



MEDIA STATEMENT

THE NATIONAL HOUSE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS POSITION ON ZIMBABWE'S LAND RESETTLEMENT POLICY AND THEIR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ROBERT MUGABE

Having sought and readily obtained an audience with His Excellency the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Mr Robert Mugabe, during the course of our 4-day official visit where the Council of Chiefs hosted a delegation of traditional leaders from South Africa, we hereby profoundly announce that we are impressed with the affable, genuine and principled discussions shared with the President.

Equally significant is that our objectives of assessing Zimbabwe's land resettlement policy, to share experiences and strategies for improved local government systems and our plan to unite traditional leaders under the banner of the Continental House of Traditional Leaders (COTLA) have been realised.

Our observation of the agrarian reform programme instituted by the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe in 2000 is that it has decidedly benefited the majority of the previously marginalized black population who had largely endured peasant life over the last century. A determined policy towards an egalitarian society can readily be described as having been highly successful as the State presently channels more energy and resources towards agricultural inputs, implements and technical extension services as well as effective marketing strategies that would ultimately enable the newly resettled farmers to reap economic benefits from the sale of their produce thereby enhancing self-sustainability of the entrenched farming activities.

What is more evident is that traditional leaders in Zimbabwe are at the forefront of land distribution. Perhaps, these are some of the lessons that we think our government should consider when dealing with land redistribution in our country. Our next step in this issue is to take a closer look at our own land policy on whether it does address our needs of accessing arable land. We think it would be proper to seek an audience with the Minister of land affairs, Ms Thoko Didiza to

discuss our concerns about foreign ownership of land; about one person owning more than one farm and the policy of willing buyer willing seller which we believe is hindering progress on land distribution.

The Zimbabwe National Council of Chiefs, through the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe, will invite traditional leaders in South Africa to witness the actual conduct of the forthcoming Parliamentary plebiscite in Zimbabwe on March 31, 2005, in order to witness the transparency and genuineness. Indeed, as traditional leaders of South Africa we have indicated our willingness to witness the actual polling and the aftermath of the process until April 8, 2005.

The Zimbabwe National Council of Chiefs further concur with us on the necessity of promoting periodic exchange visits at all levels for the purpose of strengthening cultural and socio-economic collaboration with the express intent to enhance the overall living standards of our respective peoples and specifically share insights and strategies on such topical matters as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty alleviation, conflict resolution and traditional food security measures.

Our noble intention to unite our traditional leaders in Africa received a boost from our counterparts in Zimbabwe which led to the agreement that we must invigorate our efforts, towards the establishment of COTLA with the view to deliberate and enhance the stature of African traditions in their diversity but with the common object of promoting better collaboration and effective participation in matters of development in an environment of increasingly fast and improved technological information and communication manoeuvres.

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