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Q&A Summary

Zimbabwe after the Elections: Domestic Economic Developments and Regional Impacts

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INTRODUCTION

This document is a summary of the discussion of a Chatham House event held on 8 November 2013. This event looked at the domestic and regional situation after Zimbabwe's general elections.

While international attention remains focused on the 2013 election process, fluctuations in the Zimbabwe stock exchange observed during the election period are beginning to settle and the government is increasingly looking towards attracting investors as a means of boosting economic growth. This year Zimbabwe co-hosted the United Nations World Tourism Organization General Assembly. Tourism is expected to account for over eight per cent of the country's GDP over the next 10 years, and promoting tourism remains central to the government's agenda.

Hon. Walter Mzembi, a party member of ZANU-PF, discussed Zimbabwe's regional cooperation on tourism and investment. He also presented his views on the investment climate and the prospects for political stability and economic growth after the elections.

The meeting consisted of a presentation followed by a discussion. The meeting was held on the record. The following summary is intended to serve as an *aide-mémoire* for those who took part and to provide a general summary of discussions for those who did not.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questions

What is the link between the policies of indigenisation and beneficiation?

Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa advocated the creation of a Diaspora Desk at the Zimbabwean High Commission in London. Could you update us on the current status of this?

How can the diaspora contribute their skills to the Zimbabwean economy? Is there anywhere that the diaspora can visit to obtain such information in London?

Wildlife in Zimbabwe, particularly elephants, are under threat in Zimbabwe, and this is a crucial issue considering the importance of tourism to the country. What can be done to get the message across in schools so that the future generation are aware of this problem?

Walter Mzembi

Mr Mzembi stated that the Zimbabwe government plans to link local partners with foreign investors through a database that interested parties should register with. He noted that no indigenisation policy could be crafted without the addition of a value addition policy; the two would need to be harmonized.

Mr Mzembi stated that many Zimbabweans living in the United Kingdom had not registered with the embassy and that the Zimbabwean government does not have detailed information on the population of the diaspora in the United Kingdom. The government is undertaking research to remedy this. He noted that according to some estimates, the population of the diaspora worldwide was between one and two million people. He stated that the Zimbabwean voice in the United Kingdom should be louder than it currently is.

Mr Mzembi noted that Zimbabweans appreciate their wildlife. He said that the sentence for killing an elephant can be up to 15 years, and the full sentence is usually sought for. However, the issue of elephant poaching is not only a Zimbabwean problem. There is international demand for ivory and there is a need to create a dialogue with international markets, particularly markets in East Asia. Hon Mzembi stated that Africans must take on a leadership role in order to protect its heritage.

Questions

The international community would be interested to hear about the new government's plans to improve human rights in Zimbabwe. This is also relevant to the many young Western tourists who are sensitive to matters of human rights.

You mentioned the desire to engage with the likes of the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the importance of Zimbabwe's relationship with the UN. Why has President Mugabe used the UN as a platform to attack the West recently?

What is the government's vision of the outcome of talks with international financial institutions? What the speaker has said on this subject appears to conflict with President Mugabe's viewpoints.

How will the quota system of the indigenization policy, which requires 51 per cent of businesses in Zimbabwe to be locally owned, be implemented? How will the government link markets to agriculture?

What is Zimbabwe's current position on membership of the Commonwealth?

Walter Mzembi

Mr Mzembi stated that Zimbabwe's new constitution set up the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, which engages directly with international human rights organizations. He added that no gross violations of human rights have occurred in Zimbabwe in the last 90 days.

Mr Mzembi stated that President Mugabe has used the UN as a platform to promote the interests of Zimbabwe. He noted that the United Kingdom and the United States were among only a few countries that had refused to acknowledge the result of the general elections. President Mugabe seeks only to remind people that Zimbabwe must be treated as an equal on the world stage. Furthermore, the president has used a different platform at the UN to proclaim that Zimbabwe is open for business. The message is that the country wants to engage with the world but also that Zimbabwe is an equal partner in global governance and should be respected.

Mr Mzembi stated that, along with the former prime minister, Morgan Tsvangirai, he visited the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Paris Club, among others. He noted that there is a general consensus but no agreement on the issue of debt relief. He said Zimbabwe needs preliminary financial assistance to boost its economy and start repaying its

debts. He stated that Zimbabwe wants to engage with its donors but that there needs to be a relaxation of restrictive sanctions.

Mr Mzembi noted that Zimbabweans who obtained their land through land reform programmes must utilize it; landowners who do not use their land productively will consign a generation to starvation. He stated that landowners must begin to produce for Zimbabwe. He added that President Mugabe is market-focused and willing to engage with the business interests inside and outside the country.

Hon Mzembi noted that the Gambia has recently withdrawn from the Commonwealth, citing the need for reform in the organization. He stated that the Commonwealth should not take more from member states than it received. He stated that Zimbabwe's stance was similar of that to the Gambia's. He concluded by noting that the government will review each international institution in order to see if they reflect Zimbabwe's interests.