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Summary of Report

Elections & Governance

Group Says South Africa Constitution Not Helping the Poor

A group of respected South Africans from across the spectrum have formed a group aimed at making the constitution more relevant for the country's citizens. The Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution (CASAC) says it is the country's poorest who are not reaping the benefits guaranteed in the constitution. This council is formed with the purpose to find ways to actively promote the constitution and assist those who need to assert their constitutional rights.

Harare Residents Express Anger Over Delayed Constitutional Outreach Meetings

Residents of the Zimbabwean capital of Harare are expressing anger at the postponement of constitutional revision outreach meetings canceled last month and continued confusion as to when they will be rescheduled.

Zimbabwe's Tsvangirai rejects Mugabe's appointments

Zimbabwean Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai said on Thursday his MDC party refused to recognise a string of senior appointments made by President Robert Mugabe, in a fresh row set to strain their fragile coalition.

Zimbabwe PM slams Mugabe 'betrayal'

Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai Thursday voiced his "disgust" with President Robert Mugabe's unilateral decision-making in their power-sharing government, calling it a "betrayal".

Politics

Zimbabwe's Unity Government in Trouble

Zimbabwe's power-sharing unity government is in crisis as Movement for Democratic Change leader, and prime minister in the government of national unity Morgan Tsvangirai says President Robert Mugabe has broken the constitution by unilaterally appointing senior public servants. He said these appointments were both illegal and unconstitutional. In terms of the two year old global political agreement (guaranteed by South Africa and SADC) any public service appointments must be made in consultation

with Mr. Tsvangirai. He said I now call upon President Mugabe to return this country to constitutional rule by correcting the unlawful appointments. I invite SADC to work urgently for a return to constitutional government.

Zimbabwe's MDC Party Said to be Too Weak

The deputy chairman of the National Constitutional Assembly in South Africa's capital, Pretoria said Zimbabwe's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is in an unenviable position in the unity government after Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai expressed disappointment in President Robert Mugabe. George Mkwanzu said the MDC party is behaving like a trapped animal unable to untangle itself from its predicament.

Zimbabwe PM Tsvangirai Sharply Criticizes President Mugabe Over Appointments

Zimbabwean Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai on Thursday lashed out at President Robert Mugabe, accusing his governing partner of violating the constitution by making unilateral appointments to top posts and warning that his Movement for Democratic Change would protect the constitution by disregarding such appointments.

Deceased Zimbabwe Politician Leaves Instructions Declining Heroes Acre Burial

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party this week declared the late Matabeleland Governor Welshman Mabhena a national hero - but his family said Thursday that he did not want to be buried in the National Heroes Acre in Harare alongside numerous ZANU-PF stalwarts because of his falling out with Mr. Mugabe nearly a decade ago.

Botswana's Khama softens harsh tone on Zimbabwe

Botswana President Ian Khama, one of Africa's most outspoken leaders critical of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, called for a lifting of sanctions to help prod the country to greater openness.

Economy & Energy

Zimbabwe Newspaper Reports Infighting Among Marange Diamond Zone Officials

According to a report of Newsday (an independent newspaper), a bitter dispute has erupted among present and former members of the Zimbabwean armed forces and members of the country's police force employed by a Chinese mining firm extracting of diamonds from the Marange field in the east of the country, including allegations of

looting. Newsday quoted sources as saying military and police figures are struggling for control of the operation. Harare-based political commentator Charles Mangongera told VOA Studio 7 reporter Sandra Nyaira that the dispute reveals how mineral resources in Marange are being looted for the benefit of a few.

World Bank Not Yet Ready To Fully Engage Zimbabwe Government – Official

The World Bank says it is not yet ready to fully re-engage Zimbabwe though it may provide nearly US\$3 million to help rehabilitate the Southern African country's failing water and sanitation infrastructure. World Bank Zimbabwe Manager Peter Nicholas told reporters in Washington on Thursday that the institution cannot start funding major projects in Zimbabwe until it catches up arrears on its outstanding debt of US\$600 million.

Zimbabwe FM Tendai Biti in Appeal to US, International Financial Institutions

Zimbabwean Finance Minister Tendai Biti and Economic Planning Minister Tapiwa Mashakada were set to meet with US and top international financial officials in Washington Thursday seeking development aid and debt relief. US and World Bank officials said they would also ask Biti for a progress report on democratic reforms, the stalemate in the Harare power-sharing government and the troubled constitutional revision process.

Beleaguered Zimbabwean Businesses Snub State Survey of Economic Conditions

The head of the Zimbabwe Statistical Agency said his agency has tried to survey businesses about the economic environment but many firms did not respond to questionnaires sent in the first quarter of this year.

Zimbabwe Finance Minister Biti Seeks US Help on Shortage of USD Bills & Coin

Zimbabwe adopted a mixed hard-currency monetary regime using the U.S. dollar and other currencies including the South African rand and Botswana pula in early 2009 by time the Zimbabwe dollar had lost all value due to hyperinflation. Zimbabwean Finance Minister Tendai Biti, in Washington this week, will seek U.S. assistance in securing a supply of small-denomination American banknotes and coins to ease everyday transactions in the country.

Human Rights, Social Issues & Developments

Desmond Tutu Retires From Public Life

Thursday is a milestone for South African anti-apartheid advocate Desmond Tutu. The Nobel Peace laureate turns 79 and is retiring from public life. Tutu is one of South Africa's most beloved figures who frequently spoke out on social and political issues. Now he says, he wants a peaceful life and to spend more time with his family in Cape Town.

Ignoring Patriarchy, Female Politicians Rise

In Malawi, there is gender based discrimination. Mostly women are ignored against the men. They face challenges and obstacles while coming into the realm of politics as it is dominated by men. Malawian civil society is driving an effort to get female candidates into office. It is running 50/50 program: a campaign which aims to meet the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which commits countries to work towards the goal of having 50 percent women in political and decision-making positions by 2015. And due to this program the number of women MPs has jumped from 14 to 22 percent. Whereas, South Africa boasts 45 percent of women parliamentarians, ranking it third in the world in terms of representation just behind Rwanda (56 percent) and Sweden (47 percent). South Africa and Malawi will both return to the polls in 2014 for another presidential election, and civil society in both countries expects these elections to bring further female candidates into the parliamentary fold.

Environmental Issues

Richer Soil First Defence Against Climate Change

Droughts, erratic rains and floods are some of the effects of climate change that are on the increase in Malawi. To overcome or to minimize the effects of these problems Malawi has directed local government officials to develop local response strategies to the effects of climate change.

Food Security & Health Issues

UN backs initiative to reduce child and maternal deaths in Zimbabwe

In an effort to curb child and maternal mortality rates in Zimbabwe, the United Nations and the World Bank are supporting a \$700 million Government initiative to increase spending on the provision of health services in the country over the next three years.

Free Maternal and Child Care Needed From Government

Zimbabwean government does not provide free maternal and child care because it does not have enough budget for health sector. For this reason, mothers are compelled to go to the private hospitals and maternal health clinics. But their rates for maternal and child care services are too high that they are not affordable to many. So, many women opt to give birth at home and often there are complications, some fatal, especially when they have no assistance. In the last decade as Zimbabwe witnessed a dramatic decline in primary health care services it led to a striking increase in maternal and child mortality. Currently one in three children are stunted, 100 children die daily due to easily preventable diseases while maternal mortality is more than double what it was in 1990. So, to reduce this high rate of mortality free child and maternal care is needed by the government. And by realizing this fact, the Inclusive Government of Zimbabwe has committed that by the end of 2011, no pregnant woman or child under five will be deprived of their right to health care because they cannot afford the fees.

Militancy

S. Africa charges Nigeria militant Okah over bombing

South African prosecutors brought terrorism charges against Nigerian militant leader Henry Okah, who lives in South Africa, on Monday for deadly bomb blasts in the Nigerian capital. His lawyer denied his involvement. But the magistrate overseeing the court proceedings said the accused is linked to the bombing that took place in Abuja (Nigeria).

Nigerian militant appears in S. African court

Nigerian militant leader Henry Okah appeared in a Johannesburg court on Monday after he was arrested at the weekend by South African authorities for suspected links to a deadly bombing in Abuja. His lawyer denied his involvement in the explosion of two car bombs in Nigeria. But the warrant of arrest charges that he violated (South Africa's) 'Protection of Constitutional Democracy Against Terrorist and Related Activities Act'.

Refugees/IDPs & Migration

South Africa Says it Will not Extend Deadline for Zimbabweans Applying for Documents

The South African Home Affairs Department has said it will not extend its December 31 deadline for Zimbabweans in the country to obtain documents allowing them to legally

live, work and study there. This situation has led some to conclude that many Zimbabweans will not be able to meet the yearend deadline.

Detailed Report

Elections & Governance

Group Says South Africa Constitution Not Helping the Poor

(Voice of America)

08 October 2010

A group of respected South Africans from across the spectrum have formed a group aimed at making the constitution more relevant for the country's citizens. The Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution (CASAC) says it is the country's poorest who are not reaping the benefits guaranteed in the constitution.

South Africa's constitution, adopted in 1996, is often described as one of the most progressive in the world. This is because it goes beyond many others in entrenching the right to the minimum necessities of life - including clean water, good health care and housing.

But a group of eminent South Africans say those who need those rights the most, the most vulnerable and poor, are not benefiting. The group came together recently to form the Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution (CASAC) to find ways to actively promote the constitution and assist those who need to assert their constitutional rights.

Sipho Pityana, interim chairman of CASAC, said the need for such a group is great because corruption and patronage are so pervasive, rampant and crippling that South Africa is on the verge of being deemed a dysfunctional state. He tells VOA this flies in the face of the constitution. "But our constitution is quite assertive about the establishment of a public service that is exactly that - a service to the public. Not a public service that is a self-service to those who happen to occupy positions in public office," he said.

Pityana told VOA that while some cases of corruption and patronage are exposed in the media, there are far too many that do not receive attention. He said those affected often don't know how to demand their rights or don't have the means to do so.

Pityana said CASAC will focus on education but also where necessary help people to assert their rights in the courts. "We want to make sure that the focus of that legal action is on socio-economic rights, because in that way it will demonstrate that people have the power in terms of the supreme law of the land, to demand their rights, to assert their rights, so we would do public litigation as part of this," he said.

Mr Pityana also warned that there is a conservative assault on the constitution from the very powerful in South Africa. Consequently, he said, it is now for the citizens of this

country to reassert their ownership of the constitution. He added CASAC will support them in doing so.

Harare Residents Express Anger Over Delayed Constitutional Outreach Meetings

(Voice of America)

08 October 2010

Residents of the Zimbabwean capital of Harare are expressing anger at the postponement of constitutional revision outreach meetings canceled last month and continued confusion as to when they will be rescheduled.

Harare Residents Trust Coordinator Precious Shumba said some residents are thinking about protesting at the offices of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Revising the Constitution to demand the suspended meetings be held.

About 40 Harare outreach meetings were called off on the weekend of September 18-19 after they were disrupted - violently in a number of cases - by alleged militants of President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party.

One member of the Movement for Democratic Change formation of Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai died of injuries sustained in a melee that weekend in the densely populated Harare suburb of Mbare.

Public meetings on the new constitution were left until the end of the outreach process which began in June, in part because the World Cup unfolding in South Africa represented a major distraction.

The constitutional panel has issued conflicting reports on when the canceled Harare meetings will be reconvened. The latest proposed new date to be circulated is October 16, but security for such meetings remains a concern.

Community organizer Shumba told VOA Studio 7 reporter Patience Rusere that Harare residents are starting to think the delays in rescheduling meetings reflect a ploy to deny them their democratic rights.

Harare has long been a stronghold of the Movement for Democratic Change.

Zimbabwe's Tsvangirai rejects Mugabe's appointments

(Alert Net)

07 October 2010

HARARE, Oct 7 (Reuters) - Zimbabwean Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai said on Thursday his MDC party refused to recognise a string of senior appointments made by President Robert Mugabe, in a fresh row set to strain their fragile coalition.

Tsvangirai formed a power-sharing administration with bitter rival Mugabe last year after disputed 2008 elections, and briefly led his party in a boycott of the cabinet last October citing frustrations in implementing the unity pact.

Addressing journalists after a meeting of his party's top executives, Tsvangirai accused Mugabe of breaching the power-sharing agreement and the constitution in making senior government positions without consulting him.

But he said he would not quit the unity government.

"We will refuse to recognise any of the appointments which the president has made illegally and unconstitutionally over the past 18 months," Tsvangirai said.

The disputed appointments include the central bank governor, attorney general, five High Court and Supreme Court judges, six ambassadors, the police service commission and 10 provincial governors, who were re-appointed last week.

Despite the seniority of the disputed appointments, analysts said the move was largely symbolic and would not effect the operations of the unity government, which has helped stabilise an economy hit by hyperinflation around two years ago.

Tsvangirai appealed to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional bloc, which brokered Zimbabwe's power-sharing pact and is mediating in conflict between the coalition partners, to intervene in the latest stand-off.

"It is nothing short of a constitutional crisis, which is why I have urged SADC to intervene as a matter of urgency," Tsvangirai said.

Mugabe's ZANU-PF party was not immediately available for comment.

The two parties have also been wrangling over sanctions imposed by Western governments on Mugabe and his inner circle as well as the president's refusal to appoint farmer Roy Bennett, a senior Tsvangirai ally who was recently acquitted of treason, as deputy Minister of Agriculture.

"He (Mugabe) confirmed to me and Mutambara on Monday that he has no intention of ever swearing in Roy. The matter of Roy Bennett has now become a personal vendetta and part of a racist agenda," Tsvangirai said.

Zimbabwe PM slams Mugabe 'betrayal'

(Times Live)

07 October 2010

Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai Thursday voiced his "disgust" with President Robert Mugabe's unilateral decision-making in their power-sharing government, calling it a "betrayal".

Tsvangirai said that events over the past few months have left him “disappointed in Mugabe, and his betrayal of the confidence that I and many Zimbabweans have personally invested in him.” The prime minister condemned Mugabe for acting autocratically in appointing officials to the government that the two longtime rivals formed in February 2009 in the wake of violent and disputed elections.

Tsvangirai said his party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), has resolved not to recognise the appointment of the reserve bank governor, the attorney general, five judges appointed in May, six ambassadors named in July and the police service commission.

“We will refuse to recognise any of the appointments which the president has made illegally and unconstitutionally over the last 18 months,” he said.

He also condemned Mugabe, who has ruled Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, for unilaterally reappointing disputed provincial governors over the weekend.

“To my utter surprise, and shall I say disgust, Mugabe advised me on Monday that he had... reappointed the former governors in the same manner he appointed the previous governors,” Tsvangirai said.

He also slammed Mugabe’s refusal to swear in Roy Bennett, the prime minister’s pick for the post of deputy agriculture minister.

Bennett, a white farmer who was tried earlier this year on charges of plotting to overthrow Mugabe, was found not guilty.

“The matter of Roy Bennett has now become a personal vendetta and part of a racist agenda,” Tsvangirai said.

“Roy Bennett was acquitted on May 10, but again, Mugabe has gone back on his word. He confirmed to me... on Monday that he has no intention of ever swearing in Roy.” Friction over key appointments has characterised the compromise government since it was formed, but the political climate has deteriorated further in recent weeks.

Members of Mugabe’s ZANU-PF party last month attacked public meetings on the drafting of a new constitution. The MDC says a Tsvangirai supporter was killed in the violence.

“As we have seen so many times, ZANU-PF is determined to tell citizens what they should think, and to intimidate, bully and beat up any who disagree,” Tsvangirai said.

“This goes against the fundamental principles of democracy, and is utterly abhorrent to me.” Under the power-sharing deal, public meetings on a new constitution were supposed to end last month, leading to a referendum that would pave the way to new elections.

But the process has been delayed by violence, a shortage of funds and disagreements within the power-sharing government.

Politics

Zimbabwe's Unity Government in Trouble

(Voice of America)

08 October 2010

Zimbabwe's power-sharing government is in crisis as Movement for Democratic Change leader, and prime minister in the government of national unity, or GNU, Morgan Tsvangirai says President Robert Mugabe has broken the constitution by unilaterally appointing senior public servants. And experts warn that the military and security establishment in Zimbabwe has too much control over the political process.

Mr. Tsvangirai said Thursday that he learned at a meeting with Mr. Mugabe earlier this week that ZANU-PF members had been appointed as provincial governors. He said these appointments were both illegal and unconstitutional. In terms of the two year old global political agreements any public service appointments must be made in consultation with Mr. Tsvangirai.

"My party's national executive has today resolved that we must make a stand to protect the constitution of Zimbabwe and to return it to custodianship of the citizens of this country," said Prime Minister Tsvangirai. "As the first step we will refuse to recognize any of the appointments which President Robert Mugabe has illegally and unconstitutionally made over the past 18 months."

The political agreement was guaranteed by South Africa and the regional group, the Southern African Development Community, or SADC.

"I now call upon President Mugabe to return this country to constitutional rule by correcting the unlawful appointments. I invite SADC to work urgently for a return to constitutional government," said Mr. Tsvangirai.

So, far, there has been no reaction from Mr. Mugabe regarding Mr. Tsvangirai's comments.

Mr. Tsvangirai said he had taken considerable political risk by signing the political agreement and entering into a government of national unity with unreliable partners, Mr. Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

Political analyst Brian Raftopoulos says that progress in fulfilment of the global political agreement, which is the foundation for the inclusive government, was controlled by the Zimbabwe military.

"For the moment there is a sense of exhaustion about how you come up against a regime like this which has the monopoly of force and is not shy to use it when necessary," said Raftopoulos.

He said military control of Zimbabwe was a major concern and there was no easy way out of the impasse.

"We are up against a regime, a military, and in a region which is not prepared to take any steps," he said. "Outside intervention is out of the question. It would not resolve the issue."

The global political agreement was signed nearly six months after Mr. Mugabe, and his ZANU-PF party, lost elections on in March, 2008. About 200 of Mr. Tsvangirai's supporters were killed after he easily beat Mr. Mugabe in the first round of the presidential poll. He withdrew from the second round saying it was the only way to prevent further deaths.

Ibbo Mandaza, a Zimbabwe political commentator says the major disappointment for Zimbabweans was that neither South Africa nor SADC had been able to persuade Mr. Mugabe to respect the outcome of those elections.

"The expectation was that SADC and South Africa would ensure the ballot was respected, on the contrary it was not respected," said Mandaza. "Many Zimbabweans feel that the whole GPA [Global Political Agreement] process was to batter the MDC into a GNU [government of national unity] even though they had won."

He also said that the military and security establishment in Zimbabwe would not allow the inclusive government to make any progress if that diluted ZANU-PF's state power.

"The securocrats are saying we are the core of the state, we are the custodians," he said.

Both Mandaza and Raftopoulos said as the military remained effectively in control in Zimbabwe new elections were not possible in the short term.

Zimbabwe's MDC Party Said to be Too Weak

(Voice of America)

07 October 2010

The deputy chairman of the National Constitutional Assembly in South Africa's capital, Pretoria said Zimbabwe's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is in an unenviable position in the unity government after Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai expressed disappointment in President Robert Mugabe.

George Mkwanzani said the MDC party is behaving like a trapped animal unable to untangle itself from its predicament.

“They (MDC) still see some relevance for them to continue inside but, they still continue to be humiliated and embarrassed by Mr. Robert Mugabe within the unity government. So, they don’t know what to do. They would want to walk out, but they see all the ghastly probabilities of the kind of horror that was experienced before the unity government.”

Mkwanzani also said that despite the condemnation, the MDC is still operating as a partner in the unity government.

Prime Minister Tsvangirai Thursday accused Mr. Mugabe of unilaterally appointing officials into the unity government which he said flouts the Global Political Agreement that led to the formation of the current administration.

Recently, President Mugabe single handedly appointed the reserve bank governor, the attorney general, five judges, six ambassadors and the police service commission without any input from the MDC.

Mr. Tsvangirai vowed that his party will not recognize what he described as Mr. Mugabe’s autocratic appointments.

Mkwanzani said embattled President Mugabe keeps having his way in the unity government despite protests from the MDC.

“It’s an important decision or protest on the part of MDC but it will not mean anything to ZANU-PF, once they have deployed their cadres to take up positions in those areas. They will continue to do the job according to the instructions of their employer, in this case Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF. So, MDC can only complain and complain, but that won’t create any difference.”

Zimbabwe PM Tsvangirai Sharply Criticizes President Mugabe Over Appointments

(Voice of America)

07 October 2010

Zimbabwean Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai on Thursday lashed out at President Robert Mugabe, accusing his governing partner of violating the constitution by making unilateral appointments to top posts and warning that his Movement for Democratic Change would protect the constitution by disregarding such appointments.

Mr. Tsvangirai's comments, some of the most bitter he has directed at Mr. Mugabe during the past 20 months of an uneasy power-sharing government put in place following failed national elections in 2008, came as the constitutional revision process intended to lead to new elections appeared to be foundering on familiar political shoals.

Mr. Tsvangirai deplored the violent disruption of constitutional revision public comment sessions in Harare and around the country by militants of Mr. Mugabe's former ruling

ZANU-PF party. Observers and civil society monitors have for months reported intimidation of the public by ZANU-PF activists promoting the party's constitutional views.

The prime minister said he and his formation of the former opposition Movement for Democratic Change would no longer recognize Mr. Mugabe's appointments of provincial governors, judges and other top posts - including the late-2008 appointments of Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono and Attorney General Johannes Tomana.

"I was prepared to work with Mr Mugabe to allow him to address the mistakes of the past, and to help him to rebuild his legacy This is why, despite the challenges that I have faced in working with him, I have repeatedly said that whilst our relationship was not perfect, it was workable," Mr. Tsvangirai told reporters in Harare.

"This was meant to encourage Mr Mugabe to right the wrongs of the past. However, the events of the past few months have left me sorely disappointed in Mr Mugabe, and in his betrayal of the confidence that I and many Zimbabweans have personally invested in him," he said.

Correspondent Irwin Chifera reported on Mr. Tsvangirai's broadside at President Mugabe.

On the troubled constitutional front, the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee known as COPAC said it is continuing with business despite harsh criticism from Mr. Tsvangirai's MDC and calls by others for its dissolution.

Lawmaker Jesse Majome, chairwoman of the panel's information and publicity subcommittee, told VOA reporter Patience Rusere that until the panel has new instructions it will carry out its original mandate

Majome said public comment sessions are being wrapped up in the provinces while meetings in Harare that were canceled amid clashes last month have been rescheduled for October 16 and 17.

The National Constitutional Assembly, a non-governmental organization that opposed the parliamentary led revision process from the start, has urged that it be shelved calling it fatally flawed.

But former student leader Promise Mkhwanazi said too much work has been done to abandon the exercise now.

Mkhwanazi, a former president of the Zimbabwe National Students Association now studying international relations in the Netherlands, said even an imperfect process is better than the negotiated constitution some now propose.

Deceased Zimbabwe Politician Leaves Instructions Declining Heroes Acre Burial

(Voice of America)

07 October 2010

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party this week declared the late Matabeleland Governor Welshman Mabhena a national hero - but his family said Thursday that he did not want to be buried in the National Heroes Acre in Harare alongside numerous ZANU-PF stalwarts because of his falling out with Mr. Mugabe nearly a decade ago.

Mabhena served as secretary general of the Zimbabwe African People's Union or ZAPU, one of the main liberation parties which was absorbed by Mr. Mugabe's ZANU after infighting in the late 1980s to form ZANU-PF.

The ZANU-PF politburo designated Mabhena a national hero late Wednesday what was called a marathon meeting.

But the Mabhena family told a delegation led by Vice President John Nkomo on Thursday that the deceased left instructions that he should not be buried at the National Heroes Acre in Harare.

Welshman Mabhena's brother Norman told VOA Studio 7 reporter Ntungamili Nkomo that the politician disapproved of President Robert Mugabe's policies and saw Heroes Acre as a ZANU-PF monument.

Political analyst Qhubani Moyo said that in declaring Mabhena a national hero, ZANU-PF hoped to burnish its appeal to residents of the Matabeleland region, where ZAPU has been revived in recent years.

Botswana's Khama softens harsh tone on Zimbabwe

(Alert Net)

05 October 2010

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 5 (Reuters) - Botswana President Ian Khama, one of Africa's most outspoken leaders critical of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, called for a lifting of sanctions to help prod the country to greater openness.

The United States and European Union imposed sanctions on state firms in Zimbabwe and travel restrictions on Mugabe and dozens of his associates nearly 10 years ago after a violent re-election campaign and at the start of often violent commercial farm seizures.

"We appeal to those who have placed sanctions to remove them in order to give motivation," Khama told reporters during a visit to South Africa.

"We also have concerns but let's remove them to demonstrate good faith and see where we go from there," Khama told journalists in Pretoria, the SAPA news agency reported.

A South African presidential spokesman verified the comments. Khama said last year the blame for political paralysis in neighbouring Zimbabwe lay with Mugabe's ZANU-PF party and raised hackles in Harare by saying new elections were the only way to break the stalemate threatening Zimbabwe's power-sharing agreement.

South Africa has called for removal of the sanctions, hoping that would help the economy of its impoverished neighbour and slow the stream of immigrants crossing into South Africa.

Khama's comments will likely strengthen the hand of Southern African leaders as they appeal for an end to the economic measures that have shaken Zimbabwe but not ended Mugabe's rule. The United States and EU have said human rights violations continue in Zimbabwe and the sanctions will remain in place.

Mugabe was forced into a power-sharing deal last year with opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai that has stabilized the economy after a decade of decline

Mugabe -- who this year told Western powers to go "to hell" over sanctions -- said in an interview with Reuters last month: "They have imposed unjustified and illegal sanctions on us. The sanctions are comparable to the military aggression in Iraq."

Economy & Energy

Zimbabwe Newspaper Reports Infighting Among Marange Diamond Zone Officials

(Voice of America)

08 October 2010

A bitter dispute has erupted among present and former members of the Zimbabwean armed forces and members of the country's police force employed by a Chinese mining firm extracting diamonds from the Marange field in the east of the country, including allegations of looting, the independent Harare newspaper Newsday reported Friday.

Newsday quoted sources as saying military and police figures are struggling for control of the operation. It said the dispute has generated bitter letters alleging the looting of "thousands of carats" of diamonds from other companies working in joint ventures with the government, including Mbada Diamonds and Canadile Mining.

Newsday said the dispute has pitted Anjin Deputy General Manager Ben Mabhenge, a retired brigadier general, against the firm's security manager, Zimbabwe Republic Police Assistant Commissioner Douglas Marekera. The letters include a reprimand by Mabhenge alleged insubordination on the part of Marekera, Newsday said.

In the communications between Mabhenge and Marekera, the policeman is alleged to have withheld information about mining operations from the manager, including rampant

looting, tampering with security fences, illegal panning and a shooting incident as well as preparations for outside inspection delegations, *Newsday* reported.

“Our presence at Anjin (should) cease to be a bossing contest,” *Newsday* quoted the retired general as writing in a letter dated September 17. “The dynamics of a revolutionary process dictate that the revolutionary tree sheds dry leaves, discards them, for the sake of (the) trunk,” he said. “This is where we are.”

Newsday quoted Anjin insiders as saying the dispute stemmed from animosity between police officials on the one hand and active or retired military officials with high connections in President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party.

Newsday quoted Mabhenge as saying the assignment of police and other active security personnel to Anjin was to allow “broader latitude for debriefing” higher-ups, but said he doubted such officials would back Marekera.

VOA was unable to reach Mabhenge or Marekera for comment on the *Newsday* report.

Harare-based political commentator Charles Mangongera told VOA Studio 7 reporter Sandra Nyaira that the dispute reveals how mineral resources in Marange are being looted for the benefit of a few.

World Bank Not Yet Ready To Fully Engage Zimbabwe Government – Official

(Voice of America)

08 October 2010

The World Bank says it is not yet ready to fully re-engage Zimbabwe though it may provide nearly US\$3 million to help rehabilitate the Southern African country's failing water and sanitation infrastructure.

World Bank Zimbabwe Manager Peter Nicholas told reporters in Washington on Thursday that the institution cannot start funding major projects in Zimbabwe until it catches up arrears on its outstanding debt of US\$600 million.

Sources present at the briefing quoted Nicholas as saying US\$2.7 million has been set aside for water and sanitation projects which are awaiting World Bank final approval.

His remarks came as Finance Minister Tendai Biti and Economic Planning Minister Tapiwa Mashakada met with a range of US and multilateral officials in Washington seeking funding for their strapped government. Western governments for the most part have declined to provide development assistance pending broader human rights and other reforms.

Economist Godfrey Kanyenze told VOA Studio 7 reporter Gibbs Dube that Zimbabwe cannot access funds for major programs unless it clears arrears on its external debt of some US\$6.7 billion.

Economic commentator Bekithemba Mhlanga said Biti and Mashakada will probably go home empty-handed.

Zimbabwe FM Tendai Biti in Appeal to US, International Financial Institutions

(Voice of America)

07 October 2010

Zimbabwean Finance Minister Tendai Biti and Economic Planning Minister Tapiwa Mashakada were set to meet with US and top international financial officials in Washington Thursday seeking development aid and debt relief.

US and World Bank officials said they would also ask Biti for a progress report on democratic reforms, the stalemate in the Harare power-sharing government and the troubled constitutional revision process.

The United States and Europe have withheld major development aid - and private investors have withheld capital - pending convincing evidence that Zimbabwe has turned the corner on human rights and the rule of law.

But Biti told VOA Studio 7 reporter Blessing Zulu that he is confident the World Bank will help Zimbabwe.

Meanwhile, signaling mounting economic distress at home, Harare political sources said the Cabinet asked Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai last week to go to Beijing to seek Chinese investment, but he declined to go.

Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara, tasked with the trek to Beijing, said in an interview about his mission that China represents the economic future.

Beleaguered Zimbabwean Businesses Snub State Survey of Economic Conditions

(Voice of America)

06 October 2010

The head of the Zimbabwe Statistical Agency said his agency has tried to survey businesses about the economic environment but many firms did not respond to questionnaires sent in the first quarter of this year.

ZimStats Acting Director Moffat Nyoni said more than half the companies sent the questionnaire didn't return it, and acknowledged the agency should have given companies more advance notice to encourage their participation.

ZimStats wanted companies to provide intelligence on business trends, industrial production, manufacturing volumes, employment and their use of information and

communication technology. Though some firms responded, the information ZimStats received was not complete enough to provide a snapshot of the economy.

Comprehensive survey results would have helped businesses, government agencies, foreign investors and international organizations make a broad range of economic and financial decisions, Nyoni said.

Matabeleland Chamber of Industries Chairwoman Ruth Labode told VOA Studio 7 reporter Gibbs Dube that most companies did not respond to the ZimStats survey because the questionnaires were too complicated.

Economic commentator Rejoice Ngwenya said ZimStats should be using the Internet and social media to conduct its surveys. "Most businesses prefer using fast means of responding to questionnaires and as such ZimStats has to ensure that they effectively use the Internet to conduct their surveys," he said.

The predecessor organization to ZimStats, the Central Statistical Office, stopped conducting key economic surveys in 2005 and eventually even stopped issuing data on consumer prices as hyperinflation ran out of control.

The ZimStats survey effort is funded by the Harare government and the African Development Bank.

Zimbabwe Finance Minister Biti Seeks US Help on Shortage of USD Bills & Coin

(Voice of America)

06 October 2010

Zimbabwean Finance Minister Tendai Biti, in Washington this week, will seek U.S. assistance in securing a supply of small-denomination American banknotes and coins to ease everyday transactions in the country.

Biti and Economic Planning Minister Tapiwa Mashakada will also be holding broader talks with U.S., International Monetary Fund and World Bank officials seeking further steps toward normal financial ties, Biti said.

Zimbabwe adopted a mixed hard-currency monetary regime using the U.S. dollar and other currencies including the South African rand and Botswana pula in early 2009 by time the Zimbabwe dollar had lost all value following years of accelerating hyperinflation. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe had flooded the market with Zimbabwe dollar bills of ever larger denominations, debasing the currency such that ordinary commodities went for billions.

But U.S. bills and coins are in short supply and those in circulation have become so worn and filthy that Zimbabweans have taken to laundering them and hanging them out to dry before attempting to spend them.

U.S. economist and monetary policy expert Steve Hanke said the Zimbabwean government could readily purchase American currency and coins on the open market, but may not find Washington receptive to supplying them.

International relations expert Innocent Sithole agreed U.S. concessions may not be forthcoming.

The U.S. State Department recently rebuffed a Harare ministerial delegation asking for a review of American travel and financial sanctions targeting President Robert Mugabe and more than 200 members of his inner circle. The U.S. officials said members of Mr. Mugabe's ZANU-PF party have continued to violate human rights.

Human Rights, Social Issues & Developments

Desmond Tutu Retires From Public Life

(Voice of America)

06 October 2010

Desmond Tutu fought apartheid in South Africa, and was critical of the war in Iraq.

"We waged a war that shouldn't have happened," he said. He also spoke out against genocide in Rwanda. "God have mercy on us," he said.

The retired Anglican archbishop announced in July that he would retire from public life on his birthday.

"The time has come to slow down, and sip maybe rooibos tea with my beloved wife in the afternoons" he said.

Tutu rose through the ranks of the Anglican church in South Africa to become the first black Anglican archbishop of Capetown.

He was a vocal critic of South Africa's white-ruled government and encouraged non-violence to end apartheid.

Tutu was the recipient of many awards, and in 1984, he received a Nobel Peace Prize for advocating "a democratic and just society without racial divisions." He used the recognition to step up the anti-apartheid campaign, calling for an economic boycott against South Africa.

After the end of apartheid, Tutu called it an incredible day when Nelson Mandela won South Africa's first all-race elections.

"I would say the highest point for me was when I stood on the balcony in 1994 to introduce our new, brand new president to South Africa and the world," he said.

To help mend the nation, President Mandela appointed Tutu as head of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The group issued a report that included numerous confessions of guilt under apartheid in return for amnesty.

"It makes specific proposals on how we can cultivate a culture of human rights and of structures to insure that the atrocities of the past will not reoccur," Tutu said.

Tutu also campaigned to fight poverty and AIDS. In recent years, he expressed his disappointment in post-apartheid South Africa, especially the level of violent crime.

Despite his withdrawal from public life, Tutu says he will continue to support his peace foundation and will remain part of a group of elder statesmen who campaign for peace and human rights.

But Tutu says he will no longer give interviews and, as he put it, will mostly "shut up."

"I have been part of our struggle for freedom and democracy, and I am part of the celebration that we did succeed," he said. "I have been part of the post apartheid dispensation and long for us to do infinitely better."

Many say his voice will be missed.

Ignoring Patriarchy, Female Politicians Rise

(IPS)

07 October 2010

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 7 (IPS) - In Malawi, if both a girl and boy are born into a poor family, it will naturally be the boy in whom all the financial resources are invested.

"Money for school will be given to the boy child," said Victor Maulidi, the acting network coordinator for the NGO Gender Coordinating Network. "The girl child will stay home. They won't expect (her) to go higher."

It is this general treatment of women from birth that has partially been a hindering factor when it comes to women's participation in politics in the country.

While in Malawi civil society is driving an effort to get female candidates into office, regardless of their political party, there still remain obstacles.

This is despite the existence of the 50/50 programme: a campaign which aims to meet the Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development, which commits countries to work towards the goal of having 50 percent women in political and decision-making positions by 2015.

With assistance from the 50/50 campaign, a significant number of female politicians were successful in the country's 2009 presidential elections. Of the 237 female candidates who ran, 38 were elected to office, resulting in a total of 43 female MPs nationwide, according to Maulidi.

"It was a good result. The percentage of women jumped from 14 to 22 percent," Maulidi said. "Though we didn't get the number we wanted, people now want to talk to us."

But to get there, female candidates had to overcome several hurdles on their way to candidacy, Maulidi said. This included a lack of money, isolation from the economic system, and an environment hostile to their candidacy.

"Women are denied economic rights and politics is very commercialised," Maulidi said of the situation in Malawi. "The hostile environment in which they operate doesn't give them a lot of support."

The reaction from political parties to the female candidates was mixed, Maulidi said, with some accepting the female candidates and others reacting coolly. Money for the candidates was a major problem, despite a one million dollar donation to the program from the Norwegian government, Maulidi said.

The object now is for the female MPs to perform well, earn their re-election and bring the parliament to the 50/50 ratio, he said.

"The challenge is if the current women are going to perform? People will vote for them if they perform well," Maulidi said.

Further south, South Africa boasts 45 percent of women parliamentarians, ranking it third in the world in terms of representation just behind Rwanda (56 percent) and Sweden (47 percent).

But according to Nana Ngobese, the president and founder of the little-known political party Women Forward, the country still faces challenges when it comes to recognising women politicians and women's issues.

Ngobese started Women Forward in 2008, with the explicit goal of pushing women's issues in parliament. She said she feels that Jacob Zuma's presidency has failed to advocate for women's rights, even though his party does consistently appoint women as parliamentarians.

Ngobese said she would work with all female representatives if elected to parliament, and advocate for issues such as gender violence prevention and access to education. But she could not say precisely what sort of measures she would propose.

"I'm not quite sure of the legal system yet," Ngobese said. "(But) I more want to get younger men to understand that gender equality will achieve a lot."

Though her party only campaigned in three of South Africa's nine provinces, Ngobese said Women Forward garnered approximately 10,000 votes in the 2009 presidential election, short of the about 40,000 necessary to get a seat in parliament.

While political affiliation in South Africa can be a touchy subject, Ngobese said her platform was well-received on the campaign trail.

"Our stance was less threatening than other parties," Ngobese said.

While the big political happenings in South Africa tend to take place in the country's sprawling metropolises, Jozini, a poor municipality in KwaZulu Natal, is making its own contribution. Since 2000, Thembeni Madlopha-Mthethwa has served as Jozini's mayor, the first woman to head the city.

"It was initially challenging for the community," Madlopha-Mthethwa said. "Most people weren't used to female leadership, but they ended up accepting me."

Jozini's population of 200,000 is 99 percent black, and predominantly Zulu, Madlopha-Mthethwa said. Voters there lean towards supporting the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), a Zulu-nationalist party of which Madlopha-Mthethwa is a member.

From the start, Madlopha-Mthethwa said her politicking defied the country's male-dominated political and social order.

Madlopha-Mthethwa said she discovered her knack for leadership when she was appointed principal of her local high school. In 1996 she became a local councillor in the area and finally in 2000 was elected as the city's mayor.

"If you try to infiltrate a new culture, it's challenging,"

But Madlopha-Mthethwa said her good relationship with her party has allowed her a role as a recruiter of female politicians. The IFP has drawn up a database of female party members who will be invited for training in running in council and parliamentary elections, Madlopha-Mthethwa said.

"There is no patriarchal system per se, it is just a conception that people have that men block women from politics. Politics is a harsh field even for men to break through," she said.

"The problem is with women being given the confidence and support to enter political frames. If more women are trained then they will be more women entering the political realms."

South Africa and Malawi will both return to the polls in 2014 for another presidential election, and civil society in both countries expects these elections to bring further female candidates into the parliamentary fold.

When asked if she expects her party to obtain a seat in parliament in 2014, Ngobese was optimistic.

"Not just one," Ngobese said. "I expect more than one."

Environmental Issues

Richer Soil First Defence Against Climate Change

(IPS)

06 October 2010

MCHINJI DISTRICT, Malawi, Oct 6 (IPS) - Malawi has directed local government officials to develop local response strategies to the effects of climate change.

In September, the country's Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Anna Kachikho, called on district commissioners, who are the chief executives in charge of district assemblies, to develop local response strategies against climate change.

"Rural communities feel the effects of climate change more than anyone else and we need to assist them to adapt," said Kachikho. She cited drought, erratic rains and floods as some of the effects of climate change that are on the increase in the Southern African country.

The Mchinji district, on the border with Zambia, has long been thought of as the country's breadbasket. Smallholder farmers in this area have for many years produced bumper yields of maize, the country's staple food, making a decent living from sales of their surplus across the country.

Almost every household in Mchinji has a field and the district still managed to produce a good yield while other areas in this southern African country were suffering drought conditions in the 1990s.

But in recent times, Mchinji's yields have started declining even as a government agriculture subsidy programme has boosted overall maize production in the country.

Lizbet Chagunda from Kochilira Village says the district is losing its stance as a major provider of maize.

"We have noticed a decline in the soil fertility and also erratic rainfall patterns which are not very conducive to maize production," the farmer told IPS. "Many of us are failing to

produce enough last the whole year for our own families and we are no longer able to sell the grain to people from other districts."

Chagunda, 37, who is married with five children and has been farming since she was 17, said the decline in yields has been noticeable over the past six years.

"My family has been cultivating on the same plot for a very long time. In 2004, I harvested up to 120 bags of maize but the yield has been reducing since. I managed to cultivate just 79 bags in the last growing season. The harvest keeps reducing every passing year," worried Chagunda.

The decline is all the more worrying in light of increased access to quality seed and fertiliser under Malawi's input subsidy programme.

The fertiliser and seed subsidy programme, introduced in Malawi in 2004, is targeted towards small-holder farmers who cannot afford to buy farm inputs at the normal market price. The beneficiaries receive two coupons – one for improved seed and the other for fertiliser at a subsidised rate.

But not everyone in Mchinji qualifies to benefit from the subsidy programme which is targeted towards poor farmers. Most farmers in the district are perceived to be well-off because they have been able to have surplus yield.

With guidance from government extension workers, Mchinji's farmers have adopted a range of strategies to adapt to the situation, including irrigation and boosting soil fertility with compost instead of chemical fertiliser.

Soil degradation accelerated by an increase in average temperatures and frequent floods is an important part of the problem, according to the Foundation for Irrigation for Sustainable Development (FISD), a non-governmental organisation working with small-holder farmers.

"We are promoting the use of compost among farmers as one of the adaptation methods against the effects of climate change," FISD director Moses Chirambo told IPS. His organisation is working alongside agricultural extension workers across the country to support the rural population which depends on agriculture for a livelihood.

Up to 60 percent of Malawi's 13.1 million population live below the poverty line of \$1 per day, according to the United Nations. Sixty-five percent of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihoods.

Chirambo explained that compost does not cost much as it is made cheaply from what could "ordinarily be seen as rubbish" such as grass, dry leaves, plant stalks, animal waste, soil and water.

"All these things are left to decompose for a number of months and farmers use the mixture to boost the fertility of the soil in their fields. If at all, it is only time that is consumed in the production of compost but even then the farmers are able to do some other chores such as clearing their fields while waiting for the manure to be ready," said Chirambo.

He said compost is more useful than chemical fertiliser now that the rains are becoming more erratic, also due to climate change, because the manure helps the soil to preserve water. "Compost has water in it and it transfers that water into the soil once it is applied," explained Chirambo.

Water harvesting and irrigation also form part of the strategy being promoted by FISS as an adaptation method against climate change, local farmers in many districts have since benefited from FISS's initiatives.

The farmers, according to Chirambo, are encouraged to store water in dams for use during drought and the water. When the streams are running, the farmers are encouraged to use stream water.

FISS is also teaching farmers to use spiral pumps, which harness the energy in a stream or canal's flow to pump water. "These pumps are cheaper as they do not require energy from humans or machines," explained Chirambo.

Ben Chilanga, a farmer with seven children who also from Kochilira in Mchinji uses compost in his field where, apart from growing maize and beans, he also grows tobacco, Malawi's main foreign exchange earner.

Chilanga's eight-hectare farm puts him in an awkward position; the size of his plot disqualifies him for the national input subsidy programme, but he cannot afford to buy fertiliser at market prices.

"Fertiliser is very expensive. I cannot afford it but I am still able to produce bumper yields because I use manure which does not cost me anything," said Chilanga.

At the United Nations climate change conference in Denmark in December 2009, Africa's demands for significant funding to counter the effects of global warming were not met. The Copenhagen Accord included a fast-track adaptation fund far smaller than set out by the unified African position.

Regardless of what comes out of the next round of negotiations in Mexico, adaptation strategies that rely on local resources will be an important part of safeguarding the livelihoods of African farmers.

Food Security & Health Issues

UN backs initiative to reduce child and maternal deaths in Zimbabwe

(Voice of America)

08 October 2010

In an effort to curb child and maternal mortality rates in Zimbabwe, the United Nations and the World Bank are supporting a \$700 million Government initiative to increase spending on the provision of health services in the country over the next three years.

The aim of the health investment plan, backed by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, is to cut child mortality rates by 38 per cent and reduce maternal mortality rates by 17 per cent, according to Marixie Mercado, UNICEF's spokesperson in Geneva.

The initiative was prompted by the recognition that child and maternal health in Zimbabwe have worsened over the past decade, as the country's health care system deteriorated, Ms. Mercado said.

An estimated 100 Zimbabwean children die each day from mainly preventable causes and about 35 per cent of children are stunted. Health care workers and medical supplies are insufficient or unaffordable where available, in a country where more than 80 per cent of working age population is unemployed.

The plan is intended to raise investments in health from the current \$9 per person to the \$44 per person recommended by WHO.

Free Maternal and Child Care Needed From Government

(IPS)

08 October 2010

BULAWAYO, Oct 8 (IPS) - Mother-to-be Agnes Ncube budgets up to 100 dollars each month from her informal roadside business just so she can pay for the maternal services at her local government clinic.

Ncube usually pays a maximum of 20 dollars for each consultation, depending on the service. But sometimes there are other costs that emerge, such a referral – usually to a private doctor – where she has to pay cash upfront for a consultation.

Even though the City Council Clinic is a government facility, Ncube has to pay for each consultation because currently the Zimbabwean government does not provide free maternal care. This is because the money is needed to resuscitate a health care system that has been dysfunctional after years of under investment and massive staff exodus.

"I think maternal services should be provided freely for unemployed mothers-to-be," Ncube said. "At times it is difficult to meet the cost of such services when you do not have a job and depend on selling tomatoes or some informal trade."

Bulawayo's government clinics charge a fee of about 83 dollars, a figure many expecting mothers can ill afford. These costs have been attributed to one of the contributing factors to the country's high maternal mortality rates. According to the Zimbabwe Maternal and Prenatal Mortality Study of 2006, the country has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality estimated to be 725 deaths per 100 000 live births.

"The cost for maternal care is not affordable to many. And many women opt to give birth at home and often there are complications, some fatal, especially when they have no assistance," Siphwe Ndlovu, a midwife, told IPS.

But the ministry of health and child welfare hopes to save the failing system and, most importantly, to curb child and maternal mortality rates.

On Oct. 8 the Zimbabwe government revealed the 'Zimbabwe Health Sector Investment Case (2010 – 2012): Accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals' which outlines plans designed to: provide access to health services to the poorest citizens; ensure safe motherhood; and save lives.

The report launched by the Deputy Prime Minister, Thokozani Khuphe, outlines the 700 million dollar investment needed for Zimbabwe to meet the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those on reducing child mortality and improving maternal health. The investment plan is backed by the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organisation.

In the last decade as Zimbabwe witnessed a dramatic decline in primary health care services it led to a striking increase in maternal and child mortality. Currently one in three children are stunted, 100 children die daily due to easily preventable diseases while maternal mortality is more than double what it was in 1990.

According to the ministry of health and child welfare, the costs of health care are shifting to the end user as health institutions struggle to survive, keeping even the most basic services out of reach of the poorest people. For example, to deliver a baby in an urban public facility costs between 10 and 50 dollars.

The percentage of deliveries attended by trained medical personnel has declined over the last 10 years. And the poorest mothers are the ones who bear the brunt of this. The number of trained medical personnel attending births of poor women has dropped by 30 percent.

This, the ministry said, has directly contributed to the increase in maternal deaths as many poor rural women, unable to afford the government clinic fees, end up delivering at home. This has put them at risk of death and other serious complications.

Preliminary estimates indicate that 20 million dollars will be urgently required per annum to abolish user fees.

"The Inclusive Government of Zimbabwe has committed that by the end of 2011, no pregnant woman or child under five will be deprived of their right to health care because they cannot afford the fees," said Khupe at the launch of the investment report in Harare.

"To realise this commitment, it is urgent that we succeed in making the necessary financial investments to build a comprehensive public health system that can cater for everyone."

Meanwhile, many pregnant women are forced to attend private centres like Dr. Barbara Sibanda's maternal care centre. Sibanda's Kings Maternity Home has full nursing and medical care staff and is seen to be cheaper than private hospitals and an alternative to government facilities, which often have poor services.

Situated in the heart of Bulawayo, the centre is a bustle of activity as expecting mothers come in for scheduled appointments or to enquire about the cost of services. Some come back, others never return.

While most of the up to 15 expecting mothers who use the maternal care home are working or have a steady income, some can barely afford the service. Sibanda is worried that the number of women who cannot pay for maternal services is on the rise, she has experienced it firsthand.

"I consider our rates for pre and maternal care to be among the cheapest in town but we have seen a trend where up to 50 percent of our clients often have serious difficulties paying the fees," Sibanda, explained to IPS. "At times some will pay the 10 dollar monthly consultation fee and face difficulties in paying the post natal fees opting to pay in instalments."

The Minister of Health and Child Welfare Dr. Henry Madzorera said the Health Investment Case has assisted his department to identify areas of urgent need and to further strengthen and effectively coordinate channels of funding.

Militancy

S. Africa charges Nigeria militant Okah over bombing

(Alert Net)

04 October 2010

JOHANNESBURG/ABUJA, Oct 4 (Reuters) - South African prosecutors brought terrorism charges against Nigerian militant leader Henry Okah on Monday for deadly bomb blasts in the Nigerian capital.

Two car bombs exploded near a parade in Abuja marking Nigeria's 50th anniversary of independence on Friday, killing at least 10 people and injuring 36, according to police.

Prosecutors at a court in Johannesburg charged Okah, who lives in South Africa, with conspiracy to commit a terrorist act and the detonation of explosive devices in Abuja. His lawyer denied his involvement.

"The accused is linked to the bombing that took place in Abuja," said Hein Louw, the magistrate overseeing the court proceeding.

The attacks were claimed by Nigeria's main militant group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

Security experts believe Okah -- who accepted a government amnesty last year after gun-running and treason charges against him were dropped -- was at one time the brains behind MEND, although he has denied ever being its leader.

Nigeria's secret service said it had made nine arrests.

"They all have direct links with Henry Okah, the incident and some unscrupulous prominent elements in society," Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) spokeswoman Marilyn Ogar told a news conference in Abuja.

She said the SSS had foiled a larger plot to detonate at least six car bombs in the "three-arm zone" made up of the presidential villa, parliament and the Supreme Court just days before last Friday's attacks.

"The despicable act of terrorism which eventually took place on Oct. 1 was planned for Wednesday Sept. 29 but was foiled as soon as information was received during the early hours of Sept. 28," SSS spokeswoman Marilyn Ogar told a news conference.

"The over-riding objective of the group was to scare foreign visitors from attending the 50th anniversary celebrations."

"UNPATRIOTIC ELEMENTS"

A MEND statement signed Jomo Gbomo -- the pseudonym used by the group to claim previous attacks on Nigeria's oil industry -- was emailed to media warning the area should be evacuated an hour before the Abuja bombs went off.

But Jonathan said investigations had revealed MEND members knew nothing about the attacks and they had been carried out by a small group based outside Nigeria, sponsored by "unpatriotic elements within the country".

Jonathan's special adviser on the Niger Delta, Timi Alaibe, was quoted on Sunday as saying MEND's leaders were cooperating with the government and that Okah was using the group's name.

"Everyone in the structure knows Jomo Gbomo is Henry Okah. There is no MEND sitting anywhere in any camp. It's all Henry Okah, through and through," he was quoted as saying by the This Day newspaper.

MEND carried out attacks on oilfields and pipelines in the Niger Delta, home to Africa's biggest oil and gas industry, for years until accepting an amnesty in 2009.

It has said it is fighting for a fairer share of the natural wealth for the vast wetlands region, whose villages remain mired in poverty despite five decades of crude oil extraction.

At its peak, the insecurity in the Niger Delta was costing the OPEC member nation -- which vies with Angola as Africa's biggest oil producer -- \$1 billion a month in lost revenues, according to the country's central bank.

But MEND has been severely weakened since its leaders and thousands of gunmen accepted late President Umaru Yar'Adua's amnesty offer last year and disarmed. It is unclear who is running the group now.

Nigerian militant appears in S. African court

(Alert Net)

04 October 2010

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 4 (Reuters) - Nigerian militant leader Henry Okah appeared in a Johannesburg court on Monday after he was arrested at the weekend by South African authorities for suspected links to a deadly bombing in Abuja.

A lawyer for Okah, who now lives in South Africa, has denied his involvement in the explosion of two car bombs near a parade in the capital marking Nigeria's 50th anniversary of independence on Friday, killing at least 10 people and injuring 36, according to police.

"The warrant of arrest alleges that he contravened (South Africa's) Protection of Constitutional Democracy Against Terrorist and Related Activities Act ... He totally denies any wrongdoing anywhere," his lawyer Piet du Plessis, told Reuters.

A small terrorist group based outside Nigeria and not militants from the oil-producing Niger Delta carried out last week's car bomb attacks in the capital Abuja, President Goodluck Jonathan said on Sunday.

The attacks were claimed by Nigeria's main militant group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

Security experts believe Okah -- who accepted a government amnesty last year after gun-running and treason charges against him were dropped -- was at one time the brains behind MEND, although he has denied ever being its leader.

Refugees/IDPs & Migration

South Africa Says it Will not Extend Deadline for Zimbabweans Applying for Documents

(Voice of America)

06 October 2010

The South African Home Affairs Department has said it will not extend its December 31 deadline for Zimbabweans in the country to obtain documents allowing them to legally live, work and study there.

Sources in South Africa said Home Affairs Department offices have been swamped by Zimbabweans seeking residency and other permits, some sleeping outside the offices to secure a place at the head of the line. This situation has led some to conclude that many Zimbabweans will not be able to meet the yearend deadline.

The Zimbabwean government promised to send officials from the Harare Office of the Registrar General to South Africa to provide passports to the many thousands of Zimbabweans who lack them as a basis for South African documents. But sources said the Registrar General has not yet dispatched any documentation teams across the border.

VOA tried to reach Zimbabwean Registrar General Tobaiwa Mudede, but his staff told a reporter to call back Thursday. Neither of the two co-ministers of the Zimbabwean Ministry Home Affairs could be reached for comment.

Zimbabwean diaspora activist Solomon Chikowero, chairman of the Movement for Democratic Change Veterans Activists Association in South Africa, told VOA Studio 7 reporter Jonga Kandemiiri that Harare is failing its citizens by not following through on its promise to provide passports to its nationals in South Africa.

Passport offices at home in Zimbabwe are also said to be jammed with applicants.