

## **MORGAN TSVANGIRAI TO G8 AMBASSADORS IN HARARE**

Your excellencies, you are all aware of the new dimensions of the economic crisis that has gripped the country in the past few weeks:

There is virtually no fuel in the country; the supply of electricity has become even more erratic and industry is now on its knees.

In an attempt to stave off the crisis, the Mugabe regime has become the largest dealer in foreign currency on the black market which is obviously incapable of meeting the national needs in terms of hard currency requirements.

It is common knowledge that the Mugabe regime neither has the imagination, the capacity nor the policy package to get out of the crisis.

Poverty, hunger, joblessness and disease are destroying the social fabric of this nation. Urban poverty has reached dangerous levels and death from malnutrition is already occurring. The social anger born out of these economic hardships has reached levels never seen in the country before. Nobody can foretell how and in what circumstances this social anger is going to subside. Therefore, the urgency of international pressure being exerted to bring Mugabe to the negotiating table cannot be overemphasised.

Your Excellencies will recall that since the run-up to the presidential poll, several regional and international delegations have been to Harare in an effort to broker dialogue, but Mugabe squandered those precious overtures in an endeavour to buy time, wishing that somehow, the crisis would go away.

In particular, Mugabe and Zanu-PF have never taken any initiative to resolve the crisis. This is a clear demonstration that the regime has never been sincere about dialogue to resolve crisis. The current African initiative by Malawi, South Africa and Nigeria is welcome but it needs to be complemented by a broader international effort.

The MDC's position is quite clear and consistent. We are ready to resume talks at any time. As I said before, and contrary to what has been reported in certain sections of the local international media, we have never put any preconditions on the resumption of dialogue between the MDC and Zanu-PF. It is the Mugabe regime that introduced preconditions in April 2002 when dialogue had already been set and agreed to.

We have not set any preconditions for the resumption of dialogue. We have simply reminded the Mugabe regime of its governance responsibilities in restoring the rule of law; respecting human rights; putting a stop to state-sponsored violence; disbanding and disarming the militia in general ensuring that peace and tranquillity returns to the country so that meaningful dialogue can take place.

The issue of Mugabe's legitimacy was an agreed item for discussion on the agenda. It is therefore insincere and dishonest for Mugabe, or anybody else for that matter, to demand that the MDC recognises him as head of state as a precondition for dialogue. The legitimacy of the present regime is the root cause of the crisis, and the demand that Mugabe be recognised as legitimate ahead of any dialogue is therefore incomprehensible. Pronouncing Mugabe as legitimate will not resolve the crisis because the MDC does not confer legitimacy; it is the people of Zimbabwe who do that through the mechanism of a free and fair poll.

It is precisely the illegitimacy of the Mugabe regime and the strategies to return to democracy and legitimacy that constitute the agenda for dialogue. The agenda agreed to by both the MDC and Zanu-PF during the aborted April 2002 dialogue recognised this.

In our view, the starting point in the resolution of the crisis of legitimacy and governance in Zimbabwe must be Mugabe's immediate and unconditional exit from the office of the president.

This will pave the way for interim arrangements to be put in place for the holding of presidential polls that will result in the installation of a legitimate government.

We understand that Mugabe is only prepared to relinquish his illegitimate power if he is guaranteed what he calls a safe and dignified exit. The position of the MDC on that issue is quite clear.

The MDC has never preached or practised the politics of vengeance and retribution. On several occasions, the leadership of the MDC has stated quite unequivocally to local and international audiences that we are determined never to allow the horrors of the past to haunt and influence the future of our country. That position has not changed.

The only guaranteed safe exit for Mugabe and his cronies is through a restoration of the rights of the people, the restoration of the legitimacy of the government and the opening up of democratic space. The manner and circumstance of Mugabe's immediate exit from power should not be a precondition for engaging in dialogue towards a restoration of legitimacy. Mugabe is now a clear liability to the country, the region and internationally.

We shall never accept the linkage of the dialogue towards the restoration of legitimacy to Mugabe's succession plans with Zanu-PF. The essential goal of the negotiations therefore must be put in place irrevocable measures leading to and facilitating the holding of free and fair presidential polls, ushering in a legitimate government expressing the will of the people of Zimbabwe.

The MDC will not be party to any negotiation process, which simply seeks to incorporate us, as junior partners, into the structures of illegitimate power dominated by Mugabe and his cronies. This will only serve to expand that illegitimacy and ultimately to sanitise the Mugabe regime. Those within Zanu-PF and outside of it who talk about the need for a transitional government clearly recognise the need to transit from the violent illegitimacy of the Mugabe regime to a legitimate and democratic political dispensation, and we agree with their diagnosis of the regime entirely.

However we do not believe that the transition should go through a so-called transitional government. In the prevailing circumstances, a transitional government, which does not carry the mandate of the people.

Our position and that of the majority of Zimbabweans is that the political arrangements that are necessary after Mugabe's announced departure must religiously adhere to and be guided by the provisions of the constitution of Zimbabwe. In accordance with the constitution, interim arrangements in the event of a sitting president vacating office are clearly articulated and well provided for.

An interim/acting president, logically from the ruling party, would take over the office of the president and the presidential polls be held within a period of 90 days to choose a new and substantive president. This cast-iron constitutional provision and there are no compelling reasons to deviate from it. "Accommodating" the MDC is a myth that has to be dispelled once and for all. We have not sought and will never seek to be accommodated by anybody outside democratic entitlement, the rule of law and indeed the constitution.

We in the MDC fervently believe in the unfettered free and fair expression of the people's sovereign will. We are ready and comfortable to live with any result of the people's electoral judgement. If we lose in a free and fair presidential electoral contest, we will eagerly play our role as a loyal, patriotic and constructive political opposition party in a democratic society. Similarly, if the electorate confers its mandate on us, we are ready to take up the challenge of governance.

The only way to resolve the current crisis and salvage what remains of the nation is through a process of serious and sincere dialogue between the MDC and Zanu-PF. Such a process can only start in earnest if the Mugabe regime commits itself to the creation of a peaceful environment in the context of which a meaningful political engagement can be undertaken.

As a demonstration of its sincerity and commitment to a peaceful and negotiated end to the current crisis of governance, the Mugabe regime must implement the following measures immediately:

- Put a stop to all forms of state-sponsored violence that has engulfed the nation in the past three years.
- End all political persecutions and prosecutions.
- All Zanu-PF militias must be disbanded; their training must stop immediately.
- The so-called war veterans must be disarmed. There must be guarantees that they will not be re-armed and that they will not engage in political operating above the law, but only as ordinary Zimbabweans.
- Repressive and anti-democratic laws such as the Public Order and Security Act and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act must be repealed immediately.
- An undertaking not to grant amnesty for perpetrators of murder, rape, torture, political violence and other serious crimes.
- An immediate stop to human rights abuse of all kinds.
- An end to selective and biased law enforcement. The Zimbabwe Republic Police should be non-partisan in the execution of their duties.
- An end to the use of the Central Intelligence Organisation for partisan political activities
- A stop to the use of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces in civilian policing duties and political activities of any kind.
- Respect and impartial enforcement of the rule of law.
- An end to the use of the state-controlled print and electronic media as partisan media instruments.

Again, as I said before, these are not preconditions. Instead, they are simply administrative responsibilities of any de facto authority, and the Mugabe regime has deliberately reneged on them, thereby creating the chaotic and dangerous situation in which the nation find itself.

These are the minimum conditions that would create a peaceful political environment that would enable serious dialogue to take place.