

Press Statement: Workers Day – May 1, 2024

The date 1st of May is not just a holiday, it is a day of celebration and recognition of the hardworking men and women who form the backbone of our nation. On this International Workers' Day, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) joins the nation in honouring the contributions of our workforce.

The Commission acknowledges the strides that have been realised across various sectors and applauds efforts by Government, Development Partners and communities in ensuring the levelling of gaps that may be a result of the gender divide. On this Workers' Day therefore, we call upon everyone involved in engaging with the labour sector at multiple levels to reflect on prevailing context and to put in place strategies to promote gender equality.

CALL TO ACTION

The Commission particularly implores government, employers and labours and those in positions of influence and authority in various workplaces to take cognisance of the following:

➤ **Equal Opportunities for Women in the Workplace**

As we commemorate this day, the ZGC emphasizes the importance of equal opportunities, equal pay for work of equal value for all workers, male or female. While strides have been made in advancing workers' rights, structural barriers that hinder women's advancement still require redress, particularly in male-dominated fields. We call upon employers to actively promote gender equality by providing equal access to training, promotions, and leadership roles.

➤ **Workplaces free from violence and harassment**

Sexual harassment, particularly of women and young girls remains a leading cause for concern. Contrary to popular opinion that the scourge only affects the individuals concerned, the scourge has institutional and national repercussions as qualified workers are pushed out, productivity is compromised and economic growth is suppressed. The investment made in training workers needs to be protected by ensuring all workplaces are free from sexual harassment. Institutional policies and a sexual harassment act are therefore imperative.

➤ **Maternity/parental benefits**

The Commission has taken note of employers' failure to provide adequate paternity leave benefits, a critical issue that disproportionately affects women in the workforce. Recognizing the importance of maternity leave in ensuring the well-being of mothers and newborns, as well as securing the future of the nation, the Commission urges employers to prioritize the payment of maternity benefits to women during their leave period. This is not only essential for supporting working mothers but also for promoting gender equality and safeguarding the health and rights of women in the workplace.

➤ **Recognizing Unpaid and Domestic Care Work**

The ZGC also acknowledges the invaluable role of unpaid care and domestic work, predominantly undertaken by women. This essential labour, encompassing childcare, housework, and elderly care, sustains families and communities. However, it often goes unrecognized and undervalued. We advocate for the acknowledgment and support of unpaid care and domestic work, including the exploration of policies that reduce, recognise, represent, redistribute and reward this responsibility more equitably.

➤ **Workers: Key to Vision 2030**

Furthermore, the ZGC recognizes that a skilled and empowered workforce is essential for realizing Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 of becoming an upper-middle-income economy. We urge stakeholders to collaborate in creating dignified work environments that foster innovation, productivity, and respect for workers' rights.

The ZGC's Commitment

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission remains steadfast in advocating for policies that promote gender equality and non-discrimination in the workplace, raising awareness of the value of unpaid care and domestic work and supporting initiatives that empower workers and contribute to a thriving economy.

Together, let us celebrate the invaluable contributions of all workers and strive towards a future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

For Gender Equality

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