

Zimbabwe's Changing Opposition

Dr Joice Mujuru

President, Zimbabwe People First

6 October 2016

The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the speaker(s) and participants, and do not necessarily reflect the view of Chatham House, its staff, associates or Council. Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues. This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, the author(s)/speaker(s) and Chatham House should be credited, preferably with the date of the publication or details of the event. Where this document refers to or reports statements made by speakers at an event, every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions. The published text of speeches and presentations may differ from delivery. © The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2016.

Introduction

At the meeting, Dr Joice Mujuru, president of the Zimbabwe People First Party, discussed how opposition politics is changing in Zimbabwe as her party prepares to compete in its first election in 2018.

The meeting was held on the record. The following transcript is intended to serve as an aide-memoire for those who took part and to provide a transcript of discussions for those who did not.

For more information – including recordings, transcripts, summaries and further resources on this and other related topics – visit www.chathamhouse.org/research/africa.

Dr Joice Teurai Ropa Mujuru – President of Zimbabwe People First Party

Chairperson, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, research director and head of the Chatham House Africa Program, Dr Vines, distinguished diplomats, senior business representatives here present, civil society representatives, policymakers, academics, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to start by expressing my personal gratitude and that of the entire team of Zimbabwe People First for the opportunity granted to us today. It is a great opportunity for us as team Zimbabwe People First (ZimPF) to come and interact with this great and diverse audience at Chatham House.

ZimPF joined the mainstream of Zimbabwean politics in March 2016 after extensive consultations with the people of Zimbabwe. As a political party our ideology is reflected in our name – ZIMBABWE PEOPLE FIRST. Everything we aspire to do is about putting the people first. Our policies and activities are informed by our desire to restore the self-dignity of our people and creating equal opportunities for all under a constitutional democracy.

ZimPF believes in a Zimbabwe that belongs to all people who call it home, regardless of disability, ethnicity, gender, nationality, political affiliation, race or religion. This was an important value of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle and ZimPF is entirely devoted to this particular value.

Over the past months we have had to deal with some level of scepticism directed at ZimPF by some stakeholders. Some believe that because some of us were in ZANU PF [Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front], we are therefore an extension of ZANU PF.

Yes, we were in ZANU PF some of us but it is common knowledge that the reason we became unpopular in ZANU PF is because we were perceived to be moderates who were pursuing pro-West policies against the party position as defined by a few individuals. In Zimbabwean politics, calling someone an agent of the West is a way of hiding very fundamental policy differences between you and that person.

Our position ever since the struggle has always been to put people first. Initially we thought we could achieve this from within when some of our actions and questions were for the people, but our colleagues were not willing hence their dislike of us. Mugabe's campaign against me in 2014 distracted government from focusing on economic programmes for most of that year leaving government almost dysfunctional. Since my departure from government, the divisions and misplaced focus have not ended. It would appear since then, the economy that had recovered during the Government of National Unity (GNU) era took a nose dive and the ZANU PF government looks clueless on how to arrest the free fall. Mugabe by his character has always used selective consultation and divide and rule in his leadership style, no wonder the current state of our country.

These terrible economic conditions are what have given life to new forms of opposition to Mugabe's rule. This year we have seen widespread strikes by civil servants. There have also been demonstrations by citizens in many cities. These new forms of opposition are social movements like Tajamuka, This Flag and Occupy Africa Unity Square. This new opposition is different to the opposition Zimbabwe has seen before because it does not belong to any political party and some of it is social media driven. The majority of these new activists are young people, the Zimbabwean youth.

What the young people in these social movements want is a government that is responsive to the needs of its citizens. They want a functioning economy, job creation and decent public services. Mugabe has responded to these demands by resorting to his tried and tested method, which is the use of force through the national security services to crackdown on popular opposition. I am sure you have seen the recent images on BBC, Sky, CNN, Al Jazeera and others of police instigated violence in Zimbabwe's streets, and recently the brutality on our supporters whose farms have been invaded in Mashonaland Central.

The main reason why the current popular protests and social media activism are not connected to political parties is that many young Zimbabweans had lost belief in mainstream political parties following MDC's democratic miscarriage and ZANU PF's consistent failure to fulfil the promises of Zimbabwe's armed struggle to its citizens.

Zimbabwean politics had been dominated by very old people. Mugabe is 92 years old and both his vice presidents Emmerson Mnangagwa and Phelekezela Mphoko are in their mid to late 70s. Because of their advanced age, Mugabe, Mnangagwa and Mphoko cannot understand let alone deliver the aspirations of dynamic young people who seek a modern Zimbabwe that embraces the world. Many young people have turned away from political parties because of this generational disconnect.

As Zimbabwe People First, one of our main goals is to take seriously the grievances of young people. They are the majority in Zimbabwe. It is they who stand to inherit a country that has been ruined by the mismanagement by the old guards.

Zimbabwe People First is therefore a new democratic and inclusive political party composed of people from the broad political spectrum including those who were previously apolitical. This inclusive diversity and our liberation war credentials make us a unique and democratic Zimbabwean political party offering the people hope for the future.

Let me now turn to what constitutes the key pillars of our master plan for a new Zimbabwe. Our Blueprint to Unlock Investment and Leverage for Development (BUILD) outlines key policies through which we seek to achieve our vision of attaining 'Peace, Freedom, Democracy and Prosperity for All'. These policies, with key highlights below, are informed by:

- i. Our desire and determination to see our nation move forward as a proud member of the community of nations.
- ii. Our desire and determination to create a just and equitable society, in which all people are treated equally in line with the founding principles of the liberation struggle.
- iii. Our desire and determination to see our nation grow and create equal opportunities for all.

(a) Constitutionalism

ZimPF is committed to the full implementation of, and respect for, the democratic national constitution that was passed in Zimbabwe's 2013 referendum as the sacred cornerstone upon which Zimbabwean democracy will be built. The 2013 constitution as the supreme law of the land is one of the main expressions of the political hopes of young Zimbabweans, to whom Zimbabwe's future belongs. ZimPF is therefore committed to a Zimbabwe where constitutionalism prevails.

As ZimPF, we believe in equality before the law. We shall respect and uphold the supremacy of the Constitution, and through an independent Commission align all outstanding laws to the State Constitution and oversee the proper implementation thereof. We shall observe and uphold the bill of rights as enshrined in our constitution.

Our current constitutional crisis is rooted in the past failure to separate the three pillars of the State i.e. the Executive, Judiciary and Legislature. We shall restore, resource and fully implement the intended roles of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, Human Rights Commission and the Gender Commission as prescribed under the Constitution. We shall also respect the independent role of the Prosecutor General under the Constitution.

As a measure to espouse the restoration of democracy, we shall promote and support a free press through repealing all repressive pieces of legislation like AIPPA, POSA and re-align the Criminal Code (Codification and Reform Act), to the Constitution.

We recognize that the biggest obstacle to free flow of capital is a compromised property rights regime that was triggered by our quest to correct the historical imbalance in the distribution of land. We shall enforce, promote and respect property rights and address historical compulsory acquisition through fair and transparent compensation so as to restore the collateral value of land.

All persons who call Zimbabwe 'home' shall be entitled to access land and participate in its sustainable utilization. We shall achieve this by rationalizing existing farm sizes in line with agro-economic regions and/or production capacity. To anchor this will be an independent and well-resourced Land Commission to deal with all matters on land.

Related to the rule of law is the contentious role of the security sector. We recognize and respect the role of the security sector in fostering law and order and maintaining peace and national security in Zimbabwe. The security establishment shall be apolitical, well-resourced and we shall promote meritocracy and professionalism in the sector.

(b) The Economy

We believe in a developmental state where the business of enterprise is left to business while government concentrates on creating a conducive operating environment. We do not believe in control and command economics as we believe markets are generally more efficient than governments. Government intervention will be minimally limited to cases of serious market failure.

The benefits of development have so far been concentrated at the centre, at the expense of the periphery. ZimPF will follow a development model that allocates resources down to the ward level, which will be the reference unit for development purposes. Our grassroots development model will ensure equitable distribution of the available resources and empower communities to determine their own destiny and development priorities, thus doing away with marginalization.

Gross uncertainties around the fluid and contentious indigenization law have been at the core of constraining the free flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and even local capital. The Indigenization Act will be repealed to place emphasis on economic empowerment that attracts investment and promotes the broad based socio-economic and infrastructure development objectives of the country. We also recognize that indigenization is not the only way to economic empowerment hence the need to balance the act.

As ZimPF, we believe that mineral resources belong to the people of Zimbabwe with investors bringing in capital and skills. It is only when these two factors are combined carefully that value can be created to the benefit of all parties. We, thus, believe the indigenization law must be implemented in a manner that does not scare away the much needed capital. In this respect, we also recognize the importance of policy stability and consistency in attracting meaningful long-term investments.

With formal unemployment at more than 80 per cent, we recognize the social cost that it has caused. While we also embrace the role of the SMEs sector, we believe people should be in business voluntarily not because they can't find jobs. ZimPF will pursue policies that promote industrialization and job creation with emphasis on decent jobs. Those who choose to run their own enterprises will be supported in their endeavours.

(c) Financial Sector

The almost two decades of gross financial mismanagement has eroded confidence in the financial sector and the fiscus that has meant the economy is not well oiled. The regrettable result of this mismanagement has been the ballooning unsustainable debt that has paralysed the financial system. The absence of a local currency has also been an unfortunate result of this mismanagement.

The government will be streamlined and capacitated towards efficiency and sustainability to avoid growing the debt further. We shall engage bilateral and multilateral creditors and commit to a debt resolution strategy, tied to our socio-economic development initiatives. We shall commit to tight, transparent budgetary control and management of state and national resources.

On the banking side, we shall promote and legislate for international best banking practice, to ensure the sector plays its rightful role in the development of the country, including an independent Central Bank. The Zimbabwean dollar will only be reintroduced once the key fundamentals are in place to sustain a strong currency.

(d) Real Sector Policies

We recognize that the Zimbabwean economy was predominantly agrarian in structure with downstream and upstream industries intricately linked to agriculture. Any hopes of recovery that ignores the realities in the agriculture sector are false. We shall therefore seek closure on the contentious issues of land reform and ensuring security of tenure that promotes long-term investment in agriculture. We shall seek to

create a conducive investment environment that attracts investment in agriculture as well as provide the right fiscal incentives to promote the same.

We notice over the years that the state has attempted to manipulate the manufacturing and other real sectors with disappointing results. We shall leave the business of business to business. The state will focus more on creating an enabling environment and complementary factors that attract investments in the productive sectors, namely the mining, manufacturing, and tourism sectors. We shall promote and support e-commerce to reduce corruption, fraud, and inefficiencies.

Parastatals and state-owned enterprises (SOE) will not enjoy state subsidies indefinitely, if at all. We shall depoliticize, commercialize and privatize parastatals/SOEs as necessary to ensure accountability, commercial viability, effective delivery and transparency. The above will release immediate resources to government for other programmes, whilst creating investment opportunities including promoting indigenous participation in the national economy. Government's primary role shall be to facilitate, promote and regulate to ensure a level playing field in the economy with minimum direct state participation.

(e) Infrastructure Development

Most of our infrastructure developed just before and just after independence has outlived its useful life. Lack of investment over the last two decades has constrained growth in the economy and any prospects of growth without attending to the key enablers are hopeless.

We shall promote and support investor friendly tariffs in the infrastructure and social services sectors through appropriate public-private-partnership (PPP) models. Corruption that had become cancerous in this sector will be dealt with decisively beyond rhetoric.

(f) Foreign Policy

We recognize Zimbabwe as an independent sovereign state that is part of the global village. We shall ensure that our foreign policy will be guided by rapprochement across the board, putting Zimbabwe and its people's interests first. Our policies will be informed by our sovereign interests, viewed in the context of the current modern global geo-political context.

Zimbabwe People First is committed to ensuring that Zimbabwe regains its rightful place in the global community of nations. We shall re-join the Commonwealth and avoid unnecessary self-inflicted isolation. We shall be committed to meeting our international debt obligations.

We will seek rapprochement with countries that currently have poor diplomatic and difficult economic relations with Zimbabwe, without sacrificing our national sovereignty. Zimbabwe shall strengthen its relations with all countries guided by the need to review the number of our foreign missions to reflect affordability and impact across our economic and political interests.

(g) Participation of the Diaspora

Those who choose to be out here should not be made to lose their birth right; as such the dual citizenship will be upheld as a constitutional right. The issue of the diaspora has become a global phenomenon that should be viewed positively not as a threat to sovereignty. While we recognize the positives of globalization and the opening of our borders, as ZimPF we believe the decision to be abroad must be voluntary and in the context of career development not as economic refugees. Unplanned movements to

the diaspora have broken many families and caused a lot of grief and social damage to our societal and moral fabric. As a mother it is a painful feeling.

ZimPF acknowledges the benefits arising from a strong diaspora. In fact, it has been diaspora remittances over the years that explain the miraculous survival of our government when it should have collapsed a long time ago. We will pursue investment policies that will make it easy for Zimbabweans to participate from wherever they are located in the global village. Opportunities abound in virtually all sectors of the economy that include mining, agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and real estate, among others.

The right of the diaspora to participate in the elections has been controversial as some believe most of them are anti-ZANU PF and supporters of the opposition. It is morally wrong to want their money yet denying them their sovereign right to determine how the same is governed.

(h) Conclusion

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen let me say, ZimPF is a party that connects the past, the present and the future going by its inclusive and diverse membership drawing from all backgrounds. The liberation credentials of some of the team members are beyond question and thus creating a link with the liberation history – something that the traditional opposition movements in Zimbabwe have been lacking so far. Zimbabweans across all corners have embraced the new kid on the political scene as the basis for renewed hope of change through the ballot.

Today, in Zimbabwe, we have an opposition party that Mugabe cannot dismiss as a creation of the West with no liberation history. ZimPF connects with the present situation in Zimbabwe and seeks to restore the hope of the people, which has been eroded through a myriad of challenges currently facing the economy. ZimPF offers the much-desired future through people centred policies that are set to revive the economic giant in Zimbabwe. We believe we are the future and we have solutions.

God bless Zimbabwe, God bless you all! I thank you.