



BRITAIN ZIMBABWE SOCIETY

in association with

**Zimbabwe Association
Action for Southern Africa
End the Silence**

**Canon Collins Educational Trust for Southern Africa
Centre of African Studies, University of London
Royal Africa Society**

Presents a Report on

THE OPEN FORUM ON ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA

28TH FEBRUARY 2004, 2pm – 5.30pm,

**BRUNEI GALLERY,
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL & AFRICAN STUDIES (SOAS)**

Purpose and Scope of this Document:

This report describes an initiative in the United Kingdom to expand dialogue and engagement between Zimbabweans and South Africans, and to bring together the expatriate communities of the two countries and their friendship societies. It is produced as a record of the event, a briefing to non-governmental organisations, civil society and media agencies, and a catalyst for further interventions in support of a just and stable society in Zimbabwe.

The South African government has persistently promoted a strategy of ‘quiet diplomacy’ as the most effective strategy in international mediation efforts to solve Zimbabwe’s problems. Meanwhile civil society and political opposition groupings inside Zimbabwe, growing increasingly frustrated with what they perceive to be the ineffectiveness of the South African government’s approach, continue to lobby political, civic, labour and religious organisations within South Africa to demand a more concerted engagement with Zimbabwe’s crisis.

With these challenges in mind, around 300 South Africans, Zimbabweans and others gathered to discuss how they could best address the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe and its impact on the Southern African region, with particular reference to the relationship between Zimbabwe and South Africa and to civil society in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Britain. The Forum was “open” and succeeded in attracting a wide variety of people, representative of a diversity of political views concerning the Southern African region.

Concept and Objectives of the Forum:

An inclusive, non-partisan, non-governmental Forum to examine, analyse and debate the relationship between Zimbabwe and South Africa - historically, in the present crisis and in the future. There was no intention to adopt resolutions. Nevertheless, broad objectives included:

1. To bring together the Zimbabwean and South African Diasporas in the UK, with the British constituency of interest in Southern Africa
2. To inform and educate about current developments in the region appertaining to Zimbabwe's relations with South Africa and the region
3. To stimulate and support an open, inclusive and constructive debate on the Zimbabwe-South Africa relationship
4. To promote and support networking and relationship building between Zimbabwean and South African individuals and organisations
5. To learn from the rich experience of anti-apartheid solidarity work in the UK and the Southern African region
6. To support the ongoing advocacy efforts by civil society organisations in Zimbabwe and South Africa in defence of human rights, justice and democracy in Zimbabwe

PROGRAMME FOR THE OPEN FORUM ON ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA

1.30pm Registration

2.00pm Welcome and Introduction – Margaret Ling, Britain Zimbabwe Society

2.10pm **SESSION 1 – ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA:
PERSPECTIVES ON THE CURRENT CRISIS**

Chair: David Simon

Speakers: Moeletsi Mbeki (South Africa); Brian Kagoro (Zimbabwe)

Questions and discussion

3.30pm Tea Break

4.00pm **SESSION 2 – STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:
EXPLORING THE OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Chair: Lela Kogbara

Speakers: Thoko Matshe (Zimbabwe); Jim Corrigan (SA/UK)

Questions and discussion

5.30pm Concluding contributions from panellists

5.45pm CLOSE

The Outcomes - Summary of Key Suggestions and Ideas:

Lively, but good-natured interventions prevailed at the event. The presentations successfully drew the participants into productive and sincere engagement with each other and the issues. Gleaned from the presentations and contributions from the floor, the following represents a summary of the issues that preoccupied the participants:

- Zimbabweans need to take the lead in resolving the issues affecting their country but they require support from elsewhere. Consequently, there were calls for
 - Independent monitoring of food distribution, political violence, parliamentary bi-elections, and the forthcoming parliamentary elections
 - Greater links between trade unions and grassroots organisations within and outside of Zimbabwe
 - More solidarity from South Africa specifically for civil society in Zimbabwe and for Zimbabweans currently in South Africa
 - More support from Britain, especially for those Zimbabweans currently in Britain

- There is great need to promote a change in the political culture in Zimbabwe for the following related reasons
 - Society is dangerously polarised at present
 - Civil liberties have been undermined and need to be assured
 - The country has no lasting history of recourse to justice through the rule of law
- Zimbabwe's economy has suffered from mismanagement, and rehabilitation efforts should focus on
 - Keeping assets within the country
 - Completing the redistribution of land through a transparent and viable process that takes into account the interests of farm-workers and a suitable infrastructure of support
- Information is far too restricted and needs to be more freely and widely disseminated. A political settlement must therefore attend to fostering a less stringently controlled dissemination regime that allows Zimbabweans to transmit and receive diverse views.

Organisers' Remarks:

The Open Forum succeeded in attracting a wide range of people of different generations, varied and opposing political opinions, and diverse ethnic backgrounds. While Zimbabweans appeared to be the most numerous, South Africans made up a significant proportion of the participants, and the event also attracted a number of British people concerned for Zimbabwe. Many of the Southern Africans present were people who are, or have been, actively involved in the politics of the region, and there were a noticeable number of representatives from academia, parliament, and NGOs. Despite and possibly because of this wide diversity in attendance, the audience was extremely responsive and treated the event seriously, with respect and appreciation.

Good use was made of this varied but knowledgeable and experienced participation, as most of the afternoon was devoted to open discussion while the presentations of the key speakers were limited to 15 minutes each. The calibre of debate was commendable as it was constructive, positive and good-humoured. It became clear that the Zimbabweans present at the Forum who are currently living in Britain have both a deep commitment to their country and also the intention to return to contribute more directly to its future.

Most striking was the fact that there has been no previous attempt to get Zimbabweans and South Africans living abroad to jointly address this issue in these numbers. It is hoped that bringing them together in this Forum may be an initial step in the formation of more enduring links and more effective networks, and that further action in this regard may arise from the many claims about Zimbabwean resolve to deal with their problems, as well as the expression of commitment from many South Africans to support them. But it is apparent that individuals are relatively powerless to organise other than through joining civil society and political organisations. It is therefore incumbent upon civil society organisations to carry this process forward. This Open Forum is a clear expression of the hope that civil society organisations in both South Africa and the UK can take up this challenge and liaise more effectively in support of related organisations in Zimbabwe.

THE OPEN FORUM – A FULL REPORT:

A message addressed to the Forum from **Elinor Sisulu** of the South African office of the **Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition**, was distributed with the programme at the start of the event. This message is reproduced in its entirety at the end of this document.

Introductory remarks:

Margaret Ling of the Britain Zimbabwe Society welcomed the participants to the Forum, explaining that it arose from the South African ‘Ten Years On’ Conference held in London in October 2003, and the Zimbabwean demonstration called to coincide with it. Zimbabweans have been concerned that whilst many South Africans support their concerns regarding the lack of human rights in Zimbabwe, there has been inadequate dialogue between the peoples of both countries, indicating an apparent lack of concern about their plight.

The Open Forum has been called to encourage the development of such a dialogue over the Zimbabwean crisis, particularly within the realm of civil society. The event was expected to be non-partisan, and all participants were invited to contribute in the spirit with which the event had been organised – that of open dialogue and respect for the views of others.

A Message of Support from Archbishop Desmond Tutu was read to the Forum:

Dear Friends,

I am greatly honoured to be asked to send greetings to you as you meet at a fraught time. I wish I could be with you in person as I certainly am with you in spirit.

There were moments in our struggle against apartheid when it did seem as if evil and injustice would prevail. They did not because this is a moral universe. I am sure that you sometimes just might wonder whether this nightmare might really end, and your hearts must bleed as you watch a beautiful land being dragged to ruins. The night will pass and morning will come and the dawn break. Keep your courage up and dare to speak the truth as you do without fear or favour.

Next time in Harare.

God bless you,

+ Desmond Tutu

SESSION 1

ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA: PERSPECTIVES ON THE CURRENT CRISIS

Chair: David Simon

Professor of Development Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London. Professor Simon is a specialist in southern Africa and a trustee of the Canon Collins Educational Trust for Southern Africa.

Speaker:

MOELETSI MBEKI is a director of Endemol Productions SA, one of South Africa's leading television production companies, and serves on several corporate boards. He is also deputy chairperson of the South African Institute of International Affairs, an independent think tank. Moeletsi Mbeki was formerly a journalist in exile with Zimbabwe Newspapers in Harare and with the BBC World Service in London. Between 1986 and 1987 he was information officer for the Lusaka-based Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). When he finally returned to South Africa from exile in 1990, he became Head of Communications for the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and media consultant to the African National Congress. Brother to the President, Thabo Mbeki, Moeletsi Mbeki is a regular media commentator and analyst on political and economic issues and is known for his independent and outspoken views.

Mr Mbeki referred to the complex interactive history of the peoples of Zimbabwe and South Africa since the mid-nineteenth century, and throughout the twentieth century. More recently, the African National Congress support for ZAPU rather than ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe's liberation war had adversely affected the long but not always happy relationship between the two countries. Today, many Zimbabweans believe South Africa is giving too much support to their President Robert Mugabe.

Mbeki argued that it is necessary to see the issue from the South African point of view, which itself reflects the diversity of South African society. Some see the crisis as a threat to their country, while for others it is an opportunity, and for many it is a puzzle.

It is clear, however, that ZANU-PF aims to prevent the MDC from winning an election, by tactics including the use of violence, manipulation of the electoral process, and attempts to co-opt the leadership of the MDC into ZANU-PF in a manner reminiscent of the co-optation of ZAPU. Mr Mbeki also identified the seizure of white-owned commercial farms as part of ZANU-PF's political tactics. In contrast to the limited land resettlement of the 1980s, where land went mainly to the poor, there is today no pretence of addressing the problems of poor Zimbabweans, as confiscation is now simply the transfer of assets from white farmers to the black elite. This is coupled with wider mismanagement of the economy.

It is noticeable that South African-owned properties have not been seized, because the Zimbabwean Government still wants the support of South Africa. (Examples given were Hippo Valley (Anglo-American) and the return of the Oppenheims' farm). But the process has led to the devaluation of these investments, so that Zimbabwean assets are being sold very cheaply. Some South Africans see this as an opportunity to acquire cheap capital, such as gold mines, at low prices; a process Mr Mbeki described as the 'cannibalisation' of the Zimbabwe economy. Other SADC countries are developing their tobacco industries to replace Zimbabwe's exports, often using Zimbabwean farmers and farm workers. Thus, there are some benefits to private capital in South Africa. Meanwhile, skilled and educated Zimbabweans are filling managerial posts in South Africa. There are estimated to be 2-3 million Zimbabweans living in South Africa, many of them there illegally. The South African poor (particularly those working in the informal sector) see this influx as a potential competitive threat to their livelihoods, but the voices of the poor of both countries are not being heard.

The ANC, Mr Mbeki concluded, is a party that, because of its lengthy history as an African Nationalist movement, does not easily conceive of supporting "new" parties that lack these same credentials. It is unlikely therefore that the ANC will support the MDC until the latter becomes the government of Zimbabwe as happened with ZANU-PF.

Speaker:

BRIAN KAGORO is Chair of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, the foremost civil society coalition in Zimbabwe, having served as the Coalition's coordinator until February 2004. The Coalition brings together over 250 groups and organisations including trade unions, churches, women and student groups, and other mass-based organisations in Zimbabwe seeking a way out of the country's political, economic and humanitarian crises. Prior to this Brian Kagoro was a spokesperson for the National Constitutional Assembly, which successfully campaigned for a "no" vote in Zimbabwe's Constitutional Referendum in 2001. He started his campaigning career as leader of the Zimbabwean student movement and then worked as a human rights and trade union lawyer, representing the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and its General Secretary Morgan Tsvangirai, now leader of Zimbabwe's opposition Movement for Democratic Change.

Brian Kagoro described the multi-layered nature of the Zimbabwean crisis. There is a crisis of political governance; the Government faces a crisis of legitimacy following the disputed elections, and in relation to their policies. There is a crisis of livelihoods as the élite is a major contributor to the pillage of the economy through asset stripping. The economic structural crisis will, Mr Kagoro argued, not simply be addressed by IMF policies, and the depth of these problems cannot be addressed through simplistic assumptions about the centrality of Robert Mugabe in this crisis of governance.

Kagoro argued that Zimbabwe has suffered a governance crisis since 1894, under colonial, settler, and post-Independence governments. Zimbabwe's history is the constant collapse of the rule of law – it has never experienced the upholding of the

rule of law. He pointed out that more Zimbabweans died in the massacres in Matabeleland in the early 1980s than in the civil conflict of the past five years. The country has never gone beyond the ghost of Rhodesia.

There is not only a crisis of leadership, but also one of follower-ship. The people of Zimbabwe have given former comrades the invitation to rule as they please. The debate over succession is consequently taking place in an ethical vacuum.

South Africa, Kagoro argued, has a sense of guilt for having supported the ‘wrong’ party in the past. In addition, the ANC’s tendency to support liberation movement governments reflects its own anxiety that it could ultimately be replaced as the South African government. The Zambian example has reinforced the ANC’s belief that trade unionists do not make good national leaders.

Kagoro contrasted the claims of the ANC and ZANU-PF to be left-wing parties with the realities of their economic policies, warning against ideologies that are waved like a red flag. Rather, we should dialogue about the ideologies and values under which our countries are governed in practice. The ANC’s Freedom Charter would not condone the reality of governance in Zimbabwe, but it is condoned in practice by South Africa’s “silent diplomacy”.

The ANC is now consistently engaged in this position of “silent diplomacy”, but its tripartite alliance appears divided over Zimbabwe; COSATU and, to a lesser extent the SACP, have adopted positions critical of the ZANU-PF government, but this has not been reflected in the South African government’s position. Where does this position come from? Who does it actually represent?

Mr Kagoro argued that it is easy to claim that black Zimbabweans are where they are because of white settlers. Race does determine the post-colonial condition to be an African condition. But Mugabe is racist because to argue that whites are to blame for everything infers that they are superior to black Africans. This suggests that whites are in supreme control. Furthermore, why then re-enact their laws? Nevertheless, it is important to concede that some white commercial and industrial interests have not fully integrated into Zimbabwe since 1980. The past twenty years has seen white sabotage of the economy as some Rhodesians have refused to integrate and commit to Zimbabwe. The land issue cannot be ignored.

In the subsequent discussion, speakers from the floor claimed that this crisis was ultimately one of politics and identity for the ANC, which claimed internationally to be promoting good governance through NEPAD, whilst making ‘kith and kin’ statements to its domestic support base, without actually appeasing demands for redistribution. South Africa faces the future prospect of a similar trade union-led backlash to that in Zimbabwe in the mid-1990s, following the negative impact of structural adjustment.

A few speakers claimed that poor Zimbabweans had benefited from the land reform process, and criticised the key speakers for ignoring the legacy of imperialism, the Cold War, and the impact of globalisation on the crisis. It is important to look at the

role of Britain and the USA in this regard. Zimbabwean civil society was warned that if it did not address issues such as racism, President Mugabe would do so in his own way.

Other speakers insisted that it was important to keep the focus on the relationship between Zimbabwe and South Africa, and particularly the role played by civil society. It was stressed that ordinary South African people as well as the ANC government should not forget the extensive support they had been given by Zimbabweans in their struggle against apartheid, with a number of speakers calling for that support to be reciprocated now.

There was a healthy debate as to the role that South Africa is playing in resolving the Zimbabwean crisis, and what it should be doing. It was pointed out that only eleven Zimbabweans had been granted asylum in South Africa, while 1538 had applied. Some speakers argued that President Mbeki was openly supporting the Mugabe government, and some that Britain should take responsibility for its failure to pay compensation for land. Others argued that only Zimbabweans could solve their own problems. There was general agreement, however, about the importance of learning from the history of both countries and their peoples.

In response,

Moeletsi Mbeki argued that Zimbabweans had to solve their own land reform issues, and that Africans should sort out African problems, rather than calling on the British to sort them out. He has worked with Morgan Tsvangirai in the 1980s when Tsvangirai was leader of ZCTU and Mbeki was an official of the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, an affiliate of ZCTU, and he is convinced that Tsvangirai has Zimbabwe's interests at heart. Mbeki also argued that the evidence of the Government's own report (by Charles Utete – Cabinet Secretary) on the existing land reform programme had identified its shortcomings.

Brian Kagoro agreed with this. He stressed the multiple layers of the problem, both historical and current, but while he conceded that the 'whiteness' of the post-1980 economy could not be ignored, neither could the issue of governance over the last 20 years. 30,000 people died in Matabeleland in the early 1980s, and we need to assign blame where it lies. Zimbabwe, he argued needed a national conversation to address its historical and contemporary crisis. Calling Mugabe and Tsvangirai names will not answer the question of "How do we get to live better than we did under Rhodesia?"

SESSION 2

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE: EXPLORING THE OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Chair: Lela Kogbara

Lela Kogbara is Co-Chair of Action for Southern Africa, (successor to the Anti-Apartheid movement). She also served on the national executive of the Anti-Apartheid movement. In her professional life she works in the education sector of local government.

Speaker:

THOKO MATSHE is a human rights activist from Zimbabwe and has been the director of AkinaMamaWaAfrika for two and a half years. For the past twenty years she has been involved with civil society organisations. She is an experienced civil society leader having managed several women's NGOs in Zimbabwe and chaired the Zimbabwe National Constitutional Assembly. She has also worked as a Senior Programme Officer (South Africa) for Hivos, a Dutch funding organisation, in their Southern Africa programmes. Thoko Matshe has been part of the leadership of the women's movement and sits on several boards of NGOs in South Africa and Zimbabwe. She is a member of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition.

Thoko Matshe began by posing the question "What can civil society do?" She argued that as an African woman, she was well aware that change would not come from the 'old men' who dominated the governments of SADC and the AU, and equally criticised the British government for its restrictions on asylum for Zimbabweans. Matshe responded to Moeletsi Mbeki's remarks on the "cannibalisation" of the Zimbabwean economy, by asking why the Government had only seriously addressed the land issue since 2000, despite the removal of the land clause in the Constitution in 1990, and the major donor conference in 1998. She suggested that the solution to its problems lies in embedding an interest in change in the people of Zimbabwe.

Matshe argued that whilst many Zimbabweans carry ZANU-PF membership cards, few of them are committed to ZANU-PF and many more are committed to the idea of change. However, there has been no major uprising. Instead, Zimbabweans have adapted to survive, at the price of their living conditions. There is a polarisation of Zimbabwean society into ZANU-PF versus MDC. It would be possible to give credit to certain of ZANU-PF's achievements, except that anyone who critically analyses Zimbabwean history is now accused of being MDC. Civil society has been divided into pro- and anti-government camps, and has been weakened by the loss of funds, the restriction of public space since April 2002, and the threat of torture and death against its activists. State control of the media has prevented the free flow of information. People are very innovative in Zimbabwe but these are threats that impede their innovation. Government is the biggest employer, and the state is the biggest source of

business contracts, so opposition has been tempered by this control over business and jobs, as people fear being associated with the opposition.

All this means that there is little practical dialogue between Zimbabweans – differences are interpreted as representing fixed political positions, and there is a culture of blaming someone else. We can no longer blame the legacy of colonialism for our problems, as ZANU-PF has been in power for 24 years. We need as Zimbabweans, and as civil society, to look inwards to see what we can do to move forward. The debate on Zimbabwe needs to be deracialised, the culture of ‘Mugabe must go’ must stop, and the culture of politics as a whole must change. We must contextualise if we blame, and look inward to move forward.

For example, the lack of compensation from the British is blamed for the land issue. But the land clause in the constitution was done away with in 1990. We need to discuss what happened up to 1990, up to 1996, and up to the donor conference in 1998 and subsequently. One would expect that Mugabe’s insistence on Zimbabwean sovereignty should have allowed him to act during those years.

Since April 2002, mass protest is a thing of the past in Zimbabwe, because demonstrations now only result in prison and beatings. The space for civil society is getting smaller and tighter all the time, and information is more and more controlled (e.g. the disappearance of the Daily News). There will be elections next year and there will be even less information available then.

What methods can we use to ensure that information on the situation in the country is made available? Matshe pointed to Apartheid-era solidarity between grassroots civil society in both countries, amongst trade unionists, churches, and women’s organisations. Such dialogue is needed now. She stressed that NGOs are not the same as civil society. During the apartheid struggle, civil society went beyond NGOs and information got shared and experiences discussed so that the issue was alive within civil society, whereas in Zimbabwe NGOs are seen as the limits of civil society.

There is a “We liberated the country” syndrome. Matshe quipped “What, you alone liberated the country?” Liberation was not achieved by a few people; many Zimbabweans played different roles in the liberation process. Everyone participated or suffered or lost in the struggle for Zimbabwe, not just the leaders. The ANC needs to relate to all parties in Zimbabwe, as others may be in government tomorrow.

Civil society must promote genuine dialogue between all Zimbabweans, by making people-to-people links e.g. through trade unions, churches, and women’s groups. Westerners must not be seen as driving the agenda, but the people of Zimbabwe must be seen to be the leaders. Zimbabweans must realise even if the MDC comes to power, that civil society must remain independent and retain its autonomy. The struggle is not about “one person” Robert Mugabe, but it is the political culture of Zimbabwe that has to change.

Speaker:

JIM CORRIGALL is a journalist with BBC World Service in London, and is Vice-President of the National Union of Journalists. Born in South Africa, he was active in the struggle against apartheid and was exiled in Britain from the mid-1970s. He worked as a journalist in Zimbabwe in the 1980s and more recently has travelled widely in Africa for the BBC, making documentaries.

Jim Corrigan also criticised the restriction in the flow of information within Zimbabwe, and cited his own union's practical support for trainee Zimbabwean journalists as an example of practical civil society action. The NUJ has been supporting persecuted Zimbabwean journalists and has motions currently in process for more support. The NUJ also gives training to refugee journalists. He suggested that positive action might include similar programs offered by other trade unions throughout Britain.

Mr Corrigan argued that Zimbabwean activists needed to learn from the South African experience of fighting Apartheid. The Anti-Apartheid movement had a clear and simple strategy which involved sanctions and the isolation of South Africa. This was a specific answer to the specific problem of isolating an evidently corrupt system in need of abolition. However, he questioned whether that is appropriate for Zimbabwe now. Apartheid South Africa was basically a colonial situation and that is why sanctions were appropriate. Sanctions should not be regarded as a universal method of getting rid of all unpopular or dictatorial governments.

Sanctions against Zimbabwe have been resisted by South Africa and other African countries. It is questionable whether South Africa's approach of promoting political reconciliation and transcending differences over the 2002 election was working in practice. The ANC government is sticking to this position of "quiet diplomacy" because it cannot see an alternative, and it fears the unpredictable consequences of isolating Zimbabwe, as well as the unpopularity of such a policy in the SADC region. Sanctions would also invite retaliation from Mugabe, and so the suggestion of "switching off the power" is simplistic. It may be unrealistic to expect southern African governments to take responsibility for the situation. Consequently, there is a need to focus on more positive, productive ways for Zimbabwe to find a solution that allows it to move forward.

In the second discussion, speakers from the floor focused on more practical action. Some argued that South Africa's vested economic interests in Zimbabwe were a deterrent to practical action, and there were calls for publicising such interests. It was suggested that ordinary Zimbabweans could not deal with the armed might of the Zimbabwean government, and that it was necessary to convince regional governments that the economic crisis might affect them in due course.

Some advocated more direct action by South Africa, arguing that this had been crucial in ending Ian Smith's UDI regime. There were calls for NGOs to do more to pressure the South African administration and it was questioned whether the ANC's support for Mugabe might be raised as an electoral issue. In addition, UK NGOs should fund their South African counterparts to educate their constituencies about the situation in

Zimbabwe and its historical basis – young South Africans do not remember the liberation struggle.

Again, a number of South Africans and Zimbabweans called for greater support to be given to refugees in South Africa (and elsewhere), repeatedly reminding the Forum of the support given by Zimbabweans to South Africans in their struggle against apartheid. Other states neighbouring Zimbabwe should be more conscious of the possibility that Zimbabwe's political troubles might spill over into them; there was positive action that they could take, such as independent monitoring of the distribution of food and political violence. There was also a suggestion that exiled Zimbabweans should network more and create alliances across the globe.

Some speakers argued that it must be recognised that the Mugabe regime is unreformable. Others, however, claimed that the land issue needed to be properly addressed, so that it could no longer be used as a decoy.

The Deputy Head of the Zimbabwean Embassy in London spoke briefly, praising President Mbeki's principled position and stressing that the South African President is better informed on the situation in Zimbabwe than any other leader, as there is a continuing exchange of ministers and officials between the two countries. He was pleased to hear Thoko Matshe and Brian Kagoro say that Zimbabweans should solve their own problems, as this has been the government's approach all along. Whilst the land reform programme was complete, Britain should compensate the dispossessed white farmers.

Speakers Closing Remarks:

Jim Corrigan stressed that South Africa wants an economic solution to the situation in Zimbabwe. South Africa is keen to promote economic co-operation in the region, and does not want to return to the economic boycotts, threats and invasions of the apartheid era. In response to one questioner, Jim conceded that some South African officials might be benefiting from economic interests in Zimbabwe, but he did not believe this was on a grand scale - the major South African interests in Zimbabwe's economy were held by long-established South African multinationals, not by the 'new elite'. He argued that whilst the apartheid regime had been unreformable, the situation in Zimbabwe was different, and that this influenced the approach that must be taken in trying to improve the situation.

Thoko Matshe was adamant that Zimbabweans must sort out their problems for themselves, but with support from elsewhere. There was a need for financial support for Zimbabwean civil society, and innovative approaches were needed to address acute problems, such as the provision of counselling for women who have been raped and tortured. She condemned the use of food aid as a political tool. There need to be international solidarity networks between trade unions and the dissemination of information is vital to enable support of the kind whereby people can help themselves. There needs to be strategic pressure so that civil society does not get burnt out. President Mbeki needs to be properly informed about the situation in Zimbabwe, not just informed by ZANU-PF.

Moeletsi Mbeki declined to make any concluding remarks, giving his “two minutes” to Brian Kagoro.

In conclusion, **Brian Kagoro** said he was frightened by the entrenchment of polarisation, and pointed out that many of the people present in the room are victims of this polarisation and the current policy of chaos. He argued that simply expressing frustrations is not the same as finding solutions that enable us to move beyond polarity into a better future. Kagoro added that the land reform process had not been concluded, because the rights of farm-workers had not been addressed; clinics and other infrastructure were urgently needed in the resettled areas.

The liberation war was primarily about the return of assets from settlers, and the achievement of the right to vote. Zimbabweans need to take back their resources (land), and need to continue the process of liberation to achieve one person, one vote in free, fair, transparent and legitimate elections in 2005. Kagoro argued that civil society must demand international election monitoring, and he stressed that the 2005 election should not be boycotted; the key thing is to contest it. There is also cross-party agreement that a new, truly indigenous constitution is needed, as the present constitution is still that from Lancaster House and is foreign. Violence against political opponents must end, and militias must be dismantled. The treason accusations against Morgan Tsvangirai should be dropped, he and President Mugabe should call for an end to sanctions, and they should agree a process of transformation built on truth and reconciliation. South Africans and other Africans should demand that all Rhodesian and apartheid-style repressive legislation should be swept away, restoring civil liberties and freedom of assembly. These things need to be done to address the health crisis and other critical problems. For its part, Britain should meet its commitments, not only to fund land reform, but also to provide additional resources to develop Zimbabwe.

Organising Committee:

The Open Forum was convened by the Britain Zimbabwe Society in association with the Zimbabwe Association, Action for Southern Africa, End the Silence, Canon Collins Educational Trust for Southern Africa, the Centre of African Studies at the University of London, and the Royal African Society.

The planning group consisted of the following people, who can be contacted for further information through the organisations listed:

Britain Zimbabwe Society (www.britain-zimbabwe.org.uk)

– Margaret Ling, Oliver Phillips, and Clayton Peel

Zimbabwe Association (zimbabweassociation@hotmail.com)

Canon Collins Educational Trust for Southern Africa (www.ccetsa.org)

– Katrina Phillips

Action for Southern Africa (www.actsa.org)

- Alastair Fraser

End the Silence (www.endthesilence.com)

- Eldridge Culverwell
- Lois Davis
- Tirzah Loewenstein

Individual Members of Organising Group:

- Alan Brooks
- Forward Maisokwadzo

Sponsors:

The Open Forum was made possible through the support of the following organisations:

- The Centre of African Studies at the University of London and the Royal African Society enabled the Forum to be held in the Brunei Gallery at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and assisted with publicity.
- The Britain Zimbabwe Society, the Canon Collins Educational Trust for Southern Africa, Unison, and Zimbabwe Watch, Netherlands gave financial assistance to cover speakers' travel as well as other expenses related to the event and to the dissemination of this report.
- A wide range of organisations, press and media, as well as individuals, helped to publicise the event including the Commonwealth Trade Union Council (CTUC), the International Department of Trades Union Congress (TUC), the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, the Catholic Institute for International Relations, South Africa & Zimbabwe Times, SW Radio Africa, and ZWNEWS.com.

Contributors to this Report:

The rapporteurs at the Open Forum were Marieke Clarke, Miles Larmer, and Oliver Phillips.

The final report was compiled from their detailed notes by Oliver Phillips, with assistance from Margaret Ling and Clayton Peel.



APPENDIX:

Message to BZS Open Forum on Zimbabwe and South Africa from Elinor Sisulu, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, South African Office.

In this the tenth year of South Africa's fledgling democracy, there is much to celebrate despite the major challenges presented by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and distressingly high crime rates. Those who experienced the horrifying violence of the early Nineties remember how the country seemed to be perpetually teetering on the brink of a terrifying catastrophe. Who can forget the deadly regularity of the train massacres? Or the seething anger of the crowd in the dusty fields of Boipatong, gathered to mourn the brutal massacre of some 45 people by rampaging residents of a neighbouring migrant labourer's hostel? Or the surreal aftermath of Chis Hani's assassination, when a shocked and enraged nation heeded Nelson Mandela's appeal for calm?

As the nation gears up to its third democratic non-racial presidential election, many of us recall those frightening years and say yes, we have come a long way. Unbelievably South Africa was pulled from the brink of the abyss and we today have a normal society (almost!). As I observe the Independent Electoral Commission's machinery in motion, the South African part of me is filled with pride. The IEC is one of the most efficient electoral commissions on the continent. I am proud of its impartiality and am especially proud of the strong, efficient women at its helm – Chairperson Brigalia Bam, CEO Pancy Tlakula and Commissioner Thoko Mpumlwana – women chosen for their integrity and professional skills rather than their allegiance to the ruling party, unlike the electoral bodies in some countries that will remain unmentioned.

At a recent meeting political parties in the troubled province of KwaZulu committed themselves to a code of conduct to avoid election-related violence. Prisoners appeal to the Constitutional Court to uphold their right to vote while the IEC wrings its hands in anxiety – if they win the IEC will face the Herculean task of registering tens of thousands of prisoners in the few weeks before the mid-April poll. I am sometimes irritated but more often than not appreciative of various radio talk shows that are dominated by election debates. One does become saturated by the constant media bombardment of election-related news but there is always the lighter side. Some election posters are highly entertaining – especially the one that portrayed a veteran New National Party politician now turned independent candidate, embracing the legend “Champion of the Poor”. Some enterprising soul painted out the last letter of the word ‘Poor’. The “Champion of the Poo” was not amused and declared that the person who defaced the poster “had a demented mind”.

The South African part of me celebrates this unfolding election drama while the Zimbabwean part looks on in envy. Why oh why can Zimbabwe not have a truly independent and impartial IEC? Why can't we have radio talk shows on which politicians and civil servants are regularly taken to task? South Africans take for granted what are unheard of luxuries in democracy-starved Zimbabwe. Imagine an Evita Bezuidenhout running a voter education programme in Zimbabwe? Imagine the

gifted outrageous cartoonist, Zapiro, getting his work published in the Zimbabwean media? Light-hearted humour is a missing ingredient in the Zimbabwean election concoction. Instead we have a deadly assault on the media and judiciary. Zimbabweans have as much chance of enjoying a free and fair election in 2004 as they have of landing in Jupiter.

Do South Africans, as they enjoy the fruits of democracy, spare a thought for their Northern neighbour? Fortunately some do. Organisations such as the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CVSR), the Themba Lesizwe Network, Lawyers for Human Rights, the Human Rights Institute of South Africa and the South African Council of Churches have provided sterling support to Zimbabwean organisations and to individual refugees, a considerable number of whom are torture victims. There are other organisations and individuals who constantly raise their voices to counter the Zimbabwe Government propaganda that characterizes the Zimbabwean conflict as an anti-imperialist struggle.

Unfortunately, until very recently, the Zimbabwean diaspora in South Africa has not really organised itself into a cohesive force that can advocate for positive change in Zimbabwe. Recently-established organisations such as the Zimbabwe Institute, the Zimbabwe Research Initiative, the Batanai/Bambanani Association of Zimbabwe, the Heal Zimbabwe Trust and the establishment of the South African Office of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition should strengthen ongoing advocacy efforts and mobilize Zimbabweans to take advantage of the political space in South Africa to advocate for the defence of human rights and democracy in Zimbabwe.

Recent utterances and actions of the Zimbabwean government have demonstrated beyond doubt that pro-democracy forces are in for a long haul. It is imperative that Zimbabwean organisations build sustainable capacity and develop medium and long term strategies for regional networking and advocacy.

It is a brilliant strategic move to bring together Zimbabwean and South African diasporas in Britain and to resuscitate the anti-apartheid networks for the cause of democracy in Zimbabwe. A reminder of the contribution of the Anti-Apartheid movement's contribution to democracy in the region would certainly help counter the propaganda about a monolithic imperialistic Western bloc. In addition, there is potential in the development of some very practical projects along the lines of those set up by IDAF and Canon Collins Trust. A specific scholarship scheme for Zimbabwean refugees to study at educational institutions in South Africa and other countries in the region would benefit the individuals concerned and would also provide a valuable mobilising tool.

I wish you every success in your deliberations.

Elinor Sisulu
Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition
South African Office
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