

# Zimbabwe After the Disputed Election: The Way Forward

Morgan Tsvangirai

Prime Minister of Zimbabwe (2009-13); Leader, MDC-T

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### Alex Vines

Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Alex Vines, I am the director of Area Studies and International Law at Chatham House and head of its Africa Programme. I'm very delighted to be welcoming you this afternoon to Chatham House to listen to Morgan Tsvangirai, who as you know was prime minister of Zimbabwe from 2009 to 2013 and is leader of the Movement for Democratic Change-T.

So this is a meeting that is on the record – it's not under the Chatham House Rule. Not only that, but it's actually being live-streamed so that people in Zimbabwe and elsewhere can watch what's happening. You can also join the debate if you'd like to, even from in here, using Twitter: #AskCH and also #CHAfrica. We will in the Q&A period be getting some questions that have been sent to us remotely back here. This is to try and be truly globalized and inclusive actually, so that's the idea.

With no more ado, I'm delighted to welcome back to Chatham House Morgan. He was commenting at how warm the UK is and glad to be coming down here to cool off. Hopefully we'll have a pleasant presentation and interesting and illuminative discussion. Morgan, thank you for coming. Over to the podium for you, thank you very much.

### Morgan Tsvangirai

Thank you very much. I think it's a big relief to come in this cool room. I thought I had misplaced my African weather in England. Anyway, thanks very much for inviting me to discuss the issue of Zimbabwe after the disputed elections in July a year ago.

I've been here once. Sometimes I find it very illuminative to address but I like the part when we are in lively engagement. I hope I'll have the greater part of our time in exchange.

For some of us, Zimbabwe is the only country we have got. It is with a heavy heart that I stand before you while my beloved country is fast decelerating towards an inevitable economic implosion, especially after yet another controversial election, on July 31. From the outset, it is important to note that the debilitating economic problems Zimbabwe is faced with are symptomatic of a deep-seated political crisis stemming from the disputed election last year – a crisis that has not only affected the legitimacy of government but seriously eroded any shred of confidence in the country. July 31 was not only a disputed election in Zimbabwe but in the SADC region, here in Europe and the United States of America.

We in the MDC have produced a comprehensive but disturbing report of how the will of the people was subverted in that election. We described the poll as a farce, a monument of fraud. But a spanner is thrown in the works in our legal challenge of that election, after we were barred from arguing our case and bringing witnesses to court.

The AU and SADC, while saying the election was credible, raised grave concerns about that election. Curiously and tellingly, while they say the poll was free, because there was no evident political violence, the two African observer missions – the guarantors of our inclusive political arrangement – refused to describe the election as having been fair.

Such has been our experience with deeply flawed elections that to this day the courts in Zimbabwe are still to make a ruling on our court challenge of the disputed presidential election of 2002. By-elections were never held in any of the parliamentary seats that were nullified by the courts on the grounds of ZANU-PF's instigated violence in the 2000 parliamentary election. Those seats would have given us a simple majority in the 2000 election that was held after the formation of the MDC in 1999.

Zimbabwe's current crisis therefore primarily stems from a disputed poll branded as not having been credible not just by the political players in Zimbabwe but by other countries in the region, in Africa and the broader international community. One year after the poll, we have not yet received an electronic copy of the voters' roll, that we ought to have received before the election in line with the dictates of Zimbabwean law. The polls were deliberately subverted while a special team of senior ZANU-PF officials and members of the security establishment was at the centre of systematic emasculating of that vote. The role in the elections of Nikuv, an Israeli company fronted by former Mossad agents, remains murky and unexplained to this day. In short, it was a heavily militarized election.

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, an organization linked to the Catholic Church (to which President Mugabe belongs), last week dismissed last year's poll as having had so many irregularities that compromised the credibility of that election. The CCJP concludes that the pre-election environment did not provide a sufficiently conducive atmosphere for a genuinely credible and even electoral contest. The CCJP said in a statement last week that a supposedly independent electoral body, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, was a bystander in the run-up to that election.

All evidence points to a flawed election, as confirmed by local and international bodies, and it is an illegitimate government that has eroded all confidence in the country and has spawned a huge crisis that has engulfed the economy. We are a nation, of course, in crisis. A year after the poll, the country is experiencing a serious economic and social meltdown. A million vulnerable children are out of school because the government cannot afford to pay their fees. The government cannot afford to meet the wage bill of its workers, while the provision of basic services such as health and education has become a luxury. Only last week a government minister ran for dear life after he had told flood victims that the money meant to compensate them had been diverted to pay civil servants because the government was broke. The labour minister only told parliament nine days ago that the absence of pay dates on the payslips of civil servants was not an omission but was due to the fact that the government itself was not aware of when sufficient resources for next month's wage bill would be sufficiently mobilized, and did not want to misinform government employees by putting in a date they would not comply with. Such has become the magnitude of our crisis that government itself does not know when it will raise the next month's wage bill.

But even in the face of such evidence, we have a crisis on our hands. In sharp and striking contrast to this uncertainty and apparent leadership failure, we in the MDC are very proud of our record in the past four and a half years in government. Among many achievements, of course, is the stabilization of the economy, the restoration of hospitals and schools, and predictability and certainty in government. State employees were assured of a paycheck every month. Now that the inclusive government has come to an end, the country is back on its converse, back to the collapse of 2008. Every Zimbabwean can testify not only to the order, sanity and confidence we in the MDC brought to the country, but to the certainty and predictability of government service and delivery that we assured.

Some have wrongly assumed we are desperate for a second chance at a unity government but it is not true. We are only desperate for the return to legitimacy of our government, but we are craving for the credible election that will guarantee the true expression of the people of Zimbabwe so that an exclusive MDC government can deliver to the people.

I will just summarize how the July 31 stolen election has a multilayered crisis. First, we face a crisis of legitimacy. The primary catastrophe that has led to the others is the crisis of legitimacy of government that has eroded all confidence and trust in our government. Zimbabweans do not have faith in the government in Harare because they know they did not vote for it. The international community also knows what happened. For the record and to put it in perspective, the global condemnation of our election – here were the responses of some of the global players. US Secretary of State John Kerry has made some comments. William Hague has made some comments. The ministry of foreign affairs of Canada also made some comments. The Australian foreign minister has also made some comments. The European Union has condemned these elections. The German foreign minister has also condemned.

The Botswana government's observer mission reports and states: 'Further to the above, it is the perspective of the Government of Botswana that in the context of preliminary findings of the SADC election observer mission, as well as the initial report of our own observer team, that there is need for an independent audit of the just concluded electoral process in Zimbabwe. There is no doubt that what has been revealed so far by observers cannot be considered an acceptable standard for free and fair election in SADC. The community of SADC should never create the undesirable precedent of permitting exceptions to its own rules'. It is prudent therefore to note that notwithstanding the current kindness by the EU to re-engage with the ZANU-PF government, it is on record that Africa, Europe itself, and the United States had great reservations on the credibility of the July 31 election.

The crisis of the economy. I want to say here, with its genesis from what many believe to be an illegitimate government, the country's economy is in turmoil. There is a serious liquidity crunch while revenue collections have drastically dwindled, typified by the government's failure to meet its wage bill. At a time when our economy needs massive capital injection, no one is prepared to invest in that country. Foreign direct investment has dried up. There is absolutely no trust and confidence. This is the same government that five years ago raided and [indiscernible] up private and corporate foreign currency accounts, that have yet to be repaid. The first danger and warning sign of the economy was when about \$1 billion was spirited out of the economy barely a week after that election – the clearest indication of erosion of investor confidence as a result of this dispute.

You have the office of the president being at the centre of encouraging lawlessness through needless farm seizures that have caused one farmer and his daughter to lose their lives. The highest office of the land has become a source of insecurity by encouraging more farm seizures in violation of the national constitution. I may also add here that these farm seizures have now moved away from farm seizures of former white-owned farms to black-owned farms. So when is the cycle of invasion going to end? That's the question that we have to grapple with.

The social sector is collapsing. Urban councils are failing to provide clean water to millions of citizens that stay in the country's cities and towns. Whereas in 2008 we were faced with hyperinflationary conditions, today we are in a serious deflation as there is just no money circulating in the country. I recently published a treatise on my personal reflections, in which I described the country as having been turned into a huge mall of vendors – indeed, a highly informal economy in which everyone is trying to sell something to somebody. The unemployment level in the country, projected around 85 per cent, has become an issue of national instability, if nothing is done in the very immediate future.

To sum up our dire economic status, the World Bank has put us 158th out of 183 countries. The World Economic Forum puts us at 133 out of 148 countries. President Mugabe on Sunday shockingly said the economy was on the rebound. The president is so divorced from the grim reality facing the nation, to the extent that the nation has simply become a rudderless ship, allowing the winds of fate to drift in the high seas of political denial and uncertainty. No effort to solve the crisis can be made by a president who is as much in denial about the national situation.

The crisis of governance. Our government is not only struggling to meet its basic obligations. Chief among the many crimes is the government's failure to align the country's laws to the new constitution overwhelmingly endorsed by the people of Zimbabwe last year. In that constitution, among the progressive provisions, Zimbabweans said they wanted devolution. But a year after that election, that revolutionary provision has not in any way been implemented, as the governance system remains highly centralized. What the ZANU-PF government has done instead is to appoint ministers of provincial affairs, even in the two metropolitan provinces such as Harare and Bulawayo, which they do not control.

That constitution was the major success story of the democratic movement in Zimbabwe but the government is developing cold feet in living true to the wishes and aspirations of citizens, as expressed in that contract with the people. Ours is the government that is contemptuous of any agreement with anyone and has dismally failed to pay its own debts. We now have an unserviced external debt of \$10 billion. We have not met our side of the bargain on many bilateral and multilateral agreements, while companies and other properties owned by foreigners have been seized in violation of BIPAs (bilateral agreements).

Then we have a crisis over expectations. The other layer of national crisis is due to the fact that ZANU-PF overpromised the people but it has under-delivered. They claimed to have overwhelmingly won last year's election but all they have seen is overwhelming lack of delivery on what they promised the people of Zimbabwe. Every sector received a promise in the run-up to the election – has not received those promises. Civil service, unemployment – they said they were going to create 2 million jobs and in fact what we have is 700 companies closing on a monthly basis.

So having outlined the crisis, what is the way forward? In light of our multilayered crisis, many have justifiably asked: where to, Zimbabwe? Since January, when the crisis began to take root, I have been calling for a national discussion by a cross-section of stakeholders to deliberate on the country's problems and chart the way forward. In 2009, we agreed to an inclusive government even though we had won the election, but we have learned that a discussion and agreement by political players alone is an elite pact that remains exclusive of other players who can assist to make a bigger positive difference. An internationally brokered national dialogue of all stakeholders would be a good starting point to avert the national crisis gripping the nation.

While we manage to provide respite to the suffering nation, we are calling for a discussion by a broad range of stakeholders, including the church, the unions, industry, civil society. It is up to that group that must agree on what needs to be done to solve our multilayered crisis, to bring back the confidence in the country and to address the question of legitimacy. That is the epicentre of our national predicament.

I am aware there are some who have sought to give conditions to this national dialogue. But I still maintain that a genuine, well-meaning national conversation should not be handicapped by subjective, self-serving conditions that demean the people of Zimbabwe, who know the truth of what happened in that last election. The people of Zimbabwe ought to be encouraged to discuss their national predicament and hammer out what needs to be done to extricate the country from this manmade quagmire.

Put simply, the domestic solution is an unconditional dialogue by a broad section of Zimbabweans to unpack the crisis. What is the role of the international community? The international community still has a big role to play in Zimbabwe. Gone are the days of 'lone ranger' antics in a global village. We must really join the family of nations. The current national reality is that we are isolated from meaningful investment and capital flow and substantial development of financial assistance. ZANU-PF's narrowly focused, confined [indiscernible] policy has not yielded direct fiscal support. We have had a myopic foreign policy that overlooks the significance of the broader international community, thereby underplaying the potential of leveraging international relationships in a broad sense. We must once again rejoin the family of nations in its wide scope of mutually beneficial relationships, largely driven on our part by a desire to enhance and to further the interests of ordinary citizens of our country.

Zimbabwe needs friends, strategic partners, promoters, across the breadth of the international community. Our international relations even at the regional level require fixing. We have consistently been inconsistent for so long that there are not many takers supporting our plans for the way forward. The safest bet is to shift our mindset towards thinking – and the new pronouncements that are inclined towards mutually beneficial policies.

I am aware that the EU has decided to re-engage in Zimbabwe. I know that the people of Zimbabwe stand to benefit from any form of re-engagement. But the international community must not just re-engage without a framework, but must insist on implementation of our agreed electoral conditions and embracing of universally acceptable standards by authorities in Harare.

We also notice that sanctions have for all intents and purposes been removed, except the travel bans of Mr and Mrs Mugabe. This is welcome in that it obliterates and removes any excuse by the government for not delivering on the people. What we do not encourage is the mere removal of sanctions without a framework that prods and entices the nation towards respect of full democratic values. You must insist on the government in Harare respecting and implementing the new constitution. You must insist on the need to respect the rule of law and the conditions sanctioned by SADC to ensure that the next election is vaccinated from the periodic mischief that has blighted the credibility of our elections.

Any re-engagement must be accompanied by a stubborn insistence by the international community on the universally accepted standards that ensure the guarantee of full freedoms and the franchising of the ordinary citizen. Any re-engagement must be alive to the past and present acts of omission and commission and the crimes committed against the innocent citizens of Zimbabwe. As I speak, we understand that the government wants to mortgage the Great Dyke, a rich mineral belt in our country. Our hope is that any re-engagement must be sensitive to the prospect of bad and corrupt deals that will serve neither the people nor anyone.

I want to conclude, Mr Chairman, and say that I'm aware of the complexity of our national situation, but rest assured that some of us have chosen to take permanent residence in the trenches until democracy is achieved in Zimbabwe. We remain committed to election as the only instrument of bringing about change in our country – legitimate change. But our experience with the current ZANU-PF government has taught us that it is one thing to win an election but quite another for an incumbent to accept the will of the people. It is understandable that some among us have lost hope, with our long history of subverted elections, but despite setbacks the majority of the people of Zimbabwe remain committed to the struggle for democratic change. In fact, the national psyche in Zimbabwe is that change will come. It is our hope the international community will continue to stand by the ordinary people of Zimbabwe in their determination to fight unjust laws using no other weapon than their bare hands, through a free and a fair ballot.

We remain committed to the democratic agenda. We may bicker and some may choose to go their separate ways, but that is the nature of democracy, to which we are fully subscribed members. I have no doubt in my mind that with unconditional dialogue by the people of Zimbabwe, with international re-engagement pledged conditionally on universally accepted standards, we will forge a way out of this current morass. As I have always done, I will continually reignite the embers of the crackling fire of collective democratic struggle of the people of Zimbabwe. I have no doubt in my mind that we have come close to the fulfilment of that dream of positive change and transformation. I have traversed the country, meeting ordinary Zimbabweans, being inspired by their hope that continues to spring even in the current dispiriting economic turmoil. Those ordinary people across the length and breadth of my country continue to give me strength and lift my spirits. We have travelled this torturous road together and we are all convinced we are nearing that end.

The world must assist us to put back on track an arrested and derailed transition, a delayed transition that is not only political or ideological but also generational. I can clearly see that we are on the brink of that sunset of our struggle, a sunset soon to be replaced by a new dawn of a new leadership, and new and abundant opportunities for every Zimbabwean. I see a Zimbabwe successfully unshackling the dark and grisly chains that tied down to this despicable fate among the wretched of the earth. I see a new Zimbabwe proudly taking its place among the family of nations. I am convinced that our hope is not in vain.

I thank you for your attention.

## Alex Vines

Thank you very much, Mr Tsvangirai. We've heard Mr Tsvangirai's vision and how he sees the way forward for Zimbabwe. So this is your opportunity now to test that vision and clarify it.