STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

10 DECEMBER 2013

The Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) joins the world in commemorating the International Human Rights Day. As the world continues to strive for a world where human rights are a reality, ZADHR remains resolute in its fight for the realisation of the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health for all Zimbabweans.

International Human Rights Day 2013 marks 20 years of the existence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In recognition of the commendable work of the OHCHR, ZADHR seizes the opportunity to remind the Government of Zimbabwe that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and should be given equal precedence. The right to health and all other human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis given to all rights in the new constitution of Zimbabwe.

The International Human Rights Day is, therefore, an opportunity for the government and all stakeholders to come together to evaluate and appraise each other on the challenges facing the health sector and come up with strategies to improve healthcare provision. The year 2013 saw the adoption of a new constitution in which the right to healthcare is provided for at Section 76 and the right to food and water which is guaranteed at Section 77. However, it must be emphasized that the mere inclusion of human rights in the new constitution is of no consequence if the rights are not given priority and in the absence of political will and commitment towards fulfillment and realisation of such rights. It is therefore imperative for the Government of Zimbabwe to realign the Health Services Act, the Public Health Act and the Medical Services Act with the new constitution. ZADHR therefore calls for increased cooperation between the government, civil society, business and other stakeholders in the fight for the right to health. The right to health like all other human rights underpins human dignity and human existence.

On this day, ZADHR also calls upon the Government of Zimbabwe to fully capacitate and functionalize the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission in order to enable Zimbabwean citizens to get speedy remedies in the event of violations of their fundamental freedoms and liberties.

Lastly, ZADHR also seizes this occasion to mourn the passing on of human rights icon, President Nelson Mandela. In his immortal words, “Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity; it is an act of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.” Let us blossom together as Zimbabweans, let us fight against poverty and let us fight for the realization of the right to health together henceforth.