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Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
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Election Review 2013-23

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Private media highlight Zim's economic decline



THE private media widely reported Zimbabweans' hopes for a quick economic turnaround under the new ZANU PF government as fading fast as more reports on symptoms of economic deterioration emerge almost on a daily basis.

Among them was news of further company closures; retrenchments; high unemployment levels; failure to significantly increase civil servants salaries;

persistent water and power cuts; acute food shortages; deterioration of infrastructure; and outbreaks of water-borne diseases.

These problems continued to persist more than 100 days after the July 31st election despite promises by ZANU PF during the campaign period that the party would prioritize the revival of the country's economy if Zimbabweans gave it the sole mandate to govern.

Under its manifesto entitled: *Indigenize, Empower, Develop and Create Employment*, ZANU PF outlined its goals over the next five years. These included the creation of more than two million jobs, unlocking US\$7,3 billion from the indigenization of 1,138 companies; raising \$7 billion to stimulate agricultural productivity, and financing the rehabilitation and construction of infrastructure; increasing the average GDP growth rate to 9%, up from the current 4,4%; construction of 250,000 low income housing units, 2,500 shell factories, the creation of new market stands, 610 schools and clinics; the rehabilitation of 1,250 government owned buildings; eliminating corruption; and ensuring food security for all Zimbabweans **“as a central pillar of Zimbabwe’s sovereignty...”**

These pledges also appeared to form part of President Mugabe’s speech during the official opening of the First Session of the Eighth Parliament of Zimbabwe on September 17th. During this event Mugabe outlined 14 Bills to be debated, 11 (79%) of which were on socio-economic recovery programmes.

But such hopes appeared to have been dampened by disturbing reports about the deterioration of Zimbabwe’s socio-economic situation.

Among them was a story that appeared in the *Zimbabwe Independent* (18/10), indicating that **“scores of big companies that used to employ tens of thousands of workers are either on the verge of collapse or have closed down completely, leaving workers stranded”**.

The report was based on a July 2013 National Social Security Authority (NSSA) Harare Regional Employer Closures and Registrations Report for the period July 2011 to July 2013, which revealed that 711 companies in Harare had closed down, rendering 8,336 workers jobless.

Among the companies that were downsizing and retrenching were platinum miners, Zimplats and Unki, and Bindura Nickel, Spar supermarkets, Dairibord, Cairns, Olivine Industries and PG Industries.

In another report, Studio 7 (24/10) reported Zimbabwe as having missed the third-quarter budget revenue targets **“as economic growth slows and mineral royalties diminish, indicating a tough task ahead for the ZANU-PF government in turning around the economy”**.

In a statement, the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) said it collected \$897 million between July and September against a target of \$905 million.

It attributed the shortfall to company closures and firms that are scaling down due to lack of capital to revamp operations.

ZIMRA chairman Stanford Moyo said the economy continued to face challenges, such as erratic power supplies, liquidity constraints, and depressed industrial capacity, among other issues.

Moyo indicated that company tax collections were 3% percent short of the target and mining royalties were 39% below projections. He blamed this on fluctuating mineral prices and failure by some diamond mines under Western sanctions to sell their gems.

Moyo further noted that individual tax collections rose 23% after ZIMRA extended its net, but that company closures were expected to have **“a huge impact on such taxes”**.

Earlier, Studio 7 (22/10) reported that Zimbabwe’s plans to quickly turn around the economy had **“hit a snag due to mounting debts and lack of foreign direct investment”**. This story was based on revelations by Treasury that the country recorded **“a \$74 million budget deficit for the month of July as recurrent expenditure continued its upward trend”**.

The station (22/10) also reported Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa as having told the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank the previous week that **“it will be difficult to turn around the economy without additional loans”**.

But the two organizations told him that Zimbabwe **“has to settle its external debt totalling more than \$10 billion before asking for additional funding”**.

The private media’s coverage of Zimbabwe’s economic troubles was reflected by reports with such headlines as:

- *Biti: Zimbabwe Economy Shrinking, Debts to Increase* (Studio 7, 29/10).
- *Are Bank Queues Resurfacing in Zimbabwe?* (Studio 7, 1/11).
- *No Progress in Civil Servants' Salary Negotiations* (Studio 7, 31/10).
- *Zim Govt, Civil Servants Brace for Clashes Over Pay Increase* (Studio 7, 23/10).
- *\$200 Million Debt Haunts Harare Council* (Studio 7, 30/10)
- *Harare council plunged into debt after bill write-off* (SW Radio Africa, 29/10).
- *Hwange Colliery workers put on unpaid leave after 6 months without wages* (SW Radio Africa, 31/10).
- *Jobs crisis: University graduates turn to vending* (Daily News, 5/11).
- *Zim seeks budgetary support from China* (Daily News, 4/11).
- *NRZ to retrench 6,000 workers* (Daily News, 1/11).
- *Zim tumbles on World Bank rankings* (Daily News, 31/10).
- *Manufacturing sector in crisis* (Daily News, 31/10).
- *Zimbabweans feel the pinch....as cost of living goes up* (Daily News, 21/10).
- *Harare City Council fails to pay workers* (Daily News, 18/10).

- *Depressed investor confidence dogs Zim (Daily News, 29/10).*
- *Foreclosures dramatically increase (Daily News, 28/10).*
- *Industry crisis worsens, and, Uncertainty dogs Zim's economic growth (Daily News, 3/10).*
- *Zim's economic growth receding: IMF (Daily News, 9/10).*

Meanwhile, the government media widely reported the ZANU PF government as not only making positive strides in reviving Zimbabwe's economy, but also in total control of the situation.

This was summed up with *The Sunday Mail's* news feature (3/11): *Team Zanu-PF - 54 days in office*, which celebrated the "achievements" of the President's 26-member Cabinet since its swearing-in on September 11th.

The weekly reported the President as having tasked Cabinet with ***"steering the country's economy back to full functionality and reviving social services"***.

Having promised to ***"hit the ground running"***, *The Sunday Mail* reported the new ZANU PF government as having ***"since initiated a raft of poverty-alleviation programmes and revived a number of key capital projects aimed at injecting fresh impetus into the country's struggling economy"***, in line with the revolutionary party's election promises.

Since assuming the reins of government, several critical projects, such as the rehabilitation of water supply infrastructure in several towns and cities across the country have taken off, reported *The Sunday Mail*.

The weekly observed that, a few weeks after the elections, ***"Zimbabwe witnessed a series of morale-sapping power outages across the board, drawing a barrage of criticism against the new establishment from many sections which predicted that the power situation would become an albatross around the new Government's neck"***.

Critically, though, *The Sunday Mail* reported, ***"the new Government moved with speed to address the erratic power supply, which has somewhat stabilised"***.

The weekly reported: ***"Furthermore, after years of sustained insidious attacks and funding cuts for the agricultural sector during the four-year tenure of the ill-fated inclusive Government, Team Zanu-PF has already sent a clear message that agriculture will receive unfettered support over the next five years"***, adding: ***"To date, a number of sector-specific support schemes for agriculture have been availed through various economic cluster ministries and the President's Office injected the much-needed oomph into the key economic driver."***

The government media's positive coverage of government efforts to revive the economy was also evident in reports with the following headlines:

- *Blockbuster economy beckons for Zim, and, Zim economy set for top 10 by 2020 (The Sunday Mail, 3/11).*
- *Bonus for civil servants, and, Zim economy set to grow (The Herald, 2/11).*
- *Govt to reorganise mining sector, and, Lending to private sector marginally up, (The Herald, 1/11).*
- *Govt to settle RBZ FCA debts, Govt in bid to recapitalise IDC, and, Multi-currency to anchor Zim Asset (The Herald, 31/10).*
- *Zanu-PF starts work to fulfil promises, and, Govt to address liquidity: VP (The Herald, 25/10).*
- *US\$300m projects approved (ZTV, 25/10, 8pm).*
- *Antwerp engages Zim on gems, and, Zim welcomes AWDC engagement (ZTV, 25 & 27/10, 8pm).*
- *Govt to deal with corruption (The Herald, 24/10).*
- *Cabinet endorses blueprint (The Herald, 23/10).*
- *Zanu-PF's master stroke, and, Market confident of Chinamasa (The Sunday Mail, 20/10).*
- *Mining targets on course: Govt (ZTV, 19/10, 8pm).*
- *Govt sets 9,9pc economic growth target (The Herald, 18/10).*
- *Govt prioritises Air Zim viability (ZTV, 18/10, pm).*
- *Economic blueprint unveiled (The Herald, 17/10).*
- *Forget the past, investors told (The Herald, 16/10).*
- *ZUPCO return to viability on course (ZTV, 16/10, 8pm).*
- *Zim on track to economic recovery: WB (The Herald, 15/10).*
- *Govt to expedite rebates for tourism sector (The Herald, 11/10).*
- *Zim can turn the tables (The Herald, 4/10).*

State media continue to castigate Tsvangirai

DESPITE the fact that Zimbabwe is no longer in an election campaign period, the state-owned media continued to castigate former Prime Minister Tsvangirai and his MDC party for almost every public activity they engaged in.

This was in sharp contrast with the favourable publicity these media gave to President Mugabe and his party in discharging their party business. Even when ZANU PF appeared to be experiencing its own internal problems, as evidenced by allegations of factionalism and a lack of transparency during the party's ongoing provincial elections, the state media still reported ZANU PF as united and smoothly discharging its activities.

Tsvangirai and the MDC were vilified for refusing to concede defeat in the July 31st election; seeking regional intervention in the Zimbabwe "crisis"; being reluctant to resign from party leadership; having been incompetent while in government; and collaborating with the country's perceived Western detractors to sabotage progress.

In one such case, *The Sunday Mail* (6/10) reported that efforts by the MDC-T to push for new facilitation by South Africa through a letter written by the party's secretary-general, Tendai Biti, had ***"failed while clandestine moves by the party to form another GPA-like creature called the Zimbabwe Political Parties Dialogue have crumbled as Zanu-PF has refused to be part of the opposition charade"***.

Under its front-page lead: *SA snubs Biti's letter of shame*, the weekly reported Biti as having written a letter to the South African Ambassador Vusi Mavimbela on September 23, ***"claiming to be submitting a dossier detailing what he termed irregularities in the July 31 elections that were won resoundingly by Zanu-PF and President Mugabe"***.

In an attempt to discredit Biti's letter and his party's concerns over the elections, *The Sunday Mail* reported that the South African Embassy had also dismissed the letter, saying ***"Sadc's stance is South Africa's position regarding the elections...Nothing has changed and we have nothing more to say about those elections."***

According to *The Sunday Mail*, the South African Embassy's action had ***"put paid to the purported diplomatic onslaught that the MDC-T thought could be triggered by Mr Biti's letter which was also written in the hope that it could be used to influence the region and the whole continent and give momentum to claims by Britain, the EU and the white Commonwealth that the elections were not free and fair"***.

The paper made no attempts to disclose the contents of Biti's letter or to give a balanced and unemotional assessment of the MDC-T's concerns and

recommendations on the resolution of Zimbabwe's political situation.

Instead, the weekly reported an unnamed SADC diplomat "based in Harare", who it claimed was "**familiar with the developments**", saying "**If anyone in the MDC or among the donors that support or are using the MDC to push their agenda under the claim that the elections were not free and fair in the hope of triggering a new facilitation process through South Africa and Sadc, they are flogging a dead horse**".

The Sunday Mail also reported a Nordic diplomat "**who has also been following events in the MDC-T closely**", as having revealed that that Biti's letter was "**written in anticipation of a transformation of Jomic into a new GPA-like forum called the Zimbabwe Political Parties Dialogue**".

The paper claimed that the diplomat was "**among the influential funders of the MDC-T, who, together with Rhodes like Ian Kay and Roy Bennett, are disappointed with the defeat of the Western-founded and funded party and are calling for Mr Tsvangirai to be stripped of his position as leader of the MDC-T**".

In another story, *The Herald* (26/10) reported Tsvangirai as having been "**dragged by his handlers**" to a seminar at Oxford University where he "**cast aspersions**" on diamond mining at Chiadzwa in an alleged bid to counter the visit by the Antwerp World Diamond Council delegation that arrived in Zimbabwe on October 24 to explore modalities of trading the gems on the international market.

Under the headline, *Tsvangirai de-camapigns Chiadzwa diamonds*, *The Herald* (26/10) reported that in his presentation, which focused entirely on Zimbabwe, Tsvangirai alleged that a "**new dangerous culture emerged when diamonds were discovered in Zimbabwe**".

He reportedly claimed that this culture was manifest in "**the powerful role of the military that he claimed had taken over and militarised operations in Chiadzwa**", "**lack of transparency in diamond mining and revenue**"; "**elite capture of national diamond resources**"; and the "**emergence of a parallel government during the inclusive Government that he claimed was bankrolled by diamond revenue**".

Earlier, *The Herald* (24/10) reported Tsvangirai as having been criticized for lining up a lecture at Oxford University on the mining of diamonds in Marange, "**a subject he knows very little about**".

Under the headline, *Tsvangirai slammed for lining up diamond lecture*, the paper then roped in two political analysts, UZ lecturer Charity Manyeruke and her MSU counterpart, Nhamo Mhiripiri, dismissing Tsvangirai's actions as an attempt "**to seek relevance before his Western handlers after his party's massive defeat by Zanu-PF in the harmonised elections on July 31**".

These analysts argued that Tsvangirai "**was not the right person to speak on the mining of diamonds in Marange, considering his support for sanctions on the diamond mining companies, making the sell of the gems difficult for Zimbabwe**".

The Herald then inserted these editorial intrusions:

- ✚ ***“Mr Tsvangirai and his party are known for their disdain for the mining of diamonds that is expected to transform the economic status of Zimbabwe for the better”.***
- ✚ ***“Mr Tsvangirai is well-known for globe trotting meant to discredit Zimbabwe’s systems in a hope that his Western “friends” could intervene to cause illegal regime change and catapult him to power”.***
- ✚ ***“He is responsible for calling for illegal sanctions on the country that have affected every facet of the country”.***

The State media’s biased coverage of developments in the MDC-T was evident in their headlines. Here is a list of some of them:

- *Beaten clean, panicky MDC-T throws the dice one last time (The Sunday Mail, 13/10).*
- *The trouble with Tsvangirai (The Herald, 11/10).*
- *Another MDC-T province concedes defeat (The Herald, 10/10).*
- *No evidence of vote rigging: MDC-T advisor (The Herald, 9/10).*
- *Zinasu castigates MDC-T (The Herald, 25/10).*
- *Tsvangirai must go chorus: MDC-T suspends Kay (The Herald, 9/10).*
- *Tsvangirai ditches more workers (The Herald, 31/10).*
- *Tsvangirai admits ouster bid (The Herald, 30/10).*
- *Misihairabwi urges MDC-T to accept defeat (The Herald, 16/10).*
- *We’ve no vote-rigging proof: Khupe (The Herald, 15/10).*
- *MDC-T election petitions crumble (The Herald, 15/10).*
- *MDC’s paper on de-Zanufication: A threat to peace and stability (The Herald, 15/10).*

AU REPORT ON ZIM ELECTIONS

Media gives mixed coverage to AU report on Zim elections

MMPZ notes with concern the failure by the government-controlled daily, *The Herald*, and SW Radio Africa, a private station broadcasting into Zimbabwe, to provide an accurate interpretation of the African Union Election Observer Mission (AUEOM)’s final report on the July 31 harmonized elections.

Although the report, which was released on October 30, endorsed the elections, it never described the polls as a **“true reflection of the will of Zimbabweans”**, and as having been **“held in accordance with the OAU/AU Declaration and Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa”**, as claimed by *The Herald* and SW Radio Africa.

The Herald also misled its readers by claiming that the mission had **“raised a few points that needed to be tied up”**, when in actual fact the AUEOM had reservations with at least nine issues, which they said should be addressed in future elections.

While *The Herald* listed six of them, it provided no details about them. But Studio 7 and *The Daily News* (3/11) provided the details of the AUEOM's recommendations.

MMPZ publishes the mission's recommendations in full:

- a. While in the end, the ZEC was provided the necessary resources to conduct the 31 July, 2013 Harmonized Elections, the AUEOM observed with concern, that the funding was not consistent or timely at various stages and tended to generate undue anxieties. To this end, it is recommended that there be greater transparency on, and adequate provisions of; logistics and resources to the ZEC for organizing elections as prescribed in the OAU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa (2002).
- b. The Voters' Roll should be made available to all stakeholders for verification and inspection, in both electronic and hard copy format, at least 14 days before elections. The integrity of the Voters' Roll must be assured through greater transparency, accessibility and public communication, with strict adherence to the provisions of the relevant statutes in the laws of Zimbabwe.
- c. There should be sustained public communication regarding the time frames for special and intensive voter registration exercises and the closing dates thereof, to avoid unnecessary disputes and complaints.
- d. The AUEOM recognizes the complexities of the Special Voting and the necessity of it, in equal measure. The Special Vote allows for uniformed forces and the ZEC officials deployed on Election Day to cast their vote so as to dedicate time to electoral security, management and administration. As noted earlier, this facility has engendered transparency in the conduct of these special votes, which were previously not subject to independent domestic or foreign observation. However, to ease the strain on the ZEC, it is recommended that further exploration be made by the ZEC amongst member states employing this facility to find ways of lubricating the process. Further, the requirements for persons to be afforded special voting privileges may need to be subjected to inter-party and public dialogue to enable consensus-based outcomes.
- e. Security markings on ballot papers need to be improved [as in some instances observers noted the poor quality of the inscriptions] to prevent any possibility of duplication.

f. Zimbabwean authorities should reconsider the use of police officers in assisting voters as it may unduly influence the manner in which they vote. In future, authorities might wish to consider the reduction of parameters that necessitate persons to qualify as 'assisted voters'. The number of persons allowed to 'assist' voters should also be reviewed with a view to reducing it downward from four.

g. While the AUEOM acknowledges that the 6.4 million registered voters in the 2013 Harmonized Elections was relatively high, it calls for the greater involvement of non-state actors in civic and voter education throughout the democratic process to enhance and sustain participation in elections in future. To this end, consideration must be made to review relevant sections of the Electoral Act to enable the wider involvement of civil society in these processes.

h. The lack of/or limited access to the state broadcaster was one of the most persistent complaints from opposition parties and non-state actors in the pre-election and election phases, and has been the subject of post-election disputes. The role of the media, particularly, the state broadcaster has been well articulated in relevant instruments of the AU as being central and cardinal to levelling the playing field and contributing to fair practices. The AUEOM observes that this matter has formed the basis of much contestation in the 2013 Harmonized Elections [and] therefore it is recommended that the ZEC scrupulously enforces the relevant regulations of the Electoral Act to afford alternative voices and all political parties equitable access at all times during elections.

i. The AUEOM further recommends that the provisions of the BSA (Broadcasting Services Act) be fully implemented to enable the liberalization of radio and television ownership, thereby providing a broader platform for all stakeholders to voice their opinions, consistent with the stipulations of the new Constitution. The involvement of civil society and other actors in the review of legislation, such as the AIPPA and POSA and the manner in which they are applied, will also enhance the country's progress towards democratic consolidation.

Circulated by the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe, 9 Knight Bruce Road, Milton Park, Harare, Tel: 263 4 741816 / 778115, Whatsapp: 0776 739 522, E-mail: monitors@mmpz.org.zw

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