STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 69 ENTITLED "HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION AND PROTECTION".

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his reports that he submitted under this agenda item and take note of them. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Fiji on behalf of the G77 and China. Allow me to highlight Zimbabwe’s national perspectives on the question of human rights promotion and protection.

Mr. Chairman,

Zimbabwe remains fully committed not only to the promotion and protection of human rights but also to their realization by its citizens. Knowing fully well that it has this responsibility, the Government of Zimbabwe has put in place various independent institutions, constitutional safeguards and policy frameworks that are aimed at protecting and promoting the human rights of its citizens. Our commitment to the promotion, protection and realization of human rights was born out of a protracted struggle by our people for independence, liberty, dignity and freedom. Zimbabwe’s people-driven new constitution comprehensively guarantees people’s human rights, including all the economic, social and cultural rights.

Mr. Chairman,

In an effort to promote the economic rights of its citizens, the Government of Zimbabwe has undertaken various measures in this regard and these include the land reform programme and Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment policy. These empowerment programmes seek to lift our people out of poverty through facilitating and enhancing their access to means of production and greater participation in the country’s mainstream economy. However, the Government’s efforts to promote its citizens’ economic well-being are being frustrated and impeded by the economic sanctions that were imposed on Zimbabwe by some Western countries. We reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional lifting of these illegal sanctions.
reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional lifting of these illegal sanctions.

Mr. Chairman,

Even though human rights have become widely debated, we should be mindful of the fact that the promotion and protection of these rights is first and foremost the sovereign responsibility of states. The international community can only assist and this should be done at the request of the concerned country. We share the view that every country has autonomy to independently determine its own human rights policy within the scope of its sovereign prerogatives. Likewise, we firmly believe that human rights can only be realized and protected in a sovereign country and that in the absence of sovereignty, a country cannot have the ability and means to protect the human rights of its citizens. Our country is not beyond outside foreign assistance to realize these rights, but we reserve the right to ask for this as a sovereign state.

Mr. Chairman,

Zimbabwe reiterates its rejection of the exploitation of human rights in order to use them as cover to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states. We believe that no country has the moral authority to condemn others’ human rights challenges and that doing so constitutes meddling in the internal affairs of sovereign states. We also condemn the use of human rights as a form of propaganda or a political tool to vilify other countries and to pursue selfish interests which are detrimental to the national interests of the targeted state. Zimbabwe is of the view that the most ideal path for the promotion and protection of human rights is constructive dialogue and genuine cooperation that is based on principles of respect of state sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, non-selectivity and impartiality.

Mr. Chairman,

Zimbabwe notes with deep concern the growing expansion of human rights well beyond those originally crafted and worse still, without the concurrence of Member States. Equally of concern to Zimbabwe are growing attempts to twist the language in various human rights law instruments far beyond the meaning intended by the original drafters as well as the countries that have
ratified them. We also reject attempts to reinterpret existing human rights law instruments in order to promote new classes of rights that have no international legal standing. Furthermore, Zimbabwe notes with great concern the growing scenario whereby human rights mechanisms of the United Nations are falling prey to the influence of some international human rights movements that are supported and well-funded by pressure groups whose interests are at complete variance with those of the great majority of people particularly those in the developing world. Such developments undermine the legitimacy of those human rights mechanisms. We reject this new imperialism of new slates of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Zimbabwe would like to reiterate its firm belief that all human rights, including the right to development, are indivisible, interrelated equal and interdependent. We express deep concern at the woefully inadequate attention being devoted by this Committee to enhancing the economic, social and cultural rights of people. We underscore the need for a connection between the work of this Committee and the needs of our people especially the poor and their communities which are plagued by poverty, unemployment, disease, crime and despair. It is time that this Committee makes a case for the right to economic development and prosperity of all people in order to help them become productive and self-reliant. If the boundless energy that this Committee exhibits in promoting civil and political rights would be replicated in the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights, we could make tremendous contributions towards uplifting the wellbeing of our people.

Mr. Chairman,

To this end, Zimbabwe underscores the need to put economic, social and cultural rights at par with civil and political rights in terms of both commitment and efforts. We should like to make it very clear that putting economic, social and cultural rights at par with civil and political rights does not in any way undermine the individual rights of people as we are made to believe by some among us. We remain steadfast in our belief that economic rights are human rights and an essential ingredient of human welfare. If civil and political rights such as the right to life, liberty and property are inalienable, then economic freedom and its derived rights also certainly belong in the sacred pantheon of natural rights.
Mr. Chairman,

International efforts to promote and protect human rights must uphold people’s rights to culture by paying special attention to the cultural specificities of people in different parts of the world. We base this call on the fact that the world over, people are not culture-blind. It is our firm view that the promotion of human rights should in no way lead to a decline of multiculturalism. It is our understanding that in human rights law, the right of an individual to enjoy his or her culture and to advance that culture is a human right and also that the right to culture is vital for the celebration and protection of human kind’s traditions and creativity. We must also be mindful that under international human rights law, Governments have the primary obligation to promote and preserve the cultural values of their citizens.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, Zimbabwe would like to once again reaffirm its commitment to the promotion, protection and realization of all the human rights of its citizens. This commitment arises from the realization by the Government of Zimbabwe that it is its responsibility to do so. We will not apportion this responsibility to anybody else except ourselves. However, we welcome international cooperation in these realms.

I thank you.