

Zimbabwe update

This month's update covers the SADC Troika Summit in Mozambique and the MDC's subsequent re-engagement with the Inclusive Government. The update also focuses upon WOZA's achievement in receiving the 2009 Robert. F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, ZCTU President Matombo's arrest and the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme's decision not to suspend Zimbabwe's diamond industry. News of The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Bill, the growing child rape epidemic and the expulsion and suspensions of ZINASU leaders and activists is also covered.

You can find more details about all of the stories covered on the [ACTSA website](#).

SADC urges dialogue and implementation of agreement

The SADC Troika, Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation met on the 5th November in Maputo, Mozambique. The Members of the Troika are Mozambique (chair), Zambia (deputy) and Swaziland. South African President Jacob Zuma and DRC Embassy Ambassador Bene L. M'Poko also attended. President Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai were also invited to the summit.

The Summit urged the following:

- (i) the parties should fully comply with the spirit and letter of the GPA and SADC Summit decisions of 27 January 2009;
- (ii) the parties should not allow the situation to deteriorate any further;
- (iii) the parties to engage in a dialogue in order to find a lasting solution to the outstanding issues towards the full implementation of the GPA;
- (iv) the Facilitator (the Republic of South Africa) on behalf of the Troika should remain seized with the developments on the implementation of the GPA;
- (v) the MCO Troika should continue monitoring the progress closely and report to the Chairperson of the SADC Organ Troika on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation; and
- (vi) the international community to lift all forms of sanctions on Zimbabwe.

The Summit decided:

- (i) the political parties signatory to the GPA should engage in dialogue with immediate effect within fifteen (15) days not beyond thirty (30) days;
- (ii) the dialogue should include all the outstanding issues emanating from the implementation of GPA and SADC Communiqué of 27 January 2009;
- (iii) the Facilitator should evaluate progress and report back to the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

SADC agreed South African President Jacob Zuma as the Facilitator should monitor the new talks between the ZANU–PF and the MDC and report back at the conclusion of the 15 day period. On 25 November President Jacob Zuma announced he had constituted a three-person facilitation support team to work on the Zimbabwean process. The President's political adviser Charles Nqakula leads the team, working with Special Envoy Mac Maharaj and international relations adviser Lindiwe Zulu.

MDC response to SADC initiative

Following the SADC summit, Zimbabwe's MDC has re-engaged with the Inclusive Government and ended its boycott. Tsvangirai explained that the MDC has given President Mugabe 30 days to implement a power-sharing deal. Disagreements are to be resolved within 15 days and any outstanding issues implemented within 30 days.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- Zimbabwe's parliament unanimously approved a bill intended to reform the central reserve bank. The bill is first major piece of legislation to be passed by the Unity Government since its formation in February. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Bill will reduce the powers of the governor, by appointing an independent chairperson and board, and restrict the bank to dealing with interest rates, currency management and regulating banks. The Bill however, controversially provides immunity to the bank governor and employees "for anything done in good faith and without negligence". The Bill will now be debated in the upper senate and if approved be signed by Mugabe.
- Leaders of Commonwealth countries will meet for their biennial meeting in Trinidad 26-28 November (COHGM). It is widely expected that Zimbabwe will be discussed and a timetable for it to be re-admitted at the next summit in two years time provided it implements reforms and democracy has clearly been seen to be re-established. After being suspended in 2002 Zimbabwe left the Commonwealth in 2003.

Four day arrest for holding a trade union meeting

ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo, and four fellow trade unionists were arrested on the 9th November 2009, and charged with contravening the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) which requires Zimbabweans to notify the police before holding political meetings and demonstrations. Following a court order, they were released on the 12th November, four days after their arrest. The EU expressed concern over the arrests, emphasising the recent increase in arrests of civil society leaders in Zimbabwe. Wellington Chibebe, ZCTU Secretary General released a statement on the release of his colleagues, expressing his outrage on the unwarranted arrests. He explained "The ZCTU has no faith in the current political dispensation to ensure that fundamental freedoms are protected".

President Obama presents Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) with Global Human Rights Award

WOZA have won the 2009 Robert. F. Kennedy Human Rights Award. Laureate Magodonga Mahlangu and founder of WOZA Jenni Williams received the award from US President Barack Obama in the White House. WOZA is a grassroots movement of over 75,000 Zimbabweans working throughout the country empowering women to mobilize and take non-violent action against injustice. The Government of Zimbabwe has jailed Ms. Mahlangu and thousands of WOZA supporters many times for their participation in non-violent marches. "By her example, Magodonga has shown the women of Woza and the people of Zimbabwe that they can undermine their oppressors' power with their own power, that they can sap a dictator's strength with their own," said Obama.

KPCS: No Suspension on Zimbabwe's diamond industry

The Kimberley Process (KPCS) has decided not to suspend Zimbabwe's diamond trade, despite recommendations from its own mission to suspend Zimbabwe due to gross human rights violations occurring in the eastern Marange fields. Instead, a joint work plan has been adopted whereby Zimbabwe has until June 2010 to implement the plan. No details have been given as to what the plan entails. Non-corruption groups such as Global Witness are dismayed by the decision claiming that: "Not for the first time the KPCS has failed to enforce its own minimum requirements. We know there is non-compliance inside Zimbabwe, our own report said so." On 25 November Rapaport Group's RapNet Diamond Trading Network, the world's biggest, banned its members from dealing in gems from Zimbabwe's Marange fields due to the reports of gross human rights violations in the area.

ACTION

Dignity! Period

Access to sanitary products for women in Zimbabwe is worse than ever, for many women sanitary protection is a luxury they can no longer afford. Women have been forced to use newspaper, rags or leaves as a substitute for sanitary pads which can cause serious infections for which there is no available medication.

ACTSA's Dignity! Period campaign provides sanitary towels to women in Zimbabwe, just £3 a month provides sanitary towels for 3 women for a year. Visit ACTSA's Dignity! Period web pages to make a donation or learn more.

- It has been revealed that a growing child rape epidemic is occurring in Zimbabwe. Tens and thousands of children have been sexually abused in Zimbabwe, shocking human rights activists. A single clinic in Harare has reported treating nearly 30,000 girls and boys who were sexually abused in the past four years, averaging 20 per day. The vast growth in numbers of abuses is said to be due to Zimbabwe's economic collapse which has led to widespread family breakdowns, leaving many children vulnerable. Betty Makoni founder of the Girl Child network (GCN) reports that the youngest known victim was a baby of one day; the oldest was a woman aged 93. "We still have children being raped because of the myth that if a man with HIV has sex with a virgin he will be cured of his virus."
- Three ZINASU student leaders, Vivid Gwede, Samson Nxumalo and Kurayi Hoyi, have been expelled by the National University of Science and Technology for demonstrating about tertiary fees which have reduced the status of Zimbabwe's education sector. Six other student activists have been given two year suspensions. These developments demonstrate a systemic "clamp down" on the students' union and have been described as merciless attacks on academic freedoms and the rights of freedom of expression and association.
- The Zimbabwe Europe Network (ZEN) of which ACTSA is a founding member held its AGM in Brussels on 18 November. ZEN has a website and publishes briefing papers.