

The New Age Voices

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Amplifying youth voices

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Constitution Conference: Youth re-affirms position

By Staff Writer

Young people took their constitution fight to the COPAC second All Stakeholders Conference that ended on Tuesday as they sought to assert their position in the draft constitution that was prepared by the constitutional body.

Youth say that although the constitution has managed to progressively capture the youth issues in a progressive way, there are some grey areas that need attention if the constitution is to effectively address all youth concerns.

The youth say that the constitution in its current form failed to promote the effective participation of

young people as well as to ensure that they assume positions of leadership. The draft constitution states that “young people have to be represented” a term which they say is subjective and fails to appreciate that young people can effectively represent themselves and others.

Young people came up with a position paper at the civil society stakeholders conference that was organised by Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition and National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) that was meant to interrogate the draft constitution and develop a communiqué that CSOs took to the COPAC All Stakeholders Conference.

The Youth proposed that:

There be a quarter system for youth that guarantees them representation in all positions of leadership. 50 percent representation was unanimously agreed.

There is a need for a deliberate effort to empower young people. This provision should be clearly stated in the constitution.

A youth Commission must be established to forward the concerns of young people in Zimbabwe.

The constitution fails to promote the effective representation of young women in the positions of leadership hence at least 50 % of the 60 seats reserved for women should be meant for young

women and that issues of reproductive health be stated clearly so as to protect young women.

The youth said in as much as they did not actively participate in the consultative stage due to the nature and form of the consultation process, the draft constitution presented some opportunities that the youth should take advantage of.

Young people said that unlike other groups like women and the disabled, the youth are not mentioned in the Bill of rights and called for the unconditional inclusion of the young people’s issues in the Bill of Rights which can be easily claimed in a court of law which should also include the integration of social and economic rights.

Dark cloud hangs over Zim elections

By Francis Rwodzi

As I walked travelled through Mbare two Saturdays ago, I was met with faces of young boys who faces are charred with knife cuts spotting green, red and yellow bandanas singing war songs heading to the Mbare open area situated after the bus terminus where there was a Zanu PF rally was being held. The mood was tense and as usual, the Mbare vegetable and Mupedzanhamo markets were deserted while youth commandeered passersby to the rally. By the time Vice President Joyce Mujuru arrived at the venue it was packed and the old ladies band, Mbare Chimurenga choir was entertaining the crowd. Among the Zanu PF leadership present, Hubert Nyanhongo who is the party’s legislator for Harare South and also famed for his penchant for violence was among the VIP list which also included flamboyant businessman and fallen politician Phillip Chiyangwa.

The messages at the rally were clear, that elections are looming and that people should be prepared to go for polls. The question that many continue to ask in the kombis, beer halls, market stalls and many other meeting places is when are the elections going to be held?

Tricky as the question may be considering the nature of Zimbabwean politics, but we are sure that

between March and September 2013, Zimbabweans will once again be gripped with the euphoria and anxiety that has always been associated with the holding of elections since the year 2000.

However, of great concern to many is that while the politicians continue to fight over when and how elections should be held, there has been deafening silence over the fate and involvement of key determinants of that election, the youth.

The June 2008 elections will remain the darkest period in the history of elections in Zimbabwe when hundreds of youth were murdered, thousands others were left without limbs while others were raped, maimed and dehumanized by youth militia sponsored by the then ruling elite of the country.

The aftermath of the election was a painful compromise between the 3 feuding parties that gave birth to the infamous Global Political Agreement (GPA). Among other key reforms, the Inclusive government born out of the agreement committed to ensuring that there will be healing of those who were affected by the violence through an organ called National Healing and Reconciliation.

The organ was expected to bring together those who perpetrated violence and the victims together so that the former would compensate the later for the evil deeds that they committed. The Organ has to a larger extent failed to heal the wounds of those



Will billboards such as these dominant the 2013 elections? Only time will tell

shattered by the 2008 election mainly because of its composition. The youth in Zimbabwe today stand out as a generation that has been used, abused and dumped and is waiting to be reused again by unrepentant politicians who do not think beyond tomorrow because to them their tomorrow is today.

As politicians reflect on the impending elections, it is easy to see the excitement that has gripped them

because they know that they have ready young people to use to beat up their mothers and fathers. They are not worried about the consequences of getting into an election that does not have mechanisms that protect young people because they are not young. The 2013 elections therefore remains the Red Sea for the youth in Zimbabwe and they just have two options, either sink or swim.

Resolutions of the Civil Society Leaders Constitution Conference

We, Civil Society Organisations, meeting under the banner of the Constitutional Coordination Mechanism, at Pandhari Lodge from the 18th – 19th of October, have deliberated on the COPAC Draft Constitution and plans for the 2nd All Stakeholders Conference, with the view of coming up with coordinated and common positions on the conference and coming up with minimum standards, building consensus, and agreeing on key issues, strategies and of areas of engagement with COPAC.

NOTING – The value and importance of a constitution to our country, wherein the country is faced with the 2nd All Stakeholders Conference, and asserting our devotion to the finalisation of the constitution making process as captured by our conference theme “**OUR COUNTRY, OUR INPUT, OUR CONSTITUTION**”

AWARE – of our diversity as Civil Society organisations and the different approaches within CSOs with regards the process, but affirming our commitment to a coordinated and common approach

MINDFUL – Of the absence of a clear defined framework for CSOs participation in the Constitution making Process generally, and the confusion around same on the 2nd Stakeholders Conference specifically,

Mindful of the continued inflexibility of political parties represented in the COPAC process, and the rebuffed moves by COPAC and Political parties to accredit Civil Society Delegates and Monitors to the 2nd All Stakeholders Conference under the auspices of Political Parties,

Acknowledging – The progressive nature of the draft in terms of the human rights bill and the capability of the draft to promote and protect human rights through judicial independence, separation of powers, recognition of the rule of law

REALISING – That our lived realities as citizens of Zimbabwe are different, that a constitution should speak to these lived realities, and noting that the draft in its current form has taken giant steps in addressing such through the participation of women, protection of women’s rights,

COGNISANT – Of the inclusion of economic and social rights in the draft and that these rights can impact positively on the quality of life of citizens through the justice-ability of such

Further, make the following resolutions:

1. That the draft, in its current form, is a progressive document that has more positives than negatives, and can be acceptable in comparison with the Lancaster House Constitution.

2. That in spite of the foregoing, and in noting that it is not a perfect document, we will continue to fight for the drafts improvement at the 2nd All Stakeholders Conference and following process, including after or if it is accepted as the principal law of the country.

3. That in furthering point 1 and 2 above, Civil Society will participate at the 2nd All Stakeholders Conference, but not under the ambit of political parties

4. That as CSOs, we will celebrate our diversity, and will work towards harnessing our diversity for the realisation of a coordinated, common and united approach.

5. That we commit ourselves to our role as genuine players, stakeholders and watch dogs in the affairs of our country, in a non-partisan manner for the national interest of Zimbabwe.

6. That we commit ourselves to the building of a genuine, broad based, seen, felt, heard and inclusive leadership of CSOs in order to facilitate meaningful coordination among ourselves and Zimbabweans on key democratic processes.

7. We Re-affirm our desire for Collective activism and broad based strategies on key democratic processes and issues.

8. We will embark on a massive education campaign, and popularise the Draft Constitution in all indigenous lan-

guages, for the benefit of all Zimbabweans, and the promotion of a meaningful national debate on the same.

9. That we continue to be bound by our democratic values and commitment to universalism of human rights in the country

10. That from the 2nd All Stakeholders Conference going forward, we commit to doing all we can to safe guard the gains that have been seen through the Current Draft Constitution, without forgetting our commitment on the other hand, as expressed in 2 above.

WE **reiterate** that the COPAC draft as currently written is good but not perfect, and deserves the support and defense of well-meaning Zimbabweans.

We **state** that because of the above, we see the COPAC Draft Constitution, should it receive a yes vote at the Referendum, as a useful document and charter in as far as taking forward an agenda for democratisation and transformation of our country, as well as facilitating a transition to the same.

That because of the foregoing, the completion of the COPAC Process is not the end of the discourse around constitutional reform and by no means closes this chapter, as we strive for change and improvement as a nation.