

PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE

Wednesday, 5th August, 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

SWITCHING OFF OF CELLPHONES

THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE: I would like to remind Hon. Senators to put your gadgets on silent or better switch them off.

MOTION

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, LEGAL AND
PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (HON. Z. ZIYAMBI):** I move that Orders of the Day, Numbers 1 to 8 on today's *Order Paper* be stood over until Orders of the Day, Numbers 9 and 10 have been disposed of.

Motion put and agreed to.

COMMITTEE STAGE

CLIMATE CHANGE MANAGEMENT BILL [H. B. 5A, 2025]

Ninth Order read: Committee Stage: Climate Change Management Bill [H. B. 5A, 2025].

House in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 5 put and agreed to.

On Clause 6:

HON. SEN. CHAPFUDZA: Thank you Chairperson. On Clause 6, on the authority of the Minister, we are dealing with the Climate Change Management Bill and climate change is cross-cutting. It creates a clear political centre for responsibility. My concern is that there is a danger of over-centralisation.

Since we have climate change in the local authority, mining and agriculture, when we centralise all the power to one ministry, there is a likelihood that there is going to be some over-centralisation and over-stepping of other ministries in their functions.

Climate change is cross-sectoral and too much authority in one ministry could affect the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development

and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Energy and Power Development, Ministry of Lands and Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Water Resources Development , the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development, local authorities and independent regulatory institutions. I think there should be some spread of power rather than centralising all the power in one ministry as this affects many ministries. Thank you.

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND WILDLIFE (HON. DR. E. NDLOVU): I would like to thank the Hon. Senator for his issue of centralisation. I think in every Act there is a responsible minister, then the responsible minister within Government systems. We have what we call Cabinet Committees where the minister consults other ministers who are affected by the Act. There is a process within the Government of consultation. So, there is no centralisation because I have to call Cabinet Committee meetings or inter-ministerial meetings to address the issues that might arise. I so submit.

Clause 6 put and agreed to.

On Clause 7:

THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, LEGAL AND

PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (HON. Z. ZIYAMBI): In the *Order Paper*, we have a new clause inserted. We are supposed to put it so that we either accept or reject it. If we do not do that procedurally, I think there may be a problem. Just put it and then I suggest that we recommit to new clause after Clause 7 because procedurally, I think we should.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON (HON. SEN. DUBE):

We are now dropping New Clause inserted after Clause 7 by Hon. Sen. Tshabangu since he is not in the House.

HON. SEN. GOTORA: Point of order Madam Chair. If it is something that we debated here and we agreed to, there is no point in dropping it. Let us know what the clause is supposed to say and then we move forward. I have an *Order Paper* here. There is nothing.

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND

WILDLIFE (HON. DR. E. NDLOVU): Our response to the proposal from Hon. Sen. Tshabangu is that this proposal is very noble and I would like to thank him very much for keeping on reminding us of Section 73 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, which provides for

environmental rights of our population. However, it will be key to note that for all projects of an infrastructure nature, such developments are subject to environmental impact assessment as guided by the Environmental Management Act [Chapter 20:27] that I also administer as the Minister of Environment.

An EIA's focus is on identifying, predicting and evaluating the environmental and social impacts of proposed projects before any decision or commitments are made. Having another impact assessment under the Climate Change Management Bill will only serve as a duplication effort and raise the cost of the project implementation. This is against the current government trust of facilitating the ease of doing business which has seen several levies and fees being scrapped and/or lowered across several sectors. Allow me also to bring to the attention of this Senate that the Environmental Management Act [Chapter 20:27], is also going through major amendments and is currently before Parliament. The environmental impact assessment process shall be expanded to environmental and social impact assessments to ensure that it does not just focus on environmental impacts alone but also cover

social and economic impacts, which is the just transition that Hon. Sen. Tshabangu is advocating for.

Further, Section 99 of the current Environmental Management Act [Chapter 20:27], dealing with the contents of the ESIA report will also be expanded to include socio-economic impact analysis and if people are required to be relocated or compensated as a result of a project, the project developer must produce a resettlement or compensation action plan in consultation with the affected persons and the concerned and relevant organs or agencies. So just transition should not be taken as a new concept. The Climate Change Management Bill under Clause 4, Application of Bill in relation to other laws, highlights that except where it is expressly provided to the contrary, this Bill shall be construed as being in addition to and not in substitution of any other law which is not in conflict or inconsistent with this Bill. To this extent, the Bill under Clause 3, Objectives of the Bill, clearly clarifies that its role is to provide a framework for adaptation and implementation of measures for climate change, adaptation and mitigation for achieving low greenhouse gas emissions, including the need to balance economic and social

development and the protection of the climate system in a manner which supports the realisation of the right of all human beings to an adequate living standard and the equitable distribution of the benefits thereof. This happens in complementarity with other already existing pieces of legislation. So, the issue of just transition is provided for under the Climate Change Management Bill and well covered under the Environmental Management Act [Chapter 27: 11], which talks of environmental impact assessment, audit and monitoring of projects. I so submit.

HON. SEN. GOTORA: From the explanation given by the Minister, it looks like there is no new clause to be inserted. She is responding to what was proposed and she is not agreeing with what was proposed. Therefore, there is no new clause to be inserted.

New Clause put and negatived.

Clause 7 put and agreed to.

On Clause 8:

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND WILDLIFE (HON. DR. E. NDLOVU): Allow me to thank the Hon.

Senator for expressing interest in making sure that the Climate Change Management Bill is empowered to strengthen issues of gender mainstreaming and inclusivity with efficiency and impact. However, the Bill already takes into account the needs of all vulnerable groups; being women, children and the elderly, the disabled and youth. All these are priority groups in the disbursement of funds from the National Climate Fund to be established upon enactment of the Climate Change Management Act. The finer details of disbursement cannot be broken down in the enabling Act; rather, the Ministry will promulgate an enabling Statutory Instrument to operationalise the Act once it is passed into law.

Target setting is also something that has to be done under operational documents, including national strategies and plans like the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan and the Nationally Determined Contribution and any other subsequent national policy frameworks. Under this piece of legislation, we ought to make sure that issues of gender mainstreaming and inclusivity are provided for under the key functions of the department and beyond this Bill. The Climate

Change Management Bill will then be obliged to demonstrate gender and inclusivity through follow-ups, national strategies and plans that can be reviewed and revised regularly based on the changes in the operating environment. I so submit.

Amendment to Clause 8 put and negatived.

Clause 8 put and agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 13 put and agreed to.

On Clause 14:

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND WILDLIFE (HON. DR. E. NDLOVU): Madam Chair, issues of greenhouse gas emissions for the purposes of this Bill are adequately covered under Clauses 14, 15, 16 and 17, which compel individual private and public entities to invest in greenhouse gas emission data collection, verification and compilation. The Paris Agreement to which Zimbabwe is a party to, mandates all Governments to develop and communicate ambitious nationally determined contributions which are reviewed after every five years and with clearly stated greenhouse gas emission reduction targets across all intergovernmental panels on

climate change sectors, namely energy, waste, industrial processes, product use, agriculture, forestry and other land use. This is to enable trackability and comparability across countries and regions, considering that climate change mitigation requires international cooperation.

Madam Chair, Zimbabwe has already developed and communicated its third generation Nationally Determined Contribution, NDC3, with a 40% per annum per capita emission reduction below the business as usual baseline for the period 2025 to 2035. Zimbabwe was among the first 13 countries globally and the only African country to develop and submit its NDC3 zero by the set deadline of the 10th of February 2025. The Paris Agreement again compels Zimbabwe to regularly track implementation of this nationally determined contribution and update its greenhouse gas inventory every two years through the biannual transparency report process. This standard reporting has been harmonised across all countries and is once every five years. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat commissions a global stocktake to assess collective global

progress in meeting the long-term goals and climate action plans, the Nationally Determined Contributions.

Madam Chair, I therefore propose that we do not legislate our greenhouse gas emission reduction targets but rather have this covered under our naturally determined contribution whose implementation is conditional upon affordable international financial support, investment, technology, development and transfer and capacity development. I so submit.

HON. SEN. ZINDI: Thank you Madam Chair. That clause talks of specified persons submitting the regular returns to the department on all data related to greenhouse emissions. The clarification I am seeking from Hon. Minister is that when we talk of specified persons, would it not be prudent to specify exactly what criteria or category those specified persons who are supposed to return or make returns of the gas emissions to the department?

THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (HON. Z. ZIYAMBI): Thank you Hon. Chair. In the Bill, when you find such specific reference, it means

it will be covered in the definition section of who is a specified person who will then be required to make those returns. The way it is couched is correct. I submit.

Amendment to Clause 14 put and negatived.

HON. SEN. MLOTSHWA: Point of order.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: What is your point of order?

HON. SEN. MLOTSHWA: My point of order is that this House would like to appreciate how you are measuring your ayes and your noes as the ayes outnumbered the noes.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: I asked for some debate, you did not debate.

HON. SEN. MLOTSHWA: It is not about the debate, Madam Chair. Do not be emotional. It is about how you are measuring the ayes and the noes. The ayes outnumbered the noes, but you are saying the noes have it. How did you assess that?

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: It is my discretion. I am the Chair, I have a final say.

HON. SEN. MLOTSHWA: Madam Chair, you are letting the Minister respond. Is he the Chair?

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: I am the Chair.

HON. SEN. MLOTSHWA: You respond as the Chair.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: I have the final say.

HON. SEN. MLOTSHWA: Whether it is unfair or fair, whether the ayes were more than the noes...

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: Yes. That is what I noticed.

HON. SEN. MLOTSHWA: I just want that point recorded. That is according to you not according to the majority. I thank you.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: It is according to the Chair. Thank you very much.

Clause 14 put and agreed to.

Clauses 15 to 20, put and agreed to.

On Clause 21:

HON. SEN. ZVIDZAI: Thank you very much Madam President.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: No, I am the Chairperson now.

HON. SEN. ZVIDZAI: Madam President Chair, I appreciate.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: No, I said I am the Chairperson. I am not in the seat.

HON. SEN. ZVIDZAI: Madam Chair, I appreciate. Thank you so much. I put in proposed amendments early today and the Standing Orders allow me to do that so that my proposal can be debated and if it is a pleasure with the House, get that amendment built into the Act.

I propose the deletion of Clause 2 so that it can read as follows: “that there is hereby established a National Climate Change Council which shall be a board corporate capable of suing and being sued in its own name and that board shall be responsible for the management and administration of the National Climate Fund.” I have got some justifications for that thinking and it is informed by comparing other funds, how they are administered and the efficacy of the same.

If you look at the AIDS Fund, you generally see that it is something that has performed so well for the country. In fact, we are

applauded all over the world; give it to the former President Mugabe for thinking that way and making sure that the AIDS Fund is managed by a council not resident in the Ministry. So, copying from that, I would think that it would make better sense.

I think the fund will be more effective if it is managed by a council rather than by some individual sitting in a corner in the Ministry. The reason for this is that climate finance requires independence, transparency and accountability. An autonomous council inspires greater confidence among international climate financiers such as the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund.

Funding decisions should be based on technical merit rather than ministerial discretion. Parliament will exercise more effective oversight over an independent statutory body than over a fund directly controlled by the Minister. The Minister should remain responsible for policy while the council is responsible for implementation and fiduciary management, consistent with the principles of good public administration. This amendment that I propose does not diminish the Minister's policy role. Rather, it seeks to separate policy formulation from financial

management, a widely accepted governance principle that would likely strengthen the credibility and effectiveness of the National Climate Fund.

Additionally, I propose insertion of another clause, which proposes the composition of the National Climate Fund Council namely, a Chairperson appointed by the President on the recommendation of Parliament, Permanent Secretaries for Climate, Finance and Local Government, Environmental Management Agency (EMA), Zimbabwe National Water Authority, local authority representation, the private sector, civic society, representative of women and youths, people with disability and representation of traditional leaders. I so submit. - [HON. SEN. ZVIDZAI: *Inaudible interjection*] -

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: Take your seats. It is okay Hon. Minister, to respond to the debate. Let the Minister respond; she heard what you said.

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND WILDLIFE (HON. DR. E. NDLOVU): I would like to thank the Hon. Member for the proposal. I think all the time, we as Government try by

all means to cut costs and this fund is resident in the Ministry because we are trying to cut costs.

Secondly, I am just a trustee. I am not a decision maker on my own. So, I think the proposed amendment is not okay for me because I am just a trustee. The Bill is okay as it is and the reason why we did not put a trustee, that clause was there and we removed it because we did not want to burden the fiscals with the payment of dues to a board of trustees or council. I so submit.

HON. SEN. ZVIDZAI: I find the Minister's argument a little warm. I do not think she considered what I said. Madam Chair, if it is good for the Ministry of Health to have the National AIDS Council manage the AIDS funds and if that has worked so well, is the Minister saying the Ministry of Health is not alive to the need to make costs lean? What is wrong with that?

Secondly, this is not personal. It is not about Minister Dr. Evelyn Ndllovu. It is about a principle. So, whether it is not about her, it is about introducing a principle that improves the governance of these funds so that it can deliver better to the people. It could be Minister X, Y and Z. It

does not really matter. What matters is the principle. Thank you Madam President.

THE TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: I have been correcting you. I said I am Hon. Chair when I am here. I am not the Madam President.

THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (HON. Z. ZIYAMBI): Thank you Hon. Chair. The fund was established and the Minister responsible for climate change is a trustee. The permanent secretary will be administering the fund. How the fund will be disbursed is prescribed. I do not see any problems with that and I believe that the way our drafters put it is very good. We have a fund that has been set up. The funds are State funds. The minister is just a trustee and not a beneficiary. The beneficiaries are clearly prescribed. Parliament will have oversight of the activities of the fund. In that regard, I do not believe that there is anything amiss in the arrangement. We have had several arrangements like that and this is not the first time we have had an arrangement like that. So, I propose Hon. Chair, that we proceed. I thank you.

Clause 21 put and agreed to.

Clauses 22 to 31 put and agreed to.

On Clause 32:

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND WILDLIFE (HON. DR. E. NDLOVU): Madam Chair, we respond that Government appreciates the intention behind this amendment, which seeks to strengthen accountability for offences resulting in significant environmental harm and to ensure that corporate entities are held responsible for their actions. The proposed definition of significant environmental harm provides useful guidance for the application of this provision and enhances legal certainty.

However, provisions on operations for significant environmental harm are addressed in the Environmental Management Bill, which was recently approved by Cabinet and will be tabled before this House in due course. This applies to all forms of environmental harm, including forests, wetlands, wildlife habitats and water bodies, to mention but a few. Creating such an offence in this Bill should therefore create an overlap amounting to duplication of laws.

Government also has reservations regarding the proposed penalties. Prescription of a mandatory minimum fine denominated in US dollars or linked to a percentage of annual turnover departs from the established sentencing framework and our criminal law and may create instances with existing legislation. Penalties under this Bill will be calibrated to align with the general framework of offences under Zimbabwean law while preserving the discretion of the courts to impose appropriate sanctions based on the facts and circumstances of each case. Similarly, while Government agrees that doctors and senior managers who knowingly authorise consent to facilitate environmental offences should be held personally accountable, matters such as doctor disqualification are already provided for under other legislation governing companies and corporate governance.

Introducing parallel sanctions in this Bill may result in duplication and legal inconsistency. The Bill already empowers the courts to impose penalties and provides mechanisms for enforcement under the applicable environmental and criminal laws. The Government, therefore, considers that the existing provisions strike an appropriate balance between

effective deterrence, accountability and consistency within Zimbabwe's broader legal framework. Accordingly, the Government is unable to support the amendment in its current form. I so submit.

Amendment to Clause 32 put and negatived.

Clause 32 put and agreed to.

Clause 33 put and agreed to.

On Clause 34:

HON. SEN. NCUBE: Some clarification Madam Chair. Where it says incentives shall be in accordance with appropriate law, the Hon. Minister will develop incentives in accordance with that law. What exactly does that mean?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND WILDLIFE (HON. DR. E. NDLOVU): Madam Chair, incentives in Government are mostly prescribed in the fiscal laws such as the income tax and other charges. So, it is covered under the fiscal laws. I so submit.

Clause 34 put and agreed to.

Clause 35 put and agreed to.

On Clause 36:

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND WILDLIFE (HON. DR. E. NDLOVU): Madam Chair, the right of access to information is already provided in the Bill. This right is well protected under Section 62 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and further buttressed by the Freedom of Information Act, which outlines how one can enforce that right. Any litigant requiring access to information from a public office can resort to the Constitution instead of this Bill creating duplication of provisions. Hon. Senator Tshabangu's concern regarding the protection of communities affected by projects with significant climate impacts is appreciated. Free, prior and informed consent is a concept that forms the basis of environmental and social impact assessments enshrined in the Environmental Management Bill to be tabled before Parliament very soon.

All projects with significant environmental impacts, including climate impacts are subject to environmental and social impact assessments in terms of that legislation which has more safeguards beyond free, prior and informed consent.

The Government fully supports the principle of community consultation, transparency and protection of livelihoods. Zimbabwe's Constitution and the existing environmental laws already provide for public participation and consultation in decision-making processes. The Climate Change Management Bill seeks to complement rather than replace or duplicate this legal framework.

Accordingly, the Government considers that meaningful consultation and participation should continue to be guaranteed through the existing legal process while avoiding provisions that could create legal uncertainty or unnecessarily impede the implementation of strategic national development and climate resilience projects. I so submit.

Amendment to Clause 36 put and negatived.

Clause 36 put and agreed to.

Clause 37 put and agreed to.

First and Second Schedules put and agreed to.

House resumed.

Bill reported without amendments.

Third reading: With leave, forthwith.

THIRD READING

CLIMATE CHANGE MANAGEMENT BILL [H. B. 5A, 2025]

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND WILDLIFE (HON. DR. E. NDLOVU): Mr. President Sir, I move that the Bill be read the third time.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read the third time.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE

NON-ADVERSE REPORT RECEIVED FROM THE
PARLIAMENTARY LEGAL COMMITTEE

THE HON. DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SENATE: I would like to inform the House that I have received a non-adverse report from the Parliamentary Legal Committee on Statutory Instrument Numbers 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105 and 106 of 2026.

MOTION

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

THE MINISTER OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

EDUCATION (HON. T. MOYO): I move that Order of the Day, Number 10 be stood over until all the other Orders have been disposed of.

Motion put and agreed to.

MOTION

**REPORT OF THE ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION ON
WARD 14 OF CHINHOYI MUNICIPALITY AND WARD 6 OF
EPWORTH LOCAL BOARD BY ELECTIONS**

Eleventh Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on the Report of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission on Ward 14 of Chinhoyi Municipality and Ward 6 of Epworth Local Board By-Elections.

Question again proposed.

THE MINISTER OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

EDUCATION (HON. T. MOYO): Thank you Hon. President. I move that the debate do now adjourn.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 6th August, 2026.

MOTION

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

HON. SEN. CHAPFUDZA: Mr. President, I move that we stand over Notice of Motion Number Twelve until the rest of the Orders are disposed of.

HON. SEN. MATIBIRI: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

MOTION

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

HON. SEN. CHAPFUDZA: Thank you Mr. President. I move that we stand over Notice of Motion Number Thirteen until the rest of the Orders are disposed of.

HON. SEN. MATIBIRI: I second Mr. President.

Motion put and agreed to.

MOTION

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

HON. SEN. CHIKUKWA: Mr. President, I move that this Notice of Motion be stood over until the rest of the Orders of the Day have been disposed of.

HON. SEN. ZVIDZAI: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

MOTION

REPORT ON THE 70TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)

HON. SEN. MBOHWA: I move the motion standing in my name that this House takes note of the Report on the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 70) held from 9 – 19 March 2026, at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, United States of America.

HON. SEN. NCUBE: I second.

HON. SEN. MBOHWA: Introduction

The Republic of Zimbabwe participated in the Seventy Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 70) from 9th to 19th March 2026 in New York City, United States of

America. This is an annual intergovernmental event that provides a platform for dialogue and peer learning among Member States, enabling them to exchange ideas and share lessons, particularly from countries that have made notable progress in the thematic areas being showcased that year. The event also offers a platform for UN Member States to review progress on implementing women and girls' rights as agreed in previous meetings based on the CSW conclusions.

This report summarises the key events of CSW 70 and offers some recommendations that Parliament should consider implementing through the Portfolio Committees on Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, the Thematic Committee on Gender and Development and the Zimbabwe Women Parliamentary Caucus (ZWPC).

Delegation

The Parliament of Zimbabwe delegation was headed by the President of the Senate and Patron of the Zimbabwe Women Parliamentary Caucus (ZWPC), Hon. Mabel Chinomona, who was

accompanied by the following Members of Parliament: Hon. Maybe Mbohwa, Chairperson of the ZWPC, Hon O. Sibanda, Vice Chairperson of the ZWPC, Hon. Getrude Mutandi, Chairperson of the Women Affairs Committee and Hon. Sisassenkosi Ndebele, Chairperson of the Thematic Committee on Gender and Development. Hon. E. Masuku also joined the delegation representing the Pan-African Parliament.

CSW 70 Themes

This year's priority theme was titled, "Ensuring and Strengthening Access to Justice for All Women and Girls by Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Legal Systems, Eliminating Discriminatory Laws, Policies and Practices and Addressing Structural Barriers." The review theme focused on "Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life as well as the elimination of violence for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls" (agreed conclusions of the sixty-fifth session).

Key Messages from the Commemorations of International Women's Day

This year's CSW official opening session was significant, offering Member States the opportunity to observe International Women's Day on 9th March 2026. The main message from the celebrations was that Member States should respect and protect women and girls' rights by enacting new laws, strengthening existing ones, increasing accountability, investing in and strengthening gender institutions and demonstrating political courage to safeguard these rights. Special mention was made, of women and children in war-affected countries, where civilians are deprived of food, water, medicine and shelter, underscoring the urgent need to improve access to justice.

However, participants expressed concern that across the globe, some nations were experiencing a backlash against women and girls' rights - rights that took generations to secure. Member States were clear that in the face of backlash, women must not back down but redouble their efforts and rise higher.

Key Messages from the Official Opening Ceremony of CSW 70

The key message from the official opening session was that ‘justice is a non-negotiable foundation of rights.’ Yet for too many women and girls access to justice remains selective, inaccessible and denied. It was clear that women still face systemic barriers: discriminatory laws, unequal pay, forced marriage and the absence of consent-based definitions of rape, among others.

The following key statistics were presented, signifying a call to action: that in nearly 70 percent of surveyed countries, women face greater barriers to justice than men, with women holding only 64 percent of the legal rights enjoyed by men. These barriers are often rooted in their everyday realities: cost, distance and mistrust of justice institutions. In 54 percent of countries, rape is still not defined based on consent. In 75 percent of countries, a girl can still be forced into marriage and in 44 percent of countries, the law does not mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value. The statistics show that ‘no country has yet achieved full legal equality

between women and men,’ stressing that progress depends on political will.

Digital justice and Artificial Intelligence (AI) governance have emerged as new frontiers requiring urgent, gender-sensitive regulation.

Emerging Issues from CSW 70

- Zimbabwe was elected to serve on the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) for the 2027–2030 term. This honour means that our Minister of Women Affairs, Community and SMEs Development, Hon. Monica Mutsvangwa, will stand at the heart of global decision-making, a powerful symbol of the strides our nation is championing women’s rights and empowerment. This milestone also means she will actively participate in the Bureau’s work, underscoring the Government of Zimbabwe’s commitment to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment on the global stage.
- Africa successfully submitted its bid to host the 74th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW74) in 2030. This

milestone represents a defining moment for the continent, underscoring Africa's determination to lead, inspire and shape the global future of gender equality.

Meetings Attended

During the two-week CSW, hundreds of side events took place on the fringes of the main event. Parliament, in its role of representation, oversight and legislation attended and participated in various side events, including the three meetings hosted by the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community and SMEs Development. One of these side events was co-hosted by the Governments of Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Outcomes from Zimbabwe Side Events

- The first side event showcased the First Lady's efforts to enhance access to justice for women and girls through various initiatives under her esteemed office. The engagement was themed 'Dismantling Structural Barriers to Accessing Justice: The First Lady of Zimbabwe's Blueprint for Inclusive Justice'. The meeting highlighted how, through the Angel of Hope Foundation, the First

Lady has been instrumental in implementing initiatives to dismantle structural barriers that impede women and girls in Zimbabwe from accessing justice. These include among others, advocacy to end child marriage, the *Gota/Nhanga/Ixhiba* programme, awareness campaigns on Protection of Property and Inheritance Rights, support for female prisoners, particularly the construction of the Marondera Female Open Prison and the establishment of a drug rehabilitation programme to curb drug abuse in Zimbabwe.

- The second side event was hosted by the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development on the topic, “Women in Decision Making in Zimbabwe.” The event showcased the extent to which Zimbabwe has embraced women in decision-making positions.
- The third side event was held jointly by the Governments of Zimbabwe and Namibia, focusing on sharing experiences of what the two countries had done to address structural barriers and support women’s participation in public life. The engagement

meeting made it clear that both Zimbabwe and Namibia had strong political will, reinforced by deliberate policies to support gender equality. Key highlights from the meeting showed that Namibia had made significant progress in closing its gender gap, achieving 81.8% and ranking 8th globally and 1st in Africa in the 2025 Global Gender Gap Report. Zimbabwe has closed its gender gap, achieving a gender parity score of 74.7% and ranking 49th out of 148 economies, an improvement from 52nd in 2024.

Of major importance was the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) Party's voluntary introduction of the Zebra System in its 2024 electoral system, which led to more women being elected to Parliament. The elections earned Namibia great recognition when Her Excellency Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah won the presidential election, becoming Namibia's first female President. Fifty-seven per cent (57%) of her Cabinet ministers are women, who also hold the most critical posts, including Defence, Finance, trade and Agriculture. By contrast, Zimbabwe adopted the Women's Quota for the National Assembly in its 2013

Constitution and has since extended it to Local Authorities, with the provision set to lapse in 2033. The Zebra System was also introduced in the Senate, leading to more women being elected. However, Namibia has not legislated quotas or a Zebra System; the current Zebra System was voluntarily implemented through the ruling of Government's political will.

Key Insights from Other CSW 70 Side Events

Legal Reforms Are Crucial: Implementing legal reforms was highlighted as vital to advancing the gender equality agenda and helping Member States build gender-equal societies that expand opportunities for families. Tunisia, through constitutional reforms, enacted laws guaranteeing equal inheritance rights for women, demonstrating bold leadership in aligning family law with gender-equality principles. Morocco, through electoral law reforms and investments in women's leadership programmes, enhanced Women's Political Participation (WPP). As Zimbabwe, we have made great strides in enhancing WPP; however, more reforms are still necessary to achieve gender parity.

Article 9 of the CEDAW Convention: Some discussions centred on Article 9 of the CEDAW Convention, where implementation remains difficult as some countries expressed reservations. Zimbabwe ratified CEDAW in 1991 without reservations, but implementation gaps remain. While Zimbabwean men can automatically confer nationality on their children and spouses, women face restrictions, particularly when married to foreign nationals.

The CEDAW Committee has repeatedly urged reforms to align with international standards. This provision has been successfully implemented in several countries through reforms that guarantee women equal rights in nationality matters, including the ability to pass citizenship to their children. Egypt reformed its laws in 2004, allowing Egyptian women married to foreign men to pass nationality to their children. In 2007, Morocco amended its nationality code to allow women to transmit nationality to their children. These reforms were a major step towards gender equality

in family law, particularly in reducing statelessness among children.

Gender-Disaggregated Data: Some meetings emphasised that the CEDAW Convention, alongside other international instruments, places clear obligations on Governments to collect and provide gender-disaggregated data to guide evidence-based policy formulation, particularly Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB). However, progress on GRB and gender mainstreaming continues to be undermined by the ‘invisible women’ phenomenon, in which data on women and girls is absent, incomplete or inaccessible. To address this gap, countries were strongly urged to prioritise investment in national statistical systems and to strengthen data-collection mechanisms, ensuring that policies are informed by accurate, inclusive and gender-sensitive evidence. Member States were urged to adopt GRB analytical tools to help governments and local authorities mainstream gender, turning plans into reality. Mexico has pioneered gender-disaggregated data collection through its

National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), which informs gender-responsive budgeting and policy reforms.

In global benchmarks, Timor-Leste's Constitution guarantees equality between women and men, providing the legal foundation for GRB. Circular No. 2 is considered a pioneering step in the Asia-Pacific region, positioning Timor-Leste as one of the few countries to have embedded GRB into its national budget framework. The circular mandates all line ministries and agencies to include gender analysis in their annual plans and budgets and to report on how allocations benefit women and men differently. Zimbabwe has made strides in GRB by ensuring that every Budget Statement is accompanied by a gender budget statement.

Automation of the Justice System: A critical question raised during the CSW sessions was whether automating justice, including the use of AI in the judiciary, can increase women and girls' access to justice. It was clear that AI is already embedded in many judicial systems globally, including developing countries. While AI will shape the future of justice, access remains a

minefield for women and girls because of systemic barriers.

Estonia's e-justice system integrates AI for case management and document review, but safeguards ensure human oversight, preventing automated bias against vulnerable groups. Governments and the private sector were urged to ground all AI systems in human rights laws and to protect the vulnerable.

Participants emphasised that automation must not replace human judgement and that judges, prosecutors, lawyers and clerks must be involved in shaping AI systems to ensure lived realities are captured. The Judicial System in Zimbabwe is being automated, with serious implications for enhancing access to justice for women and girls who are mostly from vulnerable communities.

Women's Quotas vs Gender Equality Law: The meetings showed that countries with legislated quotas had made significant progress in guaranteeing women's participation in public life. It was revealed that most of these countries had achieved more than 30% representation, though efforts are still required to move

towards full parity. Zimbabwe has benefited immensely from the quota system, achieving above 30% representation in Parliament. Generally, Member States agreed that quotas alone are not sufficient. Participants agreed that equal participation and representation are only possible when laws clearly stipulate a 50-50 split across all spheres; thus, the gender equality law was cited as effective.

A few countries such as Iceland, Spain, Rwanda, Bolivia and Mexico, have achieved or legislated 50-50 gender parity in Parliament, while others like Albania have enshrined balanced representation in law but remain below full parity. Thus, gender equality laws provide the structural guarantees that protect women's rights and ensure equal opportunities and institutionalise reforms beyond electoral cycles. Both countries agreed that the promulgation of the gender equality law will significantly contribute to achieving gender parity goals as outlined in international, regional conventions and national constitutions.

Violence Against Women: The Spotlight Initiative

involving over 96 countries, revealed alarming realities, including that fewer than 10% of gender-based violence (GBV) survivors report to law enforcement and that approximately 1 in 3 women, i.e. around 730 million globally, experience GBV. These figures reflect the deep entrenchment of cultural and traditional norms that perpetuate silence and impunity. Countries were urged to quantify the losses associated with GBV. For example, Uganda has quantified the economic cost of GBV, estimating that medical expenses alone amounted to UGX 31 trillion (USD21 billion) annually. Beyond financial costs, participants emphasised the importance of measuring time lost in handling GBV cases, including lost productivity, education and civic participation.

Male Engagement: Most governments recognise that preventing GBV requires cultural transformation, with greater involvement of men in the campaign. Uganda, Rwanda and Namibia have strengthened male engagement strategies, enlisting traditional and religious leaders as allies to challenge harmful

norms and reduce GBV. This approach underscores the importance of mobilising men and boys as partners in advancing women's rights and political participation. Zimbabwe needs to scale up its male engagement efforts as it is pivotal in advancing the gender equality agenda.

National Gender Institutions: Discussions emphasised that National Gender Commissions serve as catalysts for equality, amplifying the voices of women and girls and advocating for their rights at national, regional and global levels. Participants noted that commissions play a critical role in enhancing access to justice by receiving and investigating complaints, supporting survivors of gender-based violence and in some cases, challenging High Court decisions that may reverse significant progress in gender equality. From UN Women's perspective, Gender Commissions are strategic accountable bodies that strengthen Government efforts to implement the gender equality agenda.

It was highlighted that although only a few countries have established such commissions, the session underscored that the

constitutionalisation of Gender Commissions is not an act of charity but a rights-based approach to achieving gender equality, making it essential for all Member States to establish these institutions. Rwanda has invested heavily in gender institutions, including the Gender Monitoring Office, which ensures that laws and policies are implemented with a gender lens. This has contributed to Rwanda achieving one of the highest rates of women in Parliament globally (61%). In view of this, it is imperative that Zimbabwe strengthen the ZGC rather than merging it with the ZHRC.

Intergenerational Engagement to Advance Young

Women's Leadership: The meetings underscored that intergenerational discussions and dialogues remain pivotal in grooming the young women into politics. It was pointed out that young women's voices are indispensable in policy formulation, not only on youth-specific issues but across the national development agenda. Participants emphasised that youth involvement must move beyond token representation; young women should be

empowered to shape national policies and laws as future leaders. It was observed that globally, women's representation in Parliaments stands at around 27%, yet young women account for less than 1%, reflecting the limited opportunities available to them.

It was noted that student politics at universities often mirror national politics, making Government support for these initiatives a vital means of fostering young leadership. Through constitutional quotas and youth councils, Rwanda has established pathways for young women to move from student politics into national leadership. In Nepal, the 2015 Constitution required youth representation in local government, leading to thousands of young women being elected to municipal councils. Successful models from Rwanda and Nepal demonstrate that when quotas, laws and mentorship are combined, young women can transition from the margins of student politics to the centre of national decision-making.

Property Rights and Inheritance Laws: Participants highlighted that patriarchal norms continue to bar women's access

to land in both rural and urban areas. While most national laws recognise equal opportunities, practical barriers such as harmful local practices and entrenched traditions still prevent women from exercising their rights. Colonial legacies have further entrenched inequalities, leaving women as labourers who till the land but rarely own it. Traditional leaders often deprive women of land ownership by refusing to register land in their names. Thus, deeply rooted customs still position women as workers without ownership, reflecting challenges shared across Kenya, South Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

As a result, women face a double dispossession: first based on gender and later upon the death of a spouse. Even where progressive laws exist, barriers remain: for example, language used in tribunals often excludes women; the distance to tribunals makes access costly and impractical for women and male-dominated tribunals frequently resolve family disputes in ways that disadvantage women. In Kenya, the gender-responsive land adjudication system introduced in 2010 and alternative justice

systems ensure women's voices are central to land management.

Whilst in Ethiopia, legal reforms combined with awareness campaigns have boosted women's land registration, supported by community-level enforcement. Community leaders are actively involved, with women making up more than 50% of community land management committees.

Recommendations for Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus,

- To champion inclusive justice through parliamentary outreach programmes to raise awareness of women's rights in family, property and inheritance laws.
- To advocate for the repeal of discriminatory laws through prioritising and advocating for reforms in family and property rights law in favour of women and girls in Zimbabwe.
- To institutionalise intergenerational dialogues, mentorship and leadership pipelines to support youth and young women leaders with transformative leadership skills.

- To strengthen male engagement programmes aimed at involving male MPs as allies in dismantling harmful norms.
- To monitor and track progress in implementing the Women's Quota in Parliament and local authorities through an annual conference to discuss the challenges and lessons learned from implementing quotas in Zimbabwe.
- To lobby and advocate for the enactment of the Gender Equality Law as measures to move beyond quotas and institutionalise equal opportunities and rights across all sectors in line with Sections 17, 56 and 80 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.
- To lobby for the development of the Sexual Harassment Policy within Parliament in line with the ILO Convention 190: Guarantee a workplace free from violence and harassment.

Recommendations for the Portfolio Committee on Women's Affairs, Community and SMEs development and the Thematic Committee on Gender and Development

- To monitor the implementation of gender policies by demanding regular reporting on GBV prevention programmes and rehabilitation centres.
- To monitor the use of AI and Digital Justice Systems, their impact on women and girls' access and to ensure safeguards against bias and discrimination in emerging justice technologies.
- To monitor and strengthen the Zimbabwe Gender Commission's capacity to investigate complaints and enforce accountability.
- To call for Parliament to ratify ILO Convention 190: Guarantee a workplace free from violence and harassment.

Conclusion

Zimbabwe's participation in CSW 70 reaffirmed the urgency of dismantling structural barriers to justice and advancing gender equality. Parliament has a pivotal role in ensuring that commitments made on the global stage translate into laws, oversight mechanisms and representation strategies that empower women and girls in Zimbabwe. The august House is therefore called to facilitate the adoption and implementation of some of the recommendations therein. I thank you.

HON. SEN. NDEBELE: I rise to second the motion tabled by the Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Women Parliamentary Caucus, Hon. Sen. Mbohwa, on the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 70) held from 9th to 19th March 2026 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City, United States of America.

I had the privilege of representing this House at this event in my capacity as Chairperson of the Thematic Committee on Gender and Development. I can report that Zimbabwe's delegation acquitted itself with distinction, projecting our nation's voice on the global stage of gender justice with confidence and pride. Today, I bring back that voice to this House so that its lessons may be translated into the laws, oversight and institutional action that Parliament uniquely has the power to deliver.

The statistics presented to the international community at CSW 70 demand that we reflect and act before it is too late. The Spotlight Initiative operating in more than 96 countries revealed a sobering truth that fewer than 10 per cent of survivors of gender-based violence report to law enforcement. Yet despite this silence, one in three women, that is,

approximately 730 million people worldwide experiences gender-based violence in their lifetimes. These are not figures. These are mothers, daughters, sisters and colleagues. They are Zimbabwean women walking among us, many of them carrying wounds that this House has not yet done enough to heal.

CSW 70 made it unmistakably clear that GBV is not only a moral crisis but also a national development emergency. Uganda has already demonstrated with devastating clarity that medical expenses attributable to GBV alone cost the country an estimated USD21 billion annually.

Beyond the financial reckoning lies the countless costs of lost productivity, interrupted education, silenced civic participation and stolen futures. In light of these findings, Zimbabwe cannot afford to leave this cost unquantified and unaddressed. I therefore call on the Ministry of Women Affairs with support from our Treasury, to commission a dedicated national costing study of the economic burden of GBV in Zimbabwe so that this House may legislate and budget with the full weight of evidence. Violence against women is a constitutional violation. It is an offence against Sections 17, 56 and 80 of our supreme

law. This Parliament is not a bystander. We are the guardians of that law. I, therefore, urge this august House to endorse the recommendation to expand Zimbabwe's male engagement and traditional leadership mobilisation programmes for GBV prevention as measures to curb this scourge.

Allow me to also comment on Parliament's role in legislating for gender equality. CSW 70 confirmed a consensus that countries, Zimbabwe included, must now translate aspiration into law. Quotas alone are not sufficient. Zimbabwe has benefited tremendously from the Women's Quota in the National Assembly, improving our gender parity score to 74.7 per cent and advancing our global ranking to 49 out of 148 countries. We are proud of this progress. But Iceland, Spain, Rwanda, Bolivia and Mexico have demonstrated that only a comprehensive gender equality law that mandates a 50-50 split across all spheres of public life provides structural guarantees beyond electoral cycles, delivering the full and permanent realisation of gender parity. I add my voice to the growing call from the delegation, the ZWPC and the

international community. Zimbabwe must enact its Gender Equality Law without further delay.

I conclude this debate by inviting this august House to pause and take pride in a milestone achievement announced at CSW 70. Zimbabwe has been elected to serve on the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women for the 2027–2030 term. In this capacity, our esteemed Minister of Women Affairs, Hon. Monica Mutsvangwa, will stand at the very heart of global gender policy-making. This is not only a powerful endorsement of her leadership, but also a historic recognition of Zimbabwe's rising stature within the international architecture of gender equality. Furthermore, the African Union has successfully bid to host CSW 74 in 2030, a continental milestone that places Africa at the centre of global gender leadership. These are not only ceremonial honours. They are mandates that this House must ensure are matched by the quality of our domestic legal framework, our institutional capacity and our accountability to the women and girls of Zimbabwe who elected us into power.

I, therefore, urge every Hon. Member of this House to support this debate, not as a formality but as a commitment to the women who sent us here, to the girls watching us and to the Zimbabwe we are called to build. I thank you.

HON. SEN. MBOHWA: Mr. President Sir, I move that the debate do now adjourn.

HON. SEN. NDEBELE: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Wednesday, 6th August, 2026.

On the motion of **THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF VETERANS OF THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE AFFAIRS (HON. SEN. H. MOYO)**, *the Senate adjourned at Twenty-Five Minutes past Four o'clock p.m.*