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ZIMBABWE'S FOREIGN POLICY AND AN UPDATE ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT AND THE INTERNATIONAL WORLD

Speech delivered by the Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe, Honourable Dr. I. S. G. Mudenge, to The Zimbabwe Staff College, from 10.30 hours to 12.45 hours , on Wednesday, 19 November 2003

INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy is described as involving actions and ideas decided upon by policy makers in order to solve a problem, promote or influence some change in the policies, attitude or actions of another state or other states, whatever the case may be.

Zimbabwe's foreign policy objective is fundamentally to help safeguard and enhance the security and prestige of the country and the quality of life of its people by engaging with other countries at various levels in order to influence their behaviour so that an international environment conducive to the attainment of these goals is created and maintained.

Zimbabwe's foreign policy can be considered in three segments, namely, the geographical region within which our country is situated, (SADC), the African continent itself as a whole,(AU) and the entire international community.

In Southern Africa, Zimbabwe shares borders with Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa and Botswana. These countries are linked by centuries of our common history, culture and geography. Our experiences of foreign colonial rule as well as our common resistance to it serve as a common bond that binds us together.

Zimbabwe's neighbours, particularly Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana, which had already attained sovereign independence when Zimbabwe was still waging its armed struggle for freedom, immensely contributed to the achievement of this country's independence by offering political, diplomatic, moral and material as well as financial support to the liberation movements. Above all, their territories were used as rear bases by the liberation fighters, exposing them to frequent and brutal retaliatory attacks by the forces of the settler Rhodesian regime. In the case of Zambia and Mozambique, the roots of their current economic woes can be traced back to that period of Rhodesian sabotage and destabilization. This bitter historical experience makes it imperative for Zimbabwe to maintain friendly relations with its immediate neighbours. A stable, peaceful and prosperous sub-region provides Zimbabwe with a conducive environment for development.

The next layer of close interaction in Zimbabwe's foreign relations within the region is the Southern African Development Community (SADC). When the regional grouping was formed in April 1980 as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) it was tasked with the objective of pursuing policies aimed at curtailing dependence on apartheid South Africa and the integration of the economies in the region.

The solidarity established among these countries has shaped the close relations Zimbabwe enjoys with them as demonstrated by the cooperation in executing common projects on various infrastructural developments. With the demise of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, the SADC countries realized that there was need for the development of an institutional framework that would replace the Frontline State (FLS) in the areas of politics, defence and security cooperation. As a result, the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security was established by the Heads of State and Government in Gaborone, Botswana on 28 June 1996. In order to fulfill the objectives of the SADC Organ, Member States adopted the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation which was signed by the SADC Heads of State and Government on 14 August 2001 at the Blantyre Summit.

The Organ's objectives are:

- to protect the people and safeguard the development of the region against instability arising from the breakdown of law and order because of intra-state conflicts, inter-state conflicts and aggression.
- to promote political cooperation among the signatories and the evolution of common political values and institutions.
- to develop a common foreign policy approach on issues of mutual concern and advance such policy collectively in the international fora.
- to promote regional coordination and cooperation on matters related to security and defence and establish appropriate mechanism to this end.
- to prevent, contain and resolve inter-state and intra-state conflicts by peaceful means.
- to consider enforcement action in accordance with international law as a matter of last resort where peaceful means have failed.
- to promote the development of democratic institutions and practices among the signatories, and encourage the observance of universal human rights as provided for in the charters and conventions of the United Nations and the African Union.
- to develop close cooperation between the Police and state security services of the signatories in order to address cross border crime, and promote a community based approach to domestic security.
- to consider the development of a collective security capacity and conclude a Mutual Defence Pact for responding to external threats.
- to encourage and monitor implementation of United Nations, African Union and other international conventions and treaties on arms control, disarmament and peaceful relations between states.
- to develop the capacity of national defence forces peacekeeping and coordinate the participation of the signatories in international and regional peacekeeping operations.

- to enhance regional capacity in respect of disaster management and coordination of internal humanitarian assistance.

SADC has since closed ranks by adopting and signing the SADC Mutual Defence Pact. By signing this Pact in Dar-es-Salaam in August 2003, the SADC Heads of State and Government were sending a clear message about their commitment to peace and stability in the entire region. It is most appropriate that this Pact was signed in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania which was not only the seat of the OAU Liberation Committee but also whose founding father the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere was the inaugural leader of the Frontline States and an inspiration to all of us.

Thus Zimbabwe's foreign policy towards the region aims at emphasizing the importance of solidarity and cooperation with the governments and peoples of the various countries. This policy is partly a reflection of our gratitude for the solidarity and support we ourselves enjoyed during the difficult period when we struggled for our independence. Even today, we still enjoy SADC's solidarity during this critical phase of our Land Reform Programme. This solidarity was recently unequivocally demonstrated during the SADC Summit in Dar-es-Salaam in August 2003, when the Heads of State and Government called on the Commonwealth and the EU to lift sanctions imposed against Zimbabwe. SADC has turned down financial assistance especially from the USA that excluded Zimbabwe on the principled grounds that SADC is indivisible. SADC has refused to attend a SADC – EU Ministerial meeting in Copenhagen that excluded Zimbabwe. The meeting had to be held in Maputo to ensure Zimbabwe's participation.

In like manner Zimbabwe was not hesitant to stand in defence of SADC member states when their sovereignty and territorial integrity were under threat. This was the basis for our positive responses to the calls for help when Mozambique was being destabilized by armed rebels sponsored by the then apartheid regime in South Africa, and when the Democratic Republic of the Congo was invaded by rebels supported by regular troops from the armies of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. It is also in the same spirit that we have given support to Lesotho, and will continue to do so if requested to lend that assistance.

OAU/AU

Since joining the OAU, (now the AU) soon after the attainment of independence in April 1980, Zimbabwe has played an active role towards the realization of the organization's objectives. Firstly, His Excellency the President has attended almost all the OAU/AU Summits where he has made his contributions in the deliberations of that body. Secondly, Zimbabwe has contributed immensely in terms of material and personnel to AU/UN peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Angola, and Rwanda. In Liberia, our contribution was in the form of sending an eminent person, the late former President Canaan S. Banana as a Special Representative of the OAU.

Africa's sense of self-preservation compelled it to embrace the philosophy of Pan Africanism which led to the founding of the OAU. The transformation of the OAU to the AU has brought about the realization that Africa has to go through a new phase or process of renewal, transformation and forward planning. This spirit of African nationalism demands the subordination of individual sovereignty in favour of a common

or collective continental sovereignty. The African Union as envisaged by our leaders entails the acceptance of common political values and systems, common defence and security, common foreign policy and indeed common aspirations in achieving acceptable levels of development and prosperity.

Perhaps the example of the AU's Peace and Security Council provides a good illustration of how the defence and security of Africa will be inextricably linked. The provisions of this Council stipulate that an attack on a member state by an outsider will be deemed an attack on all. The most recent poignant demonstration of the solidarity that Africans are building has been the refusal by the Africans to attend the African/EU Summit in Lisbon, Portugal without Zimbabwe's participation. Thus, the age old tactic of divide and rule has been thwarted and it is hoped that this stance by the leaders of the African continent will become the norm in future in different situations or circumstances with regards to different countries. It can thus be seen that the AU has established a firm foundation of unity and solidarity in action in the continent. What it means to Zimbabwe is that our policies, attitudes and behavior have to conform with what the AU Charter says on various issues. We are a member state of the continental organization hence our Foreign Policy should be in tandem with the principles and objectives enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the AU.

UN AND THE WORLD

Having discussed Zimbabwe's relations with the rest of the African continent, we may now briefly consider our relations with the rest of the world through the United Nations and other international organizations. It has to be realized that at the founding of the UN in 1945 Africa's presence in the world body was hardly noticeable, as there were only two black ruled states that were members, namely, Ethiopia and Liberia. South Africa, though a member too, was actually a white minority controlled state on the African continent and did not represent African interests. Today, Africa has the largest number of countries as member states of the UN. Having achieved its objectives of successfully exorcising the continent of colonialism and imperialism.

It is true that today Zimbabwe and Africa lag behind the rest of the world in economic development, but we should draw inspiration from the pioneering role our continent played in advancing the frontiers of global progress as well as human civilization. It is indeed an irony that our continent, established as the cradle of mankind and civilization, can be anchored at the bottom of mainstream global economic activity. Many people see what is emerging from this so called globalization as the consolidation of the international division of labour in which Africans will for ever be condemned as the suppliers of raw materials and consumers of goods and culture from the industrialized countries. In other words, globalization has become a euphemism for the industrialized world's imperialism and cultural domination. This then poses the question whether as Zimbabweans, or Africans for that matter, we should accept whatever is put before us as manna from heaven without carefully studying it or examining it and risk having our policies contaminated by corrosive foreign influences.

Zimbabwe shares the hope and resolve of the founding fathers of the United Nations to redeem the world from self-destruction and the scourge of war. We have given eloquent expression to that resolve by participating in the UN peacekeeping missions around the

world. The performance of our troops and police officers has been so outstanding that we have been requested to provide Force Commanders to some of these missions. Zimbabwe stands for a just world order supported by the UN principles of equality of sovereign nations, respect for territorial integrity of other countries and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

These are the principles that have always guided Zimbabwe when considering making contributions towards peace efforts in such countries as Lesotho, Angola, Somalia, Mozambique, East Timor as well as in the former Yugoslavia. It is in defence of the same principles that our men and women were deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as part of the SADC Allied Forces and Zimbabwe will continue to pursue with determination its quest for peace and justice among the nations of the world guided by the principles of impartiality and equal sovereignty.

While the UN is the embodiment of our hopes and aspirations, it is unfortunately used by a few rich and powerful countries to subjugate the weaker nations. We are a member of the United Nations and will remain so, not because the world body adequately represents our interests, but because it is the only universal forum within which we can express our hopes and concerns in defence of our interests, human dignity, justice, sovereignty and our aspirations in economic development. For the UN to fully represent the interest of all, it needs to be reformed. Especially its Security Council which represents the out model world of the post 1945 world dominated by the victors of the second world war. Why should economic giants like Japan and Germany remain unrepresented on the Security Council when economic light weights like the UK are represented? Why should a whole continent like Africa and Latin America be unrepresented in the permanent member category when other continents are over represented? We need to overhaul the post world war power architecture in the political and economic fields. The Bretton Woods Institutions need urgent reform to reflect the reality of the 21st century.

In its interaction with the rest of the world, Zimbabwe is not influenced by, nor does it take any order from other states or foreign interests. It is our obligation to the people of Zimbabwe, and not to foreign interests, which inspires and influences our conduct of relations with other members of the international community. It is this national vision that we carry to the UN and shapes our behaviour with other countries. Unfortunately, the UN has failed to be the centre for harmonizing the actions of the nations but has instead been hijacked by a few countries whose conduct sometimes undermines its authority. Zimbabwe is concerned that this world body's Security Council had often failed to adopt balanced approaches in dealing with various crises in different regions of the world. When there is a crisis in Europe or other regions, the UN has zealously and robustly deployed peacekeepers provided for with adequate resources. As a result the peacekeepers are able to deal immediately with the threats to peace and security that might arise. On the other hand, its response to African conflict situations can be described as often half-hearted and hesitant.

Zimbabwe became a member of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1980. Our dynamic participation in the movement as well as our deep conviction in its principles resulted in Zimbabwe being Chairman in 1986, only six years after attaining independence. Those not familiar with the genesis and operations of the Non-Aligned Movement have questioned its *raison d'être* in the post Cold War era. What the critics of this organization

do not realize is that the end of the Cold War and the advent of unipolarity do not negate the rationale in maintaining the support for the Non-Aligned Movement and its hallowed principles on which it was founded. In fact, the danger posed by unipolarity in the world today, particularly to such small countries as ours, still exists.

We are living in a world in which military adventurism, unilateral interventionism, armed confrontation and aggression against small nations have become a disturbing norm. It is such a trend of developments which vindicate the arguments of the developing countries that it is necessary for them to maintain vigilance under the umbrella of the Non-Aligned Movement and the G77. Our strength lies in our unity as developing countries, and we will not shirk our resolve to forge greater solidarity with our African, Asian and Latin American friends with whom we share our problems and concerns, as well as our hopes and aspirations.

However, the foreign policy equation is incomplete without mentioning the critical role played by the Zimbabwe Defence Forces in its implementation. Our Defence Forces, like those of any other country are an instrument of foreign policy. This they effectively do by defending the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and broader vital interests. Within the region, they ensure a collective security arrangement and cooperation in defence matters

Zimbabwe believes that the threat or use of force to deter external aggression is a legitimate instrument of the last resort if political and diplomatic solutions have been exhausted. It is quite clear that Defence Forces are an extension as well as instrument of Zimbabwe's foreign policy. Instances of regional and international involvement of our defence forces are a clear testimony in this regard.

It must be remembered that we all have a duty to our country no matter what differences we may have with the government of the day. There are supreme national interests, which must be defended by all; for example Zimbabwe's economic well-being, its security, and its integrity as a nation. These are fundamentals that all patriotic Zimbabweans should defend as a matter of course. Americans, Englishmen, Frenchmen and Germans do the same when such fundamentals are at stake. Zimbabwe has permanent interests which we all must defend and promote.

Thank you.

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