



**SPEECH**

**BY**

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE,  
HIS EXCELLENCY,  
DR. E. D. MNANGAGWA**

**AT**

**THE REGIONAL WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY COMMEMORATIONS**

**VICTORIA FALLS**

**16 NOVEMBER 2024**

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr. H. Hichilema;

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Botswana, Adv. D. G. Boko;

The President of the Republic of Namibia, Represented by the Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. J. Mutorwa;

Representative of Heads of State and Government of the Republic of Malawi, the Republic of Mozambique and the Republic of South Africa;

The First Lady of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Amai A. Mnangagwa;

Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Hon. Gen. (Rtd) Dr. C. G. D. N. Chiwenga;

Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Matabeleland North Province, Hon. R. Moyo;

Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Hon. J. G. Moyo;

Other Honourable Ministers here present;

Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet,

Dr. M. Rushwaya;

Senior Government Officials;

The Regional Director UNICEF, Ms. E. Kadilli;

Distinguished Delegates;

Esteemed Children;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On 20 November, each year, the world unites to recognise World Children's Day, which commemorates the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This day is a powerful reminder of our collective responsibility to uphold the rights and welfare of our children across.

Zimbabwe is particularly honoured to host these celebrations, here at the scenic City of the majestic Victoria Falls.

I wish to warmly welcome you all, children and leaders

rs, as we celebrate with our children, the **2024 Regional World Children's Day**. Special greetings are extended to fellow SADC countries who are participating in this event for the first time.

Your presence today signifies the long-standing, excellent fraternal relations and solidarity within our region, cutting across all spheres. We look forward to hearing from a broader cross-section of voices of our children as they present their views, perspectives and recommendations, consolidated in their Call to Action.

To our dear colleague, His Excellency, Advocate Duma Gideon Boko, we are delighted to have you with us. I also wish to once again congratulate you on your election to the esteemed office of President to your great country, the Republic of Botswana.

This gathering is a testament to our shared dedicati

on to children's rights and their right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

### **Your Excellencies;**

This weekend has seen our children exposed to new experiences and the opportunity to engage in life-changing dialogue on crucial issues that affect their future.

The childrens' voices on aspects to do with quality education, inclusivity, protection of their rights as well as climate change, must never be silenced.

As we engage within our communities, schools and indeed at this level, we must always remain alive to our rich African heritage and the aspirations of our respective nations, and the continent as a whole. I call upon you, our children, to be proud of your African identity and belonging to the Southern African region.

Always know that, although you come from different countries within the SADC region, we are all one united people, with a shared history, which is cemented by the liberation struggles that brought about independence and freedom. We have a common future as we strive for sustainable economic growth, industrialisation, modernisation as well as peace and security, social justice and freedom.

The theme for this year's celebrations: ***"Educate and Skill the African Child for Posterity,"*** dovetails with the African Union's declaration of 2024 as the year of Education. Focus is on educating an African fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To achieve this, it is critically important that we scale up the establishment of resilient education systems with increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning for the children and young people of our continent.

This noble aspiration entails that all of us, leaders an

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d stakeholders alike, have an obligation to empower our children and young people with heritage-based knowledge and skills they will need to realise the Africa we all want.

I wish to appreciate the partnership between UNICEF and other UN agencies as well as our respective Governments in promoting dialogue.

Our coordinated efforts create an enabling environment that will undoubtedly result in children and young people of Africa, who are “fit for the future”.

You may recall that, during last year’s celebrations held in Namibia, the children presented a Call to Action, which amplified calls on the need for us to improve the quality and content of education in a rapidly evolving world. It is my sincere hope that we are implementing some of their perspectives and critical issues they raised within our national programmes.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

In the SADC region, most issues affecting children are cross-cutting. We need to strengthen instruments on child protection in order to address gaps and set specific measurable targets to achieve greater results. SADC stakeholders are challenged to broaden mechanisms for collaborating around transboundary matters affecting our children.

Considerations must be made to establish a **SADC Protocol on Children's Rights** to strengthen instruments on child protection.

On its part, Zimbabwe remains committed to enhancing the rights of children. Specifically with regards to education, all children have a right to be in school despite their location, race, parental status, disability and gender, among others.

We have transitioned to Education 5.0, which nurtur



es creativity, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship, anchored by science, technology and innovation. Education assistance is provided to vulnerable children, including those with disabilities and orphans.

In the aftermath of the El-Nino induced drought, Government launched a school feeding programme in schools in both rural and urban areas, where communities were at risk of food and nutrition insecurity.

Civil society organisations and community-based groups, including the Angel of Hope Foundation, whose patron is the First Lady of Zimbabwe, Dr Auxillia Mangagwa, have proved invaluable partners in our quest to meet the needs of our children and guarantee their moral upbringing, **Hunhu/Ubuntu**.

As we scale up activities, guided by this year's theme, our children must be taught that a country is built, governed and prayed for by its people. You, our chil

Children, must grow up knowing that you have the duty to build, develop and industrialise your countries, our SADC region, the continent and finally the world at large. Never look down upon yourselves. You are well able to stand shoulder to shoulder with any other children from across the world. This is the mindset that must take root within you for posterity.

Arts, culture and heritage, along with our unique natural resources and tourism endowments are critical parts of our identity.

These possess a remarkable ability to foster inclusive societies, enhance economic development, and propel social transformation. Let us, therefore, promote and consume our unique products and image.

By the same token, we call upon you our children to participate and excel in a wider array of sporting disciplines, both competitively and as recreation.

Us your leaders and stakeholders equally recognise the importance of accessible and affordable health services to your welfare.

Access to safe, reliable potable water is a priority that will undoubtedly enhance the quality of life of our children. More so in the wake of climate change induced droughts and natural disasters. In the case of Zimbabwe, we launched the Presidential Borehole Drilling Scheme, which aims to drill boreholes in each of the country's 35 000 villages and 10 000 schools, to mitigate climate change, while also promoting rural development and industrialisation.

My Government established Victim-Friendly Units and Child-Friendly Courts to promote access to justice by our children. This has seen the launch of the Pre-Trial Diversion Programme for children who are in conflict with the law.

## **Esteemed Delegates;**

Zimbabwe is progressively strengthening refugee protection. At the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, my Government pledged to support the Global Compact on Refugees. To this end, over 16 000 refugees and asylum seekers, including children, are being provided with protection and basic social services.

Further, we have put in place measures to prevent instances of statelessness, particularly for refugees whose rights to identity are upheld through the facilitation of birth registration to ensure access to services as espoused in the Constitution.

Regrettably, the scourge of drug and substance abuse, continues to threaten the future and education of our children and youth. It is now urgent that this matter be addressed at a regional level through a Whole of Government and Society approach targeting supply routes.

Our security services and border officials are urged to do more to fight this heinous societal ill, which is threatening the peace, security and sovereignty of our countries.

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

In conclusion, I urge all of us to recommit to availing resources towards child-focused initiatives, in line with the appeals of our children in their Call to Action, bearing in mind that children are the future leaders.

Let us remember that investing in our children is investing in our future. By empowering them, we empower the world and create a better future for all.

To our children, I thank you all for coming to this event, here in Zimbabwe, in Victoria Falls. I trust that you will go back to your countries and communities with warm memories of your visit to the majestic Mosi

—oa-Tunya, the Smoke that Thunders, the Victoria Falls.

**Long live SADC solidarity.**

**God bless you all.**

**I thank you.**