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Transcript

Revived ZAPU and its Vision for Zimbabwe

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Dr Dumiso Dabengwa:

Mr Chairman, fellows of the Chatham House, fellow Zimbabweans, and friends, good morning. I stand on this great platform today aware of the greatness that since inception in 1920, the Royal Institute of International Affairs has graced this platform with the likes of Mahatma Gandhi, the World War Two hero Winston Churchill, the first female British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the United States President Ronald Reagan, the last leader of the great Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, the PLO late leader Yasser Arafat, Russia's current prime minister Vladimir Putin, somebody from the economic powerhouse of the world - Alan Greenspan, and the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

Mr Chairman, having made a lifetime decision to fight for my people's justice and freedom, I feel privileged today to address this institute on the same platform that was graced by the former South African President, Nelson Mandela. Mr Chairman, I stand on this platform in the full knowledge of the political crisis that continues to engulf my country, Zimbabwe.

As the President of ZAPU, the Zimbabwe African People's Union, I remain seized with the suffering Zimbabwean people's expectations, that my party may be the difference. The solution that they have been seeking for so long. Many Zimbabweans have died in search of freedom. Some continue to needlessly die, due to the lack of basic public services. You had in the last few years the cholera epidemic that spread over the whole of Zimbabwe and many people died, without much assistance from the state. Others have fled or survived, but have tragic stories to tell about torture, about rape, and unspeakable politically motivated violence.

It pains me to recall that I spent almost two decades fighting for justice and freedom for my country, only to see fellow African leaders abuse the same ordinary people that we fought to defend. It is surprising that a system that is failing to deliver basic education, health and welfare is so efficient in prosecuting, oppressing and abusing the right of the innocent citizens and also corruption.

Today, millions of Zimbabweans are scattered in the diaspora after fleeing from prosecution and harsh economic conditions in Zimbabwe. Today, millions of Zimbabweans remain trapped in a system that can no longer deliver basic services. In the words of John F. Kennedy, 'our problems are man-made, and therefore they may be solved by men.'

Zimbabweans made the necessary decision to resolve their crisis by reviving ZAPU. In recent years, when it became apparent that recently formed political

parties led to the capacity to take over power in Zimbabwe, many started calling on ZAPU to revive its structures and take its place that it should have had at independence. Unfortunately again, the brokers of that independence, our British colonisers, bungled it up.

In December 2008, ZAPU was revived following a consultative conference in Bulawayo. On the 16th of May 2009, a special congress was held which resolved officially to terminate the unity accord. On the 26th to the 29th of August, ZAPU held its historic ninth congress with more than 5,000 delegates from all over Zimbabwe attending.

A new leadership and a manifesto were adopted under the power to the people through devolution. I was kindly and democratically asked by the people to be the president of ZAPU. I did not impose myself. I'm totally committed to the cause of bringing freedom to my country.

Mr Chairman, Zimbabwe is a country with which Britain has had relations for over a century. Even when diplomacy is hazy, our friendship is always expressed in other ways.

In 2005, England paraded the Ashes after winning under a Zimbabwean coach, Duncan Fletcher. Just last week, England won the cricket Ashes in Australia for the first time in 24 years. And again, under the flower a Zimbabwean saw that through.

Mr Chairman, my party ZAPU, founded in 1961, was the first party to fight for the rights of all Zimbabweans. Many international relations scholars have observed that if ZAPU, then led by the late Dr Joshua Nkomo, had been allowed to rule Zimbabwe at independence in 1980, Zimbabwe would have been a better place today.

ZAPU had the best policies we could have helped develop equitably. Unfortunately, ZAPU fell victim to a brutal few who unleashed a government operation perpetrated by the North Koreans, who trained the fifth brigade in the 80s.

ZAPU had, and still has the intention to ensure that Britain and Zimbabwe enjoy good relations based on respect. Speaking at the annual Lord Mayor's banquet recently, British Prime Minister David Cameron emphasised trade as one of the cornerstones of his foreign policy. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, William Hague, has included economy and trade as one of his three foreign policy priorities.

As Zimbabweans, in pursuit of our own national interest, we find trade with Europe and the rest of the world, an area of convergence. A few weeks ago,

on this very platform, British Minister for Africa, Henry Bellingham, asserted that Zimbabwe was historically an important partner of Britain in trade. He went on to explain why a politically stable Zimbabwe was key to continued partnerships. We understand the international community's interests in maintaining good trade relations with us.

Zimbabwe is a country blessed with abundant mineral and other natural resources. Our towns and cities are decently industrialised. Our infrastructure, our economy and public services, once ranked only second to that of our neighbour, South Africa. While at one time Zimbabwe had the highest literacy rate in Sub-Saharan Africa, we retain a remarkable human capital. We have been exporting hundreds of Zimbabwean-trained specialists in various fields – in health, in education, etc.

Sadly, there has been a downturn. In recent years, our capacity to deliver decent public services, like education and health and welfare, almost completely vanished. In recent years, Zimbabwe as a respected member of the community of nations has suffered. In recent years, our gold medal as the best bread basket of Africa has been replaced by pictures of hunger, starvation and disease, although recently, one of your British experts made a statement to the contrary about the land issue in Zimbabwe.

The political scene remains stained with fresh memories of gross human rights abuses against defenceless citizens. The political terrain continues to be dominated by those whose language of attaining votes is violence, intimidation, oppression and media clampdown. The security services have been politicised and need urgent reform. Freedom of speech remains out of bounds for the ordinary citizens, with APA, the media regulator, in place.

Civil liberties remain a taboo to the ordinary people. Freedom of association is punished by prosecution. Freedom of assembly is curtailed by the Public Order and Security Act. The economic scene is littered with corruption. The Indigenisation legislation is timed to only benefit the cronies of those that have looted the state, giving them an opportunity to reinvest and clean their loot.

ZAPU's position. My party, ZAPU, understands that our place at the international table of relevance depends on our credibility as a people, our capacity as a country, and legitimacy as an equal partner. ZAPU believes that Zimbabwe can only be a respected player in the world if there is political stability. ZAPU takes the view that political stability can only be achieved when there is a legitimate government. I'm sure all of us know there is none

at the moment. ZAPU knows that a legitimate government can only be the one that is as a result of democratic elections that are free and fair.

ZAPU wants the people of Zimbabwe to have an opportunity to freely express their democratic right in a free and fair election. We are raising our thoughts to fully participate in the next elections when they are called. ZAPU was the first party in Zimbabwe to fight for the rights of all citizens, regardless of colour, tribe or religion. The people of Zimbabwe are responding passionately to ZAPU since its restructuring. Our principled stand is on attaining power through peaceful means, and the devolution of power to the provinces.

We are confident of winning any free and fair election in Zimbabwe today. Because Zimbabweans are increasingly supporting ZAPU, some parties in government no longer want elections for fear of losing. They claim conditions on the ground have to be ideal and the constitutional process is not properly resourced.

We too want the conditions that are conducive to produce credible results. But it is the parties in government who are failing to put these conditions on the ground. Today, the parties in government will claim economic recovery. Yes, dollarisation has resulted in improved inflation figures. However, the cited figures are masking the poverty figures that continue to increase. Cited figures are hiding rising unemployment. Cited figures omit the widening gap between the corrupt haves and the decent have-nots. Cited figures exclude observations that the ordinary Zimbabwean is worse off with no means to access capital for basic commodities. Reality on the ground, however, is that millions of ordinary people have no jobs or means of survival. Yes, most schools have reopened their doors. Reality on the ground, however, is that millions of children in Zimbabwe cannot afford the fees to attend school.

Yes, most hospitals have reopened their doors as well. But the reality on the ground is that thousands die before they get treatment, because either they cannot afford medical fees, or the hospitals have no adequate staff, equipment, or medication.

Yes, there could have been a unity government in place since February 2009. But the political reality on the ground is that this government is failing to deliver for the ordinary people. They failed to instil law and order with political violence continuing. They failed to alleviate poverty for the ordinary people, with civil servants continuing to get peanuts for their pay. They failed to bring political stability, as they loudly bicker all the time.

The partisan government have become specialists in crying out to the world about their bitter differences on minor issues that are in themselves irrelevant

to the ordinary Zimbabweans. They have failed to achieve justice for victims of politically motivated violence. They failed to create a safe environment conducive for Zimbabweans, who are in exile, to return to their beloved motherland. They are failing to create a stable and conducive environment for donors and investors to re-engage Zimbabwe.

Our vision is that Zimbabwe needs political stability to re-engage the world. Zimbabwe needs mature leadership that focuses on issues that are relevant to the ordinary people. We believe it is our duty to serve Zimbabwe from the ongoing crisis. As a teenager, I gave my life to the struggle for the liberation of my country. I spent many years fighting for freedom and justice for my people.

Today, the ills we fought against prevail under the guise of majority rule. A ZAPU government will, together with the people of Zimbabwe, develop a democratic state. A state that respects, promotes, and protects human rights without distinction of any kind. ZAPU will remove the stranglehold of bureaucratic central government, and work for devolution of political power and requisite economic responsibility to five viable provinces, i.e. Manicaland, Mashonaland, Masvingo, Midlands and Matabeleland.

The provinces will have control over natural resources and environmental issues within their jurisdiction. ZAPU will restore law and order, and eliminate corruption through transparent and independent judiciary and encouraging investigative journalism.

Through a poverty reduction and eradication programme, ZAPU will put in place policies which improve or increase productive investment, skills development for gainful employment, and a fairer distribution of national income.

A ZAPU government will ensure security to reform Zimbabwe. A ZAPU government will create an environment that enables trade relations with the international community to normalise again. ZAPU will pursue policies that enhance economic development, industrialisation, private sector development, tourism, regional integration, and foreign direct investment. To sustain recovery, Zimbabwe needs access to the international market. Britain and Europe are critical to us if we are to sustain our trade balance sheet and enhance our economic growth.

What is wrong with the current GNU? Despite the abundance of resources, such as diamonds, gold, platinum, and human capital; the current unity government has demonstrated lack of capacity to lead. That is what former

South African President Nelson Mandela may have been referring to, when he said the crisis in Zimbabwe was due to a lack of leadership.

It may be common knowledge that some of them have always and repeatedly abused the rights of ordinary citizens in order to remain in power. We note with sadness that the partners in government, who in the past have claimed to be democratic, are now following the syllabus of dictatorship, finding excuses to justify holding onto power beyond their constitutional provisions which are clearly expressed in the Global Political Agreement which they signed in 2009.

With disturbing development in other parts of Africa, Zimbabwe and their former sympathisers in the West, may want to take a closer look at their growing tendencies to behave in a way similar to those they tell us they have tried to remove.

Mr Chairman, ZAPU is working at grassroots level to ensure the genuine devolution and democratisation of Zimbabwe. Zimbabweans of all tribes and colour are joining ZAPU on a daily basis. A ZAPU government will honour Zimbabwe's international commitments and uphold the principles of the ratified international conventions. A ZAPU government will ensure that all Zimbabweans are offered protection and that those in the diaspora, who so choose, are free to return.

Our appeal to the international world is for them to afford the Zimbabweans in the diaspora some training. The time is now. We expect most of the hundreds of Zimbabweans to return home and our appeal is that if the international world can contribute and make sure that they get training in skills and other sectors in order to arm them with something that they can bring home in order to bring the turnaround of the economy of Zimbabwe. After all, this is what we spent the greater part of our lives fighting for.

Mr Chairman, today I speak as a President of ZAPU, an opposition political party in Zimbabwe. Should Zimbabwe be assisted to undertake free and fair elections soon, a ZAPU President could be the next to return to this important platform to express gratitude for the assistance the international world will afford it.

Mr Chairman, I thank you.