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**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY**

**HONOURABLE F.M. SHAVA**

**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE,**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE**

**HIGH LEVEL FOLLOW UP**

**COMMONWEALTH MISSION**

**LED BY THE**

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL,**

**PROFESSOR LUIS G. FRANCESCHI:**

**12 TO 18 NOVEMBER 2022**

**Introductory Remarks**

1. Professor Luis G. Franceschi, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to Zimbabwe. Thank you for conducting this assessment visit in spite of your busy schedule. We look forward to fruitful engagements with you and your team in our quest to re-join the Commonwealth. I wish to re-affirm Zimbabwe’s determined objective to re-join the Commonwealth.
2. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Baroness Scotland, on her re-appointment as Commonwealth Secretary-General. Her re-appointment is testimony to the confidence that the Commonwealth family has in her leadership skills. We look forward to continuing to work with her closely in the membership process.
3. I am pleased to inform you that since the last Commonwealth Assessment Mission in July 2019, Government has made significant strides in the implementation of our reform agenda, as well as in meeting the five expectations that are critical to our re-admission into the Commonwealth.
4. I am aware that an update on our reform agenda is necessary to enable you to finalise your report on the informal consultations and as a result, my colleague Ministers here present, will furnish you with the details of progress made in each critical area of the reform agenda. Let me to emphasize however, that this reform Agenda was initiated by Government to, first and foremost, improve the lives and livelihoods of the Zimbabwean citizens in line with our Vision of achieving an Upper-Middle Income Society by 2030.
5. Vision 2030 prioritises the reorientation of the country towards democratisation; respect for human and property rights; freedom of expression and association; the rule of law as well as addressing economic challenges.
6. In that regard, under our National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), for the period 2021 to 2025, Government is striving to build on the successes of the Transitional Stabilisation Programme to ensure macro-economic stability and growth.
7. Notable achievements have also been witnessed since the inception of the political dialogue, notably the acceptance and endorsement of POLAD by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN), as a worthwhile and timely intervention in promoting peace, unity, social cohesion and dialogue. Further, POLAD has played an active role in promoting economic, social and governance issues at national level.
8. To date, Government has made tremendous strides in enhancing civil and political rights of its citizens. There has been tremendous progress in the alignment of laws to the Constitution. Suffice to note that statutes that relate to human rights are being given priority in this process.
9. Regarding the amendment of the Electoral Act, consultations are being held and most of the recommendations from the Electoral Observation Mission have been incorporated.

**Conclusion**

1. Professor Franceschi, let me conclude by underscoring that Zimbabwe’s wish to re-join the Commonwealth is premised on our desire to play a meaningful role in the community of nations, open new frontiers of growth and development, and rekindle relationships with erstwhile friends.
2. It is, therefore, Zimbabwe’s hope that our interest to re-join the Commonwealth will be considered on its merits, taking into consideration the tremendous progress that has been achieved to date. We look forward to fruitful discussions and a favourable outcome of our deliberations, which should take us to the next stage in the membership process.

I thank you and invite you to make your preliminary remarks.

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