

Zimbabwe Weekly Update 20/2011 – Monday 16 May 2011

Overview

1. Elections: Constitutional reform exercise resumes
 2. Natural Resources: Mines Minister, Obert Mpofu accuses De Beers of diamond looting
 3. Reconstruction: Zimbabwe has the highest tuberculosis mortality rate in the world- WHO
 4. International Relations: International Air Transport Association suspends Air Zimbabwe
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1. Electoral Preparations

- The Constitutional reform exercise has resumed this week after having stalled over disagreements. Disagreements resulted after ZANU (PF) insisted on a quantitative analysis of the data so far captured during the outreaches, while the MDC-T and MDC-N insisted on a qualitative analysis. Commenting on the resolution of the stalemate, MDC-T Spokesperson and Co-Chair of the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee said that the Committee will now use both approaches to analyse the data, while observing that "It was a compromise deal, but I must say it's a win-win deal for everyone and people are back at work".

2. Natural Resources

- Mines Minister Obert Mpofu, this week accused De Beers of looting over 100 000 tonnes of diamonds out of Zimbabwe. The Minister is quoted saying, "...We have the records (to prove it) and now they are saying we must not indigenise. If we were allowed to sell our diamonds, we could have paid our debts and would not need the World Bank or IMF". Allegedly, Andrew Bone, De Beers International Relations Director dismissed these claims as outrageous; while maintaining that De Beers would like to see Zimbabwe complying with the Kimberly Process.
- The Chamber of Mines wrote a letter seeking the intervention of Parliament to halt the ongoing indigenisation programme as carried out by the Indigenisation Minister, Saviour Kasukuwere. The Ministry has given all mines until 2 June to cede 51% of their stakes to local blacks under a process that the Chamber of Mines believes amounts to nationalization rather than empowerment of the majority blacks.



3. Reconstruction

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has this week revealed that Zimbabwe has the highest tuberculosis mortality rate in the world. In a report launched this week, Zimbabwe is currently rated 17th on a WHO list of 22 countries that are considered to be high burden TB countries in the world. According to the report, "Nearly 69 percent of new adult TB patients tested in Zimbabwe were HIV positive. National data suggests that the actual estimate is slightly higher and there is increasing HIV surveillance in TB patients".
- Reportedly, the National AIDS Council's Monitoring and Evaluation Director, Mr Amon Mpfu, noted that only a fraction of Zimbabweans infected with HIV-AIDS are able to access anti-retroviral drugs. He revealed that currently slightly above 350 000 people have access to ARVs, out of about 503 000 people who are supposed to be accessing treatment.
- It is alleged that Zimbabwe has adopted a hybrid debt solution to the debt crisis. It has been reported that the government has approved a debt resolution strategy which will see the encompassing of the traditional Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) and the use of Zimbabwe's natural resource endowments. The strategy is meant to counter more than US\$7 billion owed to foreigners.

4. International Relations

- The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has suspended Air Zimbabwe following its failure to pay a debt amounting to US\$280,000. However, Air Zimbabwe, which was suspended from international financing and ticket sales can still fly if it can use its own facilities. In a statement this week, IATA said that Air Zimbabwe must "immediately stop all ticketing and refund transactions". Air Zimbabwe general manager for Europe, David Mwenga allegedly credited this debt to IATA to a month long strike by Air Zimbabwe pilots last month. He has been quoted saying, "we have been engaged in discussions with IATA since last week and we are very keen to get this resolved"

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