

Organ for National Healing records breakthrough

Minister of State in Prime Minister's Office, Senator Sekai Holland has told The Zimbabwe Briefing of the significant progress achieved by the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration. The Organ has produced recommendations for a National Infrastructure for peace from which a set of principles for the drafting of the Peace and Reconciliation Bill and a Code of Conduct for political parties will be derived. More significantly, on the 11th of this month the Organ convened a high-level meeting to discuss the Code of Conduct for political parties which was attended by the principals of the inclusive government: president Robert Mugabe of ZANU-PF, prime minister Morgan Tsvangirai of MDC-T and professor Welshman Ncube of the smaller MDC formation. The three political principals renounced violence and pledged to work for peace.

The meeting came hard on the heels of widespread violence perpetrated by the ZANU-PF aligned Chipangano militia group to prevent the MDC-T from going ahead with a political rally that the police had cleared. The police did not intervene to arrest members of this Mbare-based militia group. The inaction of the police in dealing with political violence lies at the core of the continuing problem of violence in Zimbabwe.

Nevertheless, the Organ, according to Senator Sekai Holland's update, has con-



Sekai Holland

vened a series of meetings with key stakeholders including with the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC), with the three Secretary Generals of the three political parties which are signatory to the GPA, and their negotiators, and with the Traditional Chiefs' Council. to update

them as well on the latest developments outlined above. The traditional chiefs meeting first received an update from the Organ Chairperson - Vice President John Landa Nkomo (ZANU-PF) before a plenary session when the chiefs gave their comments. One comment was on the need to have en-

forceable mechanisms and measures for the implementation of the Code of Conduct for political parties. Zimbabweans were called upon to take the work of the Organ seriously as the work is central to the development of a new culture for peace in Zimbabwe.

The Organ's plans going ahead include having the political principals sign onto to the Code of Conduct and to convene civil society all stakeholders provincial conferences across the country to discuss the peace process and the proposal from the Global Political Agreement (GPA) principals that the proposed independent Peace and Reconciliation Council, a part proposed in the Organ's infrastructure for peace (composed of nine people four of who will be women) be immediately established through the Parliamentary process.

This commendable effort by the Organ needs to be backed up by action demonstrative of political will on the part of the political leadership. But more importantly, the Organ must realize that the key to ending the culture of violence lies in the ability of the Organ to deal with key state institutions responsible for violence, and for the maintenance of law and order. State-sponsored violence must end, and the police must discharge their mandate professionally and hold accountable perpetrators of violence.

By Dewa Mavhinga, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Coordinator

Youths in the wilderness: Effects of Zim's absence from the Commonwealth

Recently, we (two youths representatives from Zimbabwe, Sydney Chisi and Rumbidzai Mpahlo) employed by Youth Initiative for Democracy in Zimbabwe (YIDEZ)), had the opportunity to be part of a gathering of 130 young people during the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government (CHOGM) Summit in Perth Australia. The gathering provided a platform for the Commonwealth to re-engage Zimbabwe following president Robert Mugabe's unilateral withdrawal of the country from the Commonwealth in December 2003 when the international group had resolved to continue with Zimbabwe's suspension.

Whilst there is a lot that has been going on in the last 8 years, we found ourselves involved as equal partners regardless of Zimbabwe's status within the Commonwealth. What also gave us confidence was the presence of new Commonwealth members such as Mozambique and Rwanda as well as Cameroon. Critical to the process was the key role that is played by the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) which is a medium that links the Commonwealth Youth Forum with the member states' governments and other key stakeholders. This programme that has one of its missions as a catalyst for global consensus is something that youths in the civic society miss within the Zimbabwean context given the fragile to non existence of a resounding youth movement or network.

Today in 2011, Zimbabwe finds herself faced with a continuing crisis of governance. This came at a point when those in the country had started seeing indications of both social



HIJACKED DISCOURSE: The writers argue that the withdrawal of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth has had adverse impact on the country's youth and that emerging discourses on youth empowerment are highly politicised and therefore fail to fully address the plight of the youth.

collapse and economic decline due to policy deficiencies and contradictions as well as legitimacy of the then regime after the 2002 presidential elections. The rise of youth militia, violent land reform and the adverse effects of Zimbabwe's participation in the Democratic Republic of Congo war were still fresh and intact. The decision to pull out of the Commonwealth remains unilateral on the part of the government formed by a political party that had embarked on a self-destruction route by being reactionary to popular sentiments which indicated that it was no longer the people's magical recipe to development and democracy.

The formation of the inclusive government was a result of a failed transition through a free and fair election. However Zimbabwe finds herself faced with a lot of opportunities to re-engage with the international community. This reengagement requires the practical upholding of three key principles of democracy, respect of the rule of law, and human rights respect. These principles, if respected and implemented, are key to attract those in the Commonwealth who at one point were quick to notice that Zimbabwe was becoming a failed state.

Whilst Zimbabwe is grappling with is-

suces on indigenization and empowerment that might have been tried in the past using the unpopular and partisan National Youth Service and currently an unclear framework through the government programme, the CYP has its own programme. The Action Plan for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) which involves three strategic programmes namely Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Livelihoods, Youth Work Education and Training and Governance, Development and Youth Networks benefits young people within the 54-nation league.

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A Warning Against Rushed Elections

Coordinator's Note



dewaMAVHINGA



A COUNTRY UNREADY: In the absence of credible electoral reforms, Zimbabwe remains unready to hold a free and fair election that will lead to a democratic transfer of power to the eventual winner.

That president Mugabe and ZANU-PF were gearing for elections early in 2012 was obvious. What came as a surprise last week was that prime minister Morgan Tsvangirai and deputy prime minister Arthur Mutambara concurred with Mugabe on the viability of having elections early. This is a mistake of major proportions. Whatever the reasons for pushing for early elections, clearly Zimbabwe is not ready for them and several critical reforms remain outstanding and, if the Global Political Agreement (GPA) provisions are to be fully implemented – a prerequisite for free and fair elections – then they are likely to take up the entire 2012, leaving 2013 as the realistic year for elections.

The recent political violence that rocked Chitungwiza when the ZANU-PF aligned Chipangano militia group successfully blocked the MDC-T from holding a police-sanctioned rally is testimony that the infrastructure of violence is alive and well. That the police failed to provide security or to prevent the violence, or subsequently to hold accountable those responsible for the vio-

lence shows clearly that the police remains a 'captured institution' subject to partisan conduct and unable to guarantee peace.

The recent, regrettable decision by the Kimberley Process to give a green-light for Marange diamonds to be sold internationally in the absence of proper internal transparency and accountability mechanisms to direct diamond revenue to the national fiscus raises a serious possibility that vast quantities of diamond revenue will end up in the wrong hands and could very possibly finance a violent election that would leave the 2008 electoral violence looking like child's play. The role of financing clandestine, nicodemus or quasi-fiscal activities that was played by the Reserve Bank in the lead-up to 2008 elections may now be played by mines ministry headed by ZANU-PF's Obert Mpofu.

I am sure all Zimbabweans want elections as soon as possible to resolved the question of the State legitimacy, but only when those elections are held under the right conditions where there are clear mechanisms to prevent violence and to inspire the confidence of the electorate that they can vote freely,

without fear of harm. At present people do not feel confident and secure. The negative conditions that prevailed in 2008 remain. Although the MDC has been in the inclusive government since February 2009, that has done little to change the attitude of the leadership of the security forces who remain aligned to ZANU-PF, tilting the political field unfairly in favour of the former ruling party.

Last week various ZANU-PF structures including the Midlands province and the Women's League publicly endorsed the candidature of president Mugabe for the next presidential elections as resolved by ZANU-PF's December 2009 Congress. Both party chairperson (Simon Khaya Moyo) and party spokesperson (Rugare Gumbo) have indicated that ZANU-PF's annual conference scheduled for 6 to 10 December in Bulawayo will not discuss the candidature of Mugabe as it is a settled matter which can only, in terms of the party constitution, be decided at Congress or an Extra-ordinary congress.

These developments indicate serious preparation for early elections where ZANU-PF may feel con-

fident that a combination of factors, including firm support from the security forces, assisted campaigns by a partisan state media, covert violence and intimidation, vote buying through various schemes associated with the implementation of the indigenization program, will deliver an electoral victory to Mugabe and his supporters.

I agree with this analysis. To go to elections early next year, in the absence of credible reforms, would be to deliver another illegitimate victory to ZANU-PF. That victory will, just like in 2008, be unable to resolve the State legitimacy question. It will only lead to another cycle of negotiations that will result in another 'power-sharing' agreement that will likely set back Zimbabwe's transition by a decade or more.

I see no valid reasons why the MDC formations should want to rush into elections when conditions are not right. Our next election will be a make or break election. It must be properly prepared for. It would be unwise for political parties to commit to go for premature elections where they may be forced to withdraw at the last minute – after a needless loss of life on the part of party supporters and

other perceived ZANU-PF opponents. It would be most naïve to underestimate ZANU-PF's capacity to unleash violence, or its strangle-hold on the various 'captured institutions' including those responsible for justice administration and elections management.

The single message that should emerge from all pro-democracy forces is that Zimbabwe should only go for elections when there are guarantees that they will be genuinely free and fair, without violence or intimidation. SADC and the AU should be pressured to deploy a peace-keeping force on the ground ahead of the elections as a confidence building measure to assure people that no harm will visit them on account of the political preference.

The rest of the international community should then support the regional peace-keeping force to give Zimbabweans a chance to make a fresh start.

Talk of elections should only be entertained when there are mechanisms in place to protect the voter, protect the vote and to secure the secrecy of the vote.

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The role of young women in peace-building

Young women form a very critical, special interest group in society. Not only are they the leaders of tomorrow but of today! They are however often a forgotten lot. It is important that young women begin to claim their space and show what great leaders we can be and that they really are. They are often looked at as irresponsible and inexperienced. However, when looking at peace building, young women are key players in this field because they can become instrumental in the adoption and implementation of non-violent strategies of conflict resolution and this has a ripple effect in families and the broader community so that there is peace. The Shona say Mhosva haitongwi nekurwa . (We do not solve problems through violence). Young women too can be peace builders in society.

Young women are a force to reckon with because they can be agents of change. They are at a stage where they are young and their minds are eager to learn. They can be the agents to bring peace to relationships in the family, community and society as a whole thus a peaceful Zimbabwe and this is crucial condering the escalation of violence in this nation at various levels.

Young women can explore a number of opportunities to ensure that the process of peace building is adopted at a higher level. The constitution making process and the national healing process birthed by the GPA Articles 6 and 7 pre-

sented great opportunities for young women to explore means of getting their voices heard on the national agenda. They can work with various stakeholders to ensure that they engrave their voices at these levels. Since this is an important transitional era for Zimbabwe, it would be imperative for young women to effectively participate in these processes and ensure that they get redress for past violations and also to have their rights recognized in the constitution.

Young women can play a number of roles in becoming ambassadors of peace in their different positions and various platforms. They can become the defenders of the concept of Ubuntu that upholds the respect for life. Peace builders do not necessarily want an eye for an eye justice but vouch for non-violent strategies for conflict resolution. However, this does not mean that justice will be ignored; it will take its course.

Most of the victims and survivors of po-



litically motivated violence were women and young women in particular who were and still are affected. To be an effective peace builder, young women need to start speaking out without fear about this form of VAW and also ensure that they get redress and their voices engraved in the national healing process.

Young women are the leaders of today and tomorrow and they need to be part of key democratic processes if their participation is supposed to be meaningful to the development agenda. The constitution making process and the process of national healing offer the young women such an opportunity. However, they should participant independently and not be used to further other people’s agendas that could side line the agenda of women’s rights inclusion in these processes.

Zimbabwe being a patriarchal society, young women cannot be naïve to think that they can win the struggle for the recognition of their rights by not working cooperatively with the different male counterparts that surround them. By engaging their fathers, broth-

ers, uncles, local government leaders such as the heads men and chiefs and government officials, young women can achieve milestones in the recognition, respect and inclusion of women’s rights at a number of different levels.

Living in a “modernized” world that is defined by cyber operations, young women often overlook traditional means of conflict resolution such as working with aunts, uncles, chiefs and other traditional means to resolve conflict. However, exploring these avenues would ensure that they be counted as peace builders and be rue advocates of peace.

Low self esteem, bitterness, negativity, alcoholism and hatred could be some negative behaviors and attitudes that perpetuate violence. Young women can work at these and assist their counterparts in doing the same so that they can play a big role in being peace builders. Young women are a force to reckon with and thus there is need to support them to realize their fullest potential in peace building initiatives. They too can hold hands and speak with one loud voice so that they may be audible and their voices noticeable on the development agenda. As young women, they should be encouraged to take initiative and play their part as peace builders. This nation needs them to become peaceful!

Grace Chirenje-Nachipo is an activist.

Effects of Zim’s absence from the Commonwealth

From Front Page

Had Zimbabwe not pulled out of the Commonwealth and tried to re-invent the wheel through partisan youth programmes using an equally weak youth policy the country could have benefited just like Zambia did through the Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Livelihoods where they now have Youth Credit Initiatives through which thousand enterprises were set up. Young people gained functional literacy and more than 9000 were exposed to health awareness. And yet Zambia is just across the river, but with a totally different governance paradigm.

There are also Commonwealth awards given to youth-led developments and ICT training which Zimbabwean youths can take advantage of especially in the information and technology global village. As Zimbabwe faced the collapse in social service delivery especially the education sector, the CYP was delivering tertiary-level diplomas in Youth Development work through a network of 28 partner universities in 46 countries benefitting some 1, 500 youths over the last 8 years. A strong link between the Zimbabwe Youth Council, which is keen to focus on youth empowerment, and CYP could have assisted the Zimbabwe Youth Council to come up with a framework for empowerment through the Youth Development Fund since their chorus is mainly ‘economic empowerment.’

Youths, those below the age of 30, make up 60% of the commonwealth’s 2 billion people, it was therefore critical that the CYF 2011 come up with recommendations that will allow young people to be treated as equals. This meant the communiqué to be submitted to the Heads of governments had to be short and precise, unlike previous documents that were too long and full of rhetoric. The Australian Prime Minister, Hon Julia Gillard MP, noted that recommendations presented to CHOGM by youths would provide the youths with unique opportunities to create change at the Commonwealth global level. These recommendations were derived from five key themes, namely: Youth impact in decision making; Peace building and conflict management; Environmental Sustainability; Health and Youth enterprise, ICT; and sustainable livelihood and economy.

These areas are important to Zimbabwe, now and beyond the transition. They are equally pivotal in the current reform exercise of the youth policy which desperately needs to be inclusive without favoring youths from the former ruling party. This should be the advocacy that pro-democracy political parties, civic society and the donor community should also begin to look at as Zimbabwe moves from dictatorship into a

real democracy.

Influential young people who gave presentations include Ms Tinille Bentley from Global Good Foundation who works with marginalized children, Mr Darren Lomman from University of Western Australia who ‘invents’ customer-specific mobility items such as wheelchairs or bikes for disabled community members so that they can move like able-bodied persons, . Ms Yalda Hakim a journalist with Dateline also made a presentation on how she has worked in Afghanistan, North Africa during the uprisings and covered the September 11, disaster of 2001. These are young people who proved beyond doubt the possibilities available if one is operating in a functional democracy, where systems are managed well and in place, and governments which are accountable to the people. Such kind of an environment only leaves young people to be their own worst enemies if they don’t take up opportunities, which is a sharp contrast to Zimbabwean youths whom even with capacity and skills might not realise their full potential due to unfriendly policies and unconducive socio-economic and political environment.

Whilst consensus is a principle adopted by the Commonwealth to make resolutions, it has also failed to deal with some trouble hot spots amongst the member states. The failure to address the issue of violence in Sri Lanka, the coup in Fiji, and the recommendation by the Eminent Persons Group, the People’s Summit and the Youth Forum on the appointment of an independent human rights commissioner is one such unfortunate reality.

The relevance of the Commonwealth remains tested especially in the presence of UN Security Council, NATO, and regional blocks such as SADC (Defence and security) who might make decisions that can make the Commonwealth’s position appear weak. This means that young people whilst they can benefit from the Commonwealth through the spirit of equality, youths should demand their states to uphold the three Ds (Democracy, Development and Diversity).

As Zimbabwean youths, this event was an eye opener in terms of seeing what other na-

REMAINING HOPEFUL:

Despite some drawbacks, the writers insist that there is need for Zimbabwean youth to prepare themselves for their country’s future readmission into the Commonwealth



tions are doing through effective and functional linkages with other nations and regions and how such spaces can give opportunities to young people.

Moving forward it remains our hope that Zimbabwe will once again be readmitted into the Commonwealth, mend relations and do the simple things of upholding of human rights, respect of the rule of law and building of a people and youth centered democracy.

The task for the young leaders is to pub-

licise the Commonwealth Youth Forum in Zimbabwe and to make known the opportunities that exist and how CYP functions. It was encouraging to note the solidarity that young people from different regions gave to Zimbabweans, the way Commonwealth embraced Zimbabwe and that Zimbabweans can still participate in all activities despite the absence of the government.

By Sydney Chisi and Ms. Rumbidzai Mphahlo

On every Thursday, read

ZIMBABWE BRIEFING

IN

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