

Zimbabwe Weekly Update 28/2011 – 11 July 2011

Overview

1. Elections: Continued Arrests of Senior MDC Politicians – Draft Electoral Act Criticised
 2. Reconstruction: Rise in Tobacco Sales – Government Launches Economic Blue-Print
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1. Elections:

- The pre-referendum/election environment continues to be overshadowed by arrests of senior MDC politicians: Three Cabinet Ministers of the MDC-N were arrested for 3 hours in Hwange following a rally in Victoria Falls. The three, Welshman Ncube, Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga and Moses Mzila-Ndhlovu, were released without charges three hours after they had been detained. The arrests come in the wake of recent arrests of MDC-T cabinet Ministers Elton Mangoma and Jameson Timba, among other political activists who have been tortured in custody.
- Proposed amendments to the Electoral Act that are expected to be tabled in Parliament soon as part of a roadmap for elections are reportedly falling short of expectations. The Election Resource Centre (ERC) this week lamented that the envisaged changes still leave the Registrar-General, who is an appointee of the President, in charge of administering the voters roll. The ESC also criticized the fact that according to the proposed provisions, the Chief Election Officer is the Returning Officer in the Presidential Elections, saying that this should have been the role of the Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in consultation with the Commissioners. Other issues that have been raised as not satisfactory include the fact that the proposed revisions are silent on the time period within which results should be announced. There is also no clause to allow long term observation and the early deployment of observers.
- The changes to the electoral law are silent on the access of election agents and observers to election centres where tallying of results will take place. Another observation is that the requirement for residence within the constituency 12 months prior to the elections will disenfranchise a huge number of the voting public, especially those that have been displaced by



violence. The Zimbabwe Exiles Forum (ZEF) expressed concern that according to this provision the over 4 million Zimbabweans living in the diaspora would be unable to vote. The organisation says that it “will engage ZEC, the negotiators and facilitators to the Global Political Agreement and other stakeholders on this anomalous situation.”

- Meanwhile, Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai’s MDC-T has announced that it has completed a draft bill to regulate the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). The CIO, which operates from the President’s office, has been accused of widespread atrocities aimed at propping up ZANU (PF). The draft bill comes amid renewed calls for security sector reforms in line with the Global Political Agreement.

2. Reconstruction:

- Zimbabwe tobacco sales this year rose 17% from last year amid an influx of buyers from China. Chinese buyers are reported to have bought 40% of this year’s crop, but output remains at 170 million kilograms compared to 236 in the year 2000.
- This week, the government launched a five-year economic Medium-Term Plan (MTP) aimed at boosting economic growth to 7.1 per cent a year by 2015 increase employment by 6 per cent annually. It is reported that an estimated 9.2 billion US dollars would be needed to finance the economic blue-print. Vice President Joice Mujuru ZANU-PF is quoted as having said that the MTP’s thrust was to “maintain macro-economic stability, restore and transform the economy’s capacity to produce goods and services competitively for empowerment and poverty reduction”. The president of the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC), Oswald Binha, reportedly said the targets were achievable but policy inconsistency and unpredictability were a stumbling block.

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