

ZIMBABWE EUROPE NETWORK

How can Europe help improve the situation in Zimbabwe approaching elections?



**Report on the Zimbabwe Conference held on 25 February 2011 at
FOS-Socialist Solidarity offices in Brussels, Belgium**

Compiled by

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BACKGROUND

Zimbabwe Europe Network (ZEN) held a conference in Brussels for its member organisations and other interested actors to discuss and share experiences on the current state of affairs in Zimbabwe and how to bring about further democratic reforms in Zimbabwe. The conference was hosted by the member organisation, Fonds voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking - Socialist Solidarity (FOS) and was held two years after the formation of the Inclusive Government (IG).

The conference was convened against a background of the following developments in Zimbabwe:

- the alleged crackdown on people that are perceived or alleged to be opponents of the formerly sole ruling ZANU-PF,
- the recent renewal of the European Union (EU) measures against Zimbabwe,
- and the anticipated elections following President Mugabe's public statement that there will be elections whether or not the constitution-making exercise has been completed.

Given this background, the specific aims of the conference were to review the EU measures against Zimbabwe, discuss the implications of and the current political environment surrounding possible elections in 2011, and the achievements of the IG to date.

Thirty-six people from eight European countries, Burma and Zimbabwe participated - diplomats, ZEN member and partner organisations, academics, individuals and students. The participants' list is attached as an annex.

The conference was chaired by Dr Steve Kibble, ZEN chair.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening Remarks

Opening remarks and welcome were given by Ms Annuschka van de Walle, Secretary General of FOS who expressed FOS's pleasure to host the conference. Ms van de Walle gave a short background of FOS, which is a member of ZEN and works with partner organisations in the South that fight for human rights, decent labour conditions and rights to health in Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Next Mr Cephas Zinhumwe, CEO of the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO), gave his opening remarks on behalf of the ZEN National Reference Group. He applauded ZEN for its efforts, especially in advocacy, in contributing towards bringing positive changes within Zimbabwe by providing an interactive discussion platform to understand events in the country. The National Reference Group representatives would take the opportunity to discuss current events in the hope that the conference would make recommendations on how to address pertinent issues in Zimbabwe as well as on ways of formalising civil society relationships.

The following sections summarise the points raised by respective speakers, speakers' responses to questions from the audience as well as the issues raised during panel discussion.

2. Civil society perspectives on the current situation in Zimbabwe after two years of the government of national unity by Mr McDonald Lewanika

Mr Lewanika noted that while the formation of the IG had led to significant socio-economic progress in Zimbabwe, it also faces significant challenges that could hamper development. He noted that prior to the formation of the IG, schools had been closed; the standards of health care had deteriorated, shelves in supermarkets had been empty etc. However, though not as effective as many had hoped for when it was signed, the advent of the IG has managed to bring the following benefits, among others:

- Stabilisation of the economy.
- A significant reduction of the inflation rate by replacing the Zimbabwean dollar with a multi-currency system – the US dollar, the South Africa rand and the Botswana pula being the most commonly traded currencies.

The challenges or disadvantages that came with the IG include the following:

- While the multi-currency system has been instrumental in reducing inflation and stabilising the economy, it continues to pose challenges to people that have no access to foreign currencies, especially people in rural communities. The multi-currency system has not successfully created jobs in Zimbabwe; instead it has adversely affected the informal sector within the country. For example, informal traders cannot sell their goods to people for much profit because the goods are readily available in shops. Thus, the benefits associated with the dollarisation of the economy have been variable, affecting different parts of the population differently.

- There is currently considerable violence within the country.
 - People from Mbare and other high density suburbs in Harare were savagely attacked during the night by unidentified men who beat them up - allegedly ZANU-PF militia. The victims had to take refuge at the MDC headquarters in Harvest House in Harare and in some churches.
 - There is a general crackdown on civil society. Examples included the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum which had some employees interrogated because of the transitional justice projects they are currently carrying out, members of the Youth Forum had been arrested and interrogated allegedly because of a text messages campaign, the Youth Agenda Trust had some of their members arrested for conducting a peace rally and 45 people who gathered to discuss the Egypt, Tunisia and North Africa protests were arrested and charged with treason.
- Press freedom remains a challenge as legislation has not been changed by the new government. Private newspapers are being burnt and television is mainly used for ZANU-PF propaganda.
- Not much progress has been made in the provision of social services since the IG came into effect.

Mr Lewanika ended by noting that for the sake of progress there is a need for a well-grounded understanding of effective policy formulation and implementation. He noted that what happened in Egypt cannot be considered as impossible to be replicated in Zimbabwe. He appealed to the African Union, Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and EU to intervene politically and diplomatically.

3. Work of the European Union (EU) in relation to Zimbabwe, including an update on the different measures currently in place by Mr Roger Moore

Mr Roger Moore began by expressing his gratitude for the invitation to participate in the meeting. He then indicated that the EU takes into consideration the civil society recommendations in formulating policy towards Zimbabwe.

He recalled that since 2002, almost 1.5 billion Euros have been channelled through multilateral organisations and civil society for development and humanitarian purposes in Zimbabwe.

With the formation of the GNU, the EU and Zimbabwe initiated a re-engagement process. In July 2009, EU and Zimbabwe agreed to elaborate two roadmaps that will be implemented in parallel (one by the EU toward the normalisation of relations and another by Zimbabwe on the application of the GPA). However, this approach has not been very successful due to the limited dialogue between the EU and the representatives of the government of Zimbabwe.

The EU acknowledges progress in Zimbabwe's economic and social sectors. However, those developments have not been matched by equivalent progress in the political area. Further reforms are considered necessary with regard to respect for the rule of law, human rights and democratic reforms which are essential for the creation of an environment conducive to the holding of credible elections. Moore stressed the importance to effectively engage with South Africa and SADC on the preparation of the upcoming elections in Zimbabwe. He expressed his concerns about the tensions that exist within the GNU and reiterated the importance the EU attaches to support a process that ensures the country has credible elections.

Moore briefed the participants on the latest renewal of EU measures towards Zimbabwe (February 2010): These measures included among other things, a visa ban and a freeze of assets against a list of 163 individuals and 31 entities. The EU decided to extend the measures by a further twelve months. In recognition of the changes in Zimbabwe, 35 people were removed from the visa ban and freeze of asset list (which included the 4 deceased persons) while extending the validity of the remaining measures. The 35 people removed were believed to no longer be participating in human rights violations. Mr Moore added that measures can be revoked at any time. In this context Roger Moore considered that a Zimbabwean or SADC roadmap for elections is critically important.

Mr Moore also gave examples of some of the EU support to Zimbabwe which included:

- 1.500 million Euros which was channelled through the United Nation agencies and the civil society organizations to Zimbabwe since 2002.
- For the 2009-2010 agricultural seasons, the EU has provided funding for over a quarter of the fertilizer needs of smallholder farmers. This has contributed significantly to reducing the food security deficit in 2010.
- The EU provided textbooks to almost all children attending primary school.
- Support for social services was reinforced as a result of a 2009-2010 EU contribution of €80 million to address the humanitarian crises.

- Support for key governance reforms as agreed by the Government of National Unity to encourage an environment conducive to credible general elections.

4. Question and answer session.

i. What are the challenges to the implementation of the GPA?

In answering the question, Mr Zinhumwe pointed out that the main challenge was the constitution-making process. He emphasised the need to have the new constitution in place before any elections could take place. He noted the public statements by President Mugabe that there will be elections with or without the constitution as a drawback to credible elections: He pointed out that there should be a road map with clearly defined benchmarks. Mr Machisa mentioned the impingement of human rights as another challenge to the implementation of the GPA. He cited the number of deaths, displacements and political violence currently taking place in the country. He voiced his support for the EU measures against Zimbabwe. Mr Machisa also argued that there is need for freedom, without intimidation, because at the moment all those against the government are believed to be pushing opposition party agendas.

ii. To what extent does the EU consult with civil society?

Mr Moore indicated that the EU consults widely with civil society and other stakeholders including in particular regional players on how it can play a constructive role.

iii. Does the EU have a road map to follow in dealing with the anticipated elections violence?

Mr Moore answered that the EU has no intention to draw up a road map for Zimbabwe's anticipated elections. He indicated that SADC is facilitating the discussion among the parties involved.

iv. Does the EU have a common position with the United States of America and China?

Mr Moore noted that the EU has a close collaboration with both countries.

5. Panel discussion on the role of the European measures in Zimbabwe

Speakers were Mr Gideon Shoko, Mr Emmet Bergin and Mr McDonald Lewanika.

5.1 Remarks by ZCTU Deputy Secretary General, Mr Gideon Shoko

Regarding the IG's second birthday, Mr Shoko highlighted the frustrations surrounding the IG through the following analogy; *"if it were a child we would expect the child to be already walking and weaned off the mother's milk. In actual fact the child is failing to thrive"*. According to him, the negatives of the IG outweigh the positives. The negatives, *inter alia* are,

- basic freedoms and workers' rights have not been restored;
- unemployment rate is above 90%;
- indigenisation policies continue to scare away investments;
- industries are failing to perform to expectation;
- there has been an upsurge of violence since President Mugabe announced that there will be elections this year. He indicated that ZANU-PF has a culture of violence, harassment and intimidation, deploying its militia across the country.

Despite these negatives, Mr Shoko acknowledged the few positive changes brought by the IG and these include:

- stabilisation of the inflation rate;
- capacity utilisation has improved from about 10% prior to the formation of the IG to the current +/- 35%;
- schools have opened while hospitals are functioning albeit at skeleton levels;
- a reduction of violence, especially just after the formation of the IG.

Mr Shoko indicated that there have been contradictory statements from the parties in the IG in relation to possible elections this year, with ZANU-PF pushing for them and MDCs being opposed. One source of contention is whether to wait for completion of the constitution-making process before the elections. The MDCs insist that this should be the case, while ZANU-PF has called for elections to go ahead with or without a new constitution.

Mr Shoko argued that the discovery of diamonds in Marange has made ZANU-PF better resourced due to the revenues coming from the diamonds. Thus, it is believed that Mugabe has all the rigging machinery at his disposal.

It is hoped that the EU would insist on the fulfilment of the GPA before elections can take place and that there should be observers six months before and after the elections.

Further, Mr Shoko proffered reasons why elections are not likely to be free and fair if conducted this year. These are:

- the voters' roll is in a shamble;
- the state machinery responsible for all the torture and abductions is still intact;
- the Zimbabwe Election Commission is underfunded and ill prepared to handle an election at the present moment;
- a prevalence of hate speeches in the state media;
- a general lack of resources to hold an election.

On what the EU could do in terms of reconstruction supposing there is a smooth transition, Mr Shoko indicated that the EU could assist with the strengthening of democratic institutions in Zimbabwe. These institutions include human rights monitoring bodies, parliament, civic organisations, courts of law, trade unions etc. He also noted the need to assist in infrastructural development (e.g. roads, schools, hospitals, etc.).

5.2 Remarks by ZEN Board Member and Representative of Trócaire, Mr Emmet Bergin

Mr Bergin emphasised the need to implement the GPA fully and to strengthen democratic institutions to ensure better and more effective service delivery. Trócaire has an office in Harare which deals with issues of development and human rights.

Bergin explained that two of the general purposes of targeted measures are:

- 1) to isolate individuals with access to state resources in order to stop them enriching themselves *and*
- 2) to harm the interest of specific economic classes close to the regime, who it is hoped, in turn will put pressure on their political leaders to reform.

In the case of Zimbabwe, Bergin said that it is on the public record that ZANU-PF owns two companies, M & S Syndicate (on the restricted US list) and Zidco Holdings, through which much of their financial reserves are controlled. These companies in turn own several other shelf companies that have been set up in recent years to overcome the EU and US special measure restrictions. These company structures allow ZANU-PF to take a share of the profits in a whole range of enterprises set up in Zimbabwe including banking, manufacturing, retail, catering, farming, printing and publishing, duty free shops and real estate.

From an EU perspective therefore, there may be some rationale in proposing targeted measures against these companies. Bergin pointed out that there is a certain irony in ZANU-PF's focus on the EU special measures considering that a lifting of the so called "sanctions" will most benefit infamous Zimbabwean businessmen Billy Rautenbach and John Brettenkamp (who boasted during the war to be the biggest supplier of arms to the Congo). However notwithstanding this rationale for targeted measures in Zimbabwe, Bergin argued for their lifting for a number of reasons:

1. The EU measures do not really work because the measures are not from the United Nations (UN), they are just EU and US measures, which means that the targeted people have the freedom to travel to and operate in other countries – e.g. by moving bank accounts to China.
2. The total amount of money being withheld is very small. The total seized between the EU and US is just €1.2 million since the measures were introduced.
3. The propaganda value of the "sanctions" for ZANU-PF completely outweighs the financial impact on the regime. Mr Bergin said that, in the context of a Zimbabwean media that is largely state controlled it is very difficult, even impossible for the EU to explain the true nature of the special measures.

Because of the propaganda value of the special measures, Mr Bergin called for the EU to lift the special measures in return for SADC's direct involvement in the upcoming elections in Zimbabwe.

5.3 Remarks by Mr McDonald Lewanika

Mr Lewanika echoed the same sentiments as Mr Bergin on targeted measures and their use for propaganda in Zimbabwe. However, he was opposed to lifting the measures. Instead he called for alternative solutions to bridge loopholes in the implementation of these measures. He believes that the EU measures on Zimbabwe should be maintained until democratic reforms are implemented.

Mr Lewanika mentioned that those sanctioned under the measures can travel to alternative countries e.g. Gideon Gono (the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor) who can travel to China for shopping instead of Europe. He added that the fact that President Ian Khama of Botswana, who has always been supportive of measures against Zimbabwe, is now advocating for them to be removed since he was not convinced of their effectiveness.

Mr Lewanika shared the belief that President Mugabe is constantly using the existence of measures as an excuse for any problem in Zimbabwe (“propaganda capital”).

Mr Lewanika thought that ZANU-PF was wrong in assuming that the advent of the IG meant that sanctions would be removed. Mr Lewanika stressed that for ethical reasons it was difficult for Zimbabwean civil society to be seen discussing measures against its own country. Mr Lewanika urged the EU to take action in Zimbabwe, because the people of Zimbabwe could not rely on SADC or the African Union (AU) since they had not been effective in finding a solution to the problems in Zimbabwe.

5.4 General Discussion

During the general discussion, several recommendations were suggested, including:

- The Kimberly Process is central when dealing with diamonds. The revenue from the extraction of diamonds should go towards improving the welfare of the people of Zimbabwe.
- It was alleged that activities of some European companies operating in Zimbabwe do not better the lives of Zimbabweans *per se*. Some of them were operating solely in their own self-interest.
- There is need for a uniform application of policy by all EU countries towards Zimbabwe in relation to targeted measures. There should be a shared understanding between the EU, USA and other countries such as China and those in the South. A broader consensus could make the measures more effective.
- It was alleged that the world is run by perceptions and that those could be easily used and manipulated. The case in point is that of President Mugabe’s portrayal of sanctions as an EU and USA strategy to punish the government of Zimbabwe for implementing the land reform programme. As such there is need to clearly explain EU policies to ordinary Zimbabweans so that they do not base their perceptions on propaganda.
- On how the Zimbabwean issue has shaped international fora, one of the participants indicated that in international fora the Zimbabwean issue creates a division between the north and the south. The appreciation of African solutions for African problems has led to the shift of the Zimbabwean crisis being perceived as being a matter of the Southern African region. For example regional players are recommended to play the game i.e. SADC.

- It was emphasised that any crisis is dynamic and ordinary citizens should empower themselves and not put their destiny in the hands of political leaders.
- There is need to improve and maintain freedom of media in Zimbabwe and the promotion of good governance.
- There was a view that the present targeted measures against Zimbabwe are not severe compared to the full blown sanctions of the Rhodesian times. A reference was made to the Chinese arms ship destined to Zimbabwe in April 2008. Although this ship was banned from unloading by dockers' actions. The incident did highlight the various loopholes which the government can manipulate despite the arms embargo put in place by the EU and the USA and others. It was pointed out that Zimbabwe has the biggest army in the region.
- It was also highlighted that March 2008 had been the nearest thing to free and fair elections experienced by the people of Zimbabwe, bringing hope for change. However, one of the participants noted that the political violence that transpired after the March 2008 elections has instigated fear amongst the people of Zimbabwe. Thus it was recommended to postpone the election because an election could lead to a level of violence similar to June 2008.

6. Possible dates and scenarios for elections in Zimbabwe by Mr Okay Machisa

Mr Machisa started by arguing that elections have always been a bone of contention in Zimbabwe due to a culture of violence. His electoral scenarios were:

- A collapse of the GPA, due to a variety of factors. For example, as MDC members are arrested, the growing frustration with the GPA not being implemented fully and fairly could mean a withdrawal by at least one party from the IG. This would necessitate an election. Given there is a 90-day period from announcement to Election Day, the President might therefore announce in March an election for May 2011.
- There could be a stalemate in the constitution-making process. President Mugabe could use this as an excuse to call for elections which could be in August if not by April next year. Mr Machisa argued that March would be avoided because that was when Tsvangirai won the elections, and equally February would be avoided since it was then when the Government of National Unity was formed. There would also be avoidance of June since this was when the violence in 2008 before the run-off

presidential election occurred. Elections would also be unlikely between October and January because of the rainy season.

- The constitution-making process could be completed and elections set for August 2012. In this scenario Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai could be elected the President of Zimbabwe.
- Writing the constitution could be completed and the country goes for elections. If there is considerable political violence by ZANU-PF, President Mugabe could win the election through denying the electorate a free and fair choice.
- If there is no political violence and elections are free and fair with international observers, Prime Minister Tsvangirai will most likely be elected as the President of Zimbabwe.
- One of the principals of the IG could die. The scenario will then culminate in a vacuum and the army might take over the country. Elections can be called as a result of the death of the President, with the Prime Minister as acting President in case of the President's death. Then Prime Minister Tsvangirai could become the President.

7. Main Human Rights challenges and strategies for elections by Ms Susan Mutambasere

Ms Mutambasere began by noting that there is election phobia in Zimbabwe while democratic infringements are rife. The Zimbabwe Election Commission chairperson Justice Simpson Mutambanengwe has highlighted that there have not been sufficient efforts done to warrant a free and fair election. In particular Ms Mutambasere noted the following as challenges to a free and fair election in Zimbabwe:

- There is a need to revise the voters roll and this would require about US\$20 million. There is a need for voter education which is presently hindered by police interference. She noted that many people at the last election had their national identity cards confiscated due to having been perceived as having voted for an opposition party.
- People still have fresh memories of the political violence that prevailed in 2008. There is voter apathy.
- The media is not free. It is monopolised by one political party (ZANU-PF).
- Some state institutions are used to spread political violence.

She noted that donors in particular are not proactive and tend to wait until the last minute before responding to proposals.

8. Different Regions, Different Challenges by Mr Kucaca Phulu

Mr Phulu spoke on the need to recognise the different cultures and ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. He argued that although Zimbabwe is one country, it has diverse tribes and cultures. Mr Phulu charged that there was a ‘capital city syndrome’ in which people view Zimbabwe as Harare and Harare as Zimbabwe. He specifically mentioned Matebeleland in the southern part of the country as for years being a ZAPU dominated region. The people in that region predominantly speak Ndebele. The Ndebele people make up to 15-20% of the population of Zimbabwe and are the biggest minority in the country.

Mr Phulu highlighted the importance of the Gukurahundi genocide which started in 1983. Gukurahundi means the *early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains*. He described it as an attempt to exterminate the Ndebeles. It harmed civilians and not the so-called ‘rebels’ or ‘dissidents’. An estimated more than 20 000 Ndebele people were killed, with most buried in mass graves. Since the ruling party was largely Shona-dominated, the Gukurahundi could be seen from an academic point as a crackdown against the opposition. The unfortunate and sad part of the Gukurahundi genocide, according to Mr Phulu, was that it was accompanied by a media blackout.

The international community was quiet because during that time Mugabe had been a “darling of the West”. While Mugabe had focused on education, the late Joshua Nkomo (the then leader of ZAPU) talked about the land issue - a policy which was unpopular in the West. Most people from the region of Matebeleland question why the international community did not react to Gukurahundi and continue to feel isolated. This, according to Mr Phulu, has led to the recent calls for secession in the region, although he thought a majority probably want simple devolution of power. Currently, the Gukurahundi genocide was unfortunately regarded by outsiders as a Matebeleland question, not a national issue.

On the question of national healing, Mr Phulu pointed out that the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration had failed to address tensions in Zimbabwe. He believes the Gukurahundi genocide should be included within National Healing Programmes. He gave an example of the unattended mass graves in Matebeleland as an issue that needs to be dealt with.

9. Issues arising from the discussions

As the conference drew to an end, the following issues arose:

- A view that the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration which was implemented after the IG with the aim of facilitating healing of the nation, has not been effective. It has no framework within which to work. Minister Sekai Holland (MDC-T) has previously mentioned that the organ does not have a clear mandate and it is operating without an enabling law. It has failed to address political tensions within the country.
- There have been few legislative reforms following the IG. For example the issue of the Public Order Security Act (POSA) has not yet been addressed.
- The independence of the judiciary was questioned by participants, in particular its silence on political violence.
- It was recommended that there be a civil society roadmap with benchmarks to bring about a democratic society.
- There was general consensus that Zimbabwe is not yet ready for elections: people are still traumatised by what happened in 2008.
- It was acknowledged that more meetings such as this particular conference need to be called to provide a platform for people and civil society in particular to share and consider other people's recommendations.

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Annex: Name of Participant	Profile
ZEN BOARD of DIRECTORS	
1. Steve Kibble	Progressio
2. Hugo Knoppert	Zimbabwe Watch
3. Emmet Bergin	Trócaire
4. Iidiko Hermina Szilasi	Africa-Hungarian Union
OTHER ZEN MEMBER ORGANISATIONS	
5. Kwaku Acheampong	Africa Regional Desk Officer FOS
6. Annuschka Vandewalle	Secretary General FOS
7. Sophie Dreze	FOS
8. Ali Selvi	FOS
9. Tim Roosen	FOS
10. Stiene Billen	FOS
11. Wim Leysen	FOS
12. Mads Barbesgaard	Afrika Kontakt
13. Charlotte Boulanger	CCFD-Terre Solidaire
14. Anton Dekker	NIZA
EU STAFF AND DIPLOMATS	
15. Roger Moore	European External Action Service
16. Isabelle Richards	European External Action Service
17. Charles Zanza	Counsellor Zimbabwe Embassy Brussels
18. Nesbert Samasuwo	Minister Counsellor, Head of Chancery and Deputy Head of Mission Zimbabwe Embassy
19. Edward Sims	Office of Geoffery van Orden MEP, ECR
NATIONAL REFERENCE GROUP AND OTHER DELEGATES FROM ZIMBABWE	
20. Cephas Zinhumwe	Chief Executive Officer (NANGO)
21. McDonald Lewanika	Director (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition)
22. Susan Mutambasere	Project Lawyer (Zim Human Rights Forum)
23. Wiz Bishop	Acting Coordinator (IntLO Forum) London
24. Gideon Shoko	Deputy Secretary General (ZCTU)
25. Okay Machisa	National Director (ZimRights)
26. Kucaca Phulu	Chairperson (ZimRights)
PARTNER ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS	
27. Egbert Pos	Netherlands Institute of Multiparty Democracy
28. Justine Delloye	Europe Partnership for Democracy
29. Astrid Schipper	Activist Free Voice
30. Htay Tent	Burma Support
31. Wendy Verheyden	ACOD
32. Katrine Scholer Kristensen	University of Copenhagen
33. Katharina Otto Nielsen	University of Copenhagen
34. Tapuwa Bridget	Zimbabwean in Belgium
ZIMBABWE EUROPE NETWORK	
35. Tor-Hugne Olsen	ZEN
36. Thobekile Zikhali	ZEN