

DPM Mutambara Press Conference: On the Zimbabwe Political Crisis

19th October, 2009, Harare Zimbabwe

We have called this press briefing to discuss the current crisis in our country. As you are aware, our colleagues in the coalition Government, MDC-T, have called for a boycott of Cabinet and Council of Ministers with the incarceration of Roy Bennett as a specific concern, and the outstanding Global Political Agreement matters as general grievances.

Let me start by saying that after the establishment of the Inclusive Government on the 11th of February 2009, we have made tremendous progress in the country. We have established political stability in the country by having the three major political parties represented in Parliament working together. We have economic stability in the country after dollarizing, and pursuing an economic recovery plan. Our current efforts are now targeting economic development and growth. Yes, we are still grappling with industrial capacity utilization, and disposable incomes but availability of basic goods and services has dramatically improved. So, on balance we are on our way to the Promised Land.

We have to understand that this progress has only been possible because the three major political parties, ZANU-PF, MDC-T and MDC-M having been working together. These strides will not be possible without any one of the three. It is a three-way and three-some arrangement. It is important that we maintain that framework. In the absence of that arrangement, there will be no progress. In fact there will be a total collapse. I want to emphasise that the GPA and the resultant Inclusive Government created a lot of hope in the country. Our people were excited, and expectant. They want to see an end to their suffering. We must also understand the reason

why we got together in an Inclusive Government, in the first. The motivation was to salvage the Zimbabwean economy, politics and society and provide a future for our citizens. We did not do it for ourselves as individuals or parties. We did it for our people and our country. If working together in the Inclusive Government could save a single life, then it was worth pursuing as an initiative. We were driven by the national interest, not partisan or personal ambitions. We must not forget that genesis. The collective national aspirations and concerns of our Citizens; what is good for the country, is what led us to compromise, and adopt a political settlement leading to a new dispensation of inclusive governance in the country.

It is important that as we attend to our challenges and conflicts that we keep the history and achievements of this government in perspective.

Despite the progress we have made, which I have just discussed, there are still issues that are problematic and pulling us backwards. There are unresolved and unimplemented matters in the GPA. Media reforms have been slow, in particular, the Zimbabwe Media Commission has not been set up without any plausible rationale. In fact there has been retrogression in the State Media, its transformation into proper non-partisan Public Media has not happened. The ZBC and Herald are being used as instruments of propaganda by ZANU (PF) against their colleagues in the Inclusive Government. There is selective application of the law in our courts. There is chaos on our farms. Fresh farm invasions are taking place in our country. There are invasions taking place on conservancies, undermining both tourism and agro-industries. These are problems we are facing.

On the GPA itself, there are unresolved matters, issues that have not been implemented. Let me emphasize this one because there has been a fiction pedalled by ZANU (PF) saying *“the so called outstanding GPA issues are not part of the GPA.”* These matters include the appointment of the Reserve Bank Governor, the Attorney General, and the Provincial Governors. ZANU (PF) argues that these issues are not included in the GPA signed on the 15th of September. This is indeed a fiction and I will illustrate why this is the case. It must not go unchallenged. The GPA was

signed on the 15th of September 2008, but the Government was not formed the following day or week. It was only formed four months later on the 11th of February 2009. Why? What happened between 15th September 2008 and 11th February 2009? It means that after we signed that agreement on the 15th of September, there were still some disagreements, and we went back into negotiations. It took us another four months before we could settle and form a government. Agreement was achieved through a document that ZANU (PF) is choosing not to talk so much about, that is, the SADC communiqué of 27th January, 2009. That document was effectively an addendum, a variation, and thus an addition to the GPA of 15th September, 2008. So, when we talk of GPA in Zimbabwe, we should please refer to both the GPA of 15th September and the SADC communiqué of 27th January, 2009. That communiqué was the one that enabled us to form the Inclusive Government.

Without the SADC Communiqué of 27th January 2009 there would be no Inclusive Government in Zimbabwe. What are the contents of that document? That communiqué contains some of the issues that are outstanding in the GPA implementation, such as the appointments of the Reserve Bank Governor, the Attorney General, and the Provincial Governors. As Zimbabweans, we should be clear in our minds that the Inclusive Government was only possible, because of both the GPA document of 15th September and the SADC Communiqué of 27th January, 2009. If we neglect one of these documents, then we do not have an agreement in the country. This is why it is important that those matters that we say are outstanding are addressed, because they were agreed upon at the SADC Summit that produced that January 27th communiqué. By not implementing those issues, we are reneging on our agreements as per that communiqué. ZANU (PF) and President Robert Mugabe must understand this. SADC and the AU as the custodians of our GPA must make sure that the SADC communiqué is implemented without variation or equivocation.

Another subtle point that needs to be flagged is that no one won their leadership position or role in this Government during the Elections of 2008. The President, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Ministers, and the Ministers owe their positions to the GPA. We are all creatures of the GPA.

We are all creatures of negotiations. Without the GPA, and without the Inclusive Government, Robert Mugabe is not the President of Zimbabwe. Without the GPA and without the inclusive government, ZANU (PF) cannot run this country on its own. I hope and trust that ZANU (PF) and Robert Mugabe understand this in no uncertain terms. That is why they waited from the 27th of June 2008 until February 11th 2009, before they could be part of any type of government. They could not form their own government because they had no legitimacy to do so from the election of June 27th 2008. In fact from both the March and June 2008 elections none of the three political parties could form a legitimate and legal regime on their own. This fact and reality are conveniently forgotten by ZANU (PF) and their leader. I stand by my position that the June 27th 2008 elections were a nullity and a farce, and that of March 29th 2008 were fraudulent. I am not here to please or amuse anyone. I am doing my part in speaking truth to power. We should all remember that we are here as a result of inconclusive fraudulent and farcical elections. We need to fix the electoral playing field so we can have free and fair elections that will be conclusive and winners will be able to form a legitimate government. The starting point is to ensure that the outstanding GPA issues and the political hygiene matters are addressed, in the interest of the Zimbabwean citizenry. The spirit and letter of the GPA must be followed. Thereafter we must effectively work on national healing, media reforms, political and electoral reforms, a new people driven democratic constitution, and economic recovery. This will create a basis for a free and fair plebiscite.

What has exacerbated and ignited the differences in our country is what happened last week with the Roy Bennett situation. What transpired with Roy Bennett is really a travesty of justice in our country. We could have avoided this unnecessary and disruptive drama. At law, when someone is indicted, the Attorney General has the discretion to vary bail conditions, make them harsher, and still keep the accused out of jail. It was not necessary to incarcerate Roy Bennett last week on Wednesday. It was nothing to do with the law. It was about vindictiveness. It was pure and sheer malice. The whole situation last week was avoidable. This is our gripe with ZANU (PF). Why are they not being politically sensitive in order

to nurture and protect this GPA? Why risk the collapse of the entire nation over such a frivolous matter. What we saw last week was the absence of both political sensitivity and political will. The whole case against Roy Bennett is politically motivated and not based on law. Moreover, given the new dispensation we must not pursue such accusations. If there was any merit in such endeavour, one would like to see accused ZANU (PF) functionaries indicted as well. We cannot tolerate selective application of the law in Zimbabwe. There are a lot of ZANU (PF) supporters who committed acts of political violence, including murders, yet they are not being prosecuted. Furthermore, Bennett's would be co-accused have already been acquitted on the same charges that are now being brought against him. If there was no sufficient evidence to proceed with the prosecution of co-accused such as Hutchinson, then where is the evidence against Bennett coming from. The only logical explanation for this case is political vindictiveness and outright malice. Additionally, why has it taken eight months for the case to be brought forward. Remember, justice delayed is justice denied. Lastly but not least, why, in the interest of moving forward, are we not burying the hatchet. Why are we not forgiving each other in the interest of promoting national healing, and enabling the new dispensation? If Mandela and the ANC could forgive DeKlerk and the White South Africans for the things they did to black people in SA, why can we not pardon Bennett for the things that we claim he did, since we have already pardoned our own political activists, anyway. Where is the national interest in the pursuit of the Bennett matter?

Why has Roy Bennett not been appointed Deputy Minister of Agriculture? The argument that you cannot appoint someone to a Ministerial position because they have a case in the courts of law is both ludicrous and disingenuous. The position that Roy Bennett cannot be appointed because he has a pending case is totally without basis, precedence and rationale in Zimbabwe. When Chinamasa had charges against him, he was prosecuted and convicted, but he was never fired from his position. I was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, but I still had a case in the Supreme Court. In fact I am still being charged in the courts of this country, up to now. Minister of Finance Tendai Biti was still being prosecuted for treason when he was

appointed to that Ministerial position. The same situation applies to Minister Matinenga. Hence Roy is being victimised and unfairly treated by ZANU (PF) and Robert Mugabe.

In dealing with the threats to the Inclusive Government, let me emphasize that, we are very aware that there are hardliners in ZANU (PF) who do not want to see this Inclusive Government succeed. They are keen on offending all of us so that we can give up and the Inclusive Government will fail. This would serve their selfish interests at the expense of the county and nation of Zimbabwe. We should not fall into their traps. In fact this cynical group is of the view that the success of the Inclusive Government spells its demise, and hence they are bent on undermining it. Collapse of the inclusive political arrangement is the ultimate price. We have to be clever and out-think these misguided hardliners. That is our charge as leaders because the GPA is the only practical solution for Zimbabwe and its people.

As we play our national role as a political party in Zimbabwe, we are neither an appendage of ZANU (PF) nor a surrogate of MDC-T. We are a separate political entity with its own organisational structure and institutional decision making processes. However, we completely understand the position taken by our colleagues from MDC-T. We are completely empathetic to the views that they expressed last week. We understand why they are angry and upset because we are also disenchanted. The challenges that I have described here are not Tsvangirai issues, they are GPA issues. They are Zimbabwean issues. As a political party, we are disturbed with the way the GPA issues, in general, and the Roy Bennett case, in particular have been handled. As a political party we have our own mechanisms of making decisions and we will deploy these expeditiously. We also hold the balance of power in Parliament and Government and we intend to use this power and influence judiciously. We are in the middle of ZANU (PF) and MDC-T. We will use this position to make sure that we encourage dialogue between these two major political parties in the country. We will use this position to push for the national interest and for mitigating differences.

As far as the current situation is concerned we have a standing National Council decision of our party which said *“Go and negotiate, go and play a role in building an agreement in the country, and in doing so, please play the balancing act by building bridges and consensus.”* After the agreement, the National Council mandated us to go and be part of the government, but they said, *“In that Government, go and be the voice of reason, mitigate the differences between the two major parties and to push for the national interest, and do not be part to obstructive grandstanding.”* We intend to continue to undertake this role as prescribed by our Party, until there is an official variation of the same. We have to be mediators, facilitators, and consensus builders.

For example, after this press briefing, my next task is to organise a meeting of the three Political Principals, who have not met since the crisis blew up. I will have a meeting with President Mugabe at 4:15 pm today, to discuss the national crisis and how we can save Zimbabwe from this current impasse; which is tantamount to a political and constitutional crisis. We cannot proceed as if it is business as usual because we are faced with a crisis. I have already met and spoken with the Prime Minister several times since last week, including today. After my meeting with the President I will then liaise with PM, to facilitate dialogue between the two. There is none of us who can run this country on our own. We need to find each other. The people of Zimbabwe understand that. I hope that we, as political parties will also realize that and move away from ill-advised political grand standing.

Our National Council, the supreme organ of our Party has not met since the crisis. Before it does meet to review the current crisis, we will be bound by their decision to go and participate fully in the Inclusive Government. As sheer Ministers we cannot make a unilateral decision to pull out of the Inclusive Government or disengage from any of its activities, without the mandate of our National Council. Consequently, we will be attending the Cabinet meeting tomorrow. We also intend to use this forum to robustly register our concerns and disquiet about the current problems we are confronting as a country. We are going to state in no uncertain terms, our condemnation and disgust with the way the Bennett issue was handled. It is important to note that Cabinet does not proceed by quorum. Hence, it will

proceed with or without the Ministers of the two MDC formations. There is the real danger that ZANU (PF) can use our collective absence to push for unsound, retrogressive and unwise decisions which will be binding on all of us. Hence we are going to Cabinet in order to stop ZANU (PF) from making outrageous decisions. Cabinet positions are adopted and made by consensus; hence our four Ministers will be able to block any misguided shenanigans. We will go there and stop ZANU (PF) from using Cabinet to implement its unilateral ambitions. We will go to Cabinet to tell Mugabe in his face about his transgressions, and stop him in his tracks.

More importantly, as we go forward, our role will be to ensure that the three parties sit down together to move this country forward. We will be engaging both ZANU (PF) and MDC-T and their Principals. This is why I am going to do a bilateral with President Mugabe after this press conference. Thereafter, I am going to facilitate a bilateral between Mugabe and Tsvangirai. After that, the three of us will then meet Tuesday afternoon, or latest on Wednesday. The second stage is SADC. SADC should be seized with this issue, and we will agitate for their active involvement.

This Inclusive Government is the best arrangement that this country can have for the moment. It is the best way we can move forward to creating conditions for free and fair elections. If we were to pull out now without a new constitution, without political reforms, without media reforms, then we cannot have free and fair elections and we will be back to square one. The main issue we face is not when are we going to have the next elections, but rather what is the calibre and quality of the next elections we are going to have? We need to use the inclusive government to create conditions of free and fair elections.

In my concluding remarks, let me speak directly to my two fellow Principals. To Mugabe, I say directly, *"You are President of Zimbabwe because of the GPA and because of the Inclusive Government. If this Inclusive Government collapses, you will not be President of Zimbabwe and you will become an illegitimate and rebel leader with no one in SADC, Africa and the International Community accepting or recognising you. In fact your Party ZANU (PF) will not be able to run this country alone. So, shape up or*

ship out.” To Tsvangirai, I say “You have limited options. Let us find a way to all work together, as a short-term measure. Let us find a way to collectively resolve the genuine issues you have raised. A fresh election after a pullout will be clearly unfree and unfair, and we all know what that means.”

Fellow citizens, let us all work together to move our country forward. We cannot continue with this business of one step forward and two steps backwards. I am appealing to the Zimbabwean in Mugabe. I am appealing to the Zimbabwean in Tsvangirai, I am appealing to the Zimbabwean in Mutambara, and I am appealing to the Zimbabwean in all of us so that we can find and stick to that which is in the best interest of Zimbabwe. We should pursue that in the short run and in the penultimate so that we can salvage our country. These are times for us to think about the national interest. These are times for us to think about how we can work together. Let us amplify our agreements and attenuate our differences. We are going to sink or swim together. The choice is ours.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to discuss and fellowship with you at this critical juncture in the history of our country.

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