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CoRMSA stands in solidarity with the ZEP holders and calls for its extension.

Johannesburg – 11 November 2021, the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA), is in strong solidarity with the ZEP holders. The short-term permits have been rolled out for more than ten years since 2010, starting with the Dispensation Zimbabwe Permit (DZP), followed by the Zimbabwean Special Permit (ZSP) until the current Zimbabwean Exemption Permit (ZEP) which will be expiring in December 2021. Constitutionally, the permits have been issued according to Section 31(2)(b) of the Immigration Act which states that upon application, “the minister may grant a foreigner the rights of permanent residence for a specified or unspecified period when circumstances exist”, which would justify such a decision. CoRMSA applauds and welcomes this beneficial decision by the minister of Home Affairs (DHA).

The issuing of these permits has enabled many Zimbabwean nationals to be documented and regularised which unlocks access to certain basic services such as education, health care services and employment. The permits contain a couple of conditions including: to conduct work in South Africa, among others, which has given hope to the Zimbabwean nationals for a sustainable livelihood. These permits have also given Zimbabwean nationals hope and belief of obtaining permanent residence based on the fact that they have been residing in South Africa for over ten years making them part of the South African communities at large. Following from this, CoRMSA is in accord with the ZEP holders and calls on DHA to extend the ZEP or regularise ZEP holders permanently and for all South African nationals to stand in solidarity with Zimbabwean nationals in order to have their right to documentation realised.

The media has recently reported on the alleged march against Zimbabwean Special permits renewal leaving many Zimbabweans and other non-nations in a psychological turmoil coupled with uncertainty for a better future. In light of this, CoRMSA would like to remind Home Affairs and the public at large that, the regularisation of person on the move play a key role on both host country’s development and management of migration patterns. Failure to extend or to permanently regularise the ZEP holders may contribute to the current number of irregular migrants caused by the state failure to progressively address migration through regularisation of person.

Furthermore, CoRMSA also discourages social ills of blaming non-nationals for the socio-economic problems that South Africa is currently facing such as unemployment, economic challenges, among others. Such scapegoating fuels social division and discrimination in our communities. It is from this point of departure that CoRMSA also reminds all South Africans not to forget the immense economic and social contributions made by our fellow African brothers and sisters towards the economic advancement of South Africa. We need to focus on building a unified South Africa that is safe for everyone and that gives everyone an opportunity to improve their lives rather than exerting hostility on non-nationals about the high unemployment rate and other economic problems that South Africa is facing.

CoRMSA further calls the Department of Home Affairs to honour its constitutional obligation by renewing the Zimbabwean permits so as to promote safety, certainty and security among non-nationals and the relevant authorities to bring to book those who are violating the rights of the asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

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