

British Government say it's too early to lift Zimbabwe's targeted measures

The British Government said on Friday it will support Zimbabwe's inclusive government despite its concerns about President Robert Mugabe but will not lift targeted measures until Harare proves it is on a path to democracy.

Ahead of Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's visit to Britain this weekend, junior foreign minister Mark Malloch-Brown wrote in that it was time to "show a little faith" in efforts to build a new Zimbabwe.

But he said Britain would only lift the EU targeted measures when Zimbabwe's transition to democracy "has reached a point of no return".

Prime Minister Tsvangirai is due to arrive in London on Friday night as part of an international tour looking for assistance to help Zimbabwe emerge from years of chaos, which has seen rampant inflation and forced many Zimbabweans to flee.

He will hold talks with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on Monday and also meet with business leaders, according to Zimbabwe's embassy in the UK.

"We are clear that we must support the new inclusive government, whatever our strong doubts about Mr Mugabe," Malloch-Brown wrote.

"The reformers who have faced torture and death in pursuit of democracy have chosen to make this government work. We must find ways to support them," he added.

But he said Tsvangirai and Mugabe must adhere to the commitments made when they formed a power-sharing government in February aimed at steering Zimbabwe back to stability after the crisis caused by disputed elections last year.

"Our assistance depends on it meeting its commitments. This in turn depends on Mr Mugabe honouring the agreements he has made with Mr Tsvangirai and the Zimbabwean people. There is still much to do on this," Malloch-Brown wrote.

He said his government had shown some "flexibility" on the measures, such as allowing Mugabe's ministers covered by a European Union travel ban to accompany Tsvangirai to Britain. The measures also include a ban on the import of arms and the freezing of certain ZANU PF leaders assets held in European bank accounts.

But Britain "will not lift the bulk of these measures until we are convinced that Zimbabwe's transition to democracy has reached a point of no return."

Information sourced from Sapa-AFP