**STATEMENT BY ZIMBABWE DURING THE 3RD CYCLE UPR OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO: 2 MAY 2017**

Thank you Mr President,

Zimbabwe welcomes the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco to the country’s 3rd cycle UPR and thanks them for their report. The fact that the country submitted a midterm report in 2014 is a testimony to its commitment to the UPR process.

Since its last review, Morocco has made significant strides in a number of areas. These include the consolidation of sectoral policies on human rights such as the plan for gender equality, integrated public policy on child protection, national integrated strategy for youth and integrated public policy for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The country has taken measures to enhance the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights. These include combating poverty, vulnerability and social inequality, ensuring fairness, equality and quality in health care services and improving school enrolment ratios for children of 6 to 11 years of age and girls in rural areas.

During the period under review, Morocco consolidated its cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms. For instance, it played host to four Special Procedures mandate holders and presented national reports to five Treaty Bodies. The country also acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

My delegation is disheartened by the lack of reference in Morocco’s national report to the reported undesirable human rights and humanitarian situation in Western Sahara. As a starting point in efforts to improve the situation in the territory, we recommend that Morocco:

* Enables the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with international law, through the holding of a free, open and democratic referendum under the auspices of the UN; and
* Undertake to fully cooperate with the UN and, in particular, the Secretary General’s Special Envoy for Western Sahara.

I thank you, Mr President.