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Africa Meeting Summary

Zimbabwe's Future

Hon. Elton Mangoma

Minister for Energy and Power Development, Zimbabwe

Hon. Patrick Chinamasa

Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Zimbabwe

Hon. Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga

Minister for Regional Integration and International Cooperation, Zimbabwe

Chair: Alex Vines

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INTRODUCTION

The following document provides a summary of a meeting held at Chatham House on 26 March 2013. The meeting focussed on the current challenges and opportunities facing Zimbabwe and its possible future trajectory.

Members of Zimbabwe's inclusive government discussed the way ahead for the country, including the road to elections and prospects for Zimbabwe and the region beyond the ballot. The speakers discussed the role of international partners in Zimbabwe, private sector investment and the dynamics of regional growth and cooperation.

The meeting consisted of three presentations from the ministers given on the record followed by a questions-and-answers session held under the Chatham House Rule. 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.

HON. ELTON MANGOMA

Hon. Mangoma opened by commenting on the progress that Zimbabwe has been making in preparation for upcoming elections. The successful referendum that took place in March has set a robust political framework in place, and in light of this success it is possible to talk about the future of Zimbabwe.

Elections are scheduled to take place this year. From 29 June parliament will cease to exist, and the constitution allows a period of 21 days to hold elections. Hon. Mangoma stated that Zimbabweans are keen to follow their constitution in this process.

In order to get the country on the road to recovery and achieve free and fair elections, the parties in government must work together. Hon. Mangoma noted that there needs to be a full implementation of political agreements to help achieve this goal; in particular the fulfilment of outstanding conditions of the Global Political Agreement, which includes the reduction of sanctions against Zimbabwe. He asserted that the continuation of sanctions is a political distraction and renders business transactions more opaque.

Zimbabwe's politicians are seeking to develop an election roadmap that confronts issues that may hinder free and fair elections. One such concern noted was certain individuals in the police and the army who use their positions for partisan purposes. He added that these activities must cease and that there should be a code of conduct regarding elections set in place which members of the forces have to sign.

It is important to have an electoral system that serves all parties fairly and for election results to be accepted, both within government and by the public. There have been issues with violence during previous elections, and so the political leadership must encourage tolerance during the election period. Hon. Mangoma stated that domestic and foreign observers must participate in electoral monitoring, in order to ascertain the validity of results.

Once successful elections have been held, the economic development of Zimbabwe can continue. The debt situation is not sustainable for macro-economic development, and Hon. Mangoma noted that international financial institutions and the international community should help Zimbabwe resolve this situation, as the government has already adapted its policy to do so.

Hon. Mangoma concluded that the last decade of economic problems led to the loss of jobs and Zimbabweans leaving the country. What is now needed is

job creation and increased foreign direct investment in order to share economic growth amongst the Zimbabwean people.

HON. PATRICK CHINAMASA

Hon. Chinamasa stated that the relationship between Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom is now improving after years of miscommunication and misinformation. Previously, Zimbabwe's future had been held hostage to the history of the colonial past, with a lack of communication and understanding between the two countries evident. Now this relationship is changing from one of colonial dependence to that of mutual engagement. He noted that this was ZANU-PF's first visit to the United Kingdom for a decade.

Hon. Chinamasa stated that Zimbabwe is keen to establish a dialogue with the United Kingdom, especially on the land question. Bilateral talks on this have begun during the delegation's visit and this is a positive development. He noted that previous talks have always focused on human rights concerns, whereas the main issue is land.

Sanctions were also mentioned as another pressing issue. The imposition of sanctions has affected ordinary people in Zimbabwe, as infrastructure has become run down and industry has declined as British-dominated companies left the country. The increase in economic refugees has led to the enlargement of the Zimbabwe diaspora in the United Kingdom. Hon. Chinamasa stated that these migratory patterns are fragmenting social structures in Zimbabwe.

The voice of ZANU-PF has been shut out because of the imposition of sanctions; a move which Hon. Chinamasa said sought to eliminate the political party, and which has impinged upon democratic freedom. External intervention in domestic affairs has caused discord within Zimbabwean politics and this has halted any possibility for political progress.

Prior to 2000, economic domination by British companies gave way to economic collapse when investors pulled out, but the situation is now looking up. Following the Land Reform programme of 2000, formerly plummeting production figures are now rising. There have been distortions about land distribution in Zimbabwe but new studies on the land question are showing a different side. Tobacco production, which had previously fallen, is rising again, as is the production of cotton, sugar and to a lesser extent, coffee and tea. The mines are also doing well, although Hon. Chinamasa pointed out that far more is being exported than invested back into the exchequer.

This leads to the question: why does Zimbabwe remain poor, when it is richly endowed with natural resources? The indigenization policy is aimed at empowering Zimbabweans, yet Hon. Chinamasa stated that foreign businesses should not be discouraged from investing in the country, but should work with Zimbabweans for the mutual exploitation of resources.

The passing of the referendum reveals the encouraging progress that Zimbabwe has made in confronting challenges since the defeat of the previous referendum in 2000. According to Hon. Chinamasa, this result is due to the output of Zimbabweans, without international interference, which could complicate discussions and undermine hard-won mutual trust in the political elite of Zimbabwe.

Civil society in Zimbabwe is overrun with non-governmental organizations that are not producing adequate results, despite donor funding. Hon. Chinamasa stated that civil society should focus on the basic needs in Zimbabwe: more schools, access to safe water and sanitation as these problems remain endemic. He noted that NGOs should channel monetary assistance through the government so that funds are held accountable.

The political framework for indigenization policies were brought about because of the post-colonial system left in Zimbabwe where black people had nothing and the economy was dominated by foreigners. Hon. Chinamasa stated that the move towards indigenization is aimed at transforming the ownership structure to reflect the population, but should not be perceived as a challenge, but a necessary process.

Hon. Chinamasa concluded that the road to progress from 2000 would take a long time. He appealed to the diaspora to use their connections to build economic links between the UK and Zimbabwe.

HON. PRISCILLA MISIHAIRABWI-MUSHONGA

Hon. Misihairabwi-Mushonga noted that it is important for past governments in Zimbabwe to maintain a dialogue with the current government. Since the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2009, there has been a lot of movement and changes within the government. The coalition between different political parties holding divergent ideologies has led to fears among the international community concerning the capability of the government. However, the survival of the government and the move towards democratic elections indicates the opposite and proves that the GNU is not a marriage of convenience.

The government has worked towards elections independently, but some assistance from transnational institutions has aided this process. Southern African Development Community (SADC) observers have remained in the country, and the international community has worked with SADC. SADC has helped establish clear standards that will ensure that Zimbabwe's elections are fully free and fair; otherwise the country's membership in the group will be jeopardized.

Hon. Misihairabwi-Mushonga stated that the support for the referendum sent a political message that the people of Zimbabwe want a break from the past. It indicated a vote of confidence for a new society and new value system, with new rights for women and issues surrounding devolution and governance addressed.

Elections cannot be postponed after parliament has been dissolved, so there is a clear timeframe in place to establish a suitable government structure. Furthermore, the elections must abide to the Global Political Agreement. Different institutions must accept the electoral outcome, including the media, military and rule of law.

There needs to be more trust-building between the government and civil society groups. Hon. Misihairabwi-Mushonga noted that, while the views of those in civil society may not necessarily differ from those of the government, it is important to have an independent civil society sector. The government is now encouraging participation of civil society as an integral part of society.

Regarding the role of the international community in Zimbabwe's future, Hon. Misihairabwi-Mushonga stated that the removal of sanctions is critical for pragmatic reasons. Political discussions and SADC talks are dominated by the issue of sanctions. The international community should work with SADC, as the three political parties in government understand the importance of working with SADC. Finally, there needs to be international funding for the upcoming elections. It is important to have credible elections, and for this to happen there needs to be international monitoring, funding and support.