

**Testimony of Ambassador Johnnie Carson
Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights
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Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Payne, honorable Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you concerning the situation in Zimbabwe and U.S.-Zimbabwe relations.

Zimbabwe is a country of enormous economic, agricultural, and regional potential. Unfortunately, a history of fiscal mismanagement, poor governance, and a culture of political violence have limited that potential for nearly 15 years. While some visible improvements have been made, serious challenges remain.

After a deeply flawed and violent election in 2008, Zimbabwe's former opposition parties are now part of a transitional coalition government that has lasted nearly three years. This coalition government was established under the stewardship of the Southern African Development Community as a key tenet of the Global Political Agreement, which was negotiated between the opposing parties to end political violence and move past contested elections. Although significant challenges remain on the political front, there has been progress. A tri-partisan parliamentary committee has sought input for a new draft constitution from millions of Zimbabweans. Zimbabwe's economy, which dollarized in 2009, has made a remarkable recovery. The International Monetary Fund estimated that Zimbabwe's Gross Domestic Product grew at nine percent in 2010. Humanitarian need has decreased significantly since 2009, when 7 million people received humanitarian aid. In January 2012, the number of people needing humanitarian assistance is projected to be just one million. Schools and health clinics previously closed due to a lack of staff and supplies have re-opened and are providing vital social services to the Zimbabwean people.

At the same time, substantial progress has been impeded by censorship, weak rule of law, and the continued politicization of state institutions. Politically motivated harassment, intimidation and violence continue, and state institutions are beholden to partisan agendas.

The United States has always supported the people of Zimbabwe's aspirations to create a country that would truly empower its citizens. In the 1960s and 1970s, we supported UN efforts to pressure Rhodesian authorities to accept majority rule. The United States was the first country to extend diplomatic relations to the newly independent Zimbabwe in 1980.

We have also voiced our concern when the liberation-era leadership has taken actions that posed a threat to Zimbabwe's stability, prosperity, and development as a modern democratic state. The U.S. sanctions program is the most visible manifestation of that concern, as it targets 121 individuals and 69 entities pursuant to Executive orders issued to address the undermining of democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe. These sanctions began in March of 2003. Much has changed in Zimbabwe since then. Over the past year, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control has modified the sanctions list, adding or deleting names on the list to reflect some of those changes. The Administration will continue to ensure the targeted sanctions program remains meaningful and accurate.

At the same time, the United States is working to help develop a strong, democratic, market-oriented Zimbabwe and respond to humanitarian needs. We have provided nearly a billion dollars in assistance from Fiscal Year 2006 through Fiscal Year 2011. I will defer to my USAID colleague, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Africa Sharon Cromer, to provide more information about USAID programs in Zimbabwe.

We are mindful of the current fiscal climate and the existing legal restrictions on our assistance and we will continue to consult closely with Congress, especially with this Committee, on any proposals to change our assistance program to Zimbabwe.

The next two years will be a test for Zimbabwe, and the world will be watching to see if its political leaders stick to the commitments they made and hold free and fair elections according to a roadmap negotiated with the assistance of the Southern African Development Community.

Zimbabwe's future will not depend on the actions of any one individual or even one political party. It will depend on the collective decisions Zimbabwe's people make to replace a legacy of political violence and one-party rule with a culture of tolerance, reconciliation, and the de-politicization of state institutions. We are contributing to empowering Zimbabweans to build the markets and institutions necessary to determine their own future.

The United States values partnerships with nations whose leaders demonstrate a commitment to the rule of law and the free flow of information. These features form the foundation of stable, growth-oriented democracies all over the world, and will be a key factor governing our relationship with the Government of Zimbabwe in the years to come.

If Zimbabwe's political parties implement the commitments that they themselves have made in the Global Political Agreement and the electoral roadmap, there will be a clear imperative for the United States to reconsider our current sanctions policy. Specifically, this would mean the holding of free, fair, and internationally monitored elections. It will also require state institutions to be de-linked from ZANU-PF.

The Department of State will continue to press for the protection of human rights and accountability for those who abuse them while acknowledging progress where it is made. Zimbabweans have already enshrined these rights in their own laws, constitution, and international obligations, and we will continue to stand by Zimbabweans who are working to protect these rights.

We are also doing what we can, within the confines of the targeted sanctions program, to promote Zimbabwe's economic recovery and to highlight opportunities for investment that will benefit U.S. and Zimbabwean businesses alike. We will continue to provide guidance to U.S. businesses interested in taking advantage of opportunities in Zimbabwe about how they can move forward in a way that complies with U.S. law.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Zimbabwe's importance to the Southern African region. Zimbabwe shares borders with South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, and Mozambique. It is a critical transport hub, a rich resource of talent, and a country with great economic potential. Unfortunately, as we saw in 2008, the

unstable political situation in Zimbabwe affects all the countries around it. Partisan influence over elements of the security sector and the use of these forces for violent actions against political opponents has led to a darkening of the security sector's reputation, both at home and abroad. Zimbabwe's neighbors are still feeling the effects of the refugee flows and economic collapse.

It is important to note the areas of concern and stalemate, as we often do, but also to recognize progress and change in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a young nation with a long colonial legacy to overcome. Social, political, and economic advances do not happen quickly, nor will they necessarily follow an American or western model. Implementation of the Global Political Agreement has been problematic from the beginning, but the Southern African Development Community takes its mediating role seriously, and I am confident that they will not allow elections to go forward if it appears that the prevailing conditions will lead to a repeat of the 2008 crisis.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you have.