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Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare

**WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY**

**Speech by the Deputy Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare,**

**Hon. Mercy, M. Dinha (MP)**

**19 March 2024**

**Harare Gardens**

* Director Social Development, Mr Tawanda Zimhunga and all Government officials here present,
* President of the International Federation of Social Workers, Dr Noel Muridzo,
* President of the National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe, Mr Gift Saladi,
* The Registrar of Social Workers in Zimbabwe, Mr Nesbert Tadzoka and officials from the Zimbabwe Council of Social Workers,
* Social work educators and representatives of institutions of higher learning and academic research centers here present,
* Executive Directors and representatives of Development Partners and Private Voluntary Organizations with us today,
* All social workers,
* Social work students,
* Members of the media,
* Ladies and Gentlemen

It is such an honor for me to address this gathering as we celebrate the 2024 World Social Work Day. This year’s theme ‘Buen Vivir: Shared Future for Transformative Change’ resonates with our rich and long cherished cultural traditions built on an understanding and awareness of African beliefs couched within the Ubuntu philosophical ethos. The theme places emphasis on the adoption of innovative, community-led approaches that are grounded in indigenous wisdom and harmonious coexistence with nature. In the face of climate emergency, the collapse of biodiversity and pervasive pollution, we all are challenged to embrace our indigenous knowledge systems in formulating and implementing countermeasures to protect lives and preserve the environment for a better tomorrow.

Government acknowledges and appreciates the role of social workers in the development agenda, as we work towards achieving the status of an empowered and prosperous upper middle income society by 2030. This is being achieved through our blue print National Development Strategy 1 2021 to 2025. Social workers are part of the broader social service workforce and are critical in the delivery of child protection, social protection, health and education services amongst others. We can all agree that quality delivery of social protection services and child protection in particular is hinged on a well-functioning workforce. Strong social protection systems are essential in helping individuals and families including children and persons with disabilities, who are the most vulnerable, to cope with crises and shocks, find jobs, improve productivity, invest in the health and education of their children, and protect the aging population. It is therefore important to assess the capacity of the social service workforce time and again to identify strengths and gaps to be addressed to maintain the optimum quality of social services delivery.

It is with this understanding that the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MoPSLSW), through the Department of Social Development, commissioned and superintendent over the National Social Service Workforce Capacity Assessment in 2023 to analyse the status, structure and functioning of the social service workforce across the country and at all levels of operation. The assessment informed the development of a Retention Policy Brief and a Capacity Development Plan for the period 2024 to 2028.

An examination of the workforce's design, structure and functioning as well as available resources in delivering child protection, social protection and disability services was done including its capacity to implement laws and policies effectively; and the effectiveness of current capacity-building systems and factors that impact the retention of public sector social workers. I am pleased to inform you that Government, as the biggest employer of social workers has introduced a retention allowance for social workers serving as Social Development Officers. This demonstrates Government’s recognition of the value of social workers its commitment to enhancing the welfare of social workers.

Further, Government is seized with social work legislative review as it seeks to amend the Social Workers Act [Chapter 27:21] to address noted legislative gaps.

As we celebrate today, we should reflect on the critical role played by social workers in driving positive change and fostering communities that thrive on mutual respect and sustainability. Let us continue to improve the conditions of service for social workers for a more favorable practice environment. I would also want to urge the schools of social work to comply with the regulations and set standards for social work education for more qualified and well trained social workers to be produced to drive the development of this country.

We need to ensure quality social service delivery through a well-functioning workforce. This is a goal we can achieve and indeed we shall. It is with this concluding remark that I declare this celebration officially opened.

HAPPY SOCIAL WORK DAY!

I THANK YOU.