



Tenth Report
from the
Foreign Affairs Committee

Zimbabwe

Session 2001–2002

Response of the Secretary of State for
Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

*Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
by Command of Her Majesty
October 2002*

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**TENTH REPORT OF THE
FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
ZIMBABWE
SESSION 2001–2002**

**RESPONSE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS**

Introduction

1. The Government welcomes the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on Zimbabwe. The Government welcomes the Committee's view that the responsibility for Zimbabwe's problems rests squarely with the regime there, and agrees that only Zimbabweans themselves can decide the future of their country.
2. The Government welcomes the Committee's general endorsement of UK policy on Zimbabwe, in particular Zimbabwe's suspension from the Councils of the Commonwealth, the Government's decision to reject the outcome and management of the Presidential election in March, and the EU's decision to impose targeted sanctions against 79 senior members of the Zimbabwe regime.

Recommendations

- (a) We condemn Robert Mugabe for his role in the violent seizure of farms and for rewarding his cronies with gifts of expropriated land. We conclude that responsible land reform in Zimbabwe must include agreed compensation and must favour genuine farmers, who will contribute to Zimbabwe's prosperity. Such a programme should be funded and monitored by the international community. We recommend that the Government continue to stress this when working with its partners in Africa and elsewhere to bring about a solution to Zimbabwe's land reform crisis (paragraph 17).**

The Government has consistently said that land reform in Zimbabwe is essential. It has supported land reform since the 1980s, and contributed £44 million directly to this. It has said that it would continue financially to support a land reform programme that was transparent, fair and legal, consistent with sensible economics and designed to reduce poverty. Donors and the Zimbabwe Government agreed clear principles on this at a Land Conference in Harare in 1998. The agreement reached by Commonwealth Ministers — including Zimbabwe — at Abuja on 6 September 2001 was also consistent with these principles. The Zimbabwe regime has not honoured any of these principles or commitments, such as restoration of the rule of law. Its so-called fast track programme is chaotic, violent, unsustainable and little more than the arbitrary seizure of private property. This view is shared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A number of African governments have said that they support the principle of land reform in Zimbabwe, but not the manner in which it is being implemented.

It is also important to stress that Zimbabwe's crisis is not about land. Land is the Mugabe regime's excuse for justifying state-sponsored lawlessness against anyone who opposes it. It is important that Parliament and the public understand that the real crisis in Zimbabwe is bad governance.

- (b) We recommend that the Government pursue all appropriate means of supporting the work of independent journalists in Zimbabwe — including working through its EU and Commonwealth partners — by encouraging and enabling them to continue to report events and to stand up for democratic values (paragraph 23).**

The Government agrees that a free and independent media is a vital element in the maintenance of democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law in any country. In Zimbabwe, the independent media's freedom to report on state-encouraged violations of basic democratic rights has been systematically and deliberately undermined. The Zimbabwe regime's attacks on the independent media were influential in the EU and US decisions to impose targeted sanctions and in the Commonwealth's decision to suspend Zimbabwe from their Councils.

We will continue to condemn attacks on independent journalists. But, in the current political climate, the UK Government must think carefully before providing direct technical or financial assistance to the independent media in Zimbabwe. There is a real risk that such support could give the regime a pretext to increase attacks on the independent media.

- (c) We recommend that the Government ensure that the BBC World Service continues to have sufficient funds to maintain the quality and extent of its coverage in Zimbabwe, and better still, given the repressive nature of the Mugabe regime, to extend it further (paragraph 24).**

The Government has recently announced an increase in funding for BBCWS of £48 million over the three years 2003-06, on top of an annual baseline of £211 million. The annual grant-in-aid to BBCWS currently stands at £200 million. Operational decisions on resource allocation, given BBCWS's independence of government on editorial and programming matters, are for BBCWS on the basis of its spending bid and working within the framework of overall objectives agreed with the FCO. The FCO and BBCWS maintain constant contact over each other's respective objectives and priorities.

- (d) We conclude that the Government was entirely right to refuse to accept the result or the legitimacy of the Zimbabwe presidential election of March 2002 and we support the demand for new, free and fair elections in Zimbabwe, monitored by Commonwealth and other impartial international observers (paragraph 33).**

The Government welcomes this observation and believes that the future of democracy in Zimbabwe depends on transparent and credible elections, impartially observed.

- (e) We recommend that the Government act wherever possible to prevent misrepresentations of the United Kingdom's policies and motivations towards Zimbabwe by ensuring that it explains its policies clearly to all concerned, that it briefs the press fully and frequently, and that it counters in the strongest terms all misrepresentations of its position whenever they come to its attention (paragraph 37).**

The Government has gone to great lengths to explain its policy on Zimbabwe to the British media and Parliament. It will continue to do so. Regrettably, media reporting has often been inaccurate or focused unduly on the situation facing Zimbabwe's commercial farmers. The vast majority of the regime's victims are poor, black

Zimbabweans. Around 200 black Zimbabweans have been killed in the past 2 years. They have no voice. Few are connected to Zimbabwe's commercial farmers. Thousands of their countrymen have been tortured, beaten, harassed and raped. The real story of Zimbabwe — the systematic persecution of ordinary Zimbabweans who choose not to support the ruling party — is often ignored by sections of the media. There is a responsibility on the media itself to report the issues fully and accurately.

British diplomatic missions are actively countering Zimbabwean propaganda about UK policy, while emphasising the emergency assistance we are providing to the Zimbabwean people in the current humanitarian crisis, and explaining that the Mugabe regime's policies are largely responsible for the scale of the suffering.

(f) We conclude that it is vitally important — both on humanitarian and on foreign policy grounds — that the United Kingdom continues to provide and increase aid to the people of Zimbabwe, both bilaterally and through reputable international agencies, though not through the Government of Zimbabwe (paragraph 47).

The Government agrees that we should do all we can to minimise the impact on the Zimbabwean people. Since September 2001, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) has provided £32m in humanitarian assistance to the people of Zimbabwe. All food is being distributed through the United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP) and non-governmental organisations to those most in need. DFID staff routinely monitor these programmes. Other donors have similar mechanisms in place. We believe that international aid is reaching those in need. The same cannot be said of food being purchased and distributed by ZANU(PF).

(g) We commend the role played by the Prime Minister in helping to create the New Partnership for Africa's Development — NePAD — launched at the G8 summit in June. However, until Zimbabwe adopts good governance and begins to participate fully in NePAD, we conclude that the bilateral relationship with Zimbabwe will continue to be difficult and there are benefits to be gained from continued co-operation with other countries, in particular African members of the Commonwealth (paragraph 48).

The Government endorses the Committee's support for the Prime Minister's efforts on NePAD. NePAD is an African owned initiative, endorsed by the African Union. The G8's Africa Action Plan forms part of the international response to NePAD.

The Government agrees that the bilateral relationship will continue to deteriorate unless Zimbabwe's ruling party accepts and respects basic democratic norms. The Government also agrees that priority should be attached in its relations with African and Commonwealth countries to those which respect, uphold and implement the principles of both NePAD and the Harare Commonwealth Declaration.

(h) We conclude that the Government was right to call for Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth. We warmly welcome the Commonwealth's decision to make a suspension for the first time on grounds of violation of human rights and the Commonwealth Harare Declaration — in the past, countries have been suspended from the Commonwealth only after the unconstitutional overthrow of elected governments. We recommend that the Government continue to urge the Commonwealth to exert strong pressure on the Government of Zimbabwe to comply with the principles enshrined in the Commonwealth Harare Declaration (paragraph 51).

The Government continues to urge the Commonwealth Troika to remain engaged on Zimbabwe and exert strong pressure on the Mugabe regime. Since the FAC report was published, the Troika met to discuss Zimbabwe again on 23 September. The Commonwealth is an important element in the international community's approach to Zimbabwe. The Government believes that the credibility of the Commonwealth depends on confronting the blatant abuses of human rights and democratic principles, which breach the terms of the Harare Commonwealth Declaration. The Government also welcomes the statement on 17 August 2002 by the Pacific Forum of 11 Commonwealth countries condemning the actions of Zimbabwe's ruling party.

(i) We recommend that the government clarify at the earliest opportunity its understanding of how the provisions of the EU travel ban relate to attendance by Robert Mugabe, or others subject to the ban, at meetings of bodies established under international treaty. We further recommend that, if the Government has the power to block attempts by other member states to allow Zimbabweans subject to the ban to attend such meetings, they should use it (paragraph 57).

The basis for the EU's targeted sanctions is set out in its Common Position of 18 February as amended by its Common Position of 22 July. This states that Member States shall take the necessary measures to prevent the entry into, or transit through, their territories of the 79 Zimbabweans on the travel ban list. However, exemptions may be granted "on grounds of humanitarian need, including religious obligation, or on grounds of attending meetings of international bodies or conducting political dialogue that promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Zimbabwe." Every application is considered on a case by case basis. A Member State wishing to grant an exemption must notify the Council in writing. The exemption will be deemed to be granted unless one or more of the Council Members raises an objection in writing within 48 hours of receiving notification of the proposed exemption.

In practice, there are two types of cases: those where the EU has discretion to grant exemptions, and those where it is obliged to grant exemptions. International treaty obligations may require EU Member States to allow representatives of States to travel to, or through, their territory in order to attend meetings of some international organisations, for example, the United Nations, Interpol and the Cotonou agreements. In such cases, entry is granted on restrictive terms. In cases where the EU has discretion, such as private visits and official visits to an EU Member State, EU Member States have so far enforced the travel ban and denied banned individuals entry to their territory. The Government will continue to argue for entry to be denied in these cases, unless there are compelling reasons to grant exemptions.

(j) We recommend that the Government keep the effectiveness of sanctions against the Government of Zimbabwe under constant review and that it be prepared to seek a further extension or tightening of those sanctions when appropriate (paragraph 58).

As the Committee itself noted in its report, 52 names were added to the EU targeted sanctions on 22 July. Another 7 were added on 13 September, making the current total 79. This demonstrates that the Government and the EU are keeping sanctions under review. The Foreign Secretary has said publicly that he would not rule out a further extension of targeted sanctions.

The Government remains opposed to general economic sanctions. These would only hurt ordinary Zimbabweans. The Mugabe regime has already done enough damage to the country's economy. Its policies have inflicted worse damage than any economic sanctions.

(k) We recommend that the Government seek in the United Nations, G8 and elsewhere to persuade countries outside the European Union to impose similar sanctions to those agreed by the EU, and to build the widest possible consensus for a swift and orderly transition to democracy in Zimbabwe (paragraph 59).

The Government has been an active member of the international consensus pressing for a change of direction in Zimbabwe over the last two years. Switzerland, New Zealand and Norway have followed the EU's decisive action, announcing similar targeted sanctions on the ZANU (PF) hierarchy. The United States has imposed an extensive travel ban on large numbers of the ruling party and its supporters. On 17 August, Pacific Commonwealth leaders expressed deep concern at the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe. This demonstrates the true extent and depth of international concern on Zimbabwe, and the merits of collective action.

The UN is already closely involved in Zimbabwe through the UNDP, WHO, the World Food Programme and others. UN sanctions against Zimbabwe are not currently a realistic option.

(l) We conclude that, while only Zimbabweans themselves can decide the future of their country, their friends must co-operate to offer them every assistance in realising their aspirations. We recommend that the Government continue to work through the United Nations, the European Union, the Commonwealth and above all through Zimbabwe's concerned friends and neighbours in Africa, to increase pressure on the illegitimate regime of Robert Mugabe and to maximise the success of action taken in support of the people of Zimbabwe, through effectively targeted sanctions, generous and well-administered aid programmes which impact directly on the poor majority, and a commitment to responsible, fair and productive land reform (paragraph 70).

The Government agrees with the Committee's recommendations, and has been implementing them for some time.

(m) In his independence speech in 1980, Robert Mugabe said "Only a government that subjects itself to the rule of law has any moral right to demand of its citizens obedience to the rule of law. Our constitution equally circumscribes the powers of the government by declaring certain civil rights and freedoms as fundamental. We intend to uphold these fundamental rights and freedoms to the full" (paragraph 71).

The Government recalls the quotation above and deeply regrets that this, along with many other commitments made by the Mugabe regime, has not been honoured.

(n) Since 1980, Robert Mugabe has deliberately and systematically flouted the rule of law in Zimbabwe. Even judged against his own yardstick, he has lost the moral right to govern his people. By abusing the fundamental rights and freedoms, he has earned their contempt and that of the international community, and has transformed himself from a respected statesman into an outcast. The tragedy is that he has taken his country with him. One man can exalt a nation, as Nelson Mandela did South Africa; one man can destroy a nation, as Mugabe has Zimbabwe (paragraph 72).

The Government agrees.

- (o) Zimbabwe deserves better. The United Kingdom is under a particular obligation to assist, not primarily because white farmers with British forebears are under threat — although that is a matter of great and proper concern — but because as a former colonial power it still has a residual responsibility. Yet because it is the former colonial power, the United Kingdom’s actions are viewed with suspicion and mistrust; for the time being, it must therefore work with and through other countries and international agencies. In time, the relationship will surely change. We hope, for the sake of the people of Zimbabwe, that time comes soon (paragraph 73).**

As a sponsor of the Lancaster House agreement, which led to Zimbabwe’s independence, the Government continues to respect Zimbabwe’s sovereignty and remains committed to the principles of democracy, human rights, and individual liberty there. It will continue to work for the benefit of all Zimbabweans and hopes that a change in direction in Zimbabwe’s governance will allow restoration of normal relations between our two countries.



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