**STATEMENT BY ZIMBABWE ON THE OCCASSION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA: 16 MAY 2018**

Thank you Mr. President,

My delegation welcomes and thanks the delegation of the Republic of Cuba for their national report, which mainly focuses on the implementation of the recommendations that were accepted by the country during its second cycle review.

In spite of the difficult environment mainly caused by the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America, Cuba has continued to make progress in the pursuance of its model of economic and social development.

The Government of Cuba is implementing a number of strategies and policies aimed at protecting the rights of the vulnerable populations, including the National Plan of Action for Children, special social services and assistance programmes to cater for the needs of older persons and the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities.

The Government also continues to provide free, universal health and education coverage. In addition, to its credit, Cuba has provided technical assistance in these two areas to many developing countries in the form of expatriate personnel and training in its tertiary institutions.

My delegation recommends that Cuba:

* Continues to strengthen the legal and institutional frameworks for the promotion and protection of human rights; and
* Continues to implement a gender perspective in its national policies aimed at achieving equality for women.

I thank you, Mr. President