



**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HONOURABLE SIMBARASHE S, MUMBENGEGWI TO THE MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ON THE NATION-WIDE OPERATION MURAMBATSVINA/RESTORE ORDER: 27 JUNE 2005**

Your Excellencies, welcome to this briefing session. This is my first time to meet you as a group. I would therefore like to begin by welcoming you all to the Ministry and assure you of my desire to meet all of you individually.

Excellencies,

You will all be aware by now that the Government of Zimbabwe launched 'Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order' on Friday, 20 May 2005. I wish to inform you that this operation was launched following extensive consultations among stakeholders on the need to rid the national environment of illegal residential and commercial

structures and unlicensed trading premises as well as decongesting the cities and towns in order to establish an environment conducive to investment and peaceful habitation. In his speech during the opening of the first session of the 6<sup>th</sup> Parliament of Zimbabwe on 9 June 2005, His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Cde R. G. Mugabe expressed the Government's determination to implement this operation to its successful conclusion.

This operation, which was along overdue, has grossly and deliberately been distorted and politicized by our detractors.

### **Rationale**

The proliferation of illegal business premises and practices was a source of real concern to central and local government. The diversion of basic commodities from legal outlets caused panic among members of the public, resulting in the resurgence of

over pricing and black market activities. Unauthorized tuck shops and unsafe illegal structures especially in the urban areas provided a ready market for diverted basic commodities, which would be sold to the public at exorbitant prices. This parallel economy was bleeding the formal economy and thus undermining efforts to turn round the national economy. Furthermore the illegal structures that sprouted over the years also served as hideouts for criminals. Some of these places such as the infamous **Siyaso** had become ideal and ready markets for stolen goods and property.

The sprouting of illegal housing structures in the urban and peri-urban areas further compounded the situation. Most towns and cities had lost their glow. The mushrooming of these illegal premises has seen the government losing billions of dollars in potential revenue, which could otherwise be used to enhance



living standards and infrastructure development in the country.

Equally damaging were illegal dealings in foreign currency and precious stones. In provinces with rich gold deposits, illegal panning activities and illegal dealings in precious minerals were rampant, a situation detrimental to our national efforts to turnaround the economy. The illicit panners and gold dealers, apart from plundering the country's resources, were also settling themselves in any location they deemed convenient for their unlawful operations, and in the process have caused extensive environmental degradation.

Right across Zimbabwe, over the past few years, there was an unprecedented and menacing influx of illegal vendors, traders, street dwellers and loiterers. The orderliness of the cities had been seriously

compromised and unscrupulous business practices had reached unacceptable proportions.

These challenges demanded a decisive and appropriate response. Consequently, the local authorities and central Government have moved to restore order. Hence operation Murambatsvina.

### **Negative Propaganda**

Despite the noble objectives of the operation, the Government of Zimbabwe has been condemned and demonized by some western countries for carrying out 'Operating Murambatsvina/Restore Order'. The exercise has been blown out of proportion and out of context for well known political objectives and not so secret agendas. To these countries, Zimbabwe can never do anything right. We democratized land ownership and they imposed economic sanctions; we organized a perfect election and they condemned us for it.

Isn't it ironic that the countries that in yester year condemned us of not enforcing the law regarding illegal settlements are the same countries that are now not only condemning us but are threatening us with further sanctions for enforcing the very laws they said they wanted enforced.

These same countries had initially attempted to peddle the lie that this operation was aimed at punishing supporters of a certain political party that is well known to be extremely close to their hearts.

However, for once, the facts on the ground forced them to make a hasty retreat. Now they are trying to cling to baseless allegations of violation of human rights. On this they are destined to fall flat on their faces. How can the removal of squalid conditions in return for properly planned living environments constitute a violation of human rights? We totally



reject the notion that our former colonial masters should shamelessly try to occupy the moral high ground in an effort to convince the world through their weapons of mass deception that they love and care for the people of Zimbabwe more than the leadership that saw them through a protracted armed struggle against brutal and racist British colonial rule. These attacks against our sovereignty constitute relentless efforts to recolonize our people and our resources. On this, your Excellencies, they will never succeed.

These kinds of operations are not unique to Zimbabwe. They are routinely carried out around the world including in these same western countries. Yet, nowhere have we witnessed the kind of outcry that has been generated by the western countries, even before they had even established the facts on the ground. We cannot accept these hypocritical double standards.

In this respect, we welcome the U.N. Secretary General's special Envoy on Human settlement issues who will have the opportunity to objectively establish the facts on the ground. Zimbabwe has nothing to hide.

When the operation took off, the objectives of the operation were clearly spelt out and Police Officers involved in the operation were briefed on the need to proceed with great care and sensitivity. There has been no suggestion of heavy-handedness or untoward actions by the police. Both the print and electronic media were used to warn people that they should demolish their illegal structures or else the police would move in to supervise the removal of such structures. The efforts by the Police to snuff out illegal activities, weed out criminal elements, restore law and order and eliminate illegal markets have won public praise countrywide.



Some critics who have challenged the legality of the operation in terms of Zimbabwe's obligations with respect to international conventions regarding the provision of adequate housing. It is an insult to our people to suggest that the illegal structures that have been removed constitute adequate housing. Quite to the contrary, operation Murambatsvina /Restore Order is only a small phase in the massive reconstruction programme to provide our people with adequate housing and suitable premises to do business within the framework of the laws of Zimbabwe.

Hon, Minister Dr Chombo who chairs the Inter-Ministerial Reconstruction Committee, will now brief you on this massive programme to meet the needs and requirements of our people.

## **Reconstruction Programme in the Wake of Operation Restore Order**

Having said this, Excellencies, I would like to assure you that the Government has put in place elaborate rehabilitation and mitigatory measures to regularize all new settlements and informal sector operations in accordance with the laws of Zimbabwe. So far \$3 trillion has been set aside for this programme. Since the operation was conceived and planned by Government and the concerned local authorities in order to address existing challenges, provincial coordinating committees were set up. These Committees are composed of, Law enforcement agencies, Ministry Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development, Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Youth Development and Employment Creation, Ministry of Lands and

Agriculture, Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises Development, and the local authorities.

Sub-committees were also set up as follows; identification sub-Committees, mandated with identifying the illegal developments; allocation sub-Committees, to re-allocate space for legitimate use; development and funding Committees, mandated with sourcing funds for financing legitimate land use; social services committee, to provide social protection to cover the temporarily induced vulnerability; and co-operatives committee to assist in reorganising the affected persons into organised units for orderly development. The same structures have been replicated at district level to cater for small urban centres.

This institutional machinery at the national, provincial and district levels has been registering and screening, all informal traders and manufacturers as part of their



re-organization and re-location to designated sites where Government has put up proper infrastructure and facilities. Their infrastructural needs have been re-grouped into six categories: Factory shells and common service centers; Artisans' Hives; Commercial Centres; Flea Markets; Vendor Marts or People's Markets and People's Shops.

Numerous sites, ready for construction, have been identified in Bindura, Bulawayo, Chinhoyi, Chipinge, Gwanda, Rusape, Marondera, Kariba, Plumtree, Hwange, Mutare and Victoria Falls among major towns, and the respective budgets have been drawn up. The use and or occupation of these sites are at various stages: some, like Mupedzanhamo Flea Market with 1192 stalls, are ready for occupation once the vetting exercise is completed; some vending points are under renovation (paving, demarcating, walling and rehabilitating sanitation facilities), some

are under construction while others are being surveyed.

An exercise of this nature and magnitude invariably gives rise to some unintended consequences. Structures have been put in place to respond to and to mitigate any unintended consequences. For example, land has been identified for orderly housing developments in areas such as Caledonia, Hopely, Oda and White Cliff, an exercise that is at an advanced stage. Sixty-five additional farms have been acquired by the City of Harare for the purpose of housing and commercial development, and about 250 000 housing stands will be provided by Government for the same purpose. My colleague, the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development, Dr. Chombo has provided more details on this in a number of briefs he has given.

The programme requires a multi-sectoral response to sustain it. In the process, the private sector has been invited to play an active part. For instance, PG Industries in Gweru has intervened to provide temporary structures to house furniture makers. Governors have negotiated with their local authorities to identify closed shops for potential use. The Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises Development responsible for the empowerment of previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs has determined that other SMEs will supply construction material while it has designed cluster-training programmes for the traders apart from providing a micro-credit window for the emerging businesses.

Interestingly, the western media has deliberately and conveniently ignored the measures being undertaken by the Zimbabwe Government which have enabled the affected people to secure designated places from which to conduct their legal businesses or build



descent homes. A case in point are the Siyaso informal traders who have been re-allocated stalls at a new multi-million dollar complex in Mbare.

### **The Impact of the Operation to Date**

Excellencies, even though the Operation is not yet complete, there are dramatic achievements worth noting in this exercise which include the following:

- (i) Most of the Central Business Districts throughout the country are clean and peaceful following the removal of menacing street man/kids, petty criminals, illegal vendors and illegal currency traders. The exercise has resulted in significant decongestion of CBDs in the cities in general.
  
- (ii) Crime has significantly gone down about 25% following the destruction of illegal structures, which served as sanctuaries for criminals and their activities.

- (iii) Basic commodities, which had disappeared from the shelves of most shops, are re-emerging following the destruction of illegal shops, which served as ready markets for such goods.
  
- (iv) The provision of services such as water and electricity and sewerage systems are set to improve following the demolition of the illegal structures, which diverted the provision of such services away from the proper facilities.
  
- (v) Incidences of traffic congestion have reduced following the relentless crackdown on all traffic offenders.
  
- (vi) Cases of sexual abuse that emanated from the over crowding conditions of some areas are set to diminish.

In conclusion, I would like to appeal to you as representatives of your respective governments to correctly reflect the real situation on the ground.

The Government of Zimbabwe is in the process of empowering its people.

I thank You.