

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF ZIMBABWE:  
A PROPOSED STRATEGY FOR AFRICA

by Denis Worrall\*

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*While I assume full responsibility for this document, I would like to thank those persons whom I consulted for their particular knowledge or insight. This explains why the document went through 10 drafts!*

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Humanitarian crises - whether in the Middle East, Eastern Europe or Africa - don't have geographic boundaries; and what has happened and is happening in Zimbabwe is quite obviously of legitimate concern to people all over the world. The fact that the UN Security Council is planning a meeting on Zimbabwe this month reflects this concern. What is important is that African leaders, who regard Zimbabwe as primarily an African issue, should shape and lead the UN response. And that is what this proposal for the Reconstruction of Zimbabwe purports to do.

Since the March 2008 election in Zimbabwe, African and international involvement has focused on reaching some sort of political agreement between the major parties – whether as a “government of national unity” as proposed by former President Thabo Mbeki or more generally a shared power arrangement. The primary assumption underlying a political accommodation is that Zimbabwe's problems can be resolved by Zimbabwean politicians. The starting-point of the proposed strategy set out in this document is that, what in effect amounts to the reconstruction of Zimbabwe society (taken in its broadest sense), is beyond politics. In addressing that country's problems, it is essential to look beyond the present political stalemate in Harare.

### Into the Abyss

Nick Dawes, an informed and close observer of the Zimbabwe scene, recently put it like this: “Zimbabwe has been dysfunctional for a long time now, its democracy starved of oxygen, its economy driven into ruin and its people preyed upon by corrupt elite of politicians and their cronies. Since 2001 citizens have had to cope with the gradual ratcheting of oppression and of material privation, learning to cope as their salaries shrank along with their freedoms, or fleeing to South Africa, the UK or Botswana. For so long we have been saying Zimbabwe is ‘on the brink’ or ‘on the verge of collapse’. We must now acknowledge that it has tipped into the abyss, even as we watch in a kind of stunned quiescence”.

The cholera epidemic not only illustrates this but is a direct consequence of the Zimbabwe state's failure to deliver elementary services. It lays bare Zimbabwe's collapse - as Ital Rusika, executive director of the Community Group on Health, a civil society network grouping 35 national organisations, says, when asked how many people have so far died from cholera: "Zimbabwe used to have one of the best (health) surveillance systems in the region. But now phones are not working, nurses are not there, and their information systems have collapsed. It is a difficult to tell how many people have died. These are the symbols of a failed state."

Driving home the point in a most dramatic way is that, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) have called for the Zimbabwe's collapsed healthcare system to be placed under international receivership. "We recommend the entire health system - water, sanitation - be handed over to world receivership," PHR chief executive officer Frank Donaghue said. He went on to say that if the Administration in Zimbabwe refuse, the UN Security Council should compel it to allow the receivership. At the same time, the Security Council should ask the prosecutors at International Criminal Court (ICC) to start documenting evidence of human rights abuses there, including violations of the right to health, food, water and work. We don't believe that this is a view African leaders can be comfortable with. And if so, then the African Union needs to respond in a way that answers these concerns. That is what this proposal looks to achieve.

### A Failed State

The traditional international legal definition of a failed state refers primarily to the State's loss of the monopoly of physical force over its territory. In terms of this criterion, Zimbabwe clearly is not a failed state. Zimbabwe is also a sovereign country and is a member of the United Nations and other international organisations. However, the modern concept of a "failed" state includes considerations like the delivery of public services, corruption and criminality, and sharp declines in the economy. A state is found also to have "failed" where conditions of living - whether for economic or

political reasons - are so onerous as to force citizens of the state to flee the country and in effect become refugees.

Zimbabwe's failure, measured against these criteria, does not require much elaboration.

- The state has failed in all areas of social welfare - not simply health. A breakdown in elementary infrastructure - water purification and sewerage (graphically described in on-the-spot reports) - contribute to this; and a critical shortage of food compounds the situation. One NGO says cholera sufferers have difficulty in taking medicines because of the lack of water and food. Dealing with this humanitarian crisis has to be the first priority of the Africa Union and the UN. It should be guided in what it proposes by the World Health Organisation and NGO's like Oxfam and Saving the Children (UK), who are already active in Zimbabwe.
- The fact that Zimbabweans are starving is a direct consequence of the policies adopted by the Zimbabwean state.
- Again and, as a consequence of state policies, the Zimbabwean economy has steadily deteriorated. Unemployment now stands at in excess of 80% with – and this is surely critical - absolutely no likelihood of any Zimbabwean political party or combination of political parties being able to remedy the situation.
- Zimbabwe was once proud of its financial services: today, well-trained and highly competent Zimbabwean professionals can be found in countries all over the world. But with inflation over the past 12 months running to unheard of levels, the financial system has collapsed completely.
- As a result of the Zimbabwe state's failure in so many ways to deliver anything approaching a decent life for most Zimbabweans - not to mention its oppression,

control of the media, and arbitrary justice system - an estimated 5 million Zimbabweans (around half the population) today live outside of the country.

- In all of this there is a breakdown in Zimbabwe's infrastructure.

There is therefore no question that Zimbabwe is a "failed" state. But the stark and undeniable reality is that Zimbabwe and its citizens by themselves are simply not in a position to turn the situation around. This can only be done - and then only with immense imagination, skill, vision and significant funding – with direct help from the rest of Africa and the international community.

#### The Requirements of Reconstruction

With the help of the AU and knowledgeable Africans with expertise in these areas, Zimbabwe's Reconstruction requires the formulation in concrete terms of specific programmes and projects; a determination as to who is to administer the process; over what time-frames; and how the Reconstruction is to be paid for? What is required in Zimbabwe is daunting, and it is questionable whether Zimbabweans can meet these challenges without Africa's and the international community's participation. What is also critically important is whether Zimbabwean political parties – given the recent past – inspire confidence within their own divided society and the international community (both public and private sectors), whose support and participation is essential.

Given the UN's determination to address this issue, African leaders have an opportunity of putting forward a constructive strategy which is both to Zimbabwe and Africa's advantage and credit.

#### A Reconstruction Programme

Former president Mbeki, acting as negotiator on behalf of the SADC grouping of countries, understandably chose to describe the political accommodation which he hoped

to achieve as “a government of national unity”. This obviously is based on South Africa’s transformation experience, which worked: between 1990 and 1994 the main political parties served in what was described as a government of national unity (GNU). The agreed purpose of the GNU was to defuse the political situation, and create space and time for the constitutional, structural and legal changes which would transform South Africa from a white minority-dominated state to a full non-racial democratic state. And Mbeki was right in thinking that something like the South African transition was needed also in Zimbabwe. (This was embodied in the so-called Global Political Agreement (GPA) which Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara signed on 15 September 2008.) However, it is important to highlight a specifically relevant difference between the two situations. As it happened, the ANC in the election of 1994 took control of a *fully functioning state*. By contrast, the parties who will take control in Harare end up with a *failed state*. At this point the relevance of the proposed Reconstruction Programme set out in this document becomes obvious - because it is an essential part of a successful transition in Zimbabwe.

As we pointed out earlier, the African Union and the UN's first and immediate concern must be the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe - expressed in terms of medical assistance, water and food. Indeed, humanitarian concern is likely also to be the UN’s justification for addressing the Zimbabwe issue. The Reconstruction of Zimbabwe - assuming that with the support of the African Union and SADC, the Security Council is willing to endorse and promote this - must go hand in hand with the realisation of a political settlement - because the reconstruction process necessarily involves certain internal political adjustments, just as was required during South Africa’s four year GNU. In the case of Zimbabwe, we are assuming this period would be for no more than 8 – 12 months.

#### A Fresh Political Initiative

The programme proposed, particularly if supported by the AU and the SADC, and given its obvious and huge benefits to the Zimbabwe people, will undoubtedly enjoy their

support. As Elenor Sisulu, the South African representative of the largest coalition of non-governmental organisations in Zimbabwe, writes in the *Sunday Independent* of 4 January 2009: “Zimbabweans are crying out for a fresh political initiative, mediated through a non- partisan process that will focus on the transformation of institutions - the judiciary, media and the security establishment”. We believe it very unlikely that any Zimbabwean politician will oppose the kind of political adjustments which go with the proposed reconstruction programme – particularly if it is supported by the AU and SADC.

### The Reconstruction Programme

To be specific, this is what is proposed:

1. That the African Union, in consultation with the United Nations and its agencies, establish a Reconstruction Commission under the chairmanship preferably of a person from Africa who will in effect be the *Administrator* of the programme. [Names that spring to mind are Kofi Annan, former President Thabo Mbeki, former President F W de Klerk, or former President Daniel Arap Moi.]
2. The commission will include internationally-acknowledged authorities in their respective fields who as *co-ordinators* will formulate and manage suitable policies and programmes in relevant areas of government requiring assistance.
3. Aside from appropriate Zimbabwe civil servants, each coordinator will be assisted by two Zimbabwean *counsellors* (not necessarily parliamentarians themselves) elected by parliament. [Note: This provision ensures local input but it is also intended to create a basis for continuity once the Commission is deemed to have completed its assignment.]
4. The Zimbabwe constitution will be amended (on a temporary basis) so as to bring the commission into serious decision-making in respect to the relevant areas of

government to the Commission; and decisions of the Commission will be binding on all branches of government unless rejected by a two-thirds majority in the Zimbabwe parliament.

5. The representative in Zimbabwe of one of the top four auditing firms will be appointed to receive and manage the funding for the Reconstruction Programme. It would also be responsible for supervising and awarding any tenders which the Commission's work may require.

#### Relevant Government Departments Requiring Help

The following government sectors or departments of state (not in any particular order) are deemed to require the appointment of *co-ordinators*. (It should be stressed that the persons and institutions identified as possible candidates have not been approached, but are mentioned to indicate the level of involvement.)

a) Finance (including Central Bank).

Key practical financial steps which need to be taken are the following:

- abolishing exchange controls
- adopting another currency for the recovery process
- rightsizing the civil service to the tax base
- abolishing price controls
- privatizing state enterprises
- the restoration of the rule of law
- the restoration of property rights
- compensation to the victims
- reform of the police (Note: this is provided for separately)
- reform and downsizing of the army ( Note: this is provided for separately.)

Potential Co-ordinators: Dr Ipumbu Shiimi, Assistant Governor, Central Bank of Namibia; Mr Madoda Petros, Deputy Registrar, Reserve Bank of South Africa; Dr Tukiya Kankasa-Mabula, Deputy Governor, Central Bank of Zambia; James Cross, former Deputy-Governor of the Reserve Bank of South Africa.

b) Economic Affairs:

The collapse in the Zimbabwean economy has its roots in the mismanagement of both monetary and fiscal policy. Government policy toward the commercial farming sector destroyed the tax base of the country, and this was followed by monetary debasement (i.e. printing of money) in order to pay the civil service. Hyper inflation was the result.

As matters stand at the moment, the economic and policy landscape has to be completely reconstructed. The ruling party's role has deteriorated to that of a warlord. Every organ of state has been subverted to serve Zanu-PF's sole interests. The economy has been arranged to transfer resources from the productive to the connected. This has been at the centre of the collapse of the economy. These mechanisms have been designed to benefit the powerful few so that the status quo can be maintained. They have benefitted both the party and the top individuals in the party.

It is therefore essential that economic policy is driven by disinterested people so that best practice can be established once again in this sphere. The productive need to be able to keep the fruits of their labour so that economic activity can be restored. Much damage can be reversed by stopping the harm. Besides reforms, it must also be realised that Zimbabwe has lost the ability to regenerate its economy and tax through its own internal resources. The capital base has been decimated. The unavailability of foreign exchange meant that equipment has not been maintained and has become obsolete. Industry, agriculture and mining do not have the savings or resources to

restore their operations. Foreign aid will be essential but will only work in a reconstructed and reformed environment.

Potential Co-ordinators: Dr Iraj Abedian, CEO and Chief Economist, Pan African Advisory Service; Christopher Hart, Chief Economist, Investment Solutions; or Goolam Ballim, Senior Economist, Standard Bank.

c) Agriculture and Food Production.

This sector, vital to poverty alleviation and foreign exchange earnings, needs to be stabilized as quickly as possible. The starting point will be a political agreement on land ownership. In fact, there should be a massive expansion of commercial farming. In agriculture, the emphasis should first be on the revival of key industries (tobacco, sugar) by focusing on the rehabilitation of production, processing and distribution infrastructure. The focus should be in the areas where there is the greatest opportunity for fast gains, which would secure foreign exchange earnings required by the sector itself, as well as the economy as a whole. The second (and no less important) task should be to get farm inputs (seeds, fertilizers, etc) into the hands of a wider spectrum of farmers, in this case with a focus on industries that are important in poverty alleviation (e.g. maize, cotton).

Potential Co-ordinator: Steven Were Omamo, Kenyan Consultant to the International Food Policy Research Institute Derek Byerlee, World Bank; Prof. Nick Vink, Head of the Department of Agriculture, Stellenbosch University.

d) Health, Child and Social Welfare.

The general welfare situation in Zimbabwe can be gathered from the following description. Bodies are “piled up like logs” in mortuaries with nobody to pronounce people dead; hospitals are closed because they do not have water or sanitation; HIV/Aids retroviral regimes are cut short when refills are not available, increasing the threat of a regional spread of drug-resistant HIV/Aids. Medical staff cannot afford to get to work or buy food for themselves; the sick can't afford to travel to the limited

health care facilities available. Harare's main river is so contaminated with sewage that it has plants growing over its surface. The life expectancy has dropped from 62 to 36 years of age. Wells are contaminated with cholera; ageing water and sewerage pipes, installed parallel to each other, are leaking into each other, and tap water in Harare is undrinkable. Welfare payments and pensions are no longer paid. Schools are empty.

Co-ordinator: World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr Mamphela Ramphela; certain NGO's already active in Zimbabwe.

e) Infrastructure.

The concern here is especially with infrastructure relating to health, social and living standards.

Co-ordinator: Ninham Shand; EPG Consulting (Botswana). Both are consulting companies with extensive experience in sub-Saharan Africa.

f) Mining.

The Zimbabwean mining industry has all along been an important job-provider and foreign exchange earner. Apparently, most of the mining groups who are still operating have strategies in place, and given the right circumstances, they can increase production very quickly. So under appropriate circumstances, and the restoration of international investor confidence, the mining industry could be the first significant industry to start up again.

Co-ordinator: It is suggested that the coordinator for the mining industry be the international mining consultancy firm SRK Consulting. SRK has done a lot of work in Zimbabwe, knows the mining situation well, and as an international consultancy, has the necessary independence.

g) Ministry of Home Affairs (controls the Police Services).

Effective and legitimate governance of the security sector (police and army) is obviously a crucial issue in all countries but even more so in the emerging democracies of Africa. The ultimate goal is obviously to ensure that security institutions are governed according to the principles of democratic control and accountability. In this way they maintain the confidence of civil society. This clearly is not the case in Zimbabwe, where the police have become politicised in terms Zanu-PF. Changing both police practices and perceptions, and restoring public confidence will not be easy. But it is a task that must be undertaken.

Co-ordinator: Guidance in this regard should be obtained from the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland (1993-1999) under the chairmanship of Lord Patten who certainly would have ideas in this regard. Incidentally, Professor Clifford Shearing, Head of the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cape Town served on the commission and, if available would be a good point to start at.

h) State Security and Defence.

The same comments apply to Zimbabwe's army as to its police. A *transforming* Zimbabwe, through this proposed reconstruction, will need assistance in recasting its role and structures as a politically neutral factor especially given its party political role over the past 10 years or so.

Co-ordinator: Dr Naison Ngomo and The Institute for Security Studies (ISS). The ISS is a South African-based research institution with a commitment to achieving a stable and peaceful Africa characterised by sustainable development, human rights, the rule of law, democracy and collaborative security. Around 80% of the Institutes' work occurs in Sub-Saharan Africa. During 2008 the Institute was recognized as one of the top 30 think tanks in the world (outside of the USA), and the only organisation in sub-Saharan Africa to make it to the list. Important is the fact that the ISS has a specific programme in place which would be applied to Zimbabwe. Dr Naison Ngomo runs this programme.

### Timeframe and Cost

This is necessarily speculative as we don't know how the AU and UN operates and what resources are available to them. But from the point of endorsing the Reconstruction Programme, we believe that no more than six weeks would be required to formulate the terms of reference of the Commission, and finalise the appointment and terms and conditions of service of its members; and we would expect the Commission to complete its work in 8 to 12 months. (Incidentally, at this point it would be appropriate for Zimbabwe to hold another general election.) It should be stressed that the Commission's task is to identify the problem areas and offer and implement suitable responses. Put differently, the Reconstruction Commission's task is to steer Zimbabwe back to normality; restore confidence in Zimbabwe and its future among the Zimbabwean people, both living in the country and outside the country; and re-engage international business.

Regarding the costs of implementing the Reconstruction Programme, without information regarding how the AU and UN function, we are not able to make an estimate. But what we can say is that the programme's cost would be a fraction of the cost of other similar commitments. In estimating the cost of the Reconstruction Programme, it is important to distinguish between the cost of the programme on the one hand, and the funding which is needed to implement its recommended reforms on the other. The programme itself is intended to correct mistakes and failures in Zimbabwe and put it on a turnaround course. If this strategy works, and begins to demonstrate that Zimbabwe can be turned around, other funders and investors will come to the fore in supporting specific projects.

### Leadership: Inclusive or Exclusive?

As was indicated at the beginning of this document, we believe that an internal political accommodation, along the lines of the agreement between the three major parties of September 2008, could soon be implemented; and there is no doubt that this Reconstruction Programme would very considerably lessen the burden of a new

government in Harare. In propagating the programme and gaining support for it from both private and public institutions, a number of issues have arisen – most of which have been dealt with. But perhaps the most important one is: should those leaders responsible for the misery the Zimbabwean people have experienced, and experience now, and who are responsible for the virtual destruction of their country, be allowed to participate? In dealing with the question of retributive justice, Charles Villa-Vicencio and Fanie du Toit of *The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation* raise the option of whether President Mugabe and others should not be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the Hague, as was the case with Sudan. Others have taken the view that no political arrangement in Harare will be workable if Robert Mugabe is part of it.

We have considered these issues and agree with Arthur Mutambara, the leader of one the factions of Zimbabwe's *Movement for Democratic Change*. There are just three ways Mugabe can be removed: (1) By violence and arms of war; (2) By peaceful mass uprisings or demonstrations (e.g. the Orange Revolution); and (3) By free and fair elections. Neither of the first two is applicable or will work, and circumstances in Zimbabwe right now don't favour the holding of an election. So, says Mutambara, let's get on and implement the GPA agreement of 15 September 2008, with power-sharing and the transitional period. We believe this is wise counsel and we urge its adoption. Against this background, the Reconstruction Programme set out here – in all its facets – can only be a stabilising factor. Aside from the obvious economic and social benefits which it brings, the Programme will undoubtedly improve the prospects of Zimbabwe's return to full democracy.

#### Conclusion: Some General Considerations

1. This is clearly an African-driven strategy – although it is essential to recognise the contribution that the UN and its agencies can make in bringing the international community on board particularly in terms of funding and investment, and encouraging skilled Zimbabweans to return home. (In fact, the Zimbabwe Diaspora even today remits more money than foreign investors.)

2. This proposal assumes a high level of transparency in the programme and in the process of implementing it.
3. Aside from being backed by the African Union, the SADC and UN, and one assumes other relevant UN agencies, the Reconstruction Programme will undoubtedly inspire the vast majority of Zimbabweans themselves.
4. Zimbabwe is obviously a very divided society, and the programme is structured in such a way as to avoid political and factional jealousies and recriminations, etc. especially affecting the Commission and its activities during the transition period.
5. From a decision-making point of view, the Reconstruction Commission is given a measure of autonomy within the Zimbabwe government framework, so reducing the impact of conflicting party political influence on the Commission's work.
6. Aside from tackling the re-structuring of critical aspects of Zimbabwe society, the programme will provide space and time for the re-vitalisation of the political system so that it reflects the differences between the state, government and society; reinvigorate civil society, and acknowledge the importance of civil liberties, the role of an independent media and of a politically independent judiciary. This would also create a more propitious climate for a democratic general election. As pointed out earlier, the appropriate moment to call another general election would be when the Reconstruction Programme is deemed to have run its course.
7. As we indicated earlier, we believe the GPA agreement of September 2008 will be implemented perhaps even in the first quarter of 2009. This will result in a new international dynamic, with its own buzz, as African countries and the world combine to resuscitate Zimbabwe. The direct applicability of the Reconstruction Programme is obvious.

