problem to be managed but a stage of life to be respected. Every one of us in this Chamber, if blessed with a long life, and I hope I will be too, hopes to become an older person one day. Some of us already are.

The policies we index today are therefore not eggs of charity. They are investments in society that we ourselves hope to age. Madam President, I wish to focus on four areas that require urgent attention. The first is social protection and income security. Many elderly Zimbabweans live in poverty despite having worked for decades. Inflation, economic instability and inadequate pension

systems have significantly eroded retirement savings. Some senior citizens contributed throughout their working lives, yet now struggle to meet basic needs. This situation undermines both dignity and justice. The Government should therefore strengthen social assistance programmes targeted at elderly persons, particularly those without pensions or family support.

Consideration should be given to introducing a comprehensive old-age income support scheme or social pension that guarantees a minimum level of income security for every elderly citizen. No elderly person should be forced to choose between food, medication and shelter. Secondly, healthcare for senior citizens must become a national priority. Ageing often brings increased medical needs. Yet many elderly citizens cannot afford consultation fees, medication, diagnostic tests or specialist treatment. The result is unnecessary suffering and preventable illness. Government should therefore establish a comprehensive elderly healthcare programme that includes free or heavily subsidised access to public healthcare facilities, essential medication, routine screening services and geriatric care.

We should also consider dedicated healthcare desks and priority service systems for senior citizens at public hospitals and clinics. The dignity of older persons requires more than legal recognition. It requires practical access to healthcare.

Thirdly, I wish to address the issue of transport. For many senior citizens, access to healthcare, Government services, places of worship and family support networks depends upon affordable transportation. Yet transport costs continue to consume a significant portion of limited incomes. I, therefore, support measures that provide free or substantially subsidised public transport for senior citizens. Many countries have successfully implemented concessionary transport schemes that allow older persons to travel without financial hardship. Such programmes improve mobility, reduce social isolation and facilitate access to essential services. An elderly person should not miss a medical appointment simply because transport costs are unaffordable.

Fourthly, we must strengthen cash transfer programmes directed at vulnerable elderly persons. Evidence from many jurisdictions demonstrates that well-designed cash transfer programmes improve

nutrition, healthcare access and overall quality of life. Cash transfers also support entire households, particularly where grandparents are caring for orphaned or vulnerable children. The expansion of targeted social assistance programmes should therefore form an important component of our social protection framework. Madam President, Legislative reform is equally necessary. The Older Persons Act requires review to ensure that it adequately reflects contemporary constitutional standards and international best practices.

The Social Welfare Assistance Act should be strengthened to provide more effective support mechanisms for vulnerable senior citizens. The National Social Security Authority framework should be reviewed to enhance pension adequacy and sustainability. Labour laws should also be examined to ensure that older persons who remain economically active are protected against age-based discrimination. Furthermore, Parliament should consider the development of comprehensive legislation specifically aimed at protecting older persons from neglect, abuse, exploitation and discrimination. The law must recognise that elder abuse is a serious human rights concern deserving of explicit legal protection.

This discussion ultimately concerns the kind of society we wish to build. Development is not measured solely by economic growth rates. Development is measured by the quality of human lives. Development is measured by whether the vulnerable are protected. Development is measured by whether citizens can live with dignity from birth to old age. A nation cannot claim to be fully developed while those who built it spend their final years in poverty, loneliness and neglect. The elderly are not a burden upon society, they are custodians of memory. They are repositories of wisdom. They are living archives of our national experience.

They deserve respect, protection and support. Above all, they deserve gratitude. As we pursue Vision 2030 and seek to build an inclusive and prosperous Zimbabwe, let us ensure that no senior citizen is left behind. Let us create a society where ageing is accompanied not by fear and insecurity but by dignity and support. Let us reaffirm the African values of solidarity, reciprocity and respect for elders that have long defined our civilisation. In doing so, we shall honour not only our constitutional obligations but also our moral obligations to those who helped build the Zimbabwe we inherit today.

I, therefore, fully support the report and urge the Government to implement its recommendations as a matter of priority. Thank you Madam President.

HON. SEN. SHIRI: Thank you Madam President of Senate. I want to support the adoption of this report because it addresses the challenges faced by senior citizens, pensioners and retired professionals in Zimbabwe. Section 82 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe requires the State to protect and care for older persons. However, many elderly people continue to face poverty, low pensions, limited access to healthcare and difficulties in accessing public services.

The Committee rightly recommends strengthening social protection, improving healthcare services and reviewing laws affecting older persons. These measures will help restore dignity and improve the quality of life of our elderly citizens. We must also ensure that older persons with disabilities receive special support, as they face additional challenges in mobility, healthcare and access to services.

Globally, the United Nations and the African Union recognise the rights of older persons to dignity, protection and social security. Zimbabwe should continue aligning its laws and policies with these standards. They also contributed greatly to our nation and deserve respect, care and protection. I support the Committee's recommendations and urge their speedy implementation. I so submit.

HON. S. MOYO: Thank you Madam President for giving me this opportunity to debate this report, which was brought by Hon. Sen. Mavenyengwa. I will just comment on the issues in the report. I am not going to go beyond the report, so I want Hon. Sen. Mavenyengwa to listen because this is his report. I am not part of the Committee, but I am very happy to hear that this Senate can solve the problems, especially the Hon. Senators who went out to find out that our elders have dignity.

I rise today to speak on the report before this Senate. This is the report on the petition brought by the Power of Touch Institution. Two brave citizens brought this petition. Mr. Francis Dembetembe and Ms. Beatrice Sithole, they did not speak for themselves. They spoke for every senior citizen, pensioner and retired professional in Zimbabwe.

This report tells a sad story. It is the story of old people who built this country with their own hands and now in their final years, this same country is leaving them behind. The law does not even know who an older person is and there is also no director or champion. Before we can help a person, we must first agree on who that person is but this report shows confusion at the very top.

The Older Persons Act says a senior citizen is the one who is sixty-five years old. The Constitution says seventy. The petitioners say fifty-five. Three different ages, in three different laws, for the same group of people. How can we protect a person when we cannot even agree on who that person is?

On the issue of no director and no champion, this report holds a shocking admission, not from us but from the Ministry itself. The Government has not appointed one single substantive director to lead on older persons' affairs. There is a board on paper. There is a department on paper but there is no leader in the chair, fighting every single day for our elders. This is not an opposition accusation. This is the Government's own admission, written in this very report.

Then, on the issue of grants promised and grants not felt, the report tells us that social grants, cash transfers and food support exist on paper but listen carefully to what the Committee found. These measures are neither universal nor sufficient. Those are the Committee's own words. Inflation is eating these grants faster than Government can hand them out. Our elders are told that help is coming but they feel nothing in their pockets and plates.

In addition, the issue of free health care on paper and not in practice, the law says any person above sixty-five can get free treatment through the Assisted Medical Treatment Order; that is the law. The Committee found a clear gap between what the law promises and what our elders actually live through. Geriatric wards are not working as they should. Hospital bills still arrive. Medicine still costs money that our elders simply do not have.

Then, on no dignity at the service window, our elders are pushed to the back of the queue. They are treated without respect at banks, hospitals and supermarkets. The report speaks of a standing expectation that older persons should not queue but an expectation is

not a law. Good intentions do not stand in line for our grandparents and only the law can do that.

In conclusion, this report does not need more study. It needs action, Hon. Sen. Mavenyengwa. We are not asking for charity for our elders. We are asking for what they are owed. They built roads, schools, hospitals and farms. Now, in their final years, we cannot even guarantee them a seat in the queue when they fall sick. I call upon this Government to stop reviewing and start delivering. Bring the Senior Citizens, Pensioners and Retired Professionals Act to this House. Bring it without further delay. Give our elders the dignity they have already earned. I thank you.

***HON. SEN. ZINDI:** Thank you Madam President. I would like to comment on this report as a member of the Committee. I would like to say that the Government should see what they can do as soon as possible, like what was said by Hon. Sen. Moyo and others who spoke before me. This law should be reviewed as soon as possible so that it can be fixed. Why am I saying it is because it seems like those that are working in the Government will stay young forever but everyone will grow old at some point.

Let us speak about the time when we were 15 or 16. We were walking long distances, going to the war and going up the mountains. However, if you say that we should go hiking to Tsetsera Mountain, I cannot do it anymore. So, everyone will get to a point where they will get old. We are all growing and no one will stay the same.

What confuses me is what makes us not prepare for tomorrow when we know that we are growing older. I see this in many places. As a Government, we do not prepare for the future. We just say we are doing things but we do not have anything that we can point out to say we have fixed this. If you do not act like a clever bird, as a person, then no one will take care of you. As they say in English, make hay while the sun shines. If you do not do it for yourself whilst you still have the opportunity, the next thing is, we will see you picking up sadza in the bins. I will give an example of Members of Parliament. Please forgive me; I will say some names.

The late Ruth Chinamano is a good example. When she left Parliament, which is where she was getting a source of income, we were seeing her coming back to Parliament to sell cabbages and other vegetables. The late Sango, who was the former Minister of

Transport, died in South Africa and he was now eating from the bins. He was also a Member of Parliament. All this shows me is that we do not have care as the Government to prepare for the future, for the citizens that are making the Government to be referred to as doing a good job. It is showing with everyone that is in here. If someone does a good thing, or if you are doing a good thing that pushes the Government to go forward, let us remember them.

Another example that I can give is of war veterans. If you are in the group of war veterans, you will see that they will just be complaining about getting USD153 per month, old men and women with families and children who also go to school. Those who go to tertiary universities cannot pay that money because they earn USD153. That is someone who fought for Zimbabwe's liberation.

I was given an example of the pension and the work that you would have done whilst you were still young. When you get to a point where you are old, you will be thinking that the Government that you were supporting will also give you certain things that can make you survive in life so that people will not laugh at you. I will give an example of politicians and war veterans and will not speak of teachers

and nurses because it has been said. I was speaking of war veterans who are getting USD153 as their pension, old men with family, some with children, still going to school.

Yes, there are facilities for veterans' affairs that pay school fees, but you hear that they still owe money in tertiary institutions. Some of them even pass but they cannot get their certificates because the fees are not paid. Poverty keeps going on; we say that education is removing a child from poverty or a person from poverty. Some of the war veterans ran away to go to war at Grade 7 and Grade 5. Now, they have come back and they will be thinking that their governments will do certain things for them as war veterans, but at the end of the day, they do not get anything. This means that this generation of war veterans will stay in poverty and other people will overtake them. What I mean is that other people will be showing off to them that they are better than them.

That is what I am just trying to say that we will eventually grow old at some point. We should be serious people. Let us remain focused on building our nation. If a person becomes older, he must be

someone admirable as someone who uplifts his country and Government.

HON. SEN. MAVENYENGWA: I move that the debate do now adjourn.

HON. SEN. MUNZVERENGWI: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 18th June, 2026.

*On the motion of **HON. SEN. MUZENDA** seconded by **HON. SEN. GOTORA**, the House adjourned at Ten Minutes to Five o'clock p.m.*