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Churches In Zambia In Solidarity With Zimbabwe

Churches in Zambia pledged their solidarity to the Zimbabwean people in their struggle for a free and fair election due next year. Reverend Father Cleophas Lungu, Secretary General of Zambia Episcopal Conference, and Rev Susanne Matala pledged their support in separate meetings with a Zimbabwean civil society delegation in Zambia last week.

Speaking to the CSOs delegation, Rev Father Lungu held that the CSOs working together with the church is a potent tool for mobilising people on the ground and protecting the people's rights. He said that this was illustrated by the Zambian experience where Caritas Zambia, which is the social wing of the church, played a crucial role in the last elections in Zambia by implementing Parallel Voter Tabulation (PVT).

Rev Father Lungu promised the Zimbabwean delegation that the church in Zambia has always been seized with the Zimbabwe issue, and is high on their priorities. In that regard, they will continue to try and influence the



Father Lungu, second from left, with Zimbabwe Civil Society delegation in Zambia last week

Zambian government to persuade their Zimbabwean counterparts to implement key reforms stipulated in the GPA which will ensure a free and fair

election in Zimbabwe. He referred to the founding President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, who said that Zambia can never be free if our neighbours

are not free, and that this still applies to Zimbabwe today.

In another meeting, Reverend Susanne Matala of the General Christian Council of Zambia also pledged solidarity, promising to organise an indaba on Zimbabwe in the region through the churches so as to come up with key demands which will assist Zimbabwe have peace, stability and entrenched democracy. She congratulated Crisis Coalition for the good work they are doing around the region in the quest to restore the dignity of the Zimbabwean people.

She also noted that she is distressed about the situation in Zimbabwe and that there is need for concerted regional efforts that are coordinated if the challenges facing Zimbabwe are to be overcome. She stressed that 'there is need to link with the church in Zimbabwe, as Zimbabwe is on our agenda as FOCISA, and we will be doing an Indaba on Zimbabwe as a region and come up with a way forward together, and have a coordinated plan and program'

By Crisis SA Media Desk

National Budget Process: Not Too Late For The Voice Of Civil Society?

The national budget has wide-ranging reach and impact; therefore, the budget process should be subject to the influence, analysis, and scrutiny of an active and informed civil society. Harold Lasswell defines politics as the authoritative allocation of scarce resources, (who gets what, when and how?). The national budget is the instrument or vehicle by which the politician allocates scarce resources in any given polity. Interestingly, the national budget process has been unfolding in Zimbabwe since the presentation by the Minister of Finance of his annual budget on the 15th of November 2012 and the voice of Civil Society has been conspicuously silent if not missing from the process.

To begin with, the budget is a vital economic policy instrument that is essential to the sustainability of government programmes. Therefore, the budget reflects the choices/strategies of the government in dealing with social and economic development challenges of a country. It is a fundamental tool in the implementation of public policy and as well indicates the commitment of government in dealing with poverty and development. This makes the budget a key economic tool as it sets out the parameters in terms of who gets what, when and how? From the budget a plan of action can be drawn and implemented. The Ministry of Finance has been holding budget consultative seminars around the 2013 national budget, and this is quite commendable. However, the voice of civil society has been silent if not missing in the national budget process. Civil society was not forthcoming with proposals to be included in the 2013 national budget and what you get in the media is



Honourable Minister of Finance Tendai Biti, arriving at the Zimbabwe Parliament for the 2012 Budget presentation

only the voice of government, business and war veterans.

Moreover, the Civil Service unions that have been threatening strikes were also conspicuously silent on what needed to be done on the 2013 national budget. This trend of non-participation at the budget formulation process has always rendered civil society weak as decisions would have already been made. In most cases there will be little fiscal space left to manoeuvre once the announcement and adoption of the budget by government. Thus any pressures exerted on treasury after the 15th of November will deal with cosmetic rather than substantive changes for the citizenry. Every

sword smith knows that you have to strike the iron while it is still hot, because that is only when you can shape it. Any attempt to strike the iron when it's cold will be disastrous and produce poor results. This has been the sad story of civil society when it comes to the national budget.

There is a growing tendency of not putting demands before the political system, yet at the end of the day civil society expects the budget to be people friendly. The budget can only be as good as the demands that have been put before it. This is the time that civil society has to have consultation with their membership on the budget, put position

papers, have press conferences, and as well run media campaigns around the issue of the budget. Such a process will put pressure on government to include the people's views and as well provide the basis upon which civil society can base their actions post budget pronouncement. Civil Society will be able to audit the national budget versus the set of demands that it has put forth before budget pronouncement. It is this critical voice that is missing from civil society that needs to be given life.

It is time that civil society now has to stamp its footprint on the national budget process. It's never too late for civil society to activate its voice. There are still possibilities for involvement as the budget is still in the process of approval. The budget mainly has four stages; (1) drafting (2) Legislative (3) Implementation (4) Audit. Whilst stage one is now a concluded case, there is still the legislative, implementation and Audit stage that civil society can still influence. Most important is the legislative stage as there will be a chance of having the budget amended before approval. It is imperative for civil society to begin to tackle the question of the national budget and ensure that it addresses the social and economic priorities of the nation.

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Can Zimbabweans Muster A Grand Coalition For Democratic Change

That our country is in a deep political crisis locked in a stalling transition is not contestable. Realizing that the political patchwork in the form of the Inclusive Government is failing to unlock the crisis and move the reform process forward concerned citizens are asking whether the pro-reform movement does not need a grand coalition to supplant the ZANU PF regime. While these concerns are legitimate and warrant serious urgent attention from national leaders in the pro-democracy camp, for now it is clear that we are not likely to see any coalition emerging unless the same question is approached differently.

The pleas to unite the pro-democracy factions against the authoritarian ZANU PF regime are as old as multi-party politics in the country. Retrospectively, political analysts have pointed to the advantages of a united front against a sitting dictatorship post every election. The disputed electoral outcomes of the 2008 elections could have been mitigated by a coalition of the two MDC parties; while a parliamentary coalition post the same elections could have more likely benefitted the political reform process.

The failure by any of the parties to win an outright majority set the stage for both a Parliamentary crisis and an executive that was always going to be hamstrung by polarization, partisan and self-interest at the expense of national interest. A grand coalition inform of some sort of a parliamentary coalition has failed given the evident failure of pro-reform factions to collaborate even informally in pushing the authoritarian remnants towards key reforms before elections. So why have pro-reform elites failed to form such a grand coalition or an informal relationship to work together? What kind of grand coalition are we talking about here? Who are its drivers and what chances are there that such a coalition can deliver change.

It is obvious that outside the framework of the Inclusive Government any of the political parties in the country would face a serious legitimacy crisis if they were to govern without the other. The results of the Parliamentary and Presidential elections of 2008 show that the victory margins between the main political parties were slight. Of course going by a simple majority, first past the post winner takes all formula, a victory is a victory. Yet our political leaders continuously grandstand or are just blind to the fact of their limited expressed political support considered within the confines of voluntary political participation as expressed in the 2008 elections. Maybe before problematizing the

attitude of the political leadership in the country, I must also say that the pro-reform political parties and civil society actors seem to be

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oblivious to the changing demographics, trends in political socialization, and the demonstrable political values and emerging culture that is rooted in individual freedoms mediated by new technologies. The most important fact of this change is a demonstrable quest for inclusive participation and bottom-up politics anchored on grassroots politics and a robust grassroots movement. Thus any imagination of a grand coalition for change should focus at mobilization and organization outside traditional limits defined and limited to partisan functionality and constrained by misplaced grandstanding and selfish personal ambition.

To go back to the first question, the pro-reform factions have not made a deliberate effort to embrace diversity and open a conversation about the democracy Zimbabweans thirsty for. If anything, they are failing to move away from divisive political organization and mobilization based on ethnic cleavages, patronage and personality cults.

At a very closer look, all political parties seem to imagine the state in the same way as ZANU PF, of course subject to colonial institutional legacies. We seem to have embraced liberal democracy as inherited from both the colonial and ZANU PF regimes. Thus the main political parties are organized on the basis of ethnic negativity buttressed on a Shona-Ndebele hierarchical hegemony that is totally exclusive of other ethnicities, and internally relegates Ndebeles to second class citizens, with the rest seen as other classes. The Welshmen Ncube led faction of the MDC seems to have embraced this negative feature of our politics as a strategy in building a regional political constituency, thereby succeeding ZAPU, some people would like to argue.

The MDC-T seems to have quietly shifted from social democratic politics judging from its relations with its former key constituencies

such as workers and students. Although the party retains elites formerly in the labour and student movement, it cannot claim that

the majority of workers and students who were its main social base and key drivers and runners of its programmes still belong with the party in a coherently organized way and in the context of proper political mobilization by a political grassroots movement.

Our political elites believe in a form of representation that begins and ends with elections. Once they are elected, they act like they know everything, and in the culture and traditions of ZANU PF, leaders know everything and the masses should just listen, obey and follow. Typically some elite actors within the MDC factions, for some impolitic reasons, find any form of a united front objectionable. It is therefore evident that efforts to inspire a grand coalition by way of pro-reform pacting led by political parties will fail just like in the previous attempts.

Of course democracy is more than this, it abides in public participation. In its deliberative form, democracy subsists in critical informative broad debate about public policy and national developments. The basis of any grand coalition is politics of broad inclusivity that embraces intimate relationships with key political factions, ethnicities, communities, women, youths and religious groups where their diversity is positively embraced and respected, their views and belief upheld and considered within the existing political institutions and frameworks of political parties and the state. While personal differences and ethnic cleavages have contributed more to factional divergence, pro-reform parties have not done enough in seeking to focus the public on the democratic agenda by embracing all sections of our society within their structures, organizationally and in terms of mobilization. There is no doubt that any attempt to patch a top heavy elite coalition will not succeed. If such a coalition succeeds in rallying a number of elites and their supporters together, it may help in securing elec-

toral victory without advancing democracy, and therefore can only secure minimal change if any.

The pro-reform factions should engage with their social base in its diversity and create spaces that structures of political parties do not necessarily provide. There are so many people who can run an effective campaign for change outside the partisan machinery. Indeed, without displacing the face of the revolution, at the local level the chief face of any revolution is seen in the local actors who deal with the here and now situations of politics, while the voice of the national leader, who is the national face of the struggle can be heard from national radio or read from national newspapers to support these local initiatives. Amongst these groups of local actors are academics who are capable of bringing new perspectives to any broad campaign, students, school pupils and youths in the formal and informal sectors, religious organizations, burial societies in villages, cooperatives to cite a few examples. There is a whole e-generation of facebookers and tweeterites who can be key drivers of such a grand coalition.

Such a grassroots campaign would create platforms of regular daily interactions between communities of voters and publics which rallies cannot provide because of their sporadic nature. While political parties have been rushing to engage with the clergy and religious communities, such opportunistic interventions are dangerous. Outside a clear agenda to advance progressive societal democratic values, such political overtures should be treated as suspiciously manipulative. A grand coalition for democratic reform is therefore possible so long it is constructed on a strong foundation of politics of inclusivity and broad based participation as opposed to pro-reform elite pacts and as long as leaders are capable of demonstrating that the views of their supporters matter and are valued. Indeed such is the bedrock of democracy.

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‘Military Must Stay Out Of Politics’: A View From Zambia’s Parliament

The Chairperson of Zambia’s Parliamentary committee on national security and foreign affairs, Honorable Shikapashwa, said that the Zambian government must take the lead role in ensuring that the government of Zimbabwe implements the Southern Africa Development Committee (SADC) and African Union (AU) sponsored Global Political Agreement (GPA). He also reiterated that the military must stay out of politics to allow for free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. The Chairperson was responding to a political brief from Zimbabwe’s civil society delegation at Parliament House in Lusaka last week.

Honorable Shikapashwa highlighted that, ‘Zimbabwe is a sister to Zambia. It has been our position that Zimbabwe should come through these difficulties’. He praised former President Levy Mwanawasa’s stanza on Zimbabwe. ‘Mwanawasa was very committed to eradication of state sponsored violence in Zimbabwe’. He said.

The Chairperson further opined that the Zambian government must not develop an independent position on Zimbabwe outside the SADC framework. ‘It is for us to ensure SADC and AU agreements are fulfilled. We must work under the umbrella of SADC and AU not to take an independent position so that we can have a stronger regional push for a peaceful election’. He acknowledged that the implementation of the GPA was slow and hence it was the responsibility of the region to push for ‘a higher pace’.



The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Coordinator in the middle, addressing the Zambian parliament

Honorable Shikapashwa advised Zimbabwe’s civil society to develop a transitional mechanism that will address the fears of the

tion there is apprehension and people need to be assured they are supporting peace’, he emphasised.



Chairperson of the Zambian parliamentary committee on national security and foreign affairs in red tie

incumbents to enable state power transfer. ‘When there is a transi-

On the military involvement in politics in Zimbabwe, the Honor-

able was unequivocally clear, ‘When you have a partisan position from the army the rest of the process is killed’. Statements from the Zimbabwe’s military do not help the nation to go ahead. Army must stay out of politics to allow people to decide whom they should vote for. In Zambia we had to change the mentality of the army. ...People from the liberation movement cannot rule forever. We must respect the will of the people. The security cannot impose itself on the people, then you have Juntaism. The security has arms and the population has no arms.’

On the way forward the Chairperson committed to engage the speaker of Parliament so that the Zimbabwe question will be discussed in Parliament and to provide checks and balances to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so that the government of Zambia moves forward in a positive way on Zimbabwe.

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