

Creating Conditions for Free and Fair Elections

Understanding the Core Mandate of the Inclusive Government

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There has been a lot of speculation, discussion and questions raised about what transpired at the retreat of the Zimbabwean Cabinet on the 22nd and 23rd of August 2009, in the resort mountain of Nyanga. We had a very focused and productive two-day workshop. I made two separate presentations. On the first day, Saturday, my topic was: *The Case for Monitoring and Evaluation: Embracing Global Best Practice*. This was executed without any hitches. On the second day, Sunday, I presented on: *A Review of the Previous Day and an Update of the Rebranding and Shared Vision Efforts*. It was during this discussion that there was an unfortunate misunderstanding over one matter.

Let me state clearly and up-front, that, it was never my intention to insult or to offend my colleagues in the inclusive government. I was giving a review of what had been discussed the day before in what is called the Rights and Interests Cluster of Ministries. This is the group of Ministries responsible for the tasks of supervising the crafting of a new people-driven constitution, national healing, media and political reforms. One of the challenges that the participants in this cluster identified as impeding progress was the lack of political will within the inclusive government. This was identified as a major constraint, which is retarding progress towards the achievement of the targets and goals of this cluster. In reviewing this matter I sought to emphasise the importance of the work and targets of the Ministries in question, and dramatise the categorical imperativeness of their success.

In particular I was emphasising the importance of political reforms, media reforms, new constitution and national healing. In my review remarks, I indicated that the core outcome of this government is the creation of conditions for free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. This is critical so that the outcome of our next polls is not in dispute. We do not want an inconclusive and problematic election whose results are challenged. We must build integrity and legitimacy of our electoral processes so that the losers congratulate the winners and the winners form a legitimate elected government. Part of the journey to this state of affairs requires successful implementation a national healing and reconciliation program, crafting of a truly people-driven constitution, deepening of political and media reforms including transparency and accountability in all electoral processes. In order to buttress and amplify my argument, I emphasized that it is essential for members of the government and the generality of the people of Zimbabwe to understand the history, background, and hence the mandate of this inclusive government. Vana veZimbabwe hatifaniri kukanganwa chezuro ngehope. (Zimbabweans, we should not fail to address the challenges and conditions of our immediate past because of a temporary reprieve in our circumstances.)

This Inclusive Government came into being because our elections in March and June of last year were inconclusive and problematic. We had challenges around our elections. This is common cause. This is the reason why we went into negotiations from June 27 2008 to February 11 this year. There was no government in Zimbabwe from June 27th 2008 to 11th February 2009. Why? This is because all the elections of 2008 did not produce a government. This is profound. Elections must produce a government. It means in Zimbabwe we have an electoral disease to cure. The solution lies in the creation of conditions for free and fair elections. This has to be a key outcome of this Inclusive Government. This was the context of the discussion in Nyanga. Where the discomfort arose was when I used the phrase *"The election on March 29th 2008 was fraudulent and that on June 27th 2008 was a farce and a nullity."* Well, well, every

Zimbabwean knows that this is a true statement. There is agreement that this is the scientific description of those polls. The observers, SADC and the AU came to the same conclusions. With hindsight one could say maybe I could have looked for more polite language to express this agreed fact. That is a fair comment, but the import and essence of my message on the need for reforms are not disputable. We are in this inclusive government because of the challenges and problems we had in March and June, last year.

If the elections were decisive, a government could have been formed immediately after June 27 2008. It wasn't. It was only created after protracted SADC facilitated dialogue. This means everyone in this inclusive government owes their government position and role to the Global Political Agreement. There is no leader in this government who was elected to their position. We are all products of negotiations. Every one of us in this inclusive government is a creature of the GPA. That is a misnomer. That is not democracy. What we want is to make sure that we use the opportunity of this arrangement to make sure that next time around we have a proper election and the outcome is not disputed by the losers and Zimbabwe can have a legitimate elected government. Our people deserve nothing less.

This is what I was emphasising in Nyanga. Having said that, it is important that I say we must endeavour to accommodate each other and use measured, inclusive and tolerant language. I will try my best to do so in future. However, there is no space for what I call inappropriate politeness. We must make sure we craft a sustainable basis for a new Zimbabwe, and build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic nation on a solid foundation rooted in the truth and history of our country.

It is clear from the context outlined above, that, the walk-out was a complete over-reaction. As Shakespeare put it in Hamlet; *"(he) doth protest too much, methinks"*. This was much ado about nothing. It was unfortunate that they chose to express themselves that way. However,

as I have already conceded, we should all try to use measured language. We must all try to be sensitive and tolerant. We must all create an environment where the three political parties work together smoothly and effectively in the Inclusive Government. As DPM, I will try my best to do my part.

However, in the course of deliberations if there is a position stated or an issue invoked which colleagues find objectionable, the process should be to raise a point of order. The speaker can then be asked to explain or retract. We must not intimidate each other with walkouts and boycotts. We must not blackmail each other with threats of walkouts and boycotts. Walking out of meetings or not attending workshops is not part of democratic practice. What we want in the country is robust but rational disputation as an integral part of our democratic discourse. You don't achieve that by walking out of a meeting. We must talk to each other and find each other. Yes we must exercise restraint, and use measured diction. We cannot blackmail each other by saying this group will not attend a meeting if such an individual has a role. That is juvenile. No viable government can proceed on that basis. We must agree to disagree without being disagreeable.

As for "seizing any opportunity granted to you to attack the ZANU-PF, especially, President Robert Mugabe," this is news to me. I wonder if this is what I did when I introduced President Mugabe at the launch of STERP, or when I defended and fought for ZANU-PF Ministers to get visas to attend the re-engagement dialogue in Europe. When I berated President Obama for discriminating against a ZANU-PF Minister, or took public positions against targeted sanctions imposed on ZANU-PF Ministers; has this evidence been considered as well? I rest my case.

I am not a member of ZANU-PF, neither am I a member of MDC-T. I am the President of a separate political party. I am not beholden to either of these major parties. Within the context of rational disputation and democratic discourse, I reserve the right to take positions based on

principles and values of my Party, and damn the consequences. As a national leader, Principal and DPM in the Inclusive Government, I have a duty and obligation to ensure the full and complete consummation of the GPA. I have to make sure the agenda and mandate of the Inclusive Government are successfully executed. I also have to rally and unite people, and bring the different constituencies together in pursuit of a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Zimbabwe. In the process I will make mistakes. I will learn lessons. However I will try my best to be a unifier not a divider. I will try my best to build, and not to destroy. In so far as I am concerned we should all be driven by the national interest. We must subjugate partisan interest to the national interest. Our collective destiny and aspirations must encourage us to tolerate, accommodate and in fact celebrate dissent, difference and diversity. There is dignity in difference.

In all my action I am targeting the task at hand. My job is to make sure that the Inclusive Government delivers on the promise of the GPA. My task is to ensure that Zimbabweans across the political divide work together. We all have to make sure that this government delivers on its agenda. As one of the three Principals I must make sure that all the outstanding GPA issues are speedily and amicably resolved. The GPA and the SADC Communiqué of January 27 2009 must be fully and completely consummated without equivocation or variation. The three political parties through their three leaders signed a GPA out of their own volition. They were not forced. This GPA was crafted with the assistance and involvement of SADC and AU. It is an excellent example of African solution to African problems. It is a solution by Zimbabwean citizens to their national challenge. Hence, the spirit and the letter of the GPA must be respected.

Let me dramatise the meaning of our failure to fully implement the GPA. How credible am I as the Deputy Prime Minister of Zimbabwe when I say to an investor, *"Come and invest your money in Zimbabwe, I am going to respect my agreement with you,"* when I cannot keep my own agreement

with myself? Who can have confidence in a government that does not respect its own laws and agreements? Where will credibility of such a regime come from? Furthermore, what does failure to implement the GPA mean to the legitimacy and efficacy of the doctrine of African solutions to African problems? What are the implications to the credibility of SADC and the AU?

So when I speak out on the outstanding GPA issues, the problems on our farms, shenanigans in our courts, violation of human rights, and the slow pace of media and political reforms, I am only doing my job. I am being a responsible leader. I am being a national leader. Sometimes leadership is about going against the wind, making unpopular decisions popular. The measure and integrity of a leader is defined by where they stand during invidious moments of crisis. I am not driven by partisan or personal interest, but rather by the collective agenda of serving Zimbabwe. This is the urgency of now. The future will take care of itself.

The primary drivers of change in our nation should be the Zimbabweans themselves. We must become the transformation we seek to see in our country. Foreigners can only help us help ourselves. We must all gather the political will and determination to resolve the outstanding issues. President Zuma and SADC's role is ostensibly a facilitative one. This is why some of us have been outspoken on the need for convergence on these matters that are separating us. It is actually embarrassing and demeaning that we should be waiting for Zuma or SADC to encourage us to implement things that we agreed to do six months ago. It is a travesty of common cause. Having said that, it is my hope that the involvement of President Zuma, SADC and AU will spur our sense of patriotism and self-respect so that we can do what is right for our country and in the national interest of our people. The sooner we realise that we are going to sink or swim together the better. We must unite and work together.

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