



ZIMBABWE  
Judicial Service Commission



**CONCLUDING STATEMENT ADOPTED AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA CHIEF JUSTICES' FORUM THEMED "GUARANTEEING THE RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL IN AFRICA; SHOW CASING BEST PRACTICE"**

**27–28 AUGUST 2015, VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE**

***At the conclusion of the Annual Conference of the Southern African Chief Justices' Forum (SACJF) co-hosted by the SACJF, the Judicial Service Commission of Zimbabwe and the International Commission of Jurists and attended by Chief Justices and representatives of judiciaries from Southern and Eastern Africa, the following concluding statement was adopted:***

**PREAMBLE**

***Recognizing that the right to a fair trial is a basic principle of international human rights law, which is designed to protect individuals from the unlawful and arbitrary curtailment or deprivation of other basic rights and freedoms;***

***Convinced that there are numerous learning opportunities within the region from which best practice can be discerned to ensure the promotion and protection of the right to fair trial;***

***Determined in this context to promote contact and co-operation among the courts in the southern and eastern African region;***

***Guided by the provisions of articles 7 and 26 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the elaboration of these articles in the Africa Union Guidelines and Principles on the Right to Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa.***

***Mindful of the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights particularly Articles 8, 9, 10 and 11,***

***Chief Justices and judges from Southern and Eastern Africa, attending the conference adopt the following resolutions:***

**I. THE ROLE OF JUDICIAL SERVICES COMMISSIONS**

***To ensure Judicial Services Commissions work towards promoting the independence of the judiciary in practice and in theory;***

***To engage more effectively with the Executive and Legislative branches to advocate for, and secure the allocation of adequate resources for judicial operations;***



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## **2. APPOINTMENT OF JUDGES**

*To promote and support administrative and legislative measures that not only ensure that the suitable candidates are appointed on the bench, but ensure that tenure is guaranteed;*

*To establish an ad hoc team of JSCs from the region to work towards developing regional principles and guidelines on selection and appointment of judges in Africa to be presented to the SACJF for discussion and adoption at the Annual Conference of 2017.*

## **3. JUDICIAL REFORM AND THE RIGHT TO FAIR TRIAL**

*To adopt administrative, legislative and technological approaches to reduce or eliminate case backlog to ensure a timely dispensation of justice;*

*To promote and support legal reforms, which make courts more accessible and approachable to litigants;*

## **4. JUDICIAL TRAINING**

*To work toward the establishment of a regional judicial training institution/programmes to create opportunities for the systematic, standardized and sustainable provision of continuing legal education for judicial officers;*

*To build in the judiciary budgets, sufficient provisions that ensure development of comprehensive curricula in our jurisdictions and progressively moving away from ad hoc and unstructured training programmes for judges and judicial officers;*

*To look at training of judges and judicial staff beyond the establishment of continuous internal training to include making budgetary provisions for such capacity development initiatives including sabbaticals, exchange programmes and attachment for brief learning periods with appropriate academic and specialised judicial training entities in the region.*

*To encourage in appropriate cases judges to invite amicus from African academics and legal experts in order to enrich African jurisprudence*

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 28 August 2015