

**Statement by
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Bureau of African Affairs
U.S. Department of State
before the**

**U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Subcommittee on African Affairs**

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Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Flake, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing on Zimbabwe. Thank you also for affording me the privilege of testifying before you about this very important country at this critical juncture. It is my honor to have this opportunity to speak with you and our other assembled guests here today about the Department of State's work in Zimbabwe. We appreciate the deep interest of this Committee in Zimbabwe over the years, and we are pleased to work closely with members of Congress in support of our national interests in Zimbabwe and the region.

After nearly five years under Zimbabwe's unity government, 2013 began as a year of promise and opportunity for Zimbabwe. In February, President Mugabe's ZANU-PF party and the MDC parties led by Morgan Tsvangirai and Welshman Ncube agreed on a draft constitution. In March, Zimbabwe held a peaceful referendum in which the Zimbabwean people overwhelmingly approved

the draft constitution and, on May 22, President Mugabe signed Zimbabwe's new constitution into law.

The June 15 communiqué issued by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) called for the parties in Zimbabwe's unity government to seek more time to complete important reforms and create a conducive environment for peaceful, credible elections. Too short a timeline would risk undermining the careful work of SADC to build a framework for peaceful, credible, transparent elections and to ensure necessary reforms are in place.

These elections present an important opportunity for Zimbabwe to improve its relationship with the United States by holding elections that are regarded as peaceful, credible, and transparent by a broad range of international observers. Former U.S. Ambassador to the UN and civil rights leader Andrew Young recently delivered a letter to President Mugabe from Secretary Kerry outlining this opportunity. As elections approach, however, reports indicate that elements within Zimbabwean political parties and government security agencies have already begun efforts to intimidate voters and illicitly shape the outcome of the elections.

This includes a troubling trend of arrests, detentions, and harassment of organizations and individuals working on human rights, electoral assistance, and related issues. The chilly reception offered to a partial UN Electoral Needs Assessment Mission (after all but one member of the delegation was denied entry

into Zimbabwe), Zimbabwean hardliners' persistence in brushing off calls for a broad range of international election observers, and ZANU-PF's insistence on the removal of all sanctions rather than recognizing good faith efforts to ease some restrictions constitute obstacles to the conditions that we feel are necessary for warming relations between the United States and Zimbabwe. Influential officials within the Zimbabwean government and the Zimbabwean defense and security sectors who benefit from the perpetuation of the status quo remain the most vocal critics of further engagement with the "West."

The Government of Zimbabwe now faces a key decision point. Zimbabwe must decide whether it will support a credible electoral process, or continue to repress its people and isolate itself from the international community. The 2011 Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Roadmap and Zimbabwe's new constitution outline key reforms focused on voter education and registration, inspection of voters' rolls, media reform, security sector reform, freedom of assembly and association. We are concerned that holding elections without providing adequate time for voter registration, inspection of voters' rolls, other needed electoral and democratic reforms – particularly reforms of the Public Order and Security Act, media reforms, and security sector reforms - will put the credibility of the outcome at risk.

The United States shares the same fundamental interest as the people of Zimbabwe: a stable, peaceful, democratic Zimbabwe that reflects the will of her people and provides for their needs. U.S. support for human rights and democracy groups contributed to the success of the long and difficult development of Zimbabwe's new constitution. The U.S. also supported Zimbabwe's progress in attaining universal coverage for antiretroviral treatment, reducing the HIV/AIDS prevalence to just under 15 percent and extending the quality and reach of Zimbabwe's health care system. U.S. development assistance in smallholder farming has improved the lives of tens of thousands of everyday Zimbabweans, and U.S. support to the quasi-governmental statistics and economic research institutions, as well as nongovernmental organizations, has fostered a more disciplined approach to evidence-based fiscal and agriculture policy development in Zimbabwe.

In May, following the peaceful and credible constitutional referendum, and as a means of demonstrating the sincerity of our intent to work toward normalizing relations should Zimbabwe make progress consolidating its democratic institutions, the Administration eased restrictions on two Zimbabwean banks – the Agricultural Development Bank of Zimbabwe and the Infrastructure Development Bank of Zimbabwe. Both remain on the Office of Foreign Assets Control's (OFAC) list of Specially Designated Nationals (SDN List), despite the issuance of

a General License by OFAC allowing Americans to conduct transactions with those banks. As part of our regular review of U.S. targeted sanctions, we also removed eight individuals and one entity designated under the Zimbabwe sanctions program from the SDN list. Some of the individuals are recently deceased, but others have left their positions in the Zimbabwean government or are now using positions of influence to effect positive change. 113 individuals and 70 entities remain sanctioned under the Zimbabwe program today.

In an effort to leverage SADC's consistent position that elections in Zimbabwe should be conducted properly rather than expediently, we in Washington and our Ambassadors in the field have been working to highlight and reinforce key U.S. policies on Zimbabwe, including strong support for SADC as the guarantor of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and creator of the roadmap charting the reforms to which the unity government has committed. The people of Zimbabwe deserve the full and complete enactment of the reforms called for in the GPA, the SADC Roadmap, and the new constitution prior to elections. An environment free of political intimidation and violence, and the inclusion of a broad range of international observers, are essential for credible elections. Led by SADC, a robust contingent of election observers would play a central role in verifying that the credibility of the upcoming election and Zimbabwe's ability to

live up to international electoral standards. The absence of local and international observers would detract from the credibility of the electoral process.

We are also profoundly troubled by the lack of transparency within the diamond sector and the possibilities for illicit diamond sales in Zimbabwe. We are concerned about ongoing reports that diamond mining entities in Zimbabwe are being exploited by people in senior government and military positions for personal gain, that revenues from those enterprises are being diverted for partisan activities that undermine democracy, and that proceeds from diamond sales are enriching a few individuals and not the Treasury and people of Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean people deserve to benefit from Zimbabwe's diamond fields and the many millions of carats (and dollars) that they likely hold.

Giving all Zimbabweans the opportunity to choose their government this year, in peaceful, credible, and transparent elections, will help ensure a democratic, prosperous future for Zimbabwe. The United States government has made it clear that we deeply respect the sovereign will of the Zimbabwean people, and that we will work with any government chosen in such elections.

We are prepared to consider steps to further roll back sanctions and expand trade and investment between our countries. However, as a necessary first step, Zimbabwe must first hold elections that are peaceful, credible, transparent, and

truly reflective of the will of the Zimbabwean people, and which are verified as such by a broad range of international observers. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak with your Committee today. I welcome any questions you may have at this time.