



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Association of Youth Organizations (NAYO)

HARARE, Zimbabwe, 16 April 2019

The National Association of Youth Organizations (NAYO Africa) is a Youth Umbrella Body for youth organizations working in Zimbabwe. Its vision is to see a repositioned, redefined and enhanced role of youth in community and national, regional and international developmental processes. Its work seeks to redress the challenges that youth are facing and contribute towards their active participation in developmental processes through Coordination, Advocacy, Mobilization, Capacity Building and Information Sharing Initiatives. The agency of youth is cardinal in achieving this.

Acknowledging the government's commitment to align laws with the Constitution as seen by the legislative agenda tabled for the 9th Parliament by the President; the call by the President to promote democratic governance and the commitment by government to repeal Public Order and Security Act (POSA) with the Maintenance of Peace and Order Bill; to repeal Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) through the Protection of Personal Information Bill and the Freedom of Information Bill as Cabinet has set the principles guiding the crafting of these bills.

Cognizant of the importance of civic and political rights which through the enactment of the 2013 Constitution empower citizen (rights holders) to claim their rights as guaranteed by the state (duty bearer) with the constitution providing for freedoms to association and assembly (section 58), expression (section 61) and the right to demonstrate (section 59) among other socio-political freedoms key to the agency of citizens.

Perturbed by the continued crackdown on Civil Society Organizations CSOs; Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Journalists, activists and human rights defenders; most of whom are youth. The crackdown has seen unlawful suspension of NGOs as in the case of COTRAD in Masvingo; targeting of NGO leaders as seen by the arrests; increasing political rhetoric to tighten provisions for demonstrations with a corresponding increase of protests being banned by the police (last week youth had their solidarity march on shrinking civic space banned by the Police); continued brutality of the police as seen by the recent attack on journalists covering clashes between vendors and City Council Police; Public downplaying of the role of NGOs labeling them as 'regime change agents', the disproportionate targeting of youth; and the continued shrinking civic space for NGOs to operate in communities.

We therefore, implore the government to without any further delay; enact the necessary legislative measures that guarantee the exercise of freedoms to association, expression and assembly by:

- Government through Parliament of Zimbabwe to expedite the repeal of both AIPPA and POSA in line with Cabinet's recent decision – to this end there must be a clear plan to inclusively consult stakeholders and citizens in the crafting of the Bills;
- Government through Parliament to repeal the Zimbabwe Youth Council (ZYC ACT) and replace this with a more pro-development and inclusive legislative framework for youth in the country as specified in Section 20 of the constitution;
- Government through Parliament to amend the Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO Act) which governs the work of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the country and consider removing currently proposed amendments which militate against the operations of NGOs- allow the NGOs to self-regulate;
- Government upholding the Nairobi Outcome Document (agreed at the High Level Meeting (HLM2) in 2016) and Busan Partnership Agreement which recognizes civil society (NGOs) as an independent development partner in its right, working within national policies and towards poverty reduction, tackling inequality and the commitment made by governments to develop policy space and an enabling environment for the formation and operation of civil society organizations (NGOs);
- Government to respect and uphold the civic rights of students within tertiary institutions as there is shrinking academic space within tertiary institutions with student leaders being arrested among other violations;
- Government to uphold section 20 of the constitution which mandates it among other things to ensure that youth have opportunities to [associate] and to be [represented] and [participate] and are protected from harmful exploitation and all forms of abuse – the current political rhetoric labeling them as hooligans and terrorists is disheartening; and for
- Government to prioritize implementing the recommendations from the Mothlante Commission of Inquiry into the August 1 Killings that relate to freedoms to association and assembly.

NAYO remains committed to sustaining efforts towards a peaceful nation and a full participation of young women and men in development processes. We recognise that in order to achieve this goal, the primacy of youth is cardinal and we will support ongoing initiatives by other stakeholders including government.

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