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Mr President,

New Zealand welcomes the participation of Zimbabwe in the 26th session of the Universal Periodic Review. There have been encouraging developments in the strengthening of Zimbabwe’s legislative framework, including the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Protocol; the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. New Zealand **recommends** that Zimbabwe ratify the Convention against Torture and the Second Optional Protocol for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

We are concerned at the use of excessive force by government security forces, the rising number of political prisoners, and arbitrary arrests of human rights defenders who participate in public demonstrations. New Zealand calls on Zimbabwe to ensure the right to the freedom of expression is respected, and support an open political space. New Zealand also **recommends** that the government repeal and amend legislation that infringes on these rights in line with Zimbabwe’s international obligations and constitution, such as the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, and the Public Order and Security Act.

We call on Zimbabwe to meets its international obligations and respect the Constitution, particularly in regard to the protection of political activists and journalists from harassment, arbitrary arrests and detention. New Zealand **recommends** that Zimbabwe ensures all individuals who have been detained and charged with an offense are given a fair and impartial trial, while ensuring the independence of the judiciary.

New Zealand furthermore **recommends** that Zimbabwe enhance social protection to ensure the delivery of food assistance and address malnutrition, and recommends the government allow the unimpeded ability of humanitarian agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance, including food aid, to all parts of the country.

Thank you Mr President.