



NATIONAL TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE WORKING GROUP ZIMBABWE

NTJWG Statement on International Day of Peace Confronting New Barriers to Peace

“Today peace faces a new danger: the climate emergency, which threatens our security, our livelihoods and our lives.” UN Secretary-General António Guterre

The NTJWG join the rest of the world in commemorating the International of Peace. Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on 21 September. The General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.

The United Nations Member States adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 in a drive to ensure that a peaceful world is based economic and social development for all people everywhere, and ensure that their rights were protected. The Sustainable Goals cover a broad range of issues, including poverty, hunger, health, education, climate change, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, environment and social justice.



Sustainable Development Goal 13 “Climate Action ” is a call for immediate action by all to lower greenhouse emissions, deforestation, and natural disasters, build resilience and improve education on climate change. Affordable, scalable solutions such as renewable energy, clean technologies are available to enable countries to adopt greener, efficient and more resilient economies.

This year’s theme 2019 Theme: “Climate Action for Peace” resonates well with the effects of climate change in Southern Africa. Tropical Cyclone Idai swept through and made landfall during the night of 14 to 15 March 2019 near Beira City, Sofala Province, in central Mozambique. The cyclone brought torrential rains and winds to Sofala, Zambezia, Manica and Inhambane provinces. Even though warnings were issued, Governments in the region did not do enough to evacuate people. The strength of the storm gained more strength as it crossed land. However, it continued to bring strong winds and heavy rains as it made its way across central Mozambique and into eastern Zimbabwe. Southern Malawi received heavy rains in the days prior to the cyclone landfall.

Most parts of the Eastern Highlands in Zimbabwe and Central Mozambique were severely affected by the cyclone. Close three million people were affected by the floods and caused at least 678 deaths in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In Malawi, about 868,900 people have been impacted, with 59 deaths and 672 injuries recorded , according to the government. Nearly 87,000 people are estimated to be displaced. While rapid needs assessments have been conducted in Nsanje and Phalombe districts, they continue in Machinga, Mangochi and Zomba to verify initial estimates and determine the total number of people in need of immediate humanitarian assistance. In Mozambique, about 1.85 million people have been affected, with at least 447 deaths. Nearly 129,000 people have been accommodated in 143 sites across Sofala (103 sites), Manica (26 sites), Zambezia (10 sites) and Tete (4 sites), as of 25 March, 2019. Health and education facilities have suffered significant damage, with more than 3,100 classrooms and 45 health centres impacted. Some 72,260 houses have been totally destroyed , partially destroyed or flooded, according to Government reports (2019). In addition, more than 474,150 hectares of crops have been damaged , which will impact food security in the months ahead, particularly as the losses coincide with the annual harvest period.

In Zimbabwe, at least 172 deaths have been reported, more than 186 people have been injured and 327 are missing, according to the Government (2019). In Chimanimani and Chipinge districts, at least half of the total population has been impacted, according to the preliminary findings of an inter-sector assessment mission which confirmed significant damage. At least 16,000 households need shelter assistance in Chimanimani, Mutare, Chipinge and Buhera, according to the Government (2019).

Humanitarian response is ongoing in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, led by the respective governments. However, significant response challenges remain, as heavy rains have damaged roads and main access bridges have been washed away. The theme draws attention to the importance of combatting climate change as a way to protect and promote peace throughout the world. As history has taught us displacements, water scarcity, hunger and other calamities caused by climate change ignite and drive conflicts. The damage left by Cyclone Idai will be stuck in our memories for a long time and this raise new questions along reparations, redress, promotion and protection of human rights in Zimbabwe and the region.

Climate change causes clear threats to international peace and security. Natural disasters displace three times as many people as conflicts, forcing millions to leave their homes and seek safety elsewhere. The salinization of water and crops is endangering food security, and the impact on public health is escalating. The growing tensions over resources and mass movements of people are affecting every country on every continent.

Peace can only be achieved if concrete action is taken to combat climate change. Speaking to young Māoris and people of the Pacific islands in New Zealand in May, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said “nature does not negotiate” and emphasized four key measures that Governments should prioritize in order to reach carbon neutrality by 2050: tax pollution, not people; stop subsidizing fossil fuels; stop building new coal plants by 2020; focus on a green economy, not a grey economy.

The NTJWG commends the UN for calling for a Summit on 23 September, 2019 on ‘Climate Action’ to discuss concrete and adopt realistic plans to accelerate action to implement the Paris Agreement. The Summit will focus on the heart of the problem – the sectors that create the most emissions and the areas where building resilience could make the biggest difference – as well as provide leaders and partners the opportunity to demonstrate real climate action and showcase their ambition. This is commendable.

In the lead up to the International Day of Peace on 21 September, the NTJWG calls upon everyone to take action to tackle climate change. Every human is part of the solution - from turning off the lights to taking public transport, to organizing an awareness raising campaign in your community, matters.

“It is possible to achieve our goals, but we need decisions, political will and transformational policies to allow us to still live in peace with our own climate.” -Secretary-General António Guterres (15 May, 2019).

What needs be done?

The NTJWG calls on everyone across the globe to confront the new barriers to peace. Climate challenge is an existential threat to every human being. The NTJWG calls on all people to take action on climate change in their homes, schools and communities. Small things such as raising awareness, running educational programmes, promoting sustainable lifestyles, planting trees, conserving nature, supporting renewable energy, adopting environmentally-friendly practices and implementing adaptation and mitigation projects can be done to combat climate change.

The Working Group represents an emergency and calls for bold and creative steps from the human rights community, radical, robust and coordinated approaches to tackle it. The NTJWG believes that we should take it upon ourselves to confront new barriers to peace for present and future generations. The time for ACTION is now.