

On Malawi's demonstrations



RIGHTEOUS ANGER: A ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) vehicle (above) is set alight by protestors. Property belonging to the party and its functionaries was targeted during the July 20 protests as an expression of Malawians' anger towards gross mismanagement of the economy and a culture of intolerance by the Mutharika regime.

LEFT: Malawi police use force as they disrupt the peaceful demonstrations on July 20.-internet photos.



The events of July 20 are a reflection of people's true feelings over the poor economic and democratic governance that have almost become a daily occurrence in Malawi.

Over the last couple of years, political leaders have scaled up their defiance of the rule of law, effecting various acts of intimidation and violation of people's constitutional rights.

Almost every constitutionally-guaranteed freedom is now under attack in Malawi –from free speech to freedom of association to academic freedom.

Malawi is also currently facing a series of catastrophes on multiple fronts due to economic mismanagement and democratic derogation by the incumbent leadership and administration. But instead of owning up, the authorities desperately blame everyone –rather than their own poor performance –for the fuel and forex crises and other problems that have taken the shine off the much-touted “economic miracle”.

Reasons provided by the current administration regarding the causes to the fuel and forex shortages have been unsatisfactory and at times embarrassingly derisive.

Most people will agree that the current leadership and its administration has not demonstrated to the nation the ability

to reverse the dismal situation any time soon and the resultant sense of uncertainty merely serves to intensify the sense of doom and gloom afflicting the nation.

Amidst all this, the current leadership has continued to excessively and irresponsibly squander public funds without consultation and with cavalier disregard for current economic hardships afflicting the populace created by the mismanagement.

The list of anomalies is lengthy, but some major issues include the secret purchase in 2010, of a private jet costing US\$13 million - equivalent to half the budgetary support that Malawi's major donor contributed. The purchase went on regardless of condemnation from different stakeholders within Malawi and beyond. The amount spent was equivalent to annual salaries of approximately 5,000 nurses or approximately 11,555 primary school teachers.

At the beginning of 2011, the President secretly awarded a contract to his wife, the First Lady, Callista Mutharika, leading to a payment in arrears, of MK6,400,400 for the period before the contract was signed, and subsequent salary of MK1,300,000 per month – ostensibly for doing charity work.

The First Lady's salary is equivalent to monthly salaries for 30 nurses or 93 primary school teachers.

All this has necessitated action to show the leadership that Malawians are not happy with this state of affairs.

After the foiled Valentine's Day protests, civil society organisations finally settled for July 20 as the date for nationwide peaceful demonstrations. But far from being peaceful, the demonstrations turned out to be the most violent and deadly the country has seen in over a decade.

As many people had feared, the authorities did everything in their power to frustrate the demonstration.

On Tuesday 19th July, on the eve of the demonstrations, an injunction was granted by the High Court at the eleventh hour by ruling party agents.

In the morning of 20th July, 11 civil society activists were detained by police who were at the starting point in Lilongwe. Later, police descended on civil society leaders, journalists and political leaders who had sought refuge at a CCAP Church premises while awaiting the outcome of a legal challenge against the injunction, beating them up severely. Elsewhere, at least 18 people were killed while several sustained injuries during the protests that engulfed Malawi's major cities and towns. Lots of property was damaged; DPP vehicles were smashed while business premises belonging to party leaders and senior government officials,

including government spokesperson Symon Vuwa Kaunda, were looted and burnt to ashes.

A lot of people have pointed out that the ugly scenes that ensued could have been avoided had “some quarters” not tried to frustrate the demonstrations by throwing spanners in the works; hence heightening the marchers' emotions.

Despite the violence, civil society and other concerned managed to present their petition to the State President through various authorities. However, it is sad that instead of responding to the issues, the President has become aggressive and vicious in his remarks.

The President has recently threatened that he will “smoke out” activists and all those who were part of organising the demonstrations from their hiding places. This shows a regime hatching plans to crackdown on those who organised the demonstrations. It also shows that the struggle for justice and democratic governance in Malawi has just begun.

By Undule Mwakasungula, Chairperson of the Malawi Human Rights Consultative Committee (HRCC) and Executive Director of the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR)

The Anatomy of the Zimbabwe Crisis

Coordinator's Note



dewaMAVHINGA

For an extended period of time Zimbabwe has experienced a multiplicity of challenges that have received intense attention and analysis to levels where the phrase ‘Zimbabwe crisis’ has virtually been reduced to a cliché. Through the overuse of the phrase: ‘ZimbabweCrisis,’ its anatomy, meaning and true nature has been lost. I will attempt here to reveal by separation of parts and constituent elements, the nature and structure of the Zimbabwe crisis.

At the very core of the Zimbabwe crisis is the absence of a national vision, identity or even national institutions that stand apart and above politics. What exists currently, owing to ZANU-PF’s 1980s attempt to convert Zimbabwe into a one-party state, are shells national institutions that have gradually and systematically been subverted to become de facto extensions of the party. Consequently, such institutions align themselves, not with national interests, or the best interests of all Zimbabweans,

but rather with the interests and dictates of one single political party. So deep and pervasive is ZANU-PF’s pollution and subversion of national institutions that one is hard pressed to find a symbol, emblem or institution that all Zimbabweans are able to rally around and proudly associate with on the basis of it being Zimbabwean. The world over, citizens often identify with their national anthem or flag as a source of pride and expression of patriotism, but in the poisoned and polarized politics of Zimbabwe, the flag and the national anthem have become appendages of one political party. Wherever one looks, politics is ubiquitous and has a corrosive influence, sharply dividing Zimbabweans on political lines. Aspects of our history, such as the liberation struggle where there was national effort, have been appropriated privatized by one political party and have become the basis upon which select members of that political party claim all manner of entitlement. Relentless efforts

have been made to rewrite history and erase the contributions of other parties such as ZAPU and glorify the exploits of a single entity. In line with subverting national institutions to serve party interests, professionalism has been sacrificed in favour of comradeship. As a result you find that national institutions such as the Zimbabwe National Army, that are highly professional, disciplined and organized and have clear communication structures through their spokesperson Alphios Makotore, would battle to control senior officials such as Brigadier-General Douglas Nyikayaramba who dabble in politics in apparent contravention of the Defence Forces Act but without repercussions. I say subversion of national institutions is at the heart of the Zimbabwe crisis because in Zimbabwe it is not a failure to uphold the rule of law that is the problem, but a clear unwillingness, on political grounds, to do so. If the Zimbabwe Republic Police political leadership was willing and committed, they have the

capacity and resources to investigate and apprehend perpetrators of political violence and bring justice to victims. Unfortunately respect for the rule of law is one of the victims of subverting national institutions. Article 13 of the Global Political Agreement stated the obvious when it noted that: “State organs and institutions do not belong to any political party and should be impartial in their duties.” If the political leadership is able to translate this article into practice then Zimbabwe’s democratic transition will be successful. Without the full restoration of the impartiality and independence of national institutions, any attempts to find common ground and forge a national identity will be futile. Focus now should be on forging a national identity that transcends ZANU-PF or any other political party affiliation. Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai was right to challenge senior military officials not to engage in partisan politics while in uniform instead of taking off the uniforms

to get into the politics arena. Vice President Joyce Mujuru was also correct to call for the de-politicization of all national institutions. Whether one belongs to this party or that party should not matter at all. I belong the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, for instance, but I do not go about asking what church colleagues belong to before engaging them. It matters not whether it is Family of God, ZAOGA, Makandiwa’s flock or Guta Ra Jehovah. Until we learn, as Zimbabweans, that first and foremost we are Zimbabweans, we are one people and one nation, we will not be able to talk multi-party democracy and development. Party politics should not be taken too seriously. Politics differences should be tolerated and when it comes to national institutions – professionalism should take precedence. When that happens, we would have taken a major step in addressing the Zimbabwe Crisis.

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Mutharika must not abet Mugabe

The comment below was initially published by a Malawian online newspaper, Nyasa Times and then re-published by The Zimbabwean in 2008. Recent events in Malawi and their potential impact on the crisis in Zimbabwe prompt us to take another look.

Mutharika must be criticised for pursuing a grotesque foreign policy, which is sacrificing Malawi’s credibility in the international arena and jeopardising the safety of Malawians living in Zimbabwe. It is intriguing that while the President is advocating the rule of law, dialogue and patience, he is at the same time behaving in a manner that suggests that he is supporting Robert Mugabe’s Adolf Hitler-like grip on the nation of Zimbabwe.

Well if the president thinks that these virtues can apply in Zimbabwe, he should also make the same effort to practice them here. For before we even start talking about how other countries should handle their business we should remove the huge planks in our eyes. Mutharika knows that. It is unbelievable that Human Rights are again being trampled on in Zimbabwe, where the dictatorial geriatric has unleashed an untold fear campaign on his people and he is so far being allowed to get away with it. The so-called “Chimurenga-Veterans” [ironically some of whom are as young as 20 years old] are methodically pushing back the country to the era of Ian Smith, when the ruthless colonial forces subjected the nationals to so many traumas for aiding and abetting the genuine Chimurenga War guerrillas. The current serial molesters choose their victims indiscriminately; their attacks serve a clear and sanitised philosophy; an astonishing package of political values and ob-

jectives that are malevolent and extremely cold blooded. The will to oppress and intimidate the whole nation of Zimbabwe into submission is unmistakable. Therefore, Mutharika’s cheap political advertising through his recent Press Release is a desperate attempt at blunting the international ridicule his government is experiencing now.

It is not too late though for Bingu to reposition Malawi’s doctrine of contact and dialogue in our relations with peoples of the world

Isn’t it true that our government’s mediocre foreign policy is failing dismally to respond to the disgraceful campaign of terror in Zimbabwe? Again, we have seen the feeble attempts and headless chicken antics of a government that does not care about Zimbabweans, trying to bogusly play philanthropist just because the rest of the SADC region is tightening the screws on Robert Mugabe. Some day in future, both Malawians and Zimbabweans will look at this period of betrayal as the turning point in our history. We will remember a once prosperous country driven to destitution by a sadistic Octogenarian. We will have visions of a country crying for help from the international community but literally abandoned to fend for itself by even those short-sighted and selfish people who have in-laws and property in that country. We will remember the Malawian president who upon his arrival from Red China, declared that Malawians had

no business asking him why he was supporting the rogue government in Zimbabwe, and later expelled lies at a mass rally in Thyolo that it was the private traders selling maize to ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe and not his disgraced 21st century “Maoist” government. Is it not true that the government in Malawi has always had the capacity to stop the export of maize abroad? Whom is Mutharika trying to fool here by lying to the poor masses that he was not exporting their Maize to Zimbabwe, when officials from the same government admitted having received maize from this country? It’s lies, lies, lies, shameful lies and out-and-out treachery! Can somebody please stop him from making a cartoon of his person this way?

The current situation in Zimbabwe is very exceptional for Malawi. Moreover, the misfortune running through the Zimbabwean political blood stream is likely to rear its ugly head, in Malawi, in May 2009, if we are not watchful by making our leaders take responsibility of their actions and what they say. The post-election horror offensive in Zimbabwe and the Malawi Government’s indulgence in its nefarious activities in Luanda, Angola should serve notice to Malawians that Mutharika has the propensity to “pull a Mugabe” if not monitored closely. He may decide to recycle the same playbook to cling to power. It is not too late though for Bingu to reposition Malawi’s doctrine of contact and dialogue in our relations with peoples of the world. Mutharika can support dialogue between the conflicting parties in Zimbabwe by serving as a decent emissary. That will be far more award winning than his current malice laden involvement in Zimbabwe’s affairs.

Bob's Not Your Uncle

The year is 2006. The country is Malawi. Plot: the official opening of the Robert Mugabe Highway, formerly known as Midima Road. Scene: the foot of this road, where the so-called highway begins. Enter two presidents, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and his Malawian counterpart, Bingu wa Mutharika (not yet Ngwazi Professor). The road itself, a European Union funded initiative, is aimed at necessitating easier movement for purposes of local and regional trade, mostly with Mozambique.

But the protagonist, Robert Mugabe, is by this time – 2006 – now a well-known detractor of the West, including the European Union who have imposed targeted sanctions on him and his cronies. Therefore, there cannot be a greater insult to the EU than to name this stretch of tar after a man who is presiding over frightening human rights abuses, an economy in the intensive care unit, a record of stolen elections and the hurting of many a citizen. But Mutharika is adamant; Robert Mugabe is a “true son of Africa,” he declares.

Mugabe himself, claims he is 200% African and does not belong to Europe since he is neither British nor American. Quite a telling statement coming from a man who, once upon a time in his life – before the EU sanctions actually – enjoyed shopping at exclusive shops like Harrods in central London.

Mugabe, in 2006, was a man who was fast running out of opportunities for travel and also for getting his eccentric ego stroked. That road – Midima – is not something a man like him would be easily impressed with, let alone be associated with.

Wherever you go; Harare, Windhoek or anywhere with a Robert Mugabe Street/Highway, you will notice that these are around much more nicer areas, mostly central business districts. It could be mere coincidence.

But, would Mugabe really want to have his name bear witness to the poverty, chaos and poor planning that is Bangwe and Namiyango townships for instance? This is a man who, a year earlier in the harsh winter of 2005 had ordered the demolition of many “illegal” structures in urban areas by insisting they were an eyesore. An eyesore to whom exactly? These structures – mostly houses and small shops built without much approval from municipalities although considered of very low quality – represented a growing housing problem in Zimbabwe that the government was failing to take care of. Hence, Operation Murambatsvina (Get-Rid-of-Rubbish), for that was the name of the operation, affected an estimated 700,000 people, most of whom endured cold winter nights and mornings in the open since they did not have alternatives. A lot of property, hard earned, was lost too. There could not be greater disdain shown to a people by their leader that surpasses the stripping of the right to shelter.

And Mutharika decided to reward this leader of a party that openly boasts of having many degrees in violence by naming a road after him – a road Mugabe himself may not even care about. Fast forward to 2011. In a space of five years, Mutharika has exhibited just how much admiration he harbours for Mugabe. It is not a misplaced admiration.

The people I spoke to on the day Mugabe opened “his” road in 2006 expressed such admiration and described the man as a brave freedom fighter and a hero whose stance on the West was inspiring. They were partly right; the West's relationship with Africa has not yielded the best results for the latter, the nasty result of a painful legacy of colonialism and the West's imperialist culture. Yet they – the supporters of Mugabe disguised as Pan-Africanists – also miss the



point that you cannot right a wrong, a colonial wrong especially, with another wrong. The consistent use of colonial structures and machinery of violence against unarmed and defenceless citizens by the ZANU PF regime in Zimbabwe should force us to see a traitor in Mugabe; he has become exactly that which he once opposed and fought against, if not worse.

Against that backdrop, therefore, Mugabe's anti-West rhetoric – “Zimbabwe will never be a colony again” – comes across as empty, hot air and at times pure baloney. Sadly, this is the example Mutharika has decided to follow it would seem. Unfortunately for Malawians, the president has decided to follow that example to the letter. Forex shortages, long fuel queues, failures to pay civil servants, badly run municipalities, blackouts, water shortages, rising cost of living, whatever crisis it is, it is the kind of which has been seen before in Zimbabwe.

Oh, there's also that exciting bit of giving diplomats the middle finger and telling them to go to hell because a sovereign nation cannot be told what to do; that too, Zimbabwe has seen. In fact, all that his happening in Malawi chillingly reads like a script authored in Harare.

Even sadder is the disturbing irony that all this is happening under the pretext of this country having reached its apex; the sun is shining, is it not? Well, ain't no sunshine in Malawi, Mr President. That full noon joke which influenced malawi's flag change from an image of a rising sun frozen at dawn to an awkward full sun might as well have been coined by a Professor Jonathan Moyo wanna-be in the Mutharika camp.

At the height of the violent and chaotic land seizures in Zimbabwe, Moyo presided over a comical propaganda campaign which featured, in part, radio and television adverts declaring that since the land was now in the hands of black people, there were going to be guaranteed bumper harvests season after season. It really doesn't take rocket science to understand that you cannot feed a nation from a harvest of TV and Radio agitprop. Actual farming does not take place on radio or in newspapers. Zimbabwe soon discovered that it could not feed its own people and had to look to the same ol' folk from the wild wild West to assist in feeding its people. It just isn't enough to run a country on cheap sloganeering that is starved of common sense. Words as bullets!

Similarly, dynamic and wise leader-



CARBON COPY: President Mutharika (right-main picture) seems to be following, to the letter, every move that has been executed by his close ally, President Mugabe (left-main picture) in an attempt to strengthen his grip on power against the demands of democracy. Scenes of police crackdowns on protests such as those captured above in Malawi have ever been seen in Zimbabwe too.-dailymaverick.co.za (main picture) / -ewn.mobi (supporting picture)

ship does not occur in a vacuum, it has to be tangible, like true evidence of the works of hands that are dedicated to touching lives and building communities organised around practical, selfless and everlasting visions whose mission is to serve Malawi – and indeed any other country – in the best way possible because they are borne out of the great and progressive understanding that Malawi belongs to all who live in it and not exclusively to certain tribes, political parties and individuals hell-bent on turning it into a fiefdom.

Zimbabwe, through the inspiring resilience of its people, has proved that it is much bigger than Mugabe. That it still stands today is not some heroic act pulled by the octogenarian, as he would want us to believe. Of course, there are those who have swallowed the Mugabe lie and methodology of governance hook, line and sinker. Well, their countries are falling apart and are on the verge of sinking.

Last Wednesday, thousands of Malawians took to the streets in all major cities as an expression of anger at the mismanagement of the economy and declining democratic culture in their country. But soon enough, an unashamed and trigger-happy police force began firing live rounds at the demonstrators, accusing them of public disorder. 19 people lost their lives. Mutharika says the 19 died in vain be-

cause the very demonstrations they had participated in are works of Satan. As if that was not enough, he went on to say he would “smoke-out” any future protestors before they even arrive in the streets.

With parliament clearly on his side, making it easy for him to pass laws that can help him strengthen his tight grip on power, it is not hard to see another Zimbabwe coming out of Malawi.

After all, both Mutharika and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe enjoy a very cosy relationship. But, SADC does not need another Zimbabwe, certainly not before the crisis north of the Limpopo has been convincingly resolved. Yet, with President Jacob Zuma already being drawn into the developing crisis in Malawi, there is an urgent need for a sincere and brutally honest look the July 20 protests in Malawi and take appropriate action to prevent yet another dictatorship forming with drastic consequences to the region.

Therefore, SADC needs to act quickly on the declining democratic culture in Malawi before it has to deal with yet another situation similar to that of Zimbabwe which, by all accounts, badly needs an urgent resolve.

By Levi Kabwato, Media & Communications Officer in the Regional Office.

SA Home Affairs Dept. grants permits extension

The Department of Home Affairs Deputy Director-General, Jackie McKay, on Thursday, 21 July 2011 announced that the Zimbabwe Dispensation Project will be concluded at the end of August 2011, rather than the end of July, a statement issued by People Against Suffering Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP) says.

“We welcome this one month extension, as we had previously been under the impression that the deadline would certainly be at the end of July. This is evident in the following two transcripts: dated

22nd of February 2011 (available here: <http://www.info.gov.za/speech/DynamicAction?pageid=461&sid=16460&tid=28715>) and the 30th of June 2011 (available here: <http://www.info.gov.za/speech/DynamicAction?pageid=461&sid=19609&tid=36304>).”

The statement adds: “We therefore wish to advise all Zimbabwean nationals that, although not termed an extension, they have essentially been given an extra month to collect their permits. It is our concern, however, that one month may be am-

bitious considering the delay by the Zimbabwean Government to issue passports, and the time consuming process of distributing the permits.

“We view this extension as a positive move and recognize that the department has once again exercised diligence in ensuring the smooth and thorough completion of the entire process.”

For more information on the PASSOP statement, please contact: Langton Miriyoga: 084 026 9658 or Doug Leresche 079 712 7341.

SA Home Affairs Speaking notes for briefing to the media

In relation to the story above, we publish excerpts from the South African Home Affairs Department Head of the Zimbabwe Documentation Project, Jacob Mamabolo. These excerpts are Mamabolo’s responses to questions fielded by the media and are available on the department’s website at: (<http://www.info.gov.za/speech/DynamicAction?pageid=461&sid=19609&tid=36304>)

Question: What will happen to Zimbabweans who did not apply for documents?

Answer(DDG Mamoepe): It is critical at this stage to mobilise all our resources towards the process of completing the documentation of all Zimbabwean nationals who have applied, without having to hold an axe over their heads. It is critical for us to ensure we utilise all available resources at our disposal, including the partnership with the Zimbabwean Stakeholder Forum, government – consulate and Embassy, to ensure we can mobilise all those who have applied to assist us to complete the process of their documentation. This is the critical message we want to disseminate now.

Question: Will this process now be applied to other groups of nationals who have applied for asylum in our country?

Answer (Jacob Mamabolo): You may recall that when we launched the project to document Zimbabweans the principle at hand is that all people in the country must be registered and all those who are not are in violation of the applicable laws and in this case, it will be the Immigration Act. So whether the issues learnt and experience gained from this process will be extended, will be communicated by the Minister Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and of course, Cabinet, as was applicable in this process, will make the relevant announcement at the relevant time.

(DDG Mamoepe): I just want to remind the colleagues that the Minister did indicate in Parliament that yes, following this project, our intention is to document nationals of other neighbouring countries. At this stage of challenge is to conclude the process of documenting Zimbabweans who are in the country illegally. Following that, when we are ready I am certain the Minister will make the appropriate announcement as to when we will begin documenting other SADC nationals.

Question: What has been the response of the relevant stakeholders the Department has been engaging with? Regarding the SMSs that will be sent, does it mean people are not responding? How many people have responded? How many remain to respond?

Answer (Jacob Mamabolo): Firstly the SMS process has commenced. So, applicants who must still take fingerprints and submit documents are receiving SMSs.

Secondly, on the issue of the stakeholder forum and of course what we want out of the forum – it is important to recognise that the success of this project, from its inception, has been premised on the cooperation of the stakeholder forum. So, we announced in one of the press conferences that we meet with the stakeholders on a monthly basis, to brief them on the status of the project and also to get their input. You will remember that even when we concluded the process on 31 December 2010, there has not been any challenges from the stakeholders. This is as a result of the ongoing co-operation and dialogue with them.

So, the engagement on Monday is part of our ongoing and historic engagement with the stakeholder forum. It is not just about the SMSs – it is part of the principled interactions that have been going on. We are still analysing the responses received and once we have concluded this process, we will let members of the media know about our observations on this process. At this point we are certainly satisfied that people are re-

sponding and we will provide an analysis in due course.

Regarding our discussions on Monday, and as part of our communication and interaction with the applicants, is that when you mobilise people to respond to a call you want this to happen as fast as possible with maximum impact. The discussions will therefore serve to have Zimbabweans respond as fast as possible, just as we needed them to respond to the call to have themselves documented.

This is part of the discussions but the only important element. When we meet with the Zimbabwean Stakeholder Forum it does not include the banks and the financial institutions. This is a separate stakeholder forum. Our Minister Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma met with the banks and the insurance industries in January this year. In that meeting the financial institutions were given the opportunity to brief Minister on the challenges that arise from those clients with fraudulent documents who will now require permits to replace these documents. To put it in short we have received a positive response from the financial institutions since they understand the principle underpinning the documentation process. It is after all, not in their interest to have people with fraudulent documents transacting with them. And they support the fact that such citizens must be regularised.

Recognising the fact that the Department of Home Affairs is the national custodian of citizenship and national identification, when we issue the permits to replace the fraudulent documents, the bank has undertaken to accept these permits since it is only the Department of Home Affairs with the mandate to register foreign nationals who come into the country. The banks were therefore satisfied with the process and have committed to accepting such documents.

The engagements are ongoing. We have received cooperation from all partners, including the Zimbabwean consulate.

Question: Of the 6 243 amnesty applications received how many have been successful and how many have been rejected?

Answer (Jacob Mamabolo): The total number we have referred to regarding the people who have received their permits, this includes some of those who applied for amnesty. The applicants for amnesty are also the applicants for permits. Once we receive the fraudulent documents, we issue permits to replace these so that people are properly documented and regularised. The number we have given includes some of whom have applied for amnesty.

We have said that there were cases that were rejected, particularly in 2010 and we reviewed these cases. We said at the end of this process that when we finally conclude this project we will announce the number of rejections. Therefore, at this point, we are not talking about rejections in the process. The principle is that we should assess applications of those who took the initiative to come forward and apply for documents in a manner that enhances their registration. We will talk to this issue at the end of the process.

Question: Would I be right to say the purpose of this briefing is to encourage people to respond to the SMSs since this is a key aspect of the process?

Answer (DDG Mamoepe): I think the response to the SMSs are an aspect of the process. But we also wanted to give you the status of where we are in the process. This is why we have given you statistics and all other information. The SMSs are therefore an aspect.

Question: Why was the fingerprint-

ing not done at the time of application?

Answer (Jacob Mamabolo): We had to assess the principal consideration at the end of December 2010 – and that was to receive as many applications as possible from as many people who wanted to be documented. When you have taken applications you still have the opportunity to go back to the clients to work on finalizing the applications. The main reason was to meet the deadline. This did not affect those who came forward saying they wanted to register even though they were not in possession of all the required documents. I think this has worked because currently we can take fingerprints, etc without the pressure of a deadline. It helped us to meet that deadline and that was really the issue.

Question: I remember that the majority of Zimbabwean nationals did not have passports and the government of Zimbabwe had to assist with the provision of these documents. How is this process going?

Answer (Jacob Mamabolo): The background and context to this question is that Minister of Home Affairs met with her two counterparts from Zimbabwe during which they discussed the capacity of the Zimbabwean government to fast-track and issue passports. Our initial deadline to close this project at the end of June 2011. But the Zimbabwean government requested that in order for them to issue travel documents to the list of applicants requiring them – they provided a breakdown by month according to how many they were issuing at that point – and then they asked for the process to be extended to the end of July 2011.

We hold regular meetings with the consulate to assess how they are responding to providing travel documents to those on the lists we had provided. We received feedback that they are in the position to issue passports to those who have applied for them. When we met with them recently there had been a remarkable increase in the number of passports produced, also the response from their citizens to collect their documents. The process is therefore going very well.

Question: Why do you still have to issue 142 431 permits – is it because people are not collecting their documents?

Answer (Jacob Mamabolo): Remember that as people submit fingerprints or their supporting documents for a work, business or study permit, this does not constitute adjudication. Therefore, our adjudication did not stop just because applications did not contain all the required supporting documents. So as people present their documents – the issue you are referring to refers to issuance, not collection – one people bring their passports we affix the permits in their passports.

Question: Regarding the passports to be issued by the Zimbabwean consulate – do you have figures of how many people are still waiting for their documents?

Answer (Jacob Mamabolo): While we are deeply interested as the Department of Home Affairs on the issue of the fast-tracking and production of passports, I think you will appreciate that we do not have the mandate to deal with this issue. It falls within the sovereignty of the Zimbabwean government. It will therefore be incorrect of us to make comments on processes that relate to another sovereign state – in this case the issuance of travel documents by the government of Zimbabwe to their nationals residing in South Africa. I would therefore advise that you discuss with the consulate. What pleases us is the commitment they have made to issuing passports and their co-operation. But the details thereof remain an issue for the Zimbabwean government as a sovereign state.

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