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Statement on Agenda Item No. 4: Effective practices for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages.

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Madam Chair,

Recognising progressive provisions on the protection and promotion of minority languages as exhibited through sections 27, 33 and 63 of the Zimbabwe constitution. Further, inline with Article 4 subsection (3) and subsection (4) of the 1992 United Nations Declaration on Minorities, I would like to call this August house and my government to constructive dialogue and engagement on how we can improve learning outcomes for children from linguistic minorities.

Madam Chair, we are concerned about the poor grades among children from linguistic minorities. The national schools examinations management body, Zimbabwe School Examinations Council has over the years recorded zero percent pass rates in schools located in areas inhabited by ethnic and linguistic minorities, namely, the south western parts of the country. For example, last year 29 schools in Matabeleland North province, recorded zero percent pass rates.

Researchers and educationists have noted that, one of the causes of these low pass rates is learners being taught in foreign languages and by educators who are not conversant in local languages.

Again, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, learning and stimulation of learners in their languages ensures that children have what is necessary to boost their sensory, emotional, cognitive, social and physical development.

Madam Chair, in order to improve the practice and teaching of local languages, I humbly urge my government to put in place the following policy measures;

1. The government to ensure that minority languages are taught up to tertiary level and give effect to minority languages to be used as languages of instruction and record in academic work;
2. Giving opportunity to linguistic minorities to enroll in teacher training colleges, so that they can impart language skills to other generations for the sustainability of languages;
3. The Government of Zimbabwe should take a deliberate policy to digitize minority languages and adopt a deliberate policy to rely on the speakers of the language to teach children in schools and tertiary education institutions;
4. To craft a policy that compels the national broadcaster to commission and produce children's education programmes in minority languages;
5. To take positive measures to ensure that minority languages are resourced and function in the broader economy beyond the domestic sphere of the home.

I thank you!