

Press Statement By Honourable Emerson D. Mnangagwa, Minister Of Rural Housing And Social Amenities, On The Extraordinary SADC Summit Of Heads Of State And Government Held In Lusaka, Zambia, On 12 April 2008.

The Extraordinary SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government was convened on 12 April 2008 in Lusaka, Zambia, by President Dr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and President of the Republic of Zambia to discuss Zimbabwe. The letters of invitation to the Summit were issued on Thursday 9 April 2008, two days after the convening of the Summit had been announced in the Western media namely: - BBC, Sky News and CNN. This took Member States by surprise since there had been no prior consultations undertaken by the SADC Chairperson as is the tradition.

It is in this context that His Excellency the President, Cde. R. G. Mugabe, constituted a delegation to attend and represent him at the Summit. The Zimbabwe delegation so constituted comprised:-

Honourable E. D. Mnangagwa, Minister of Rural Housing and Social Amenities and Head of Delegation;

Honourable S.S. Mumbengegwi, Minister of Foreign Affairs;

Honourable P.A. Chinamasa, Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs; and

Ambassador J. Bimha, Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs.

The Summit met in closed session. In outlining the cause of convening the Extraordinary Summit, the SADC Chair gave his reasons for convening the Summit as the alleged stalemate and impasse which he said had developed in Zimbabwe following the harmonised elections. He also indicated that he had invited Messrs Tsvangirayi and Simba Makoni to address the Summit. The SADC Chair accordingly went on to propose the following agenda for the Summit:

- a) Presentation of Report of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation on the Report of the SADC Electoral Observer Mission deployed in Zimbabwe during the elections;
- b) Presentation of Report by President Thabo Mbeki, Facilitator of the SADC Initiated Dialogue in Zimbabwe;
- c) Brief by the Zimbabwean delegation on the situation obtaining in Zimbabwe; and
- d) Address to the Summit by Messrs Morgan Tsvangirayi and Simba Makoni.

The Zimbabwe delegation objected in the strongest terms to the inclusion on the Summit Agenda of the address by individuals who were neither Heads of State and Government. The Zimbabwe delegation argued that the inclusion of this item on the Summit

Agenda was tantamount to elevating opposition politicians to the status of Heads of State and Government. The Zimbabwe delegation went on to draw the Summit's attention to the fact that the proposal by the SADC Chair had no precedence in the whole history of SADC as no opposition politicians had ever been allowed to address the Summit. Such a step, if allowed, would create a dangerous precedent. A lengthy debate ensued with an overwhelming majority of the Member States supporting the Zimbabwe position. The Chair then ruled that debate on the issue be suspended until other agenda items had been disposed of.

President Jose' Eduardo dos Santos, Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation presented the Report of the SADC Electoral Observer Mission deployed in Zimbabwe during the elections. In its Report, the SADC Electoral Observer Mission commended Zimbabwe for the manner she conducted the elections which it described as having been free and fair. With regards to the polling process, the Mission stated that:

- the elections were conducted in an open and transparent manner;
- the voting process was meticulously witnessed by the observers and Party agents; and
- polling stations opened and closed at the prescribed times and that voters behaved in an orderly and exemplary manner.

The SADC Observer Mission also praised the counting process as having been conducted meticulously and lawfully. The Mission concluded its Report by making the observation that the harmonised elections held on 29 March 2008 were a peaceful and credible expression of the will of the people of Zimbabwe. The Summit accepted the Report presented as a true reflection of what transpired in the harmonised elections.

The Zimbabwe delegation briefed the Summit on the recent elections held in Zimbabwe and it emphasised that the situation was calm and peaceful. The delegation underscored the point that the elections were held in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere. It went on to explain the various legal processes that were currently under way which had caused the delay in the announcement of the results of the Presidential election.

The delegation explained in great detail, the legal and Constitutional provisions which made the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) the sole authority with responsibility to organise and run elections and to announce election results. It went on to refute suggestions that the Government of Zimbabwe was in any way responsible for the delay in the announcement of the results as this suggestion was totally without any basis since ZEC's independence is enshrined in the Constitution.

In the ensuing debate, the briefing by the Zimbabwean delegation was extremely well received and greatly appreciated. In conclusion,

it was agreed that there was neither a stalemate nor an impasse in Zimbabwe.

The Summit recognised and accepted that the electoral process currently in Zimbabwe was in accordance with the laws of Zimbabwe and should therefore be left to run its course. The Summit totally rejected claims by the MDC (Tsvangirayi) that it had won the elections and it called on all Parties to exercise restraint and respect the laws of the country. In particular, it called on all Parties to await announcement of the results and accept the results when announced by ZEC.

The Summit then revisited the SADC Chair's proposal that the Summit be addressed by Morgan Tsvangirayi and Simba Makoni. After another protracted debate on the issue, the Summit rejected the SADC Chair's proposal to allow Morgan Tsvangirayi and Simba Makoni to address the Summit and instead agreed to suspend the Summit proceedings to give an opportunity to those delegations who wished to hold informal consultations with Messrs Tsvangirayi and Makoni on the sidelines of the Summit to do so as is the normal procedure at such Summits. The Zimbabwe delegation did not see any merit in attending the informal consultations.

14th April 2008