

# UK POLICY ON ZIMBABWE

## **1. Introduction**

Since coming to power in 1997, the UK Government under Anthony Blair has pursued the following policy objectives in its relations with Zimbabwe and the ZANU (PF) Government under President Robert Gabriel Mugabe:

- to destabilize and derail the Government's land reform programme to give white farmers extended monopoly over Zimbabwe's most fertile arable land;
- to perpetuate the marginalisation of the black African majority in rural areas to form a huge reserve for cheap agricultural labour;
- to remove ZANU (PF) and President Mugabe from power and replace them with the more pliant and directionless MDC and its president, Morgan Tsvangirai;
- to use coercive diplomacy in the EU, the Commonwealth, and the United States to conscript them to impose declared and undeclared sanctions on the Government and people of Zimbabwe;
- to manipulate the IMF, the World Bank and other financial institutions to withdraw loans and balance of payment support to Zimbabwe to cripple its economy and generate widespread domestic discontent and disillusionment against the ZANU (PF) Government and President Robert Gabriel Mugabe;
- to stunt the growth of genuine democracy, the rule of law and people-empowerment as a means to create a human rights and governance crisis in Zimbabwe and the isolation of the Zimbabwe Government internationally;
- to employ its immense print and electronic media out-reach to lie about and demonise Zimbabwe to incite international hostility against the Government; and
- to fund non-governmental organisations to arouse and incite internal domestic upheavals to make Zimbabwe ungovernable.

Over the same period, the Zimbabwe Government under ZANU (PF) and President Robert Mugabe has pursued the following policy objectives in its relations with the United Kingdom:

- to draw to the UK Government's attention its obligations to fund the land reform programme and to compensate white farmers whose land Government would acquire for redistribution to the landless black Africans, as agreed

during the Lancaster House Conference on the Independence of Zimbabwe in 1979;

- to convince the UK Government that the redistribution of land to the landless black Africans was a bilateral agenda between the UK and Zimbabwe and should be undertaken as such, with the international community having to get involved only at the joint invitation by the UK and Zimbabwe governments;
- to convince the UK Government that the redistribution of land to the landless black Africans could not be delayed beyond 2000 and that any delay would see the landless peasants taking the law into their own hands through spontaneous land occupations and the eviction of white farmers from the land; and
- to convince the UK Government that the Zimbabwe Government is committed to democracy, non-racism and social justice, noting that the struggle for the independence of Zimbabwe sought to establish these values in Zimbabwe.

In pursuit of these objectives, the Zimbabwe Government has maintained its appeal to the United Kingdom Government to relate to Zimbabwe more constructively by:

- entering into direct bilateral dialogue on all outstanding aspects of the land redistribution process, and especially:
  - (a) the payment of compensation to white farmers whose land has been acquired for resettlement;
  - (b) the rehabilitation of former farm workers rendered jobless and food insecure by the land resettlement programme;
  - (c) the extension of start – up support and provision of continuous back – up support to the new black farmers;
  - (d) the provision of infrastructure, especially roads, clinics, schools and marketing facilities in newly settled areas; and
  - (e) the extension of continuous humanitarian assistance especially to cushion the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Zimbabwe has repeatedly called upon the UK Government to discontinue its covert and overt actions to cause change of Government in Zimbabwe, especially because both the Parliament and President of Zimbabwe were put into office by the choice of the majority and through sound democratic processes. That the MDC's president, Morgan Tsvangirai, lost the March 2002 Presidential Elections should be accepted without pique, or vengeance because it was the result of the people's choice expressed in a free and non-coercive manner

through a secure ballot. The majority of external governmental and non-governmental election observers judged the Presidential Elections positively, with the exception of those with the pre-meditated mission to find fault with them, especially if Morgan Tsvangirai lost.

Contrary to the policy of the Zimbabwe Government to engage the Blair Government, Blair's policy on Zimbabwe has been openly hostile to the Zimbabwe Government since 1997 when he came to power in the United Kingdom.

In addition to disowning British obligations towards the redistribution of land as agreed at Lancaster House in 1979, the Blair Government set upon a determined course of action to cause a change of Government in Zimbabwe. With every effort of the Government of Zimbabwe to remind him of his country's obligations to Zimbabwe under the Lancaster House Agreement, Prime Minister Blair's determination to remove President Mugabe became more and more vicious and relentless.

We will illustrate the issues raised above in the remainder of this paper.

## **2. Blair and the Land Crisis in Zimbabwe**

Contrary to the claim by Tony Blair's government that Zimbabwe's problems are of its own making, it is very clear that Britain and particularly, Blair's government, is at the core of Zimbabwe's economic and political crisis, either as a form of vengeance over loss of colony or as a personal grudge against President Robert Mugabe and his government or simply as a means to satisfy Britain's desire to have a trouble spot elsewhere in the world as a popularity gimmick to rally the British electorate behind Blair. The Blair government has embarked on a massive international diplomatic and media campaign to deny this allegation and blame the crisis in the country on the Government's land reform programme. Although it has repeatedly claimed that it is not opposed to land reform in Zimbabwe, an examination of the UK's actions towards Zimbabwe since 1980 would reveal that it has always been Britain's policy to delay the land reform programme by pursuing a gradualist approach which would maintain the status quo or take at least 150 years to deliver land to the landless black majority.

The seeds of this gradualist approach were sown at the Lancaster House Conference through the inclusion of the following conditions in the agreements which brought about Zimbabwe's independence:

- Land acquisition was to be on a willing-seller/willing-buyer basis during the first ten years of independence. This provision, which was enshrined in the Lancaster House Constitution, severely constrained the Government's ability to acquire land for resettlement purposes as farmers were either unwilling to sell their land or asked for exorbitant prices.

- The Government of Zimbabwe was to provide counterpart funds and match British funding dollar for pound. Due to inadequate resources, the new Government could not allocate enough resources from its meagre budget to match British funding, resulting in only £26.5 million out of the £30 million pledged by the British Government for land acquisition on a willing-seller/willing-buyer basis being utilised. The balance of £3.5 was eventually not disbursed after the programme hit a snag.

As part of this strategy, the British also sent a number of technical missions to Zimbabwe, whose overt intention was to show British interest in the land reform programme, when, in fact, the strategic objective was to complicate matters to achieve the delay or derailment of the programme. A case in point was the 1988 Overseas' Development Assistance (ODA) sponsored **Land Resettlement in Zimbabwe, Evaluation Report** by J Cusworth and J Walker of Bradford University in the UK, which concluded that the programme had a high economic rate of return (12.5%) compared to other development programmes on the continent and had benefited the rural poor. However, latching onto the mission's observation that the first phase of resettlement had "little or no impact on the plight of the communal areas that still suffer from land degradation due to population pressure", a point the Government of Zimbabwe had also emphasised in seeking additional funds to complete the land reform programme, the then British Overseas Development Minister Lynda Chalker, wrote to the then Zimbabwe Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the late Dr Bernard Chidzero, in 1992 outlining her government's proposals on reforming the land reform programme.

A second ODA Land Appraisal Mission, comprising J Cusworth, M Adams, E Cassidy, M Lowcock and F Tempest was dispatched to Zimbabwe in 1996 to carryout further evaluation of the land reform programme. As in 1988, the mission also concluded that the programme had benefited mostly the landless rural poor.

A Zimbabwean delegation subsequently went to London in 1996 to present a report on the institutional and other reforms that the Government had put in place to improve the effectiveness of the land reform programme as suggested by Lynda Chalker, but the report was not discussed as the British authorities preferred to concentrate on a review of assistance policy and new conditionalities. Lynda Chalker's letter marked the end of donor funding for the land reform programme and any funds disbursed afterwards were solely for the purpose of completing on – going projects. Nevertheless, dialogue between the two countries continued, but the Conservative Party was defeated in the 1997 general elections before concluding negotiations on new funding for the land reform programme. By that time only 3, 5 million hectares had been acquired for resettlement.

With the coming into office of Tony Blair's government following New Labour's election victory in 1997, the British Government cut off all meaningful dialogue with Zimbabwe as it repudiated Britain's colonial responsibility to fund land reform in Zimbabwe as agreed at Lancaster House. In what was then described by the Economist magazine as imperial amnesia, the new British Minister for Development, Ms Claire Short, wrote to the then Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement of Zimbabwe, Honourable Kumbirai Kangai, stating her Government's policy as follows:

***"I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new Government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish and as you know we were colonised not colonisers."***

In its attempt to evade its colonial responsibility, the British Government has sought to rewrite the Lancaster House agreement, declaring boldly in an undated "Memorandum on Zimbabwe":

***"The UK Government accepts, and has always accepted, that land reform is essential if Zimbabwe is to develop to the benefit of all its citizens. But it has never accepted that the solution is to hand over large sums of money to the Zimbabwe Government on an unconditional basis. We did not agree this at Lancaster House in 1980 and we will not in future. We made clear that funding for land reform was beyond the capacity of any single donor."***

This position was reiterated in a note verbale sent to Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations accredited to Zimbabwe on 23 October 2002 saying:

***"At the Lancaster House Conference in 1979, the British Government outlined its support for land reform. Lord Carrington, then British Foreign Secretary, drew attention to the fact that any serious land resettlement programme would be beyond the scope of any one donor to fund. But the British Government undertook to support the efforts of the Government of Zimbabwe to obtain international assistance."***

British duplicity is best noticed and understood when it is recalled that the country which publicly undertook to mobilize international assistance towards Zimbabwe's land reform programme is the same country which, at the same time, is leading an international hate-campaign against Zimbabwe and its land reform programme.

The Blair Government has been roundly criticised over its "imperial amnesia" not only by the Government of Zimbabwe but also by prominent British politicians such as Lord Owen, Foreign Secretary under the Labour Government of Jim

Callaghan (1977 – 1999), who, in a newspaper article on 23 April 2000, unequivocally stated:

***“The last Labour Government in 1977 under Jim Callaghan promised substantial sums: £75 million pounds from Britain and US\$520 million from the United States”.***

Similarly, Lord Peter Carrington, former British Foreign Secretary, who brokered the Lancaster House Agreement, has called on the UK government to meet its promises in helping to pay for land resettlement and agricultural reform. Carrington told SABC news on 29 October 2002 that the programme was started in good faith – but was halted amid suspicions over how the funds were used, adding:

***“There was a disproportionate amount of good arable land in the hands of the white farmers and what was proposed was that we should help not pay entirely but help out with compensation for those farmers. And the Americans incidentally said they would do the same thing. And this went all right, I mean we did help for some time.”***

In spite of the suspicions in White Hall that land reform was benefiting “Mugabe’s cronies,” Carrington, a member of the British House of Lords and the Zimbabwe Democracy Trust, an organisation formed in April 2000 to fuel dissent in Zimbabwe, said that the payments should go ahead, but directly to farmers whose land has been acquired for resettlement.

***“You could help them in some way, and we always envisioned spending the money in this way and it seemed to me sensible to do so. But I got a very wintry answer from the government about this, and I am wondering what else I can do”, he said.***

Criticism of the British policy of meddling itself in the land reform programme in Zimbabwe has also come from an unlikely quarter, Commercial Farmers Union Director David Hasluck, who recently lashed out at the British government for approaching the land question in Zimbabwe without regard to the country’s history and British commitments made at Lancaster House.

For its part, the Government of Zimbabwe was taken aback by the new British position as it repudiated the cornerstone of the Lancaster House Agreement and effectively removed any prospects of resuming co-operation on the basis of that agreement. However, the Government of Zimbabwe accepted this reality and following a meeting in Brussels between His Excellency President Robert Mugabe and the then European Commissioner for Development, Professor Joao de Deus Pinheiro in January 1998, decided to appeal to the international community for assistance through an International Land Donors’ Conference that was held in Harare from 9–11 September 1998. The Donors’ Conference agreed

on basic principles for international assistance to the land reform programme and set up a task force of major donors to prepare documents for a two-year Inception Phase, which would kick-off Phase II of a donor supported land acquisition and resettlement programme. Although the UK, whose reluctance to join the other donors had been evident throughout the conference, refused to join this task force, it exerted a negative influence on the other donors by proposing that a consulting firm be appointed to do an economic returns analysis of the programme to date and assess how far it alleviated poverty among the chronic poor in Zimbabwe, thus effectively killing the Inception Phase in its tracks. As a result, nothing was achieved, not even the purchase of the 118 farms then on offer.

Having failed to secure donor funding for the land reform programme as a result of these British machinations at the Land Donors' Conference and being keenly aware of the growing impatience and land hunger among the landless black majority, the Parliament of Zimbabwe on 6 April 2000 amended the Constitution of Zimbabwe to empower the Government to compulsorily acquire land for resettlement purposes and absolve it of any responsibility for paying compensation for land acquired for this purpose. The Constitutional amendment placed responsibility for compensating farmers whose land would be acquired for resettlement on the British Government, while the Government of Zimbabwe would only be required to pay for improvements on the land. This prompted the Blair Government, for the first time, to invite Zimbabwe to send a team to London to discuss funding for the land reform programme following a meeting in Cairo between His Excellency President Mugabe and then British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook brokered by President Obasanjo of Nigeria.

However, no material progress was achieved at the London meeting as the British Government refused to offer any funds for the land reform programme beyond the £30 million pounds already offered to Zimbabwe in 1999 in the country programme published by DFID, whose stringent conditionalities rendered it totally inaccessible. £5 million already offered but still not distributed to non-governmental organisations and civil societies in Zimbabwe was also thrown in to bring the total to £36 million. The British Government stubbornly refused to move forward and evaded the issue of Britain's colonial responsibilities. In the end, the Zimbabwean delegation left London with the conviction that the meeting had been a stage-managed media circus designed by the British Government to play to the British public, which had already been primed to expect a tough position. The concluding statement issued on 27 April 2000 at the end of the meeting was illustrative in this respect:

***“The UK delegation reiterated its commitment to enhanced developmental support for Zimbabwe, as set out in the DFID (Department for International Development) Zimbabwe Country Strategy Paper. This could provide an additional 36 million pounds over the next two years for the UK***

***development programme in Zimbabwe provided the conditions are met for moving to the high case scenario”.***

Similarly, although Britain accepted the conclusion reached at Abuja on 6 September 2001 that land was at the core of the crisis in Zimbabwe and undertook to make a significant financial contribution to the land reform programme as well as encourage other donors to do the same, it has not fulfilled this obligation. By contrast, the Government of Zimbabwe has already fulfilled all its obligations arising from the Abuja meeting as evidenced by the lessening of tensions within the country.

It is quite clear from the foregoing that it is an abiding objective of all British Governments to delay the land reform programme in Zimbabwe. Delayed access to land by the indigenous African majority would guarantee the continued occupation of Zimbabwean land by Anglo-Saxons in Britain, and elsewhere in the Anglo-Saxon diaspora.

It had always been hoped that with increasing population growth in rural areas, more and more Africans would drift into commercial farmland as cheap labour. The so-often repeated success and profitability of Zimbabwean commercial agriculture was principally the result of African cheap labour. Most farm workers were paid in salt, beans and mealie meal, with no cash left for them to send their children to school, nor to clinics and hospitals for treatment.

The impoverishment of indigenous Africans became an abiding strategy of all white colonial settler regimes who wanted to exploit African poverty and backwardness to augment their profits and comfort.

No wonder agricultural production rose to such a flowery level, turning the country into a bread basket for the entire region. It is therefore, primarily because of profit considerations that the British are bitterly opposed to the land reform programme as it would empower the majority of the people and reduce the supply of cheap labour and by extension, the profits of white farmers.

### **3. Blair’s Pursuit of “Regime Change” in Zimbabwe**

The coming into office of Tony Blair’s government in 1997 coincided with the Government of Zimbabwe’s twin decisions to legally compulsorily acquire 1800 white owned farms for the resettlement of landless peasants and to send troops to the DRC. This provoked the wrath of the British Government which had encouraged Rwanda and Uganda to invade the DRC. The best minds were assigned to come up with an effective strategy to cripple Zimbabwe’s economy as well as bring down its Government. The policy framework of such a strategy was well articulated by Foreign Secretary Jack Straw during a debate in the House of Commons on 8 January 2002 when he said:



***“Our approach has been to internationalise the issue, while taking a firm lead within all the international forums in which we speak. That is why the General Affairs Council – the Foreign Affairs Council – of the European Union is in train to take firm action on this; why I called a meeting of Commonwealth Ministers for 20 December; why I have spelled out to the House that if the situation in Zimbabwe continues to disintegrate we will argue for Zimbabwe’s suspension from the Commonwealth.”***

The Foreign Secretary added exasperatedly during the same debate:

***“I repeat that I have been trying to ensure that Zimbabwe, not Britain, is isolated for the terrible actions that President Mugabe and his henchmen are taking. That has received the approbation of many Conservative Back Benchers, as well as Labour Members. --- One of my key aims has been to ensure that the issue ceases to be a bilateral one and is made an issue of shared concern by the international community.”***

The EU was immediately prevailed upon to commission a study on Zimbabwe in 1998 by the Conflict Prevention Network, a network of academic institutions, non-governmental organisations and “independent experts”, which is part of the European Union Analysis and Evaluation Centre. The CPN report entitled **“Zimbabwe – A Conflict Study of A Country Without Direction”** was duly presented to the EU’s Africa Working Group in December 1998 for use in making recommendations on Zimbabwe. Of note was the EU report’s recommendation that for things to go “right” in Zimbabwe, President Mugabe must go. This could be done through civil society, notably the trade union movement or NGOs, through organised urban uprisings, the implied possibility of discontent in the armed forces, the exploitation of perceived rifts in the ruling ZANU (PF), and the transformation of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions into a political party. The prediction was that President Mugabe would not last till the 2002 Presidential Elections. The EU report singled out the land reform programme and Zimbabwe’s involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo for special mention as prime pretexts for their hostility towards Zimbabwe.

In the UK itself, the EU report’s recommendation to topple President Mugabe was carried forward at Chatham House during a meeting of the Royal Institute of International Affairs on 24 January 1999, whose theme was “Zimbabwe – Time for Mugabe to Go?.” The meeting considered a number of options for achieving this objective, including masterminding a military coup, upheavals in the streets and manoeuvres within the ruling party, ZANU (PF). The Chatham House meeting identified “confiscating” white – owned land and sending troops to the DRC as underlying excuses for their attacks on the Zimbabwe Government. A similar meeting held at the US State Department on 23 March 1999, obviously at the instigation of the British, also deliberated on ways of removing President Mugabe from power. The US State Department meeting resolved that the best way for achieving this would be to work through NGOs, find ways to divide the

Shonas and Ndebeles, probe the ruling party for weak spots with a view to subverting it, and generally make Zimbabwe ungovernable. The conveners of the US State Department meeting emphasised Zimbabwe's presence in the DRC as a problematic issue.

Other prominent personalities in the UK and the US with substantial economic interests in Zimbabwe and ties to the Ian Smith's racist Rhodesian regime, stepped forward to implement these scenarios for "regime change" arising from the recommendations of the EU report. Most notable among them are the members of the Zimbabwe Democracy Trust, who include four former British Foreign Secretaries – Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Lord Douglas Hurd, Lord Peter Carrington and Lord Geoffrey Howe as well as a former US Assistant Secretary of State, Dr Chester Crocker. Other members are Sir John Collins, Lord Steel of Aikwood, Lord Taylor of Warwick and Lady Soames. The primary mover in the organisation is reputed to be Sir John Collins, the Zimbabwean Chairman of National Power, the largest British energy company, which also has substantial investments in Zimbabwe. Rifkind is involved with an Australian company which has mining interests in Zimbabwe, while Chester Crocker sits on the Board of Directors of Ashanti Goldfields, which owns gold mines in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Democracy Trust fostered the birth of the opposition MDC under the pretext of promoting democracy and has orchestrated a well-funded advocacy for that party through the private and international media with the intention of demonising ZANU (PF) and undermining land reform in Zimbabwe.

For its part, the British government has not disguised its designs in Zimbabwe as demonstrated by Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's declaration during a question and answer session in the House of Commons on 25 June 2002 that:

***"What I would like to happen is very clear. I would like President Mugabe to recognise the error of his ways and the disaster into which he has plunged Zimbabwe. I would like him to leave office, allow elections to take place immediately, stop interfering with humanitarian relief, get the farmers, whether they are white, Indian or black, back on to the land ---- I am asked how that would happen, but that is the point. I say to Opposition Members that the issue for the international community is how we do this. That is the truth of it."***

These sentiments were echoed by Tony Cunningham, MP for Workington, who said during the same question and answer session:

***"I am sure we would all agree that the sooner he (President Mugabe) goes, the better, not just for Zimbabwe, but for the entire region."***

In pursuit of this objective therefore, the British government has exerted its immense diplomatic and economic clout as well as control of global media to demonise President Robert Mugabe, isolate Zimbabwe internationally and deny

the country access to vital international financial support. First to be targeted at the diplomatic level was the European Union, for the obvious reason that members are required to act in concert on foreign policy matters under the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty, the founding charter of the European Union, thus forcing countries such as Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, which have no quarrel with Zimbabwe, to support the British position. Furthermore, the Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and its former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP), though not yet ratified by the majority of European Union countries, would give the EU considerable leverage over Zimbabwe. The British government has achieved some notable success on the Maastricht Treaty track, as evidenced by the EU's imposition of so – called “targeted sanctions” on Zimbabwe on 18 February 2002, while its machinations on the Cotonou Agreement track were thwarted by the Southern Africa group, which twice mobilised ACP countries to resist attempts by British members of the ACP–EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly to sponsor condemnatory resolutions on Zimbabwe in March 2000 (Abuja) and October 2000 (Brussels). Most recently, the fifth ACP–EU Joint Parliamentary session, which was scheduled to be held in Brussels on 25 November 2002, was abandoned after ACP countries resisted attempts to prevent Zimbabwean ministers from attending the meeting, despite threats by the head of the EU parliamentary delegation, Glenys Kinnock, to withdraw development aid. This setback on the Cotonou track notwithstanding, Jack Straw could, however, assure the House of Commons during the question and answer session on 25 June 2002 that:

***“The sanctions that I was able to ensure that the European Union imposed in February are stronger and more extensive ...”***

In what was widely perceived as a racist onslaught on a black country by white supremacists, the British government, with support from Australia, Canada and New Zealand, also took its relentless campaign to isolate Zimbabwe to the Commonwealth, with then Foreign Secretary Robin Cook falsely claiming in February 2001 that he had agreed with Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon to place Zimbabwe on the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group's agenda, even though that body did not have the mandate to discuss the situation in the country. CMAG was eventually prevailed upon to illegally discuss Zimbabwe at its meeting in London on 30 January 2002 but rejected demands by the UK and its allies to have Zimbabwe suspended from the Commonwealth. Having failed to secure a suspension, Tony Blair took his campaign to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting that was held at Coolum, Australia from 1 – 4 March 2002. But tempers flared at Coolum over attempts by the UK and its allies to prejudge the 9 – 10 March Presidential poll before it was even held, with President Thabo Mbeki declaring that:

***“-- those inspired by notions of white supremacy are free to depart (leave the Commonwealth) if they feel that membership of the association reduces them to a repugnant position imposed by inferior blacks.”***

He added that the outcry against the Commonwealth decision to set up a troika to decide on how to deal with Zimbabwe after the election:

***“-- reflected a stubborn and arrogant mindset at all times that the white world must lead.”***

A livid Tony Blair immediately broke with convention by distancing himself from the customary end-of-summit consensus and attacked the 54-nation organisation for postponing a decision on sanctions, saying he hoped the Commonwealth would eventually:

***“-- do the right thing. If it does not, its credibility is at issue; if it does not act in circumstances where it is plain that a member country has held an election which has not been fair.”***

In a final broadside at African countries, which had stood by Zimbabwe, Tony Blair told reporters before his departure from Coolum that:

***“If there is any sense in which African countries appear to be ambivalent towards good governance – that is the one thing that will undermine the confidence of the western world in helping them. The credibility of my country, investment in my country, doesn’t depend on Zimbabwe. But for Africa it is a major issue, on which their credibility and the possibility of investment flows depend. --- There are no half measures about democracy. It is for Africa that if countries are not behaving democratically --- that we are seen to act.”***

This theme was picked up by a number of speakers in the House of Lords on 6 March 2002 after Prime Minister Tony Blair admitted in an address to the House of Commons on the same day that he had failed to secure Zimbabwe’s suspension at Coolum. Drawing heavily on claims by US Assistant Secretary of State, Walter Kansteiner that:

***“The road to NEPAD lies through Harare,”***

several speakers called for strong linkages between support for NEPAD and firm action on Zimbabwe. Most striking in this respect were the remarks by Lord Astor of Hever who said:

***“We must now make it clear that the kind of aid anticipated by NEPAD is dependent on recipient governments demonstrating a return to good governance and an acceptance of the will of democracy. --- It is imperative***

***that we send the strongest possible message to the SADC countries that they should take action against the man who threatens to plunge the entire region into a catastrophic economic and political meltdown. All democratic nations have a responsibility to try and preserve democracy wherever it is threatened.***

The message was not lost on the primary sponsors of NEPAD, Presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo, who, in spite of the endorsement of the outcome of the Presidential elections by the official observer missions from their own countries, voted to suspend Zimbabwe from the councils of the Commonwealth for a period of twelve months, paving the way for an ecstatic Jack Straw to declare in the House of Commons on 25 June 2002 that:

***“One of the many things that we have done is to secure a situation whereby the decision on the suspension of Zimbabwe from the councils of the Commonwealth was taken not by us, not by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, of which the United Kingdom is a member, but by a troika of the current chair of the Commonwealth, Prime Minister Howard of Australia, and two key members – President Obasanjo of Nigeria and President Mbeki of South Africa. It is hugely to their credit that they made the decision that they did once the Commonwealth observers found that the elections were not free and fair.”***

Having secured the isolation of Zimbabwe in the West, the UK government turned its attention to attacking Zimbabwe’s economy with the intention of creating political instability in the country. To achieve this objective, the UK enlisted the support of the United States, with which it enjoys a “special transatlantic relationship,” in denying Zimbabwe access to international lines of credit. The Bush Administration obliged by signing the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001 into law on 21 December 2001, which among other things, instructed American officials in international financial institutions to:

***“oppose and vote against any extension by the respective institution of any loan, credit, or guarantee to the government of Zimbabwe ---- and to vote against any reduction or cancellation of indebtedness owed by the Government of Zimbabwe.”***

The Act also authorised President Bush to:

***“fund an independent and free press and electronic media in Zimbabwe.”***

US\$6 million was subsequently granted for aid to “democracy and governance programmes,” a euphemism for groups seeking to topple the Government of Zimbabwe. Also acting in terms of the same law, the Bush Administration on 22 February 2002 imposed “targeted sanctions” on senior government, ZANU (PF),

business and church leaders following the imposition of similar sanctions by the European Union on 18 February 2002.

The impact of the US policy of “opposing any extension of loans, credit or guarantees to Zimbabwe” by international financial institutions was immediately evident as the International Monetary Fund, which on 24 September 2001 had declared Zimbabwe ineligible to use the general resources of the IMF and removed Zimbabwe from the list of countries eligible to borrow resources under the Fund’s Poverty and Growth Facility over non-payment of US\$53 million in debt service payments, followed this up with a declaration of non-cooperation and suspension of technical assistance to Zimbabwe on 13 June 2002. The IMF’s declaration of non-cooperation was intended to discourage lending by other financial institutions, putting additional pressure on Zimbabwe’s economy. Due to the decline in foreign trade and the denial of credit, unemployment in Zimbabwe rose to 70 percent, while three fourths of the population were classified as poor.

A relentless campaign of negative publicity against Zimbabwe mounted at the same time the British government embarked on its diplomatic campaign to isolate Zimbabwe internationally also created perceptions of instability, which scared away investors and led to capital flight from Zimbabwe. Foreign direct investment in the country slumped from a peak of US\$426 million in 1998 to US\$5, 4 million in 2001 as investors fled from the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange. A number of company closures in the last two years are suspected to have been motivated primarily by political considerations, not unfavourable macro economic conditions. Similarly, the many travel advisories issued by western Embassies in Harare warning citizens not to travel to Zimbabwe also served the same purpose of denying Zimbabwe access to foreign currency. This policy is set to continue for the foreseeable future following Jack Straw’s assurances to British parliamentarians on 14 March 2002 that:

***“But I can tell the House today that we will continue to oppose any access by Zimbabwe to international financial resources until a more representative government is in place.”***

In the mean time, the crippling foreign currency shortage has made it difficult for Zimbabwe to service loan repayments, leading to the withdrawal of international credit facilities for the importation of fuel, electricity as well as capital and commercial goods. This has led to stunted industrial activity, low exports, high interest rates, high inflation, company closures, massive lay-offs and a crippling brain drain, which are intended to arouse discontent against the Government and political polarisation within Zimbabwe.

While the British government likes to blame President Mugabe for the worsening economic situation in the country, it is nevertheless quick to assume credit for creating this situation. For example, in a spirited response to shadow Foreign

Secretary Michael Ancram's allegations in the House of Commons on 25 June 2002 that sanctions were not working, Jack Straw had this to say:

***"A year ago, President Mugabe expected to be treated, and was treated in capitals around the world, as a legitimate head of state. Today, he is condemned by the Commonwealth, the European Union and the United States. He is increasingly shunned by other African governments and has been declared by the International Monetary Fund to be in non-cooperation and subject to sanctions and suspensions. That international consensus has come about not least as a result of the painstaking diplomatic activity of the British Government."***

Having created the conditions for disaffection and political instability in Zimbabwe, the British government now intervened directly in the internal affairs of the country with the intention of subverting its democratic processes. Working through the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, an organisation that receives 95% of its funding from the British government and whose board of governors includes representatives from each of the three major political parties in the UK, the British government clandestinely poured substantial amounts of money into the opposition MDC for use in a combination of violent campaigning, bribery and smear tactics against the legitimate government of Zimbabwe. At the behest of the Blair regime, the Foundation financed sorties into Zimbabwe by operatives, organised seminars and assisted in designing and printing political party cards for the MDC. Some of the Foundation's "projects", a euphemism for subversive activities, were brazenly published on its website [www.wfd.org](http://www.wfd.org). The website was subsequently cleaned up after the Government of Zimbabwe presented the material to the international community as evidence of British interference in the internal affairs of Zimbabwe. However, the following entries remain indelibly etched in the minds of many Zimbabweans:

***Zimbabwe: DOA Further Assistance to Oversee Election Organisation: £13 876.00 to fund the Conservative Party to provide the opposition to Robert Mugabe, in Zimbabwe, with support from like-minded democratic parties in Africa;***

***Zimbabwe: Opposition Visit to UK: £4 460.00 to fund the Conservative Party to provide assistance to the opposition forces in Zimbabwe ahead of presidential and other elections by bringing to the UK leaders of two opposition parties for briefings; £4 980.00 to provide assistance to opposition forces in Zimbabwe ahead of presidential and other elections by bringing to the UK key leaders of the movements for briefings on the promotion of democratic change in Zimbabwe;***

***MDC Party Development: £30 000.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC to consolidate party structures throughout the country;***

**MDC Women Candidates: £5 263.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC to produce campaign material specifically for women candidates and voters in the run-up to the General Election in June 2000;**

**MDC Purchase of Photocopier: £4 375.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC in Zimbabwe to purchase a photocopier to produce materials in preparation for the elections in June 2000;**

**MDC Elections Assistance: £8 594.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC to increase political awareness through the radio, in advance of the elections in June 2000;**

**MDC Production of Leaflets: £18 750.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC to produce leaflets in preparation for the election in June 2000;**

**MDC Media Communications for Women: £7 018.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC in targeting women voters through media communications to encourage them to vote in the election due in June 2000;**

**Training of MDC Election Monitors: £19 982.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC to train party representatives on election monitoring techniques for the June 2000 elections;**

**Zimbabwe - Membership Cards for the MDC: £10 000.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC to produce membership cards before their first national conference in early 2000;**

**Training for MDC Election Monitors: £10 000.00 to fund the Liberal Democrats to assist the MDC to train party representatives on election monitoring techniques for the General Election due in June 2000;**

**Training for MDC Election Monitors: £10 000.00 to fund the Labour Party to provide further assistance to the MDC in a project part-funded with the UK Liberal Democrats to continue to train MDC party representatives in election monitoring techniques for the June 2000 elections;**

**Support for Youth and Women's Chairpersons of MDC: £12 600.00 to provide salary support through the Liberal Democrats for the Youth and Women's chairpersons for the MDC in Zimbabwe in 2001;**

**MDC Voter Registration and Women's Outreach: £12 300.00 to fund the Conservative Party to assist the MDC for voter registration by providing a full-time co-ordinator and also facilitating a women's outreach programme in advance of the Presidential election;**



**MDC Provincial Workshops: £10 625.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC to organize workshops on election strategy in preparation for the forthcoming Presidential elections starting from July 2001;**

**MDC Elections Assistance: £10 119.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC to organize a women's and youth conference in 2001 in the run-up to the Presidential election;**

**MDC Production of Materials: £12 649.00 to fund the Labour Party to assist the MDC to produce materials in preparation for the Presidential election.**

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy also funded NGOs such as the **Foundation for Democracy in Zimbabwe, (FODEZI)**, which received **£3000.00 to carry out a range of activities, including voter education, radio and TV programmes, training seminars for young potential political leaders and public meetings**, and **ZimRights**, which received **£10 000.00 towards the purchase of offices**, and **£110 368.00 to support its activities for the period 1997-1999.**

The British government has also masterminded the formation and funding of subversive organisations such as the Amani Trust, and provided financial support, through European Union channels, to numerous other “non – governmental organisations” whose sole purpose appears to be to agitate for the unconstitutional overthrow of President Mugabe through the abuse of humanitarian assistance. These organisations have already sowed discord in communities where they are operating by distributing food aid on the basis of political affiliation, as well as giving aid stocks to the opposition for distribution as part of its campaign.

Again through the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the British Government sought to use the media to distort the democratic process in Zimbabwe. **£9 800.00** was provided **to enable “Horizon” magazine** (described by WFD as an independent political journal) **to gain full benefit from new equipment, and £9 400.00 for the magazine to undertake a six - month marketing campaign to increase its sales and revenue from advertising.** A further **£13 999.00** was disbursed **to purchase office equipment, cover a percentage of overheads and pay the salary for a full-time business manager during 1999.**

When the premises of *The Daily News*, a British-funded opposition paper, were bombed by unknown criminals, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy disbursed **£20 000.00** to cover the costs of sending two “experts” to Zimbabwe to assess the damage. At that stage, the British High Commissioner openly acknowledged “British interest” in the opposition newspaper.

A “Media Reform Campaign” was also funded by the WFD to the tune of **£5 000.00 to enable the Media Institute of Southern Africa, Zimbabwe to produce a range of materials to be used in its media law reform campaign.** The materials were distributed in 2000, the year of the parliamentary elections.

In spite of this massive array of interventionist measures in support of the MDC, the British government was still not confident about the MDC’s ability to remove President Mugabe from power by legitimate means and sought to achieve that outcome by trying to rig the March 2002 Presidential elections through underhand tactics such as the foiled attempt to suspend Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth at Coolum a few days before the elections; assertions by Tony Blair at Coolum, which were later parroted by Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand, that the elections would only be judged to have been free and fair if the MDC won; and sponsorship of fake opinion polls by the Financial Gazette just before the elections, which predicted a “crushing defeat” for President Mugabe in the elections. Earlier in February 2002, the British government’s media allies at the **National Post** in Canada, had, in an editorial on 22 February 2002, attempted to incite the Zimbabwean people to overthrow President Mugabe or even kill him, saying:

***“But Zimbabwe is not a totalitarian state such as North Korea: When it becomes plain to almost all Zimbabweans that Mr Mugabe is at the root of their problems, he will be overthrown or killed. Either outcome would lessen the country’s miseries and open the door for the nation’s diplomatic and economic rehabilitation.”***

To vent their ire after the people of Zimbabwe resoundingly voted to retain Robert Mugabe as President in a massive show of confidence in his land reform policies, the British Government and its allies refused to recognise the outcome of the elections and vowed to intensify their efforts to topple him from power. This has seen the UK, which broke off diplomatic relations with Libya over the Lockerbie bombing in 1988, making overtures to the Libyan government in order to wreck the friendship between that country and Zimbabwe. The assessment was that Libya would be prepared to dump Zimbabwe in exchange for normalised relations with the West. A message was subsequently put out for the obvious consumption of UK watchers in Tripoli when Jack Straw told the House of Commons on 25 June 2002 that:

***“Libya’s route back into the international community partly depends on its showing a responsible attitude towards Zimbabwe and in respect of Sierra Leone. We are aware of that, and it is a point that has repeatedly been made to Libya in the dialogue that is taking place.”***

Furthermore, junior Foreign Minister Mike O’Brien, in an apparent attempt to woo Libya towards Britain’s campaign to dent Zimbabwe’s international image, raised the ante when he told reporters in South Africa on 3 August 2002 that:

***“We have decided that Gaddafi no longer wants to be involved in international terrorism. Gaddafi has condemned al – Qaeda and expressed outrage over the September 11 attacks. We’ve been seeking to engage Libya across a number of issues following a hard headed assessment of Libya’s position. We hope Libya will engage seriously with the West and indeed other countries --- and that will mean a country that has a fairly large degree of influence in the Arab world and Africa will move away from being a pariah state towards helping the international community and preserving peace.”***

In what is a logical step in the script to complete the international isolation of Zimbabwe as well as consolidate and broaden declared and non-declared sanctions already imposed by the EU, the US and white Commonwealth countries, the British government has now shifted the focus of its attack to the United Nations Security Council, where it recently demanded that Zimbabwe be required to respond to the report of the UN Panel on the Illegal Plunder of DRC Resources, the only country required to do so. The recent appeal by Morgan Tsvangirai to the Security Council for UN intervention to stop “state sponsored violence against the defenceless people of Zimbabwe” was obviously orchestrated, at the instigation of the British government, to create justification for making Zimbabwe a Security Council issue.

#### **4. President Mugabe’s response to British hostility to the Land Reform Programme**

In spite of the intense British hostility to the land reform programme in Zimbabwe, President Mugabe has remained resolute in his efforts to redistribute land to the landless indigenous black majority and has eloquently and courageously told Blair to end his government’s colonial policies on Zimbabwe and to mind his own business and that of his country and keep his “pink nose out of our affairs”. He has also maintained that Britain has a continuing obligation to pay compensation to the white farmers whom successive British governments have encouraged to forcibly occupy Zimbabwean land. In September 2002, he took Zimbabwe’s case to the international community, telling delegates at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg that landlessness is at the root of the endemic poverty and underdevelopment which black Zimbabweans have endured through the full century of British occupation of their land. Judging by the thunderous applause which punctuated his now famous speech at Johannesburg, President Mugabe spoke for the poor, dispossessed and downtrodden in all parts of the world and struck a resonant code in the hearts of many Heads of State, business leaders and civic society groups attending the WSSD, when he said that:

***“ --- we in Zimbabwe understand only too well that sustainable development is not possible without agrarian reforms that acknowledge in***

***our case, that land comes first before all else, and that all else grows from and off the land. This is the one asset that not only defines the Zimbabwean personality and demarcates sovereignty but also an asset that has a direct bearing on the fortunes of the poor and prospects for their immediate empowerment and sustainable development. Indeed, ours is an agrarian economy, an imperative that renders the issue of access to land paramount. --- But we say this as Zimbabweans, we have fought for our land. We have fought for our sovereignty. Small as we are, we have won our independence and we are prepared to shed our blood in sustenance and maintenance and protection of that independence. ---We don't mind having and bearing sanctions, banning us from Europe. We are not Europeans. We have not asked for an inch of Europe, any square inch of that territory. So Blair, keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe. ”***

Through the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, President Mugabe and his government have accorded the majority black Zimbabwean people's grievances the urgency they deserved and exposed the folly and futility of Britain's gradualist policies towards the eradication of poverty among his landless compatriots. As a result, over 1.6 million people have benefited from the land reform programme between July 2000 and August 2002, ending a century of landlessness and poverty for the Zimbabwean people.

Having waged a bitter and protracted armed struggle to bring democracy to Zimbabwe, President Mugabe and his government have relentlessly stuck to the principle of democracy, facing the opposition five times in parliamentary elections and twice in Presidential elections, which he and his party, ZANU (PF), won convincingly. The people of Zimbabwe have hailed these elections as free and fair, while the progressive world, including governments and civil societies, have similarly hailed the elections as free, fair and legitimate and recognised the verdict of the national electorate. At the same time, the international community has applauded the fact that there is not a single political prisoner in Zimbabwe, showing that Zimbabweans enjoy freedoms of speech and association.

President Mugabe and his government have also exposed the neo-colonial agenda of the British government and warned the EU, the Commonwealth and the United Nations not to join Britain's attacks on Zimbabwe. Hence, he won the sympathy and support of many nations, both big and small, when he appealed to the 57<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly to:

***“ --- convey to Britain and especially to its current Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair, that Zimbabwe ceased to be a British colony in 1980 after Prince Charles had gracefully lowered the British flag called the Union Jack. He should also please be informed that the people of Zimbabwe waged an armed revolutionary struggle for their independence and stand ready to defend it in the same way. We want to be left in peace to carryout our just reforms and developmental plans as we peacefully interact and cooperate***

***with other countries within the region, the African continent and the international community. We refuse to be an extension of Europe.”***

Although the EU, the UN and white Commonwealth countries are quick to deny that they are pursuing a British agenda in Zimbabwe, it is an undeniable fact that the UK has been on a crusade to entice and conscript the EU and the Commonwealth to take sides in its bilateral differences with Zimbabwe and has succeeded in doing so. In several instances, Britain itself has taken no direct actions on Zimbabwe, but by ruse and stratagem made the EU and the Commonwealth fight it out with Zimbabwe using declared and undeclared economic sanctions.

By leading the struggle for economic liberation on the side of black Zimbabweans, President Mugabe has inspired the poor and dispossessed blacks in Africa and the Diaspora to assume their individual and collective dignity and to struggle continuously for economic emancipation, for their land rights and for reparations against slavery and colonial subjugation. His call for just land reforms in Zimbabwe has therefore, been echoed by the landless in Kenya, Namibia, South Africa and among dispossessed indigenous communities in countries such as Australia and Canada.

Leading a weakened small country, which refuses to bow down to international pressure in the conviction that right is on its side, President Mugabe has assured the weak nations of the world, especially those of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, that there can be equal sovereignty between big and small nations and that principle, honesty and determination can be the bases of strength for leaders of both small and big nations who respect human rights and human dignity and subject themselves to international laws and conventions. President Mugabe and his government have always and continue to subject themselves to the values, conventions, protocols and resolutions of the United Nations, the African Union and SADC and join them in condemning attempts of some countries to interfere in the internal affairs of others, especially the actions of those who seek to impose their will upon others through military processes.

And yet, President Mugabe is the leader and Zimbabwe is the country Mr Blair and Britain want to demonise, and condemn. We urge the progressive international community to see through all this British hypocrisy and duplicity and relate with Zimbabwe in a mutually supportive way, and with respect.

## **MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**12 December 2002**