



Statement on Zimbabwe

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The swearing in on June 29 of Robert Mugabe as President is an unacceptable outcome of the Zimbabwe crisis, for the people of that country, the region and Africa. It is disappointing that the African Union, despite the valiant efforts of some of the leaders at its recent summit, was not able to deal effectively with the Zimbabwe matter. However, we applaud the African leaders who chose to speak out against the sham election and we support the position of the European Union which does not regard the current government as legitimate. The international community, and especially African leaders, should take a similar position, especially at the UN.

Zimbabweans courageously went to the polls in March in the face of a campaign of voter intimidation. They clearly voted to oust the Mugabe regime. Governments and international civil society organizations should support the people by adopting concrete measures to isolate the Mugabe regime, which hijacked the process in a run-off election that was not endorsed by any outside group. Indeed, both the Pan-African Parliament and the observer mission of the Southern African Development Community agreed that the June vote was neither free nor fair. Such conclusions by these organizations are rare, underscoring the illegitimacy of the regime. The African Union, in effect, failed to uphold the findings of its own observer missions.

The Zimbabwe regime under Robert Mugabe now poses a clear threat to the peace and security of the Southern Africa region. Not only has the regime brutalized its own people, but it is responsible for the utter ruin of one of Africa's strongest economies, impoverishing the people in what was once the region's breadbasket and threatening instability across borders. Zimbabwe's state failure has resulted in severe humanitarian suffering, including the flight of millions of refugees to neighboring countries.

We support the positive role of the African observer missions and their findings, the new standards of conduct embodied in the Africa Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance and the African Union constitutive act regarding unconstitutional holding on to power.

We advocate three steps to be taken now. First, the international community, including the U.N. Security Council, should urge member states to withhold recognition of the Mugabe government and downgrade its diplomatic representation in the country. Second, the UN should adopt stiffer economic and travel sanctions that will isolate the regime further in order to hasten the peaceful installation of a government that legitimately reflects the will of its people. Third, international donors should plan a quick-disbursing international aid program that would assist a new government in reconstruction and stabilization, if and when a legitimate, civilian government takes office. It is imperative that the international community act swiftly if democratic values are to be preserved and further deterioration avoided in a state that is pivotal to the growth and stability of sub-Saharan Africa.

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