Zimbabwe Weekly Update 48/2011 – 21-27 November 2011

Overview

1. Reconstruction:

- This week, Finance Minister **Tendai Biti (MDC-T)** presented the 2012 Budget in Parliament - setting next year's spending allowance at US$4 billion. The Finance Minister believes the Zimbabwean economy will grow more than 9% in the coming year. Biti highlighted that most industries remained distressed with high unemployment levels pervading. More resources would be allocated to rural electrification, water and sanitation services. Commenting on foreign travel costs of government officials "this continues to be a cancer in the management of our public resources. Between January [and] September, 2011, an unacceptable sum of US$45.5 million, representing 1,2 percent of the total budget had been spent on travelling."
- **David Coltart (MDC-T)**, Education Minister, said this week that 2011 was the best teaching year in a long time despite remaining challenges like inaccessibility: "The Education Transition Fund (ETF) went a long way in ensuring that primary and secondary schools got enough textbooks for all children." But Minister Coltart also acknowledged: "Sadly, we are a long way away from attaining the Millennium Development Goals, especially regarding primary school education. Education remains very inaccessible to an unacceptably high number of children. Dropout rates are unacceptably high as parents and guardians cannot afford the fees."
- Cases of typhoid in the capital reportedly continue to grow. The **Harare City Council** announced this week an estimated 500 suspected cases. Precious Shumba from the **Harare Residents' Trust (HRT)** commented that the rate at which the disease is spreading is "alarming and frightening," explaining how areas in Harare had no clean water for weeks.

2. Election Environment:

- On 24 November, the **Broadcasting Corporation of Zimbabwe (BAZ)** announced the awarding of two free-to-air broadcasting national radio licences, the first after the inauguration of the Inclusive

Government. The licences were awarded. to the state-controlled Zimpapers' Talk Radio and ZiFM, a company owned by AB Communications. Reportedly, **BAZ chairperson** Dr. Tafataona Mahoso said the awarding of licences to the two firms followed a thorough adjudication process that saw them scoring higher points among applicants. Zimpapers announced to be on air in the next three months; AB Communications gave a time-frame of six months. **Douglas Mwonzora, spokesperson of MDC-T**, reportedly commented: "It was clear that the licences would be given to ZANU PF apologists. The BAZ is clearly an illegitimate body, it must be reconstituted. Clearly the airwaves have not been freed, this has maintained ZANU PF's grip on the broadcasting sector." **Welshman Ncube, President of MDC-N**, Minister of Industry and Commerce, is quoted: "What has happened is not what we envisaged and it's not congruent with the election roadmap. [ ] We have to take it up within the context of GPA [Global Political Agreement], JOMIC [Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee], Cabinet and Parliament and if need be we will take it up with the negotiating forum within the framework of SADC." **Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)** Zimbabwe advocacy officer, Tabani Moyo is quoted: "The licensing of Zimpapers Talk Radio is set to raise eyebrows on whether the radio station will truly be independent. [ ] Supa Mandiwanzira, who was taken to task over his alleged links with ZANU-PF, is the majority shareholder and CEO of Zi FM stereo under the AB Communications stable."

3. Natural Resources:

- **Eddie Cross (MDC-T),** a senior economic advisor to the Prime Minister has commented this week on his proposition to nationalise all diamond deposits. Mr. Cross said that ministries - including the treasury - were kept in the dark about diamond revenues: "The solution to all of this is a proposal made to Cabinet last year that the whole of the Marange deposits should be nationalised formally and brought under government control. Everyone who is currently on site extracting diamonds formally and informally must be removed, the area fenced and guarded by the armed forces." **Mines Minister Obert Mpofu (ZANU-PF)** commented on this move: "I will not allow him to destroy the mining sector with such strange ideas." The Director of the **Centre for Research and Development, Farai Maguwu,** is quoted "[ ] even though I agree that the licences should be revoked, I don't think nationalisation is the way to go. Nationalisation means government will take full control of mining in Marange and we know that the cemetery of companies which have been owned or taken over by the Zimbabwe government is always growing. Maguwu believes Zimbabwe should copy the public-private partnership model of Botswana between De Beers and the Botswana government: "There is transparency, there is accountability, there are tangible benefits to the Botswana nationals coming from this partnership."

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