

**Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions:
Update on the situation in Zimbabwe
Thursday, 4th June, 2009**

Since the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) between Zanu PF and the two MDC formations, the Zimbabwean situation has not changed much. What has changed is the mood of people. There is an air of optimism all round. However, the situation on the grounds still points to a country still in crises.

Although the retail sector has shown some signs of life, production in industries is still low with some companies actually closing down, and in some instances workers going on forced unpaid leave for long periods of even up to six months. The retail sector is full of imported products pointing to the fact that in our local industries no production is taking place at all. Some workers are earning wages as low as US\$60 per month, while civil servants get an allowance of US\$100 per month versus a breadbasket or Poverty Datum Line of around US\$454. Transport to and from work cost US\$1 per day.

Although schools have reopened, with some school teachers reporting for work after the call by the Prime Minister, there are still a great number of schools where there are no teachers. Teachers are refusing the allowance of US\$100 and they have threatened to embark on a strike soon if government does not address their plight soon. The ZCTU is vehemently opposed to workers being paid an allowance instead of a salary. What this means that if one retires today or dies, he gets nothing because things like gratuities and pensions are calculated based on one's salary not an allowance. Our demand is that workers must be paid US\$454 as wages per month. This is in line with Poverty Datum Levels.

On the political front, it is difficult to say whether the coalition government will hold or collapse. But it appears the two parties, Zanu PF and MDC, cannot afford to do without each other. It appears the coalition is still intact although there are squabbles and it might hold for the moment. ZCTU is doubtful that Zanu PF will reform its ways of conducting government business. The application of the rule of law is still questionable: there are continued farm invasions, opposition activists, journalists and human rights lawyers continue to be arrested. There are still reports of harassment of opposition supporters in remote areas from Zanu PF hardliners.

Because of the food crisis, it appears there has been improvement in the working environment of international relief organizations. But still there are reports of politicisation of food distribution. However, government is now moving to try and curtail the operations of NGO's through amendment of existing legislation to require NGO's to disclose their source of funding and all their programmes.

Already, the government and civic organisations are heading on a collision course as regards the issue of the constitutional making process. The ZCTU is for a people-driven constitution while government has already started a process that is Parliamentary led. We are of the view that Parliamentarians cannot take charge of this process as they are highly interested parties and they also come from a highly polarised political environment, points which may affect their objectivity. Our situation is different from other countries who had their process led by their respective Parliaments. These had credible systems in place unlike in Zimbabwe.

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