



13 February 2010

**STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE
GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY**

On 13 February 2010 nation will mark the first anniversary of the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU). This year's commemoration comes amid growing concerns over the Inclusive Government's failure to abide by the provisions of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and its apparent inability to address the social, political and economic crisis still facing the country.

In the Preamble to the G P A the parties expressed their concern *"about the recent challenges that we have faced as a country and the multiple threats to the well-being of our people and therefore determined to resolve these permanently"*. More importantly, in article 2 of the agreement the principles agreed *"to work together to create a genuine, viable, permanent, sustainable and nationally acceptable solution to the Zimbabwe situation and in particular to implement the (following) agreement with the aims of resolving once and for all the current political and economic situations and charting a new political direction for the country."* Although the GPA did not truly reflect the will of the people, which is best articulated in an election, it was seen as a potential solution to the political and economic impasse, based on the assumption that the parties would honour the terms to which they had all signed and that it would bring an end to the political violence prevalent at the time.

A year following the creation of the GNU, many of the challenges that faced the country and the multiple threats to the well being of the people of Zimbabwe still exist. The continued

power struggle between the main political parties over “*outstanding issues*” challenges their commitment to putting the people and country first. This bickering has also affected progress in possibly the largest deliverable that the GPA undertook, namely the drafting of a new constitution. The process has already fallen behind the ambitious time lines outlined in Article 6 of the GPA. The Forum also remains concerned with the suppression of freedom of expression and association as demonstrated by the arrests and harassment of members of civic groups, the continued victimization, intimidation and abductions of political activists and human rights defenders, the unabated violation of property rights on commercial farms, the disregard of court orders and the continued blocking of official visits by members of the international community invited to verify the human rights situation in the country.

It should however be noted that there have been slight improvements in the progressive realisation of socio-economic rights with the introduction of a stable currency in the economy. Basic commodities are now available in the shops and the provision of some social services has also improved but at a premium. However a large portion of those employed still live well below the poverty datum line. The GNU has also brought about a reduction in cases of overt violence, including a decrease in the cases of politically motivated torture, assaults, arrests, abductions, murders, internal displacements and incidences of unlawful arrests as compared to the period prior to the GNU. However much needs to be done to ensure that durable peace and the rule of law are restored.

The Forum remains extremely concerned at the slow pace at which the GPA is being implemented and the apparent inability of SADC to influence the parties to honour their original commitment to implement the provisions of the GPA. The Forum implores the GNU to address these as a matter of urgency and “*resolve once and for all the current political and economic situations and charter a new political direction for the country*” which will also ensure justice for the victims of past political violence and foster true national healing and reconciliation.

Ends//