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BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

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Summary of Report

Political Developments

Tsvangirai urges peace force for next Zimbabwe poll

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai said on Sunday Zimbabwe should invite international observers and a peacekeeping force to ensure that its next national election is free and fair.

Harare Residents: Too Early to Lift International Restrictions

This week in London British Prime Minister Gordon Brown rejected a proposal from South Africa's Jacob Zuma to soften travel and financial restrictions against President Robert Mugabe and his inner circle. Mr. Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party charge that the measures are holding back the country's economic recovery. Many people in the streets of Harare say the restrictions should remain until there is more political progress.

Zuma's Trip to Britain Comes to an End

South African President Jacob Zuma winds up a three-day visit to Britain today - a visit marked by pomp and ceremony as well as substantive political talks, including on the situation in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe at Top of List in Brown-Zuma Talks

South African President Jacob Zuma met with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on the second day of a state visit to Britain. The leaders spoke of their united front in dealing with international issues. Mr. Zuma questioned the benefits of sanctions in Zimbabwe.

Royal Welcome for Zuma in Britain

South Africa President Jacob Zuma says international sanctions against Zimbabwe should be lifted. In recent weeks the European Union and the United States voted to extend sanctions against South Africa's neighbor.

Obama Extends Sanctions on Zimbabwe Leaders

U.S. President Barack Obama has extended sanctions against Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and his key supporters for another year.

Bitterness and unease in bankrupt Zimbabwe

After 30 years in power, Zimbabwe's veteran leader Robert Mugabe said this week he was ready to stand for another term as president. BBC Africa correspondent Andrew Harding finds Mr Mugabe's party in angry mood, and others - the white minority and the former opposition MDC party - full of foreboding.

South Africa president Jacob Zuma faces angry protest

South African President Jacob Zuma has been met by protesters in London chanting "shame on you" on the last day of his state visit to Britain.

Zuma works his charm on the UK

The enduring memory of South African President Jacob Zuma's state visit to the UK will be his broad smile.

ZIMBABWE: Constitution in the Limelight

A new play, *Waiting for Constitution* has generated great interest among politicians and civil society groups anxious to get consultations over drafting a new constitution under way.

Botswana: Govt Makes U-Turn on Zimbabwe

Botswana has rescinded her decision to recall her defence and intelligence attaches from Zimbabwe.

Economic Developments

Zimbabwe reviewing local ownership rules – minister

Zimbabwe's unity government is reviewing rules forcing foreign-owned firms to sell a majority stake to locals, a cabinet minister said on Wednesday, adding that the regulations were published prematurely last month.

Zambia: BP to sell five African units

BP Plc's Zambia marketing wing is among the five African units lined up for sell by the London based global oil giant. BP Plc said it will sell its marketing operations in Namibia, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana after a 'strategic review' into its African operations.

Union Leader Flees Zimbabwe

The leader of Zimbabwe's largest trade union says she fled to South Africa because she was being harassed by the police.

Kimberley Process Monitor Arrives in Zimbabwe

A monitor from the Kimberly Certification Process, which was set up to end international trade in conflict diamonds, has arrived in Harare to check on output from controversial diamond mining in eastern Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe Forces White-Owned Firms to Give Up Majority Stake

President Mugabe says the new law is designed to correct historical imbalances, while the MDC says the law is 'null and void'

Zimbabwe law on firms' ownership comes into effect

A new Zimbabwean law that forces companies to sell a majority stake in their businesses to indigenous people has come into effect.

Social Developments

Mozambican gays visit Malawi

A delegation of Mozambican gays and lesbians are in Malawi on a solidarity mission over the arrest of Tiwonge Chimbalanga and Steven Monjeza. The two were arrested on December 28 last year, two days after staging Malawi's first-ever public gay engagement in the country's commercial city, Blantyre.

BOTSWANA: Technology to catch undocumented migrants

Botswana is adopting a two-pronged approach to tackle abuse of its immigration system by increasing the sophistication of travel documents, visas and work permits, and putting more boots on the ground to apprehend undocumented foreign nationals.

SOUTH AFRICA: Police blame "illegal immigrants" for crime

The "absurd" claim by Gauteng's police chief that South Africa's richest province was home to as many as three million "illegal" immigrants was part of a pattern by government departments to blame undocumented migrants for their own shortcomings, Loren Landau, director of the University of the Witwatersrand's Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP), told IRIN.

Tales of Witchcraft Abound in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, witchcraft is still common in rural areas. Hardly a week passes without a local report or newspaper story on the practice. For example, police recently cornered a man at the Mbare Mbare bus terminal, after they discovered a live cobra snake in his luggage. He told officers the reptile was one of his witching tools.

South African Group Ready to Aid Chile Quake Victims

A humanitarian group in South Africa says it is poised to send rescue workers to Chile, following its massive earthquake. But the group is also urging donors not to forget earthquake victims in Haiti who remain highly vulnerable after a similar disaster seven weeks ago.

World Cup Organizers Praise South African Stadiums

Organizers of this year's World Cup have praised the 10 South African stadiums that will host the football matches, and say that with 100 days to go until the tournament kicks off there is no doubt that the country will be ready.

World Cup Organizers Inspect South African Stadiums

World Cup organizers are visiting the 10 South African stadiums that are to host matches later this year. Tuesday marks the 100-day countdown to kick-off for football's biggest event.

South Africa starts 100-day World Cup countdown

The man in overall charge of Durban's World Cup preparations fell like a stone towards the manicured grass pitch inside the city's spectacular new stadium.

Swaziland: Property rights for women at last!

A recent court ruling has given Swazi women the right to own and administer property in their own names.

HEALTH-SOUTH AFRICA: Prescription Drug Abuse on the Increase

"Prescriptions are great," she said. "I recommend Codeine." Codeine is a mild narcotic used to treat mild to moderate pain. One of the warnings on the medication is that it should not be taken with alcohol because of the risk of death. Despite this, Allen takes it when going out or hanging out with her friends.

ZIMBABWE: Informal Sector Lures University Graduates

This is not for the faint hearted," she says of her work and the many dangerous routes she has to navigate as a small-scale businesswoman in Bulawayo.

Detailed Report

Political Developments

Tsvangirai urges peace force for next Zimbabwe poll

(Reuters)

March 6, 2010

Tsvangirai formed a coalition government with President Robert Mugabe a year ago to end a political and economic crisis, but analysts say mutual suspicion and strategic positioning are delaying democratic reforms meant to clear the way for a poll next year.

Addressing a party rally just outside Harare, Tsvangirai told supporters of his Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) that Zimbabwe could guarantee that violence which has marred previous parliamentary and presidential elections is avoided by accepting observers and a peacekeeping force.

"Lets bring in foreign observers for the next elections... We can use the African Union and SADC (Southern African Development Community) forces for peacekeeping during the election period," he said.

There was no peacekeeping force in 2008. Mugabe allowed poll observers from SADC and the AU but refused those from Western countries, saying they were biased against his ZANU-PF party.

"We want a peacekeeping force so that we can have a free and fair election," he added.

Tsvangirai charges that Mugabe -- 86, and in power since Zimbabwe's independence from Britain in 1980 -- has remained in office by using violence and rigging elections, including a 2008 presidential run-off which the MDC boycotted over violence.

Under a global political agreement that brought together Mugabe's ZANU-PF and Tsvangirai's MDC party into a power-sharing government, Zimbabwe must free the media sector and write up a new constitution and hold elections in two years, but the whole process is running months behind schedule.

On Thursday, Mugabe said he would stand for re-election if his party nominated him, brushing off calls for him to make way for a younger successor after 30 years in power.

Tsvangirai told his supporters on Sunday that his MDC was fed up with Mugabe's party over "endless talks" on disputes in the unity government, including the sharing of executive power and the appointment of various senior state officials.

"We are sick and tired of endless talks. We shall take measures so that there will be no more dialogue for dialogue's sake," he said, without elaborating.

Despite his frustrations with ZANU-PF tactics, Tsvangirai has said there is no alternative to the current power-sharing deal, which Zimbabweans hope will eventually produce democratic reforms and lead to elections acceptable to all.

Harare Residents: Too Early to Lift International Restrictions

(Voice of America)

05 March 2010

This week in London British Prime Minister Gordon Brown rejected a proposal from South Africa's Jacob Zuma to soften travel and financial restrictions against President Robert Mugabe and his inner circle. Mr. Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party charge that the measures are holding back the country's economic recovery. Many people in the streets of Harare say the restrictions should remain until there is more political progress.

Almost uniformly people going about their business in Harare told VOA international restrictions against Mr. Mugabe and senior members of ZANU-PF should remain.

Bhekitemba Sibanda, a stationary salesman in Central Harare, is one of many in the city who expressed support for the Movement for Democratic Change. He tells VOA the restrictive measures were introduced because of widespread violence against Mr. Mugabe's opponents after he failed to win the first round presidential poll in 2008.

"Those sanctions were imposed specifically because the motive was to bring sanity in a government that had gone berserk terrorizing its own people subverting its own constitution," he said.

Sibanda believe the restrictions need to remain until there is greater progress in fully implementing the agreement that brought the unity government.

Isaac Chideme, a former policeman, said the measure would be lifted when all three parties which signed a political agreement in September 2008 agreed sufficient progress had been made.

"The Americans and the Europeans, they said we want to see progress on the ground and if there is progress on the ground, what are you afraid of because they invited us when we have progress we invite you three parties, you three come to Europe and tell us you have progress," he said.

Mr. Mugabe says ZANU-PF has complied with all demands of the political agreement, and says the U.S. and European sanctions are standing in the way of any further progress.

But Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and other civil rights groups say the level of repression in Zimbabwe is rising.

The lawyers offered examples of several civil rights activists who have recently been arrested when they tried to hold meetings in areas which have traditionally been ZANU-PF strongholds. They also point to trades union leaders forced to hide and flee Zimbabwe to avoid arrest.

The International Crisis Group, or ICG, says Zimbabwe is in danger of returning to the collapsed state it was in prior to establishment of a unity government a year ago.

ICG said ZANU-PF and its security establishment maintain what the Brussels-based group calls an intransigent stance on reforms for political stability. It said a relatively small number of officials, motivated by fear of losing power, wealth and impunity, oppose reforms.

On Wednesday President Robert Mugabe, now 86, said he was available for re-election. The next election, after a new constitution is completed, is scheduled to take place next year.

Mr. Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change charges that constitution writing is being delayed by obstructions put in the way of progress by ZANU-PF.

Mr. Mugabe also blames EU and US restrictions for the failed economy and says it is up to Mr. Tsvangirai to get them removed.

Harare salesman Sibanda points out that the Movement for Democratic Change has no power to impose or lift EU and U.S. restrictions against the ZANU-PF hierarchy.

"So-called smart sanctions were imposed by independent governments. It is their own institutions that influence such decisions," he said.

Zimbabwe's economy, which briefly revived after the inclusive government was formed, is stagnant now, according to economists and industry executives.

There is little domestic investment and almost no foreign investment. And, inflation - according to retailers - is now moving towards 20 percent.

Zuma's Trip to Britain Comes to an End

(Voice of America)

05 March 2010

South African President Jacob Zuma winds up a three-day visit to Britain today - a visit marked by pomp and ceremony as well as substantive political talks, including on the situation in Zimbabwe.

President Zuma was given a royal welcome to Britain from Queen Elizabeth II Wednesday and in the busy three days that followed he met with Britain's Prime Minister,

parliamentarians, business leaders, and even made a trip to Wembley Stadium, the home of English football (soccer).

While in Britain, Mr. Zuma repeatedly highlighted the two countries historic economic and cultural ties.

But two issues threatened to overshadow those links.

The first, Mr. Zuma's personal life. His polygamy and the recent revelation of a twentieth child born out of wedlock have led to criticism in some corners of the British media.

And the second, Zimbabwe. Mr. Zuma, who is the regional mediator on Zimbabwe, has called for sanctions against the country to be lifted. But in a joint press conference, Mr. Brown said EU sanctions cannot be lifted until progress on human rights and democracy are made.

But Mr. Zuma said he believed talks with Mr. Brown had led to better understanding on what needs to be done. "I think there has been a greater understanding of what we are trying to do in Zimbabwe and what are the concerns," he said.

While in Britain, Mr. Zuma also visited London's top football stadium where he said he was confident that English football fans visiting South Africa in June for the World Cup will be safe. "As a country we have worked hard to ensure that 2010 comes to South Africa and it is coming," said the South African president.

Addressing business leaders, Mr. Zuma said his country was improving education, reducing crime, and creating stability for foreign investment.

And Mr. Brown said the upcoming World Cup would be a good opportunity to put universal education on the global agenda. "I know it's making great preparations for the World Cup but at the time of the World Cup we can also see progress in achieving one goal that has eluded the world for many years and that is education for every young child in Africa and around the world," he said.

Speaking to British parliamentarians Mr. Zuma sought to allay fears that South Africa would nationalize its mining industry - he said there was no discussion within the South African government to do so. South Africa is the world's largest platinum producer and third largest producer of gold.

Thomas Cargill, from the London-based think tank Chatham House, told VOA Mr. Zuma's trip was an important opportunity to carve out South Africa's place on the world stage.

He says a "post-apartheid celebratory attitude" has characterized international perceptions of South Africa over the past 16 years. "Now we're really into what happens next - South Africa, as an independent state, deciding its future path and its future international relations," said said Cargill.

Sydney Masamvu, a senior South Africa analyst with the research organization International Crisis Group, says the trip was also important for Mr. Zuma domestically.

He says it was a chance for him to shake off negative press at home over his personal life. "He has lost a lot of his moral high ground because of his polygamous marriage and I believe this to a very large extent makes him appear as more of a statesman and to repair his image," said Masamvu.

While in Britain, Mr. Zuma also visited the former residence of anti-apartheid politician and past leader of the African National Congress, Oliver Tambo.

Zimbabwe at Top of List in Brown-Zuma Talks

(Voice of America)

04 March 2010

South African President Jacob Zuma met with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on the second day of a state visit to Britain. The leaders spoke of their united front in dealing with international issues. Mr. Zuma questioned the benefits of sanctions in Zimbabwe.

Following talks with Mr. Brown, President Zuma repeated his suggestion that sanctions in Zimbabwe may limit progress in the country. "If the Zimbabwean issue is not moving forward, certainly some people could use sanctions as an excuse to say because we are sanctioned, how do we operate?," he said.

But he emphasized that the international community is united in its approach to the country. "We are agreed that we should all put our heads together to find a solution in Zimbabwe, so that Zimbabwe can move forward," said President Zuma.

The United States and the European Union have imposed a travel ban and asset freeze on Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and some of his associates because of disputed elections and concerns over human rights abuses by his government.

Mr. Brown said some sanctions in Zimbabwe had been lifted, and emphasized the remaining sanctions target certain individuals. "We wish to work with the South African government to find a solution to the long-standing problems that have existed in Zimbabwe, and in recent weeks you may know that we have supported the reinstatement of Zimbabwe's voting rights at the IMF and reducing sanctions on some companies," he said.

But he said progress had to take place in Zimbabwe. "We want to see the commissions that have been set up on human rights and on the media, on governance move forward quickly so that people can see the future shape of Zimbabwe as a democratic, prosperous country where there is freedom of press and where there is respect for human rights," said the British prime minister.

Mr. Brown and Mr. Zuma also spoke about the global economy, climate change, nuclear non-proliferation, and the football World Cup, soon to take place in South Africa.

Royal Welcome for Zuma in Britain

(Voice of America)

03 March 2010

South Africa President Jacob Zuma says international sanctions against Zimbabwe should be lifted. In recent weeks the European Union and the United States voted to extend sanctions against South Africa's neighbor.

But President Zuma says Zimbabwe's power-sharing government should be supported so the country can move forward.

Thomas Cargill from the Britain-based research group Chatham House says Zimbabwe will be one of the topics discussed during President Zuma's three-day visit to Britain. But he says Mr. Zuma is also here to raise the profile of the World Cup football (soccer) championship, which kicks off this June in South Africa.

"South Africa is very keen to drum up support and worldwide interest in the World Cup," Cargill said. It wants to allay fears and the U.K. as a major center for interest in football is a good place to do that."

He also says Mr. Zuma wants to attract financial investors to his country.

"After the financial crisis that South Africa is just beginning to emerge from, the big priority for President Zuma and for the South African government is investment and attracting investment into South Africa," Cargill adds. "And so this visit is really to try and get international and European and British interest in the opportunities in South Africa."

Mr. Zuma arrived in London with his third wife, Thobeka Madiba Zuma. Some British media agencies have been scathing in their coverage of Mr. Zuma's polygamy and the recent news of his 20th child, born out of wedlock.

Cargill says the British media has a tendency to focus on personal matters.

"The British press, I mean if there is anything to do with private lives and sexual issues in private lives then of course the British media are going to be very focused on that, because it is in their nature," Cargill said.

But as Mr. Zuma arrived in Britain, a South African newspaper published an interview in which he accused the British of thinking their own culture is superior to others. Mr. Zuma's party, the African National Congress, released a statement criticizing news reports by the British media, calling attacks against Mr. Zuma as "disrespectful."

Mr. Zuma is scheduled to meet Thursday with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Obama Extends Sanctions on Zimbabwe Leaders

(Voice of America)

02 March 2010

U.S. President Barack Obama has extended sanctions against Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and his key supporters for another year.

In a pair of statements late Monday, Mr. Obama said the travel and financial restrictions on Mr. Mugabe and his allies will extend at least through March 6, 2011.

President George W. Bush imposed the sanctions in 2003, accusing Mr. Mugabe of undermining Zimbabwe's democratic institutions and causing instability in southern Africa.

President Obama says the crisis has not been resolved, and that Mr. Mugabe's actions continue to pose a threat to U.S. foreign policy interests.

President Mugabe has demanded an end to the sanctions and similar measures imposed by Britain and the European Union.

The sanctions were put in place a few years after Mr. Mugabe's government began seizing white-owned farmland for transfer to landless blacks.

The Zimbabwean leader said he was correcting a colonial-era injustice. Critics say the move triggered a sharp drop in food production and the collapse of Zimbabwe's economy.

Millions of Zimbabweans have fled the country in the past decade, mostly to South Africa.

Zimbabwe's economy has stabilized since Mr. Mugabe's ZANU-PF party and the longtime opposition MDC formed a unity government last year.

Bitterness and unease in bankrupt Zimbabwe

(BBC Radio)

6 March 2010

After 30 years in power, Zimbabwe's veteran leader Robert Mugabe said this week he was ready to stand for another term as president. BBC Africa correspondent Andrew Harding finds Mr Mugabe's party in angry mood, and others - the white minority and the former opposition MDC party - full of foreboding.

It has been a grey, drizzly week here. In the wealthier suburbs of Harare, Zimbabwe's shrinking white population is once again feeling nervous.

Pat, who runs a small hairdressing salon, and whose family has lived here for four generations, is finally planning to leave.

They don't want us "whiteys" here any more she says. The writing is on the wall. Pat has been spooked by a new law, introduced this week, which is supposed to correct the enduring economic legacies of colonialism, and give black Zimbabweans a controlling stake in almost all companies.

The main focus is Zimbabwe's rich mines and its industry. But the indigenisation law also seeks to prevent white people from owning things like hairdressing and beauty salons. In a few years, says Pat, we will be like an extinct species. They will come for our houses next.

The reaction may well be extreme. Many white Zimbabweans have been slow to acknowledge the debt they owe to the black majority here. Economic empowerment is clearly necessary.

But after a decade of economic chaos, horrific violence, and the brutal seizure of white-owned farms, it is easy to understand why so many Zimbabweans - of all colours - are hair-trigger tuned to expect the very worst.

Bitter words

Saviour Kasukuwere does not exactly try to smooth the waters. "You people," he almost spat at me, as I sat in his office on the ninth floor of the squat grey building that houses President Mugabe's Zanu PF Party.

Mr Kasukuwere used to be a member of Mr Mugabe's notorious state security. He is a hardliner and a rising star.

"You British, you could learn a lot about democracy from us," he says with a thin smile. Mr Kasukuwere, a tall, heavy-set man, was at primary school when his country won full independence from Britain 30 years ago.

Unlike Mr Mugabe's generation, he did not fight and suffer for freedom. But, full of passionate intensity, he seems to wallow in his bitterness. In his eyes, and words, everything can still be blamed on what he calls the "genocidal" West.

Zanu PF's current preoccupation is with what it calls "Western sanctions". The state media makes it sound like some overwhelming economic blockade.

"Our children are dying because of sanctions," says Mr Kasukuwere. But as diplomats and economists here point out, the reality is less extreme. The European Union is

currently imposing a travel ban on 198 individuals. Thirty-five companies are also frozen out.

"This is about Mrs Mugabe not being able to shop in Paris," one diplomat put it. "Zimbabwe can't borrow money, not because of sanctions, but because it owes \$6bn, and can't pay it back because it systematically wrecked its own economy."

Train smash

Within Zimbabwe's unity government, sanctions are a poisonous issue - one of many. The unity government, formed after bitterly disputed elections, has survived a year now - President Mugabe's Zanu PF sharing, or at least pretending to share power with its enemy, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

"It's a train smash, warfare every day," one MDC minister told me. But the government has survived and on some issues is clearly making progress.

The MDC is hoping now to water down the new indigenisation law in order not to scare away foreign investors and potentially plunge the economy back into chaos.

Both parties are now gearing up for new elections - possibly next year. It is the only way to settle Zimbabwe's political deadlock once and for all.

The sanctions issue and the indigenisation law, are key campaign themes for Zanu PF. If the MDC tries to question either of them - it is accused of being a stooge for colonial Western interests.

The MDC can probably handle that sort of criticism. It has got a strong support base, and at least one recent opinion poll showed it would crush Mr Mugabe and his party at the polls.

Any credit for the economic stability achieved here during the past year, seems to have gone to the MDC.

But the party is not nearly as well organised or ruthless as Zanu PF. We are floundering, one MDC insider told me dejectedly. And of course, past experience in Zimbabwe shows that elections here are won by intimidation, not popularity.

In 2008, Zanu PF orchestrated a campaign of terror - killing and beating MDC supporters - in order to hold on to power.

Now at the age of 86, after 30 years in office, President Mugabe has announced he is planning to run for yet another term.

Elections could be held next year, he says. Mr Mugabe controls the police and the army, and under the current constitution, most of the electoral infrastructure.

Will he play fair this time? We are heading towards another big fight, a senior MDC official told me anxiously. Unless we have foreign peacekeepers to protect us, it will be another bloodbath.

South Africa president Jacob Zuma faces angry protest

(BBC News)

5 March 2010

South African President Jacob Zuma has been met by protesters in London chanting "shame on you" on the last day of his state visit to Britain.

Earlier, the leader sparked anger over calls for international sanctions on Zimbabwe to be eased.

About 50 people gathered outside the South African High Commission, waving banners saying "Zuma save Zimbabwe".

In response, President Zuma walked up a red carpet at South Africa House before turning and waving to demonstrators.

Earlier on Friday, he held talks with Prince Charles at Clarence House on climate change, youth opportunities and the built environment.

'Another wife'

During his three-day state visit, the leader suggested sanctions should be eased to help Zimbabwe "move forward".

But campaigners accused him of appeasing Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and believe he should be doing more to ensure fresh elections are called in the country. Gordon Brown has said Zimbabwe must show progress in key areas including democratic reforms before sanctions are lifted.

At the protest, one man wearing a Mugabe mask held aloft a sign saying "Zuma - have another wife on me".

The 67-year-old leader is a polygamist - following a Zulu tradition - and has taken a third wife.

Rose Benton, co-ordinator of a weekly demonstration outside the Zimbabwean embassy, said: "The government of national unity isn't going to work, Mugabe isn't serious about making it work - he never has been.

"What we need is Zuma to do something, " she said. This has been the third state visit to Britain by a South African president since the advent of full democracy in 1994. Nelson Mandela came to the UK in 1996 and Thabo Mbeki in 2001.

Zuma works his charm on the UK

(BBC News)

5 March 2010

The enduring memory of South African President Jacob Zuma's state visit to the UK will be his broad smile.

At every turn during his three-day stay in London as a guest of the Queen, he looked thoroughly at ease. He oozed charm as he swept effortlessly from one engagement to the next.

Mr Zuma appeared to be unfazed by the hectic schedule, but he has always demonstrated plenty of stamina.

This is the man who conducted an exhausting personal campaign criss-crossing South Africa in the months leading up to the country's 2009 elections.

President Zuma is not a natural when delivering a formal speech. His delivery is slow and often halting.

His strength however, is his ability to engage with an audience when speaking off-the-cuff.

He looked especially relaxed when he met children at the Alexandra Park School in Muswell Hill in north London on Wednesday.

He thanked them warmly for their song of welcome, and stressed the critical importance of education.

The school in London is twinned with the Ephes Mamkeli School in Wattville, a South African township near Johannesburg.

The connection between the two schools was fostered by the late Mike Terry who headed the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the UK for nearly 20 years, but returned to his profession as a science teacher after the end of apartheid in 1994.

Mr Zuma knows better than most about the need for good education. Coming from a humble background, he had little schooling in rural KwaZulu-Natal, and was a beneficiary of the learning among political prisoners on Robben Island.

A joint declaration by Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Mr Zuma after a meeting at No 10 Downing Street on Thursday, said Britain and South Africa would work with Fifa and the Global Campaign for Education to harness the power of the 2010 World Cup for the benefit of education.

In a speech later to parliamentarians at Westminster, President Zuma said South Africa was making education a central priority for the five years of his administration. The South African leader will feel that his visit to Britain went well.

'Cultural chauvinism'

The controversy over his private life (his polygamy and his extra-marital affair) had largely petered out by the end of the week, but only after some furious exchanges in Britain and South Africa, as Mr Zuma arrived in the UK on Tuesday.

An article in the UK's Daily Mail had described the president as "a buffoon" and "a sex-obsessed bigot with four wives and 35 children".

In response, the South African newspaper, the Sowetan, said this "smacked of cultural chauvinism of the worst kind".

South Africa's governing African National Congress also defended Mr Zuma. "We find it appalling that the media would have such a myopic view and disrespect for an official visit of a head of state," said an ANC statement.

This has been the third state visit to Britain by a South African president since the advent of democracy in 1994.

Nelson Mandela came to the UK in 1996 and Thabo Mbeki in 2001. The promotion of the 2010 World Cup, now less than 100 days away, has given Mr Zuma's visit special impetus.

Like a team captain, he introduced his 12 accompanying ministers one by one when he faced the press at Wembley Stadium on Thursday.

It was a reminder that the South African president is a consensus politician who always likes to consult.

But in the countdown to the World Cup in South Africa, the spotlight will remain on this colourful and often controversial character.

ZIMBABWE: Constitution in the Limelight

(Inter Press Service News Agency)

Mar 3,2010

The play, which premiered in Harare on Feb. 23, dramatises a family meeting where daughter Constance's impending marriage is to be discussed. But Constance does not appear. She's late: too busy taking part in a thematic committee preparing public consultations over the new constitution.

The performance uses the divisions in the family over Constance's marriage plans - like disagreements on how much should be charged as bride price, and who should pocket what fraction of the proceeds - to highlight competing positions that have emerged over Zimbabwe's new constitution.

"The play asks many pertinent questions, and also attempts to answer those questions on how to make the new supreme law a truly people driven one," director Tafadzwa Muzondo told IPS. "People still have questions on some key aspects of the process, and whether the input of ordinary people will be valued."

"The play looks at such issues as who the people are, what sort of fundamentals and ideals make a democratic constitution, the importance of guaranteeing freedom of expression and the diverse opinions and ideas coming from different sections of society."

Muzondo, a celebrated actor in Zimbabwe, says while it may not necessarily provide the answers, the play will provide a fresh platform for debating the issues. And the well rounded characters in the production do just that.

From the stage, Constance's feuding family raises questions over what's wrong with the present constitution, whether a new one is necessary, what led to the rejection of a draft constitution in 2000 and the prospects of achieving a people-driven constitution.

Douglas Mwonzora, one of the three co-chairs of the Constitution Parliamentary Committee - an inter party committee of members of parliament tasked with spearheading the process - was very optimistic the play would add a new dimension to the process.

"They (artists) have been of great use in revolutions, wars and other historic national developments. I believe such works of art like this play will play a key role in conscientising our people on the need for participation in this unique national project. It is very encouraging where you see artists bringing out products on the project."

The writing of a new constitution is among the major tasks of the three parties in the inclusive government, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and two formations of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The process has been delayed several times by lack of funding and disputes between the parties.

While the start of public consultations across the country has been delayed, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CZC) sees the play as a fresh approach to begin stimulating thought and gathering the input of ordinary people; the coalition is partnering with the production's producers, Rooftop, to take it on a nationwide tour. The play will also be translated into local languages.

"It is not just about taking a play to the people, it is about taking the discussion about critical issues to the people," said MacDonald Lewanika, director of CZC. "We view theatre as a vehicle that can trigger debate on both the process and the content. What the play tries to do is to highlight the critical issues and processes. We try to do this in a non-prescriptive, non-partisan manner."

Lewanika said the choice of theatre as a medium of influencing debate on the new constitution was based on the realisation that "our society is not homogenous", hence the

need to portray different messages differently. After a two week run of the play at Harare's Theatre in the Park, the CZC will partner with the producers to get the play on a national tour.

"As civil society, our work basically is about engaging the people on issues that affect them. We are basically taking the discussion to the people. There are clear contested issues raised in the play around the process," said Lewanika.

Waiting for Constitution is Chifunyise's second play centred around current affairs issues. Last year, he wrote another play titled Heal the Wounds, which focused on the government's national healing process, and the various issues around the project.

The current play is a candid and refreshing exploration of hot-button issues such as the participation of women in the process, disagreements of various proposed drafts, divisions that have rocked civil society because of the process, the coercion of people at the grassroots by different political parties, the participation of exiled Zimbabweans in the process, the composition of teams driving the process, and the rights of minority sexual groups.

There is high entertainment when family members discuss issues "stipulated" in the various drafts, and how these will affect their traditional values. And when Babamnini, played by Silvanos Mudzova, walks out of the marriage meeting without any deliberations, it becomes clear to the audience how prudent it is for the process to be concluded quickly to allow people to concentrate on other essentials.

Botswana: Govt Makes U-Turn on Zimbabwe

(IPOC Africa)

02 March 2010

Botswana has rescinded her decision to recall her defence and intelligence attaches from Zimbabwe.

A statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that in a bilateral meeting held in Zimbabwe, the two countries discussed mutual defence and security matters together with a range of issues concerning wildlife, customs and excise, prisons and animal diseases.

A few weeks ago Botswana decided to withdraw her defence and intelligence attaches and gave Zimbabwe an ultimatum to follow suit and withdraw their attaches (defence and intelligence).

Botswana was reacting to Zimbabwe's insistence that the three wildlife officers who were arrested for crossing into the Zimbabwean border by mistake should be taken to court to determine their innocence or otherwise. The trio were released and punished with the Prohibited Immigrant status. However Zimbabwe has since rescinded the decision.

At the weeklong Botswana-Zimbabwe Joint Permanent Commission on Defence and Security, attended by Defence, Justice and Security minister Ramadeluka Seretse and Labour and Home Affairs Minister, Peter Siele it was decided that there was "need to strengthen cooperation at various levels in respective areas of defence and security between Botswana and Zimbabwe and also the need to nurture cooperation to ensure continued peace and stability in two countries," reads the statement.

In an interview with Mmegi, Siele said they also discussed immigration issues and operations of borders between the two countries.

"Normally we collaborate with our Zimbabwean neighbours. When we arrest illegal immigrants we document them, getting information about them and their country of origin. Then we take them to Zimbabwe officials, who after confirming that the person we are repatriating is indeed their citizen take them themselves," he said.

The minister has however said that the illegal immigrant problem continues to overstretch Botswana's resources.

When asked on the reaction of the Zimbabwean authorities he explained, "they acknowledged that there is a problem and that it is a much bigger problem than just repatriation of illegal immigrants. This is a problem that has to do with the political and socio-economic situation in that country. The good thing is that we had this meeting in a cordial atmosphere," he said.

Economic Developments

Zimbabwe reviewing local ownership rules – minister

(Reuters)

Mar 3, 2010

HARARE, March 3 (Reuters) - Zimbabwe's unity government is reviewing rules forcing foreign-owned firms to sell a majority stake to locals, a cabinet minister said on Wednesday, adding that the regulations were published prematurely last month.

The regulations came into effect on Monday and give foreign-owned companies, including banks and mines, 45 days to submit proposals on how they plan to sell 51 percent of their shares to black Zimbabweans within the next five years.

"Those regulations were published prematurely," Welshman Ncube, Industry and Commerce Minister told business executives.

He said the rules had not been submitted to a cabinet committee for debate on their legality and whether they were consistent with government policy. The committee would then make recommendations to the government.

"That did not take place. It is now taking place and all the ministers will be asked to make contributions," Ncube said.

Zambia: BP to sell five African units

(Africa News)

4 March, 2010

BP Plc said it will focus on South Africa and Mozambique while it will also continue to invest in its operations in Angola, Algeria, Egypt and Libya. This contained in a statement issued by BP African Unit CEO Siphon Maseko.

The intentions by BP Plc to quench its marketing wing in Zambia will further suffocate the fuel-thirsty nation which has battled with fuel shortages for years due to lack of stable suppliers from Middle East.

Late last year, Zambia experienced a month-long fuel crisis which plunged the nation in economic slowdown by paralysing industrial operations, darkening neighbourhoods and inconveniencing motorists and citizens.

Union Leader Flees Zimbabwe

(Voice of America)

03 March 2010

The leader of Zimbabwe's largest trade union says she fled to South Africa because she was being harassed by the police.

The general-secretary the General Agricultural and Plantation Workers Union, Gertrude Hambira, first went into hiding in Harare last November, days before the documentary, House of Justice, was released in Johannesburg.

At the premier of the documentary in Johannesburg she told journalists farm workers had suffered more than their white employers since Mr. Mugabe began seizing white-owned farms in 2000. She said many of them had died since the seizures or were unemployed - and those retained by the new farmers, who are mostly senior ZANU-PF officials, are often under paid.

She said the plight of farm workers and violence on the few hundred remaining white-run commercial farms has been ignored by the Southern African Development Community of which Zimbabwe is a member. "This is an appeal to SADC leaders to end violence on Zimbabwe's farms," said Hambira.

Hambira returned to Zimbabwe, but a week ago was called in for questioning by police in central Harare. Colleagues say police and security agents then called at her Harare offices and her home and she went into hiding again.

According to Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions President Lovemore Matombo, Hambira fled to South Africa and seven of Hambira's colleagues have gone into hiding, fearing arrest.

Matombo says lawlessness, human-rights abuses and repression continues in Zimbabwe a year after an inclusive government of ZANU-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change was formed.

Police spokesmen in Harare were not available for comment.

Meanwhile, a Congress of South African Trade Unions statement said the group fully supports Zimbabwe workers in "their very difficult situation, as a result of intensified persecution against them". The trade-union federation confirmed Hambira is in South Africa and said it is aware of the grave situation in Zimbabwe.

The COSATU statement said it would seek assurances from Zimbabwe's security ministers, who are mostly loyal to ZANU-PF, that they would ensure Hambira's safety and stop threatening her with arrest.

Kimberley Process Monitor Arrives in Zimbabwe

(Voice of America)

02 March 2010

A monitor from the Kimberly Certification Process, which was set up to end international trade in conflict diamonds, has arrived in Harare to check on output from controversial diamond mining in eastern Zimbabwe.

Mining Minister Obert Mpofu, a senior member of President Robert Mugabe's Zanu-PF party, says Zimbabwe has done its best to comply with Kimberley Process standards. He denies reports by Human Rights Watch that gross abuses, including murders, have taken place at the Chiadzwa diamond fields in eastern Zimbabwe.

Last November, a meeting of Kimberley Process members in Namibia rejected pressure to expel Zimbabwe, and decided instead that it would appoint a monitor to check on production from the Chiadzwa diamond fields.

It chose an experienced diamond expert from the United Kingdom, who Zimbabwe rejected. It then accepted South African Abbey Chikane.

According to Ian Smillie, one of the architects of the Kimberley Process, Chikane will have no powers to stop any diamond smuggling or even human-rights abuses at the

diamond fields. He says the Kimberley Process's decisions on Zimbabwe in Namibia were no more than a "face-saving exercise."

Smillie said the Zimbabwe monitor's powers, as defined in Namibia, were to check on certification of diamonds for legal export, which he said Zimbabwe was already doing properly.

Smillie quit the Kimberley Process last year, citing ineptitude and failure to discipline countries that he said ignore rules set up six years ago to end trade in conflict diamonds.

Earlier this year, two new local companies backed by financiers from South Africa and Mauritius were given licenses to mine for diamonds in the Chiadzwa fields.

Zimbabwe's Supreme Court has ordered all diamond mining in eastern Zimbabwe to stop until a dispute over ownership of two of the diamond fields is finalized. In Mutare, the closest city to the diamond fields, several people involved in providing support services to operations in the Chiadzwa fields say mining is continuing.

Chikane has said he would go to inspect the diamond fields and will visit Zimbabwe once a month as part of his monitoring assignment.

Mr. Mugabe said last week that if Zimbabwe was unable to comply with the Kimberley Process it would go it alone and sell its diamonds to any buyer.

Zimbabwe Forces White-Owned Firms to Give Up Majority Stake

(Voice of America)

01 March 2010

A law that forces white-owned companies to hand over 51 percent of their shares to black Zimbabweans has come into force. Most of the foreign companies affected are South African owned, which are supposed to be protected by a recently signed trade agreement.

There was confusion in the business sector, as recently published regulations supporting the so-called indigenization law came into effect.

Within the next 45 days, companies with assets of \$500,000 or more have to submit forms reporting information on the race of present shareholders and their plans to hand over 51 percent of their assets to black Zimbabweans. Many people on the streets of Harare are not familiar with the new law.

Ministry of Health research officer Oswald Dziike was surprised when told about it.

"I have not heard anything about this bill," he said. "I do not know anything about this bill, so I cannot comment on it."

A salesman at a vehicle spare parts shop in central Harare, Costa Chipadze, said he is worried it would frighten away any new investors.

"It is actually a threat to investors, as has been currently enunciated by those ministers that are coming with it," he said. "They [investors] feel very much shied away by this because most of them will be having billions of money to invest, but the fact that as long as they sign their contract with the Zimbabwe government, definitely they will have lost," he said.

During his 86th birthday celebrations last weekend, President Robert Mugabe said there would be no going back on the new law.

He said indigenous Zimbabweans, those previously disadvantaged during the colonial era, must control the country's national assets. He said the new law was not nationalization.

"Like the land-reform program, it is designed to regress historical imbalances in the ownership of our economy," he said.

An influential investment newsletter distributed in Zimbabwe's business community said the law contradicts the recently signed South African-Zimbabwe trade agreement.

South African companies in business in Zimbabwe have not commented on the new law. South Africa is the largest foreign investor in Zimbabwe.

The shrinking number of white businessmen who are also Zimbabwe citizens and own smaller companies say they are worried about the new law. One, who asked not to be named, said many of his colleagues believed the new law is similar to the land-reform program that saw thousands of white farmers stripped of their land and assets beginning in 2000.

Another said he hoped the new law was only what he called "electioneering" by Mr. Mugabe's ZANU-PF Party, which says it is trying to boost its popularity since it lost the last elections in 2008.

The law was passed in 2008, before Mr. Mugabe entered the current coalition government with Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai. Mr. Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change said the new law is "null and void."

Zimbabwe law on firms' ownership comes into effect

(BBC News)

1 March 2010

A new Zimbabwean law that forces companies to sell a majority stake in their businesses to indigenous people has come into effect.

Firms worth more than \$500,000 (£332,000) run by non-indigenous people have five years to sell a 51% stake, upon the threat of jail sentences.

Harare-based economist John Robertson told the BBC's Network Africa programme that it was "a very bad idea".

He said it would only deter further badly-needed foreign investment. "The government appears to have no wish at all to make the country attractive to the [overseas] investors," said Mr Robertson.

Government split

The new rule - dubbed the indigenisation law - is seen as an extension of the government's seizure of white-owned farms, which started approximately 10 years ago.

That controversial programme was widely considered a failure, as many of the seized farms have remained dormant.

This resulted in Zimbabwe - once known as the bread basket of Africa - having to become a net importer of food, sparking hyper inflation.

The law on company ownership has further divided Zimbabwe's already strained unity government.

President Robert Mugabe has repeatedly defended the law, saying that firms would be "foolish" not to comply.

By contrast, Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, has rejected the law, saying it was published without due process.

Investment 'needed'

Mr Robertson added that it was likely to have the same negative impact as the farm seizures.

"As soon as the skills are taken away from the businesses they now have their eye on, those businesses will also fail," he said.

He added that far from empowering the wider population, the move would only benefit those individuals that the government appoints to take control of the companies.

The main trade union group, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), has also warned that the new law could have negative consequences.

"Although the principle of the law is good, we fear that this could lead to a creation of new minority blacks who will just replace the minority whites," said ZCTU president Lovemore Matombo.

"The law should have not been rushed, we are just coming out of a self-inflicted economic crisis.

"This law could create fears that the process could be chaotic, just like the land reform, which will affect the economic recovery of the country and we do not need this right now as we need investments."

A previous version of this story referred to "foreign-owned" companies being affected by the law, however this has now been amended to reflect the fact that the law applies to all firms controlled by non-indigenous Zimbabweans.

Social Developments

Mozambican gays visit Malawi

(Africa News)

6 March, 2010

The two gay suspects have been held in custody since then, prompting human rights activists and the Malawi Gay Rights Movement (Magrim) to cry wolf.

Magrim Spokesperson James Wongani Phiri confirmed the development, saying the Mozambican gays and lesbians have been in Malawi since this week and will go back home Tuesday next week.

"In fact, we have received a gays and lesbians' delegation of 17 people, 14 males and three women, and are happy with their gesture of goodwill. It is high time African gays united against repressive laws," said Wongani Phiri.

Phiri said the Mozambicans and their Malawian counterparts have been holding closed door meetings, and will issue a Press Release at the end of the meeting next Tuesday.

"Among other things, we want Chimbalanga and Monjeza released unconditionally," said Phiri, in the presence of the Mozambicans.

BOTSWANA: Technology to catch undocumented migrants

(IRIN News)

1 March, 2010

GABORONE, 1 March 2010 (IRIN) - Botswana is adopting a two-pronged approach to tackle abuse of its immigration system by increasing the sophistication of travel documents, visas and work permits, and putting more boots on the ground to apprehend undocumented foreign nationals.

Zimbabweans escaping their country's continuing economic, political and social malaise - despite the formation of a unity government more than a year ago - have favoured neighbouring Botswana, one of southern Africa's most prosperous nations.

Letso Mpho, acting spokesman for Botswana's Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, told IRIN that workplace inspections would be "intensified" from 1 March 2010, and special immigration assistants would accompany police and home affairs officials to help identify undocumented foreign nationals.

The government has also begun introducing electronic online passports (e-passports), and the computerization of work and residence permits for all foreign nationals. The current passport is to be phased out in 2011.

"The ongoing e-passport project will improve the security features of the Botswana passport. The document is machine-readable - it will be difficult to fake or even tamper with it," Mpho said.

Britain, the former colonial power, has issued strong warnings to Botswana to improve its passport security systems or risk its citizens having to apply for visas to visit the UK.

In 2009 Britain withdrew South Africa's visa-on-demand privileges after raising concerns about the security of its identity documents and South Africans now have to apply for a visa ahead of travelling to the UK.

Zimbabwean nationals presenting a passport are allowed a maximum 90-day annual stay in Botswana and extensions can be granted on written requests, but Zimbabwean passports are both expensive and difficult to access, and many people migrating in search of work cannot afford to apply for one.

Zimbabweans arrested

"From December 15, 2009 to January 15, 2010, in our South Central region, which includes such areas as Mochudi, Sikwane and Gaborone [the capital] we repatriated a total of 195 illegal immigrants," Mpho said.

"[Of these] 147 were males, 45 females and 3 were minors; all were from Zimbabwe. Prior to 15 December 2009 - that is, from January 2009 to December 14, 2009, we repatriated a total of 12,200 illegal immigrants in the same region. The numbers in our other regions like the Francistown region [bordering Zimbabwe] are even more."

Most of the undocumented foreign nationals were from Zimbabwe, but other countries of origin included China, Egypt, Somalia, India and Sudan. The number of undocumented migrants in Botswana is unofficially estimated to number in the hundreds of thousands.

"Other than the normal procedure of arresting culprits and handing foreign passports to the embassies of holders of such passports, the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, is engaged in two major projects ... the computerisation of the issuance of residence permits and visa, and the computerisation of passports and border control," Mpho said.

Arrest of permit dealers

The recent arrest of a Zimbabwean "permit dealer", Raymond Dube, who was feted by his fellow countrymen in Botswana for his ability to help many of them get work and residence permits, has created widespread concern.

"When I came to Botswana last year [in 2009], he helped me secure a work and residence permit, using my emergency travel document. I had exceeded my days [I was allowed to be in Botswana], but he was so helpful. Now I am afraid they may blacklist all permits he facilitated," Nothando Ncube, a Gaborone hairdresser, told IRIN.

Dube appeared in court early last month facing 11 charges of issuing false documents, including work and residence permits, and those who received false documents have had them withdrawn. In January 2010 Zimbabwean national Peter Elton was charged with possession of counterfeit immigration stamps.

"These ones were unfortunate to have their documents detected and confiscated," Ncube said. "Many of us got our papers through Ray [Dube] and his colleagues, and it will be very hard for us when the authorities manage to detect the serial numbers of the permits and licenses he issued. I can assure you, thousands of people will be affected."

Local citizens are also being implicated in permit scams, including marriages of convenience to foreign nationals, but government has announced that it will review the automatic access to residence papers of non-nationals married to Botswana citizens.

"Many Batswana have been arrested or charged for aiding and abetting illegal immigrants. Some would act as witnesses to help foreigners acquire the national identity document – omang," Mpho said. "With an omang, the foreigner would be able to acquire other documents like the passport."

SOUTH AFRICA: Police blame "illegal immigrants" for crime

(IRIN News)

3 March, 2010

JOHANNESBURG, 3 March 2010 (IRIN) - The "absurd" claim by Gauteng's police chief that South Africa's richest province was home to as many as three million "illegal" immigrants was part of a pattern by government departments to blame undocumented migrants for their own shortcomings, Loren Landau, director of the University of the Witwatersrand's Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP), told IRIN.

Simon Mpmbe, Gauteng's acting chief of police, reportedly told the police parliamentary portfolio committee in Cape Town on 2 March that there were "more people to police, but we don't have enough officials to do the extra work. We can't say we won't police them because they come from another country."

Landau said statements like this were "worrying", and "we should not let the police commissioners' prevarications and fabrications distract us from the reality that they [police] spend far too much of their time and money on policing non-nationals."

A FMSP study conducted in 2009 - *One Burden Too Many? A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Immigration Policing in Gauteng* - found that the police spent a quarter of their annual budget, or R350 million (US\$48 million) in Gauteng alone, on immigration policing, despite instructions from senior officials that this was not a priority.

The 2007 Community Survey by Statistics South Africa, the most recent and accurate data available, estimated the number of foreign-born residents - including South African citizens - at about 1.2 million people, or 2.79 percent of the population. The number foreign nationals residing in Gauteng was put at 580,000.

"That number has undoubtedly increased in the last three years, but the numbers are still likely to be under 2 million - and that is for the whole country. Unless the police have conducted their own survey, they are evidently fabricating the numbers to suit their purposes," the FMSP said in a statement.

Landau commented that undocumented foreign nationals were "blamed for all their [police] failings, and it's not the first time [government departments had blamed foreign nationals]" for their inadequacies. He cited instances where the departments of housing, home affairs and education had attributed their "non-performance" to foreign nationals in South Africa.

At the same parliamentary briefing, Limpopo chief police Calvin Sengani said the province, which borders Zimbabwe, had to deal with foreign nationals "flooding our towns and cities. They cause a great number of problems with crime; we arrest them and protect them with resources that are intended for our citizens."

Landau said the claim that undocumented foreign nationals were responsible for one of the world's highest crime rates was not borne out by statistics, which showed that most crimes were committed by South Africans.

The police "spend their time looking for foreigners - it helps their own legitimacy [because foreigners are blamed for crime], and this is then seen as fighting crime. It is a spurious logic. They [the police] are not getting the serious criminals, they are getting the guys selling tomatoes on the street without a licence," he said.

The "real issue" was that it was difficult for people to come to South Africa legally; if there was a regional migration system about 85 percent of undocumented foreign nationals would have documentation, Landau commented.

Dangerous talk

Mpilo Shange, an advocacy officer at the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, said statements blaming foreign nationals for crime were "dangerous".

Since May 2008, when xenophobic violence swept through South Africa, killing at least 62 people and displacing 100,000 others, the government had started addressing the issue, but "a lot still needs to be done", she said.

Xenophobic violence has often accompanied service delivery protests, which have mushroomed across Gauteng Province since the beginning of 2010. Attacks on foreign owned shops and businesses have been reported. Shange said, "We are worried about it [protests combined with xenophobic violence]."

Tales of Witchcraft Abound in Zimbabwe

(Voice of America)

05 March 2010

In Zimbabwe, witchcraft is still common in rural areas. Hardly a week passes without a local report or newspaper story on the practice. For example, police recently cornered a man at the Mbare Mbare bus terminal, after they discovered a live cobra snake in his luggage. He told officers the reptile was one of his witching tools.

About two weeks later, some women were discovered wandering naked in the early hours of the morning near Highfield. After being confronted by locals, they claimed they'd "flown" from a rural location during one of several night time escapades. But they said something went wrong and the spell wore off, before they could return to their original location.

Four years ago, the government proclaimed that supernatural powers do exist. But it says it still prohibits the use of magic if it harms someone.

Many Zimbabweans, especially those who grow up in rural areas, find it difficult to dismiss the existence of witchcraft. Tendai Manyimo, 30, lives in Chitandara. He explained that his wife is a vendor and that her face became contorted after she was bewitched by rival vendors. He claims she'd been running a successful sugar sale venture:

"When she came to barter with rural folk the trouble started. One of our neighbors requested [sugar] on credit and she refused. Before the end of the day she was bleeding from the nose, mouth and ears," he says.

Manyimo said a faith healer cured her.

David Nyemba, 77, from Mazhambe village believes he was bewitched by his aunt while he was employed as a driver in the city three years ago. He says a turning point came in his life when he quit his job in order to return to village life:

“I was the darling of the company management ,” he says, “and I did not realize I could have some hidden enemies.”

“My aunt pretended to like me and gave me money to spend. My instinct told me to refuse, but I went against my better judgment and spent it. I was demoted and harassed constantly by my superiors [which] never used to happen. I got the answers after visiting a traditional healer.”

Margaret Mashayamombe, 83, is a traditional healer in Mutenda village, Chihota. She says witchcraft is used in families for revenge and spite.

Mashayamombe also says the frequency of recent reports on witchcraft indicates forces of good are triumphing over evil. She says Zimbabweans should respect traditions by performing rituals favored by their forefathers.

“Life was okay,” she asserts, “until some over-ambitious individuals went outside the country to get advice from traditional healers there on how to get rich quickly. That is where the problem began, because they came back with remedies that are harmful [to] others. All this is now being exposed due to the powers of the spirits of our forefathers.”

Sarudzai Nyota, 33, a member of the apostolic faith sect, says she believes the country would be better off without elevating the supernatural. Sarudzai says people should turn to God and seek salvation through Jesus Christ, as a way of overcoming being susceptible to witchcraft.

[Nyota says] The Christian church believes there’s only a “good” spirit, meaning what is called the Holy Spirit, whereas witchcraft has origins in Satanism.

South African Group Ready to Aid Chile Quake Victims

(Voice of America)

04 March 2010

A humanitarian group in South Africa says it is poised to send rescue workers to Chile, following its massive earthquake. But the group is also urging donors not to forget earthquake victims in Haiti who remain highly vulnerable after a similar disaster seven weeks ago.

The head of the Gift of the Givers organization, Intiaz Sooliman, says that if requested his group could immediately send to Chile 30 search-and-rescue specialists, sniffer dogs and 10 experts in treating traumatic injuries.

"There is no request for international search and rescue and medical teams. However, if they [the Chileans] do change their mind we are still on stand-by and we are ready to

move in on short notice with medical supplies to accompany the search-and-rescue teams," said Sooliman.

The earthquake and tsunami Saturday in Chile killed at least 800 people and damaged two-million buildings, including 500,000 homes.

The Chilean government has asked the international community for certain forms of aid, but says it can handle search-and-rescue efforts.

Sooliman spoke (to VOA) shortly before flying to Haiti where his organization has been helping victims of the earthquake there that killed an estimated 300,000 people and destroyed much of the country's infrastructure.

Gift of the Givers initially flew three search-and-rescue teams to Haiti.

It has since replaced them with medical personnel who are working at make-shift hospitals. Sooliman called Haiti's one of the worst natural disasters ever and urged the donor community to increase its aid.

"With the Chilean earthquake and other responsibilities around the world, the world should not forget that the people in Haiti are in great distress," he said. "Even the tents and all that everybody has supplied will not be adequate with the coming rains and the coming winds," said Sooliman.

He said more aid was needed to build shelters for the homeless and schools for the children.

On this trip to Haiti, Sooliman says he took 500 tons of medical supplies and is accompanied by the archbishop of South Africa's Anglican Church and other religious leaders who are supporting the relief efforts.

World Cup Organizers Praise South African Stadiums

(Voice of America)

02 March 2010

Organizers of this year's World Cup have praised the 10 South African stadiums that will host the football matches, and say that with 100 days to go until the tournament kicks off there is no doubt that the country will be ready.

The delegation of senior football and political figures Tuesday delivered their endorsement of South Africa's World Cup preparations at the new stadium in Durban.

The president of football's world governing body, FIFA's Sepp Blatter, said the decade-old dream of staging the World Cup on African soil had become a reality.

"There is no doubt that never during the whole duration of my idea, confirmed by the executive committee, that Africa is a good choice and then when South Africa [was chosen], never have we put into question the ability to organize," said Blatter.

FIFA and local organizers completed a four-day tour of the 10 stadiums that will host World Cup matches. They noted that all but two stadiums are finished and have already hosted local games. They said the remaining two would be ready in a few weeks.

South Africa's Deputy-President Kgalema Motlanthe noted that in addition to the stadiums, his government has invested billions of dollars to upgrade airports, roads and railways.

"Now that we have completed the brick-and-mortar construction work, we now need to focus more on the soft issues of movement of people," said Motlanthe.

Air transportation authorities say many additional flights are being scheduled during the World Cup and hundreds of buses are being imported to transport fans to the games.

The head of the local organizing committee, Danny Jordaan, noted that football fans in other parts of Africa have voiced concerns about a lack of travel options to the Cup.

"We are continuing to do the work to make sure that all those African fans that would like to come to South Africa have the capability of coming here," said Jordaan. "The general problem is the [lack of] direct flights from every African country into South Africa and that is a matter that we are paying attention to."

In response to a question about difficulties in obtaining tickets in many African countries, Jordaan said ticket sales have been going well in some countries, particularly those whose teams have qualified for the Cup.

FIFA officials said they were working to make tickets more readily available in other countries in the region. They said more than two-thirds of the nearly three million tickets have been sold.

World Cup Organizers Inspect South African Stadiums

(Voice of America)

01 March 2010

World Cup organizers are visiting the 10 South African stadiums that are to host matches later this year. Tuesday marks the 100-day countdown to kick-off for football's biggest event.

Local organizers of the 2010 World Cup say eight of the 10 South African stadiums are finished and have already hosted local matches.

They said Johannesburg's 90,000-seat Soccer City stadium, which is to host the opening and final matches, is nearing completion and is to be handed over to organizers by the end of this month.

They told reporters the only stadium behind schedule is in Nelspruit, 300 kilometers east of Johannesburg.

South African Organizing Committee head Danny Jordaan said construction is finished, but the pitch (field) needed re-planting because of drainage problems.

He noted that football's world governing body, FIFA, had brought in experts to assist and predicted that it would be ready in seven weeks.

"There is a period of total uninterrupted work with no possibility of matches," said Danny Jordaan. "And therefore a new stadium gives that flexibility and that possibility."

He made the remarks as he led FIFA officials and the news media on an inspection tour of the arenas.

The group has visited the stadiums in Johannesburg, Rustenberg, Polokwane, Nelspruit and Bloemfontein, in the central part of South Africa. It is also traveling to Cape Town and Port Elizabeth on the southern coast.

The group goes to the southeastern port of Durban to participate Tuesday in ceremonies marking the 100-day countdown to the World Cup kick-off on June 11.

Jordaan underscored that South Africa would be ready.

"As we sit here, 100 days to go, and look back at the road we traveled, certainly it is with great sense of achievement that all of us celebrate the reality that for the first time after 103 years of international football, Africa will have its first chance to host this event," he said.

FIFA Secretary-General Jerome Valke says the organization is moving thousands of middle-priced tickets into the lowest-price category. This category, where tickets to preliminary games sell for less than \$20, is limited to South African residents only.

FIFA said it wanted more South Africans to be able to participate in the event. It says more than two-thirds of the three million tickets have been sold and all but a dozen of the 64 matches are sold out.

South Africa starts 100-day World Cup countdown

(BBC News)

1 March 2010

The man in overall charge of Durban's World Cup preparations fell like a stone towards the manicured grass pitch inside the city's spectacular new stadium.

"Durban is absolutely ready," shouted Mike Sutcliffe, red-faced but grinning, seconds after an elastic bungee rope had broken his fall and left him swinging gently in the humid air.

A hundred days before the World Cup begins in South Africa, this cosmopolitan port city on the Indian Ocean is racing to complete an ambitious billion-pound refurbishment of local infrastructure that officials insist will be on time, on budget, and destined to reshape Durban for years to come.

"No white elephants," said Mr Sutcliffe, the city's manager, after his inaugural stadium jump.

"Unlike any other country that has hosted a World Cup, or an Olympics, ours has been developmentally oriented."

By now, he was standing on a viewing platform, reached by a small train, back at the very top of the giant white arch that loops over the \$372m (£250m) stadium.

"We've made sure everything we're building here is something for beyond 2010. Sustainability is really our buzz word... and we have not taken out one loan as a city to pay for this investment," he said.

'World class'

Four weeks of international football have acted as a catalyst for a whole range of major infrastructure projects in Durban. Some, like the stadium, are more or less finished.

Others, like the new sea-front park will probably keep the bulldozers busy right up to the last minute.

Mr Sutcliffe, a well-connected member of the ruling party, the ANC, said the World Cup had enabled the city to get a new airport "probably five years early," and he listed a string of other benefits, including an upgraded road system, an overhaul of public transport, and extensive broadband cabling.

"The world will think differently about Durban," he said. "They'll say - my goodness, these are not just hicks from a developing country. They are world class."

Critics have suggested the huge new stadium will not be sustainable, particularly since the local rugby team, the Sharks, is reluctant to move from their own, more intimate grounds, just across the road.

A local sports reporter, Zayn Nabbi, broadened the complaint. "We've got roads, we've got airports and that's a huge benefit, but those have been improved in affluent areas.

Your areas outside the city centre are still left decrepit and derelict, and that's the sad reality," he said.

"Expectations are too high," said Simphiwe Ntshweni, from Durban's Youth Advisory Centre.

"This is a Fifa event. It will come and go. People are hoping the World Cup will bring real money into their pockets, but the person on the street will find it is not easy to realise those dreams. Come back after July and you'll see a lot of people have not made money. "But if you see all the infrastructure that is here now, the roads and public works - those positive things outweigh the negatives."

Cruising off the coast in a sleek white motor boat called Bring it on, marketing executive Trevor Tshuma acknowledged that not every business was going to benefit from the World Cup.

"There will be quite a lot of disappointment, but that's to be expected - this is a first for Africa, and there's no yardstick to refer to so certainly there will be quite a lot of losers," he said.

Mr Tshuma works for a new accommodation management company called Teatro, which has expanded rapidly in the past year by offering tours, rooms, boats and other tourist facilities to visiting fans.

The accommodation industry has been wrestling with issues of over-pricing, accreditation, low tourist numbers and the dominant role of Fifa's official partner, MATCH Services, but Mr Tshuma said Teatro was "going to make a very nice profit and a good turnover".

"There were a lot of people who over-inflated room rates, but we're keeping it realistic." More important, Mr Tshuma, stressed, was the long-term impact of the World Cup on Durban.

"A lot of people have the wrong perception. People talk about crime but it's often exaggerated," he said. "When people come and realise how safe it is and how affordable things are... it will definitely give a positive impact for tourism in the future."

All around the centre of Durban, workmen are noisily racing to complete (and in some cases it seems, just starting work on) fan zones, park and ride zones and other World Cup-related infrastructure projects.

Beside one particularly noisy building site, a group of traders selling football shirts and other goods from their stalls seemed uncertain about Fifa's marketing restrictions around the stadium, and less-than-convinced that June and July would do much for their businesses.

But serving the lunchtime takeaway crowd at her busy curry restaurant nearby, Priscilla Powell was adamant.

"There's been a lot of road works; they're getting the country ready and it's changing for the better; I think we'll sell to a lot of football fans," she said with a grin.

Swaziland: Property rights for women at last!

(IPS News)

5 March 2010

Many Swazi women married in community of property have been left in the cold by their husbands, who chase them out of their matrimonial homes or sell property without their knowledge. In some cases, the wives will have paid for the property but leave with nothing because it is registered in their husband's name. Dolly Ndlovu found herself in this situation after moving out of her matrimonial home last year. She is still paying the bond on the house where her estranged husband now lives with his mistress.

Back in 1995 when she applied for the loan Ndlovu was not aware of what she was getting herself into. It was only 10 years later, when she tried to use the property as collateral on a car loan application, that she realised the house was not actually hers. "I was shocked when the bank told me that, although I was the sole payer of the bond, my husband was the sole owner of the property," said Ndlovu, a primary school principal and women's rights activist. The bank refused to stop deducting the loan installments from her salary when she moved out of the four bedroomed house because the bond is in her name.

Due to the brave efforts of women's rights activist, Doo Aphane who challenged the Deeds Registry Act on the basis of the equality clause of the Constitution, other Swazi women will no longer have to experience what Ndlovu has gone through. Last year Aphane took government to court where she argued that the provisions of Section 16(3) of the Deeds Registry Act not only undermines her dignity but is also discriminating of her and other women married in community of property in the kingdom. Section 16(3) of the Deeds Registry Act prevented women married in community of property from registering immovable property in their names. This piece of legislation further allowed the husband to be the sole administrator of the property.

Aphane further asserted that this piece of legislation is against the provision of Section 20 of the Constitution, which states that everyone is equal before the law while Section 28 awards women equal rights to men in political, economic and social activities. Justice Qinisile Mabuza last week gave women married in community of property the right to register property in their names and have equal partnership with their husbands in its administration. She further ordered parliament to put into motion the law reform process so that offending statutory provisions such as Section 16(3) of the Deeds Registry Act are removed from the country's statutes.

Mabuza observed that the legislature has had enough time since the adoption of the Constitution in 2005 "to embark on aggressive law reforms, especially those relating to women who have been marginalised over the years in many areas of the law." Despite being signatory to various international instruments aimed at empowering women,

including the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development, the Swazi government has done little to amend laws that subjected women to perpetual minority status.

The women's movement sees the judgment on property registration as an important milestone towards law reform in the country and an opportunity for women's economic advancement. "Now women can use their 50 percent of the property they own jointly with their husbands as collateral to get loans to start businesses," said Aphane. Although title deed land accounts for only 30 percent of the land in the Kingdom, Aphane said a lot of economic activity takes place in urban areas, which is why this judgment will uplift the Swazi economy.

Lungile Mzizi, project manager at the Business Women's Forum of Swaziland could not agree more with Aphane. She said women in the country are now in a position to venture into big businesses such as construction and property development because it is clear who owns what between husband and wife. The Swaziland Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) has also welcomed the judgment. Member of Parliament and women's rights activist Nonhlanhla Dlamini, told IPS that it was brave of Aphane to take the tedious legal route because many other women in her position were afraid.

"As the WPC we're very excited about this judgment and we'll take it upon ourselves to ensure that laws aimed at protecting women are passed in Parliament," said Dlamini. Dlamini told IPS the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Bill would be a priority for Parliamentary debate when the legislature starts sitting this month. Because this judgment does not apply in reverse, it will not affect Ndlovu's situation. But she told IPS she is consoled by the fact that her child will not go through the same experience as she did.

HEALTH-SOUTH AFRICA: Prescription Drug Abuse on the Increase

(Inter Press Service News Agency)

Mar 5, 2010

"Prescriptions are great," she said. "I recommend Codeine." Codeine is a mild narcotic used to treat mild to moderate pain. One of the warnings on the medication is that it should not be taken with alcohol because of the risk of death. Despite this, Allen takes it when going out or hanging out with her friends.

"I usually get them from someone who gets prescribed them, otherwise one of my friend's mother has a drawer full of rad Codeine pills."

According to Allen, prescriptions are harder to get than illegal drugs. However, when they are available she uses them. Allen also takes illegal drugs but she finds that the prescriptions offer a different high.

Allen is just one of an increasing number of people who are becoming hooked on prescription drugs. According to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) annual report, globally there is an increase in the abuse of prescription medication.

While no information is available for Africa, other countries show an alarming rise in the use of prescription medication. The study found that in the United States 6.2 million people were abusing prescriptions and in several European countries like France, Italy and Lithuania between 10 to 18 percent of students use sedatives or tranquilisers without a prescription.

The report states that although most countries recognise the abuse of prescription drugs, countries do not systematically collect information of prescription drug abuse. However, the report stated prescription drug abuse is not limited only to first world countries; the same trend is being seen in developing countries like South Africa.

The reason for the increase in prescription drug abuse can be attributed to the fact that these particular drugs are not themselves illegal, said Dr. David Bayever - the deputy chairperson the Central Drug Authority (CDA).

He explained that because the drugs were legal medication, when a person is caught with them they cannot be arrested. Bayever called this a "disturbing development".

According to the INCB report, the abuse of pharmaceuticals can be partially attributed to fact that medication, which is banned in other countries, can be obtained without prescription or at unregulated markets in most countries in Africa

Paul Kruger the executive director of Narconon, an addiction treatment and rehabilitation programme in Johannesburg, says that there has been an increase of about 25 percent in the last year in the number of patients addicted to prescription medication at the clinic.

According to Kruger, the medications are obtained one of two ways: patient's either get their prescriptions filled out by their doctor; or they get the medication from the black market. He explained the most common method of acquiring the drugs is through prescription scripts.

IPS spoke to pharmacies around Johannesburg and many said they discovered only a few cases of forged prescriptions. Eugene Jonker, an assistant pharmacist from Clicks Pharmacy in Boksburg said that while they have seen forgeries of prescriptions, particularly schedule 6 prescription medications, they had not discovered many forgeries. In the event of a suspected forgery the pharmacist has to call the doctor to confirm the prescription. The pharmacy is also required to keep a record of this in compliance with the requirements set out by the South African Pharmacy Council.

Amos Masango, chief executive officer of the South African Pharmacy Council also says that they are not aware of an increase of the misuse of pharmaceuticals. "Nothing has officially been reported to us, the council does inspections in all pharmacies to look at compliance with the standards set out by the council."

With the FIFA 2010 World Cup being held in South Africa in less than three months, the CDA is worried that illegal drugs will flood into the country. The CDA has also discovered websites which advertise the availability of drugs in the country to foreign tourists.

Although the country has been preparing years in advance for the 2010 World Cup and there will be an increased border post policing, and airports will be more vigilant in screening people entering the country, the CDA is concerned this will not be sufficient.

"I fear whatever we do will not be enough," said Bayever. "People will see this as a picking field and will take advantage of the event. In spite of all the measures taken one must remember that these are well-organised groups who know where the loopholes are."

"The drug problem in South Africa is twice the world norm," he said. "One out of every four Rands in circulation in the South African economy can be linked to the substance abuse problem."

A CDA report presented by Bayever showed drugs can be linked to several other social problems including poverty, crime, sexual abuse and HIV/Aids.

"Unfortunately when we talk of substance abuse of any nature it knows no boundaries and happens on all levels" said Bayever.

ZIMBABWE: Informal Sector Lures University Graduates

(Inter Press Service News Agency)

Mar 1,2010

"This is not for the faint hearted," she says of her work and the many dangerous routes she has to navigate as a small-scale businesswoman in Bulawayo.

"I have given my life to spending nights in the middle of nowhere after the bus broke down, and you can expect anything in those circumstances. I sometimes think it is better if you are a man because they are not as vulnerable as us," she told IPS. Sex is always high on the agenda among bus crews who expect it as currency in exchange for their knowledge of the ins and outs of how to get goods across the border without making hefty duty payments.

"In the middle of nowhere and in the dead of night, you ready yourself for the bus crew to ask for sex. Some of them seem to think it's quite normal to do this," says Moyo who has been making frequent trips across the Botswana and South Africa borders for five years now.

As a regular cross border trader moving large volumes of goods for her flea market business, Moyo says the bus crew is practically on her payroll. She pays them about 130 dollars per trip for her goods to come through without the frustration of paying high duty charges.

She pays because she can afford it, she says, but not all the women traders have that option. The choices are to accept the advances, decline and end up with your goods left behind at the border or negotiate a fee, part of which the bus crews use to bribe customs officials.

What makes Moyo's case rather extraordinary is that she is a university graduate. Like thousands of other graduates, Moyo has never worked in formal employment since leaving university several years ago with a journalism degree. She is from that generation of young Zimbabweans who headed for university at a time when the country's economy was spiraling out of control amid world record inflation, with companies either downsizing or closing down altogether.

However, she says she has few regrets in a business that has seen her purchase a house and a van – assets that many of her journalist colleagues and other professionals in the country can only dream of.

Her colleague Sarudzai Washaya, also a university graduate, runs a small beauty boutique in Bulawayo's central business district and buys her stock in South Africa and Botswana.

"There are times when I feel so exhausted I want to give up altogether, but the money I get is the kind I would never get in formal employment so I soldier on," she told IPS.

These brave women have become "the new middle class" in a country where formal employment is increasingly being shunned and derided because of poor salaries. Early February this year, thousands of civil servants went on strike protesting against poor salaries. State workers reportedly earn between 120 – 200 dollars per month, and have been pressing government for a five-fold increase to an average of 630 dollars per month.

Moyo credits her university education with making it easier for her to negotiate the cross border business and keep herself safe.

"There are still patriarchal stereotypes here that have made life difficult for women cross border traders. But university education is something that still intimidates some men," she says.

But having a university education does not make it any easier to maintain healthy family relationships when you are constantly on the road. For married women who make numerous trips across the border to buy stock, Moyo says many have abandoned the business, as husbands tend to question where their wives spend the night.

These realities have raised concerns among some NGOs, such as the International Organisation for Immigration's Partnership on HIV and Mobility in Southern Africa (PHAMSA), which notes that female traders are exposed to HIV as they negotiate their way with transporters, customs officials and risk rape and other forms of gender based violence in unknown and dangerous environments.

Despite these and other challenges, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) notes that informal cross border traders contribute an average of 18 billion dollars each year to trade within the Southern African Development Community.

Moyo believes women cross border traders' mobility has created stereotypes in their communities where the only jobs 'good' women are expected to have are the "visible" type where everyone knows where she works.

"If you are away from the matrimonial bed just for one night, neighbours start talking and that puts pressure on your husband," Moyo says.

"No one will believe you when you say the bus broke down. It sounds like a convenient explanation. So for me, being single means I can concentrate on this without explaining anything to anyone. But I will be the first to admit it is a lonely life," says Washaya.

While some of the better off female traders like Washaya and Moyo can afford to drive cars of their own, the toil of making is, as Moyo put it, is surely not for the faint hearted, especially with little formal support from government, and other potential stakeholders.

"Financial backing has been the most difficult part. We cannot access bank loans as banks say our operations offer high financial risks with some saying they do not offer loans altogether in an economy like ours," says Washaya.

While the Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprises continues organising training workshops for young women in business, Moyo says they are not getting anything from these in terms of loans that she says she badly needs to expand.

"We are capable of running bigger things and my ability to run my flea market is testimony to that," Moyo told IPS.