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Ladies and Gentleman,

It is my honour to deliver the civil society perspectives at the Friends of Zimbabwe meeting being held here in Brussels. As you may be aware, one of the key areas of focus of the National Association of NGOs (NANGO), the apex coordinating body of Civil Society in Zimbabwe, is to campaign for an enabling operational environment for Non State Actors. My presentation touches on the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe with a focus on the elections roadmap, Global Political Agreement (GPA) implementation and way forward.

We note with concern that since the Friends of Zimbabwe group meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2010 there has been little progress in implementing the GPA and resolving identified outstanding issues. There are signs of political stalemate amid continuing violence and intimidation. Calls for a referendum and/or elections are occurring in a context where the people of Zimbabwe are unable to express their views freely and without fear. The conditions obtaining in Zimbabwe such as widespread state-sponsored violence, partisan application of the law, increased deployment of soldiers across the country openly intimidating citizens and campaigning for ZANU-PF, arbitrary arrests, harassment of rights activists and MDC leaders all confirm that key state institutions remain unreformed and extremely partisan and politicised. There is general consensus amongst civil society that due to the prevailing political environment Zimbabwe is not ready for elections in 2011 without having undertaken extensive reforms as outlined in the GPA, including the constitutional reform process, media and electoral reforms.

As Civil Society we are concerned about the readiness of the country for elections. The operational environment still needs to be improved and most of the critical reforms outlined in the GPA have not yet been implemented. We therefore urge the international community to apply **diplomatic pressure** on the government of Zimbabwe to outline a clear road map for the hosting of credible free and fair elections.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), as the guarantors of the GPA, should urgently lay out in clear terms and firm pre-conditions to ensure democratic elections in Zimbabwe that are without violence and intimidation and that fully comply with SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. While acknowledging the efforts made thus far by the SADC Organ Troika on Politics, Defence and Security Summit through the milestone Livingstone Communiqué and the subsequent Sandton Summit Communiqué on the need for a credible elections roadmap for

Zimbabwe more still needs to be done to ensure free and fair elections. These include dealing with the outstanding issues of disagreement amongst the political negotiators on the following five key thematic issues:

- a. The staffing of the Zimbabwe Elections Commission
- b. The role of the Zimbabwe Security Forces in governance issues and political campaigns
- c. The denial or lack of acknowledgment of violence as a problem by ZANU (PF)
- d. The existence of oppressive legislation prohibiting freedom of expression and movement
- e. The role of election observers and monitors

It is therefore our submission that the Zimbabwe elections roadmap must address the following five critical pre-conditions to guarantee free and fair elections:

1. A new, democratic constitution which includes critical electoral reforms such as an updated and accurate voters' roll, guarantees for media freedoms, promotes gender equality and equal access by all political parties to state media while repealing or amending all legislation that hinders free political activity. The roadmap must layout contingency plans of steps to be taken in the event that a credible constitutional referendum produces a NO Vote.
2. All soldiers currently deployed across the country must be returned and confined to their barracks and all service chiefs must issue a public statement committing themselves to restricting their activities to their constitutional mandate and to totally separate themselves from politics and from interference in political and electoral affairs.
3. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and its secretariat staff, responsible for elections management, must be completely demilitarised, independent, professional, adequately resourced and receive direct technical support from the SADC Electoral Commissions Forum to enable it to impartially discharge its mandate.
4. In the context of its on-going mediation in the political conflict in Zimbabwe, SADC must independently examine and certify that the environment is conducive to holding free and fair elections before an election date can be set, and SADC must supervise the elections to ensure full compliance with SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. The elections must be monitored and observed by local, regional and international groups who should have unfettered access to all parts of the country.
5. Together with the AU and the UN, deploy peace-keeping monitors at least three months ahead of elections to prevent state-sponsored violence and intimidation and to guarantee peaceful transfer of power to the eventual winner of the elections. The peace-keeping monitors should remain on the ground a further three months after elections have been held.

In defining the future direction of the country, while noting that the current process is marred with a lot of challenges as has been highlighted above, at present the GPA is **the only tool** we have which maps out the way forward towards a democratic Zimbabwe. It is therefore of the outmost importance that the provisions of the agreement are adhered to by all parties concerned. In particular the international community needs to support the orderly conclusion of the **constitutional reform process** so that elections are held on the basis of a new constitution.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the international community has at its disposal a two – pronged strategy in engaging with the Zimbabwean question in support of the people of Zimbabwe;

Firstly at the **diplomatic level** the imperatives are as follows:

- i) Engagement with SADC, as the guarantors of the GPA, and South African Jacob Zuma in particular as the facilitator, to attend to the unresolved components of the GPA. This of essence implies that SADC must guarantee the democratic transfer of power to the eventual winner of the proposed elections.
- ii) The International community must use political and diplomatic pressure to ensure that that the Inclusive government prioritises security sector-reform in Zimbabwe to ensure that security forces are non-partisan in the execution of their duties.
- iii) Apply pressure on both SADC and the Zimbabwe authorities to agree on a roadmap for the hosting of free and fair elections. An independent assessment of conditions on the ground by SADC to certify that the environment is conducive and that necessary institutional and legislative reforms have taken place to allow for an election that meets SADC standards on the conduct of democratic elections should be a pre-conditions for 2011 elections. This includes ensuring that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) is fully capable (technically and financially) of managing and delivering a convincing election which will lead to a peaceful transfer of power; that there is a clean and updated voters' roll whose compilation should be the responsibility of ZEC and not the partisan Registrar-General; that Zimbabweans in the Diaspora have a right to vote; and that soldiers return to the barracks and play no part in electoral affairs.
- iv) To support lobbying and advocacy efforts by civil society for the deployment of SADC, AU and UN monitors to Zimbabwe to comprehensively assess and ensure the full implementation of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) for restoration of political stability, peace and human security paving the way for Zimbabwe to hold credible elections. These monitors should be deployed to Zimbabwe at least six months before any election is held and to maintain such monitors for at least another three months after the conclusion of elections in order to prevent violence and intimidation.

Secondly using the two pronged strategy the international community should extend **financial** and **technical** support towards targeted state institutions, regional and civil society organisation whose work will strengthen the credibility of the electoral process:

- i) There is urgent need to build the capacity of the constitutional commissions created by amendment 19 of the constitution before elections are held. This

- entails providing them with the technical and financial resources to be able to carry out their respective mandates.
- ii) Facilitate technical support to the newly appointed Zimbabwe Electoral Commission by more experienced regional electoral bodies such as the South African Electoral Commission. This includes administration of the pre-election, conduct of elections, and post election periods; overhaul of the voters roll; and creation of an enabling environment for the other actors within the electoral process.
 - iii) Continue work within the Kimberley Process to work for fulfilment by Zimbabwe of the 2009 adopted joint work plan with its additions from the July 2010 agreement in St Petersburg, in particular to call for the respect of the civil society role in the process.
 - iv) Civil Society continues to play a critical role in supporting the transition processes in Zimbabwe towards full democracy. Hence the international community should continue to support civil society initiatives in the following areas;
 - Support the participation and engagement of Civil Society with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process for Zimbabwe due this October. In particular both diplomatic and technical support is needed to engage the members of the Troika on Zimbabwe; namely Spain, China and Senegal.
 - Protection to human rights defenders including establishment of an Civil Society Violence Early Warning and Response Coordination Mechanism.
 - Voter education to build a pool of citizen aware of their national obligation to participate in democratic processes and how the electoral process works.
 - Monitoring and documentation of the referendum and elections.
 - Evidence based advocacy and lobbying premised on solid research and the development of discussion papers to inform alternative policy positions.
 - Creation and maintaining of dialogue and engagement platforms with both local and international actors.
 - Violence prevention initiatives in support of Article 7 process in the GPA to prevent recurrence of the scale of politically motivated violence witnessed during the 2008 elections.
 - Increased support to monitoring of the Chiadzwa diamond fields in order to avert the use of this resource to fund conflict and for personnel rather than national use. Particularly we would encourage the donors to support the Kimberley Process endorsed Local Focal Point to enable it to operate efficiently in the current disputed situation.
 - Strengthen regional networks and civil society groupings such as the SADC CNGO to foster greater cooperation and coordination for lobbying SADC on the Zimbabwe question.

Donors to Zimbabwe should formulate incentives towards full compliance with the GPA and development of a clear roadmap for the holding of free and fair elections. This includes creatively framing the targeted measures debate so that gradual relaxation of these measures is linked with steady progress towards full democratisation reforms. Other economic tool relates to the huge international debt that Zimbabwe has accrued over the years; the suspension or total lifting of portions of this debt can also be part of a rescue package to support the democratic reforms with clear benchmarks.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I again wish to re-iterate of the following recommendations as presented by Civil Society in Copenhagen, December 2010:

- a. **Continue and increase support to the people** of Zimbabwe, maintaining high levels of humanitarian aid and support for social sectors. Donor aid should be transparent in the nature and extent of engagement with Government and civil society. Donors should strengthen the social component of aid to ensure participation of the poorest sectors of the population;
- b. Provide **long term, predictable funding** to civil society organisations;
- c. Focus support on **human rights and governance**, including for monitoring the inclusive government and greater transparency in the extractive industries. We also urges quick and enhanced support for civic society efforts in countermanding fear, and mitigating and exposing violence;
- d. Strengthen support for the transition towards a new Zimbabwe, including working for legislative and institutional reform, especially **security sector reform, transitional justice and healing**;
- e. **Support the election preparations** in the country to ensure elections are free from violence, intimidation and manipulation, and are carried out in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) electoral principles and guidelines;
- f. Ensure the access in Zimbabwe to the **widest variety of media information**, including support for externally-based media outlets;
- g. Support a **moratorium on debt repayments** to allow an independent and transparent debt audit;
- h. Support a **land ownership audit**;
- i. Support work on transparency in extraction and use of **diamond revenue in Chidzwa, to enable the country to meet international standards**. Support the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme local focal point and encourage Zimbabwe to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative;
- j. Continue the appropriate and targeted measures, including the travel bans on individuals responsible for human rights violations, until the GPA obligations are fulfilled;
- k. **Continue to press and support SADC and the African Union**, including using the EU-AU human rights dialogue, to fulfil their role as guarantors of the GPA.

Ladies and gentlemen
I say thank you.