

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT,  
PROMOTION AND PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL CULTURE AND  
HERITAGE – HON A NCUBE ON THE FOURTH COMMISSIONING OF  
THE ZIMBABWE PAVILLION AT THE VENICE BIENNALE ON 8  
FEBRUARY 2017 AT 10AM IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF  
ZIMBABWE, HARARE**

**The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Rural Development, Promotion and  
Preservation of National Culture and Heritage – Dr T Chitepo**

**The Italian Ambassador and Members of the Diplomatic Corps**

**The Principal Director for Arts, Culture and Heritage – Rev Damasane and team  
Members of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe Board here present**

**The Executive Director of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe - Mrs Sibanda and  
her team**

**Executives from the Corporate World**

**Members of the Creative and Cultural Industries here present**

**Esteemed Artists**

**Members of the Media here present**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

May I on behalf of my Ministry and Staff appreciate the efforts by the National Gallery of Zimbabwe to support creativity through the provision and facilitation of local and international exhibitions. Government is committed to the development of the creative and culture industry. We would like to see this industry make a significant contribution to the national fiscus. The fourth priority area expressed in the Arts, Culture and Heritage policy which was passed by Cabinet stresses the importance of artists seeing themselves as business persons. Artists contribute to the economy through their own products and services. Further, artists are critical in promoting unity and social cohesion over and above their contribution to better livelihoods. We are here to celebrate the pioneering nature of Zimbabwean visual art in promoting national identity.

The Venice Biennale is the ultimate showcase of contemporary art. Any artist who exhibits at this platform is exposed to art appreciators and collectors from all over the world. The Government of Zimbabwe has, in the last three Biennales, funded the 7-month showcase in having a Pavilion and 4 artists. The Zimbabwean Pavilion has been the only one from Africa that has been consistently supported by its Government. The Zimbabwean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale is a diplomatic platform to project our culture and heritage to the global arena. Those artists so supported have grown to be popular names in the international contemporary visual art scene. They include Misheck Masamvu, Portia Zvavahera and Masimba Hwati, to mention just a few.

Today it is my singular honour and privilege to announce the visual artists selected for the fourth edition of the Zimbabwe Pavilion at the Biennale di Venezia. We celebrate these artists as cultural ambassadors of our very vibrant Zimbabwean Culture more than just announcing them. This is an opportunity to include the Zimbabwean voice to the global story and provide another perspective on the themes of identity, migration, patriotism and belonging. The varied work of the selected artists' points to the diversity of perspectives in this story.

I am aware that it was not easy to come up with this selection and I commend the selectors for a job well done.

**Sylvester Mubayi** is an elderly contributor to Zimbabwean visual art. He belongs to the first generation of Zimbabwean stone sculptors. He is a master and imaginative sculptor. The substance of his work brings significance to the Zimbabwean narrative at the Venice Biennale where we have, since the first Pavilion, been avoiding stone sculpture because of the unreasonable stereotyping associated with it.

This edition's theme tackles a vast topic which has become a central issue. The exhibition will illuminate some of its diverse perspectives through the artists; **Admire Kamudzengerere**, is a young outstanding expressive painter. His selection and use of colour compliments the subject matter that he seeks to put across to the viewer ; **Charles Bhebhe**, is also a young prolific Bulawayo-based visual artist who profiles the ordinary Zimbabwean person in his observations through the use of intricate colours in his paintings; lastly is **Dana Whabira**. She is an architect, artist and cultural facilitator and

curator of the visual arts and their related interfaces. She ably runs her personal gallery known as Njelele Art Station which affords artists space to interact, experiment and showcase their creativity. She brings to this year's Zimbabwe Pavilion at the Venice Biennale some refreshing angles to the story of who we are as Zimbabwe.

This selection is our way to ensure that we continue to make a mark in visual art on the global arena.

I wish to thank the Exhibition Commissioner and Curator for their sterling efforts in the face of many challenges, to stage an international exhibition of this calibre and engagement.

I also want to congratulate the artists for being selected. I do commend the Zimbabwe Pavilion's strategy of recognising mature and emerging perspectives that continue to push the boundaries of visual art.

I also wish to acknowledge my Government's continued commitment to presenting and celebrating the visual art and artists of Zimbabwe across all available art platforms.

I wish the Creative Industry the best in this year's Venice Showcase.

I thank you.