



**Crisis Coalition
Convenes
ground breaking
'YES OR NO
VOTE' Constitu-
tional Debate**



**COPAC Draft Con-
stitution Repre-
sents Incremental
Gains**



**Political Stakehold-
ers Argue Why Ref-
erendum Date Can-
not be Extended**

**Crisis Coalition Convenes ground
breaking 'YES OR NO VOTE' Consti-
tutional Debate**

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition convened a 'Yes or No vote' ground-breaking debate on the COPAC Draft Constitution at Cresta Jameson Hotel in Harare on Wednesday, February 20, 2013.

On the 'Yes' front from political parties were COPAC co-chairperson and MDC-T Spokesperson Hon. Douglas Mwonozora, Director of Research and Policy Coordination for MDC-N Qhubani Moyo and ZANU-PF Deputy Director of Information and Publicity Psychology Maziwisa.

Women's Coalition Virginia Muwaningwa and University of Zimbabwe Lecturer and Political Scientist Dr. Charity Manyeruke also threw their weight behind adoption of the COPAC Draft at the referendum.

MDC-99 President Job Sikhala, ex-Finance Minister and ex-SADC Executive Secretary and now MKD President, Dr. Simba Makoni, Former -ZINASU President and NCA representative Clever Bere and Former -Highfields MP and International Socialist Organisation (ISO) leader in Zimbabwe, Munyaradzi Gwisai took to the tug of war from the 'No Vote' side.

Close to 500 people shrugged off the usual end of day fatigue to gather at the evening meeting.

The no holds barred debate was moderated by Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe (IDAZIM), Programs Director and Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) chairperson Joy Mabenge.

Co-hosting with Mabenge was Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Vice-Chairperson and Zimbabwe Young Women Network for Peace Building (ZYWNP) Director Ms Grace Chirenje.

Those who canvassed for a 'Yes Vote' said the COPAC Draft Constitution was not a compromise document but a consensus document for all Zimbabweans who seek to promote national cohesion and stability.

Pitted against this stance was the logic



The venue of the debate, Cresta Jameson Hotel was full beyond capacity on the evening

Head Office
18 Philips Ave
Belgravia
Harare
+263-4-704418/+263-4-798038

SA Regional Office
711, 7th Floor Khotso House
62 Marshall Street
Marshalltown
Johannesburg
+27-11-838736/+27-732120629



that the Draft Constitution needed to be rejected to pave way for a fresh process on the basis that the process and content had not met expectations.

Speaking before the debate kicked into motion, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Chairperson and ZIMRIGHTS Director Okay Machisa thanked the congregants and assured the discussants that there would be fair moderation in this and any future debates on the Draft Constitution organized by the Coalition.

COPAC Draft Constitution Represents Incremental Gains

THE proponents of the YES Vote in the constitutional referendum have said that the COPAC Draft Constitution represents incremental gains in the quest for a democratic constitution for Zimbabwe.

The speakers were debating with their opponents who are canvassing for a NO Vote at the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition ground-breaking talk show held at the Cresta Jameson Hotel in Harare on Wednesday, February 20.

The Yes Vote proponents argued that the Draft Constitution should be viewed as a consensus document for all Zimbabweans as it encourages national cohesion in the country.



Hon. Douglas Mwonzora

COPAC co-chairperson and MDC-T Spokesperson Hon. Douglas Mwonzora said: "To say that this document is half a loaf is untrue.

"It is only half a loaf from a partisan perspective considering that the other half which completes the loaf to make it a full one is with the other stakeholders."

"There are things that the MDC may like in this draft which ZANU-PF may dislike, while the document also contains things that ZANU-PF may like which the MDC may dislike and the same truth applies to other stakeholders."

Mwonzora also pointed out that there were many good clauses in the envisaged new Constitution of Zimbabwe.

"We have the most comprehensive Bill of Rights on the African continent even if you compare it with the Malawian, Ghanaian, and Benin constitutions."

"For the first time in the history of the country we have devolution of power."

"The Draft Constitution introduces the culture of term limits for the president and Commander-in-Chief, heads of commissions and the clerk of Parliament among others," Mwonzora said.

Psychology Maziwisa dismissed those who are campaigning against the COPAC Draft Constitution like Media Commission chairperson Tafataona Mahoso who is believed to be aligned to Zanu-PF, saying it sufficed that President Mugabe wanted the draft and his position was adopted by the party.

Though, Maziwisa added that should Zanu-PF win the forthcoming elections they could amend the envisaged new constitution.

"Zanu-PF will vote yes to honour President Robert Mugabe who made historic compromises to allow this process to move forward."



"We were operating under a coalition government and we had to employ a give and take approach because Zanu-PF wanted to work collaboratively with its coalition partners," Maziwisa said.

University of Zimbabwe (UZ) Lecturer and Political Scientist Dr Charity Manyeruke said:

"What this draft does is that it enables cohesion and stability in the country."

The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is a broad based civil society network of over 72 active members comprising churches, women's groups, social movements, residents associations, labour unions, human rights lawyers, and health professionals. It was formed in August of 2001 to focus on democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable development issues – working locally, regionally and internationally.



Dr Charity Manyeruke

"These political parties and other stakeholders have checked out each other, but it creates a balance."

"There is power balance in this constitution."

Manyeruke added: *"The majority of Zimbabweans had grown sick and tired of the amendments and we now have a consolidated document, a total package. Fundamentally, it speaks to our values and principles as Zimbabweans."*

"The public was informed at every stage, whether it was the drafting that was the problem, or it was the money which was lacking."

"What is also important is that all the security institutions are mentioned in the draft which demystifies what security is all about and this is important for transparency and accountability."

Women's Coalition chairperson Virginia Muwanigwa said:

"What we did was to look at the draft and compare it with the Lancaster House Constitution and we saw that there won't be discrimination among Zimbabweans on the basis of gender, religion or anything."

"The constitution is a posterity document and it sets the scene for our children and grandchildren because gender equality is found in this document."

"Think about your mothers, sisters and daughters who are suffering from customary practices."



Virginia Muwanigwa

Qhubani Moyo, the director of Research and Policy Coordination in the MDC led by Prof. Welshman Ncube said:

"Let us not allow our quest for the perfect to stand in the way of the common good."

"While this document is not a perfect document, it is a perfect incremental gain."

"The chances of this document being rejected are between zero and zero because we only have two options to accept it, or accept it."

Proponents of the NO Vote had other ideas.

MDC-99 President said he was against adoption of the draft constitution.

"We have only been shown areas of attraction in this document," said Sikhala.



Munyaradzi Gwisa

International Socialist Organisation leader and former Highfield MP Munyaradzi Gwisa said:

"Incremental gains are nothing new in the history of constitution making in this country."

"In 2000, we were given a constitution that had incremental gains and we rejected it because it did not meet our expectations."

However, Moyo said Gwisai was a flip-flopper because at one time he supported the COPAC process, charging that Gwisai *"like a robot is sometimes red, green and at times amber."*

Ironically, Prime Minister and MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, who was the founding National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) chairperson, has since publicly regretted the NO Vote decision in 2000, saying it could have allowed some incremental gains.

Government has set aside March 16 as the date for the referendum and Zimbabweans from all walks of life will be given a chance to either reject or endorse the draft constitution as the new charter for Zimbabwe.



The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is a broad based civil society network of over 72 active members comprising churches, women's groups, social movements, residents associations, labour unions, human rights lawyers, and health professionals. It was formed in August of 2001 to focus on democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable development issues – working locally, regionally and internationally.

Political Stakeholders Argue Why Referendum Date Cannot be Extended

The political stakeholders in the COPAC constitution making process have defended the need for the country not to delay the referendum scheduled for March 16.

There has been stern opposition to the date with the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) having recently filed a Supreme Court application for the referendum to be held in not less than two months.

However, COPAC co-chairperson and MDC-T spokesperson Douglas Mwonzora and Director of Research and Policy Coordination in the MDC led by Prof. Welshman Ncube gave reasons why the referendum should be held early.

"The tenure of the Inclusive Government will come to an end in June. So in the short period between now and June 30 we need to hold a referendum and after that we need to implement reforms related to the constitution before elections," said Hon. Mwonzora.

"The GPA does not say there should be a referendum 'in' two months after the Parliamentary debate, but 'within' two months," Moyo said.



Part of the Panel (from right:) Psychology Maziwisa, Hon Douglas Mwonzora, Qubani Moyo, Munyaradzi Gwisai and Dr Charity Manyeruke

Moyo admitted the current constitution allowed the President to delay elections until September, which could allow the referendum to be delayed.

Moyo said the route was not desirable because by then the tenure of Parliament would have ended giving the Head of State too much power and operate without checks and balances from Parliament.



The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is a broad based civil society network of over 72 active members comprising churches, women's groups, social movements, residents associations, labour unions, human rights lawyers, and health professionals. It was formed in August of 2001 to focus on democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable development issues – working locally, regionally and internationally.

The pair from the two MDC formations in the Inclusive Government was responding to statements from ISO leader and former Highfields MP Munyaradzi Gwisai.

“In Kenya, the people were given four months to look at the constitution, but here we are being given one month because they want to hide the deception,” said Gwisai.



“No” vote advocates: Job Sikhala (left), Clever Bere (center), Dr Simba Makoni(Right)

The accusation was given a rebuttal as the two MDCs’ representatives, notwithstanding from different angles, explained why the referendum could not be delayed.

Kenya recently had a constitution making process and Kenyans adopted the document when it was put to the referendum.

The East African nation has had a political transition almost similar to Zimbabwe after contested elections marred by violence and is also due to have elections in March , 2013.

The contentious issue of referendum timelines is now to be decided by the Supreme Court after the NCA made a court application for extension.

The matter reared its head again at a constitutional debate held by the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition in Harare on Wednesday, February 20, 2013 mainly from MDC-99, NCA, International Socialist Organisation (ISO) and Mavambo/ Khusile/Dawn (MKD).

Except for MKD which has not yet made its position known, all the formations who want an extension to the proposed date are campaigning for a NO Vote and claim Zimbabweans need ample time to be read the COPAC Draft Constitution before it is put to the referendum.



The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is a broad based civil society network of over 72 active members comprising churches, women’s groups, social movements, residents associations, labour unions, human rights lawyers, and health professionals. It was formed in August of 2001 to focus on democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable development issues – working locally, regionally and internationally.