

## AfC Press Releases

---

### **Sustainable Rural Development**

**August 21, 2006**

The recent call made by Comrade Dingiswayo Banda for the next Zambian government to tend to the development needs of rural communities needs to be echoed. Earlier this year, we had an online discussion with a concerned Zambian at Radio Mano in Kasama on this very subject. His view about the general welfare of rural communities would perhaps reflect the views of rural dwellers nationwide; he said, "Rural areas back here at home are deplorable. We lack simple amenities the urban areas are enjoying and, at times, we feel sidelined and forgotten."

Simply, rural areas are, by and large, neglected by the government. This, of course, is not to suggest that socio-economic development in urban and peri-urban areas is satisfactory—not at all!

There is clearly a pressing need for leadership that will retrieve the issue of rural development from political rhetoric and make it an important element of the national AGENDA that is deserving of serious consideration. The starting point in addressing the glaring under-development in rural areas in Zambia—and in all countries worldwide as a matter of fact—is to understand the causes of such under-development.

Currently, Zambia's economy is characterized by uneven development in the national economy between the agriculture-based rural sector and the manufacturing-based urban sector, whereby the latter sector is relatively more developed than the former. There are several situations which have lead to such uneven development in our beloved country's economy; they include the following:

- (a) The general lack of transportation, recreational facilities, decent housing, health-care services, educational institutions, and other basic facilities and services in the agriculture-based rural sector causes a drift of people to the relatively more developed manufacturing-based urban sector;
- (b) Distorted government policies and incentives that are more favorable to the manufacturing sector and less favorable to agricultural activities; and
- (c) Relatively higher wages in manufacturing facilitated largely by collective bargaining attract skilled people away from the generally non-unionized and low-wage agricultural sector.

To take development to rural areas, a caring government, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, can initiate attractive incentives designed to lure investors and job seekers from urban centers to rural and sub-urban areas, and to provide adequately for essential public services and facilities in the rural areas—including police protection, an inter-modal transporta-

tion network, fire protection, rural electrification, accessibility to clean drinking water, low-cost housing, as well as educational, vocational, recreational, and healthcare facilities.

Besides, it is essential to pursue rural development in ways that would not rob the fragile natural environment in the rural areas of its ability to meet the needs of both present and future generations. As a critical part of our national HERITAGE, the land—with all the natural endowments beneath and above it—needs to be protected from reckless economic pursuits and endeavors.

For example, it is important to stem natural-resource wasting culminating from uncontrolled production of fuel wood, charcoal production, shifting cultivation systems, overgrazing, incineration of woodlands and grasslands, poaching for game meat as well as ivory and animal skins, and the use of explosives and toxic herbs to kill fish.

Moreover, there is a need for stringent pieces of legislation designed to control the various forms of environmental pollution to tolerable levels—that is: air, water and solid-waste pollution.

---

### **The Incidence of Crime in Zambia** **September 10, 2006**

On September 28, 2006, voters in our beloved country's nine provinces will be lining up at polling stations to elect their fellow citizens to positions of authority at various levels of governance. Unfortunately, one of the serious issues affecting the country is totally ignored by political contestants—that is, the escalation of crime.

The issue of rampant criminal activities in our country is a serious problem that needs to be tended to urgently. Today, every family and business has been directly or indirectly affected by robberies, burglaries, vandalism, and other senseless crimes. It ought not be that way. We, therefore, need to reverse the trend, and we need to do so sooner rather than later! Let us consider a few initiatives for addressing the cancerous scourge.

1. National Crime-Prevention Board.—We need to create a "National Crime-Prevention Board" under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice to formulate an effective and efficient national crime-prevention strategy. The Board should be made up of police, prisons and paramilitary commanding officers, and representatives of chambers of commerce and industry, private legal practitioners, relevant government agencies, and civil rights organizations.

2. Local Control over the Police.—We should also consider the prospect of transferring the responsibility over the civil police and both prisons and corrections to provincial governments after creating semi-autonomous provinces administered by elected provincial governors and district mayors. In the interim, superintendence over the operations of the civil police and prisons should fall under the jurisdiction of a Ministry for Culture and Community Services—in which case the Ministry of Home Affairs would need to be dissolved.

Close superintendence over police functions by local governments is more likely to make it possible for police officers to discharge the following duties more effectively: (a) protection of life and property; (b) preservation of peace, and prevention of crime; (c) detection and apprehension of law breakers; (d) enforcement of laws and ordinances; (e) safeguarding the rights and freedoms of members of society; and (f) developing sound police-community relations.

Sound police-community relations are indispensable in the fight against crime. Without adequate involvement by local communities in combating crime, for example, police officers are not likely to succeed in their endeavors. And, in the same manner as accused individuals are protected by the presumption of innocence until they are proven otherwise by a competent court of law, we need to provide for adequate protections to both alleged victims and witnesses.

Also, individuals who volunteer to report crimes need to be assured of adequate protection of their rights and identities if they are to share vital information on criminal activities with law-enforcement personnel and agencies.

Upon devolving the superintendence over the civil police and prisons to provincial governments, the national government would need to work hand in glove with provincial governments through the Ministry for Culture and Community Services in providing logistical and other essential forms of support to prisons and the civil police.

To bolster the fight against crime and other social vices nationwide, the national government would need to allocate adequate financial and material resources to police units in order to enhance their capabilities in terms of communications, transportation, crime-fighting gadgets and equipment, and security cameras for installation in town centers and on major roads and streets.

3. Public Complaints Authority.—We should continue with the concept of a Police and Prisons Public Complaints Authority at the district level in order to provide an effective mechanism through which members of the public can be afforded the opportunity to keep the operations and conduct of police and prisons officers in check.

4. A Multi-Faceted Strategy.—The fight against crime involves more—much, much more—than rounding up alleged criminals and/or handing out stiff punishment. It is of the utmost importance to address the factors that induce criminal activity. Although habitual criminals cannot be easily reformed, creation of adequate jobs by stimulating supply and demand through lower taxes and interest rates can greatly reduce the number of citizens who are disposed to engage in criminal activities for the purpose of obtaining financial and/or material resources in order to meet their basic needs. And, as an age-old maxim tells us, “An idle mind is the devil's workshop.”

By the way, there is a two-way relationship between crime and poverty which may be illustrated as follows: (a) irresponsible and/or poverty-stricken individuals in a particular community commit crimes like burglar-

ies and robberies; and (b) existing businesses and potential investors are fanned away from the community by such crimes—thereby deepening the poverty situation by depriving the community of employment opportunities and the essential goods and services which business entities provide.

Like corruption, the incidence of crime can only be contained by a political leader of Brig.-Gen. Godfrey Miyanda's stature, a leader who has genuinely earned the badge of being exceptionally principled and law-abiding from observers both at home and abroad.

In all, it will be irresponsible for us as a nation to cast our votes for presidential candidates who are surrounded by crooks from the current and previous government regimes. We SHOULD NOT bolster the potential for crooks to be landed with positions of authority during the 2006—2011 period.

---

### **Solid-waste Pollution in Lusaka** **October 11, 2006**

We wish to commend the Environmental Council of Zambia for sponsoring the "Environmental Newsmaker Forum" held at Holiday Inn on November 8, 2006 to discuss the nagging problem of unprecedented levels of garbage in Lusaka city. Since we could not partake in the discussion, we have found it hard to resist the temptation of making a brief comment relating to the same issue through Zambezi Times Online (ZTO).

#### Introduction:

Solid waste, like air and water pollution, is a form of environmental pollution that is mainly a by-product of human activities. As such, it is an inescapable problem in every human society. It is, by and large, a culmination of discarded products or parts of products—including broken and non-reusable bottles, metal cans, plastic sacks and containers, newspapers, and automobile parts and bodies.

Lusaka city, like many other cities in modern Zambia, is currently experiencing serious problems at all stages of solid-waste management—that is, the collection, sorting, transportation, and disposal of garbage. The seriousness of this problem is summed up by the UN Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) in an article dated May 20, 2004 entitled "Zambia: Failure to Manage Urban Waste" found at <http://www.queensu.ca/> as follows:

"Heaped garbage, a choking smell and pools of stagnant water sum up the state of Soweto market, the largest open-air trading area in Zambia's capital ... [and] are a sign of how urban waste management has failed in what was once called the 'garden city' but is now cynically referred to as 'garbage city'".

#### A Health Hazard:

The accumulation of solid waste in the capital city can be attributed to many factors, including the following: (a) public attitudes that are alleged to be generally characterized by lack of concern for the quality of surroundings; (b) failure by local authorities to prioritize garbage collection and disposal; (c) lax enforcement of by-laws relating to littering and other

forms of contamination in public surroundings; (d) rampant and uncontrolled street vending; and (e) lack of financial and material resources resulting from irregular support in the form of grants from the central government.

But regardless of the reasons for the unprecedented accumulation of solid wastes in Lusaka city—and in other urban and sub-urban centers of Zambia, as a matter of fact—It is perhaps important to underscore the fact that such wastes are a serious health hazard. For instance, piles of uncollected solid-wastes facilitate the formation of pools of stagnant water and create breeding grounds for mosquitoes and, as such, dispose residents to the deadly malaria parasite.

Besides, outbreaks of cholera, meningitis and other contagious diseases in the country have been directly linked to the absence of effective solid-waste disposal systems, together with the lack of potable water in some communities and unhygienic street-vending of foodstuff.

The congestion of people in the city's urban and sub-urban areas occasioned by rural-to-urban migration has perhaps exacerbated the potential for outbreaks of communicable diseases in such areas. Inevitably, the potential health risks have become more profound and mind-boggling given the city's lack of adequate resources to provide for decent social services, public amenities and improved sanitary conditions to unprecedented numbers of residents.

Members of the MANGOKA Secretariat—who represent the residents of Marapodi, Ng'ombe and Kamanga residential areas in matters of refuse collection and disposal, and public health and sanitation—would perhaps provide us with a more precise and down-to-earth account of the potential health hazards associated with high levels of solid wastes in the capital city, whose sources include households and both commercial and industrial undertakings.

#### Potential Solutions:

A viable and long-term solution to the problem of solid-waste pollution is regular collection and recycling of all forms of solid waste. For example, plastics, discarded metals, and paper wastes can be collected and recycled into usable raw materials. Another feasible solution to the problem of solid wastes is the production of biodegradable products—that is, any products that are made in such a way that they can be naturally broken down into elements that are less harmful to the physical environment upon being disposed of.

Moreover, making reusable products and parts of products can greatly contribute to the mitigation of solid wastes. For example, containers can be designed in such a way that they can be used for other purposes once their original contents are exhausted. Junk yards are certainly not a viable solution to the problem of solid-waste pollution because they, among other reasons, take up areas that need to be reserved for commercial, residential, recreational, and/or other worthwhile purposes.

Besides, it is essential for the Zambian government to require locally based organizations to include environmental impact statements in their business plans or corporate charters. Suggestively, such statements need

to incorporate the following, among other things: (a) identification of potential impacts of their operations on the environment; and (b) a description of measures they are geared to take in managing these impacts to tolerable levels.

It is also important for the government to provide adequately for the material and financial needs of the Environmental Council of Zambia, which was created under the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Act of 1990 to protect the environment and control pollution so as to provide for the health and welfare of persons, and the environment as follows: coordination of environmental management; promotion of awareness about the need to protect the fragile natural environment; and enforcement of regulations pertaining to the control and prevention of air, water and solid-waste pollution.

Further, inclusion of subjects or courses of study aimed at sensitizing citizens to environmental issues and problems in the curricula of all educational and vocational training institutions can lead to conduct among citizens that is environmentally benign. To be effective, such education needs to be interdisciplinary in nature; in other words, it needs to be aimed at preparing citizens to be: (a) knowledgeable about the interrelatedness of biophysical and socio-cultural environments of which humans are a constituent part; (b) aware of environmental issues and problems and of viable alternatives in resolving the issues and problems; and (c) motivated to work voluntarily toward the protection and improvement of the fragile natural environment.

At this juncture, let us reflect on the lack of material and financial resources for addressing the nagging problem of solid-waste pollution in Lusaka city in particular, and in the entire country in general.

In this regard, there is an urgent need for both the central government and local authorities to seriously consider the prospect of shedding off some of the top-level sinecures in their administrations, instituting strict controls on both recurrent and capital expenditures, and streamlining operations.

It is, for example, irresponsible for us, as a nation, to condone a situation where the central government is composed of so many ministers and deputy ministers. Have we ever asked ourselves how government ministries continued to perform as before under the superintendence of Permanent Secretaries after the Cabinet was dissolved prior to the 2006 tripartite elections? What difference, then, will the recent appointments of ministers and deputy ministers make in terms of the performance of government ministries?

We are generally impressed by the caliber of the current crop of Permanent Secretaries; they are capable of advising the Republican president on, and spearheading the implementation of, policies relating to the government ministries they are expected to administer--a task which one would expect current ministers and their deputies to perform, but which most of them are not likely to perform adequately because they do not possess the necessary knowledge and skills relating to the overall missions and objectives of the government ministries to which they are appointed.

Once we secure a constitutional proviso that will require the Republican president to constitute his or her Cabinet from citizens who are not MPs (non-politicians, that is), Republican presidents will have the opportunity to fill Cabinet-level positions with technocrats.

By the way, do we really need District Commissioners in our quest to provide adequately for public health and sanitation, education and training, food security, public safety and security, and so forth? Further, and without intentionally wishing to inflame controversy, wouldn't our National Assembly still be representative and able to function effectively as the legislative organ of our national government with only 72 elected Members of Parliament (MPs)—1 MP elected from each of the existing 72 districts? Also, does the Republican president really need to nominate 8 people to the National Assembly? Why not 5 or less?

Meanwhile, the performance of essential public services like refuse collection and disposal is left to the private initiative of community-based organizations like the Marapodi Solid Waste Collection Services, and private enterprises like the Copperbelt-based Asset Holding Company--which provides municipal services in several mine townships involving garbage collection, operation of disposal sites and treatment of sewer.

Government leaders should be there not to function merely as figure-heads. More than ever before, our country needs leaders who are change agents—leaders who are always on their tenterhooks searching for ways and means of improving the livelihoods of their fellow citizens, and applying scarce public resources with the utmost frugality.

#### Conclusion:

While individuals and institutions need to be obliged to tackle the pollution they directly generate, there is a need for the creation of a partnership by the business community, non-profit organizations, and both national and regional governments to deal with environmental issues and problems for which no single organization or societal member can be held responsible. Ideally, such a partnership should, among other things, be based on voluntary self-help, that is, without any undue reliance on any of the cooperating institutions.

Currently, there are a few cooperative endeavors in the capital city which are making a positive impact on refuse collection and disposal in particular, and on sanitation in general; they include the Sustainable Lusaka Project (SLP) financed by Ireland Aid, and the Lusaka-Dayton partnership created by the Lusaka City Council and the Dayton municipality in Ohio, USA.

And one would do well not to slight the contributions being made through the "Keep Lusaka Clean" campaign, the "Make Zambia Clean and Healthy" campaign, the Zambian Red Cross Society door-to-door community health-education campaign, the Lusaka Solid Waste Management Project funded by the Danish Development Agency, the Resource Cities program sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other non-government efforts directed at redressing the solid-waste problem in particular, and enhancing public health and sanitation in local communities nationwide in general.

Ultimately, the overall responsibility for ensuring that garbage is collected, transported and disposed of in a safe and environmentally friendly manner should be assumed by local authorities supported materially and financially by the central government. This can be achieved in any of the following ways: (a) through direct local-government involvement in the exercise; (b) by engaging private contractors through competitive bids; and/or (c) through both direct local-government involvement and sub-contracting the garbage collection and processing services in selected areas.

---

### **Constitution-Related Demonstrations** **January 7, 2007**

The planned demonstrations by the Patriotic Front (PF) over the slow pace of the constitution-making process need not be perceived as a scheme designed to destabilize the country. Zambians nationwide have generally become weary of routine and rehearsed utterances that the government is committed to the review of the constitution as demanded by the people without providing a definite timetable that is consistent with the people's expectations.

The people want a new Republican constitution that should be adopted through a constituent assembly, and to have it sooner rather than later. So, why impose anything else on them? The acquisition of a costly presidential helicopter, the 37 video-mounted Nissan vans for ZANIS, and the 36 four-wheel drive vehicles for chiefs suggests that money for the constitution-making process is really not the problem. The adamancy about maintaining the highly bloated executive branch of the government would perhaps support this thesis.

The Electoral Reform Technical Committee (ERTC) and the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) have already done a great job in this endeavor. What we need now is for the authorities to treat the constitutional issue with utmost urgency. Meanwhile, the Draft Republican Constitution prepared by the CRC in December 2005 has continued to gather dust on the shelves!

In passing, there is a need for the authorities to be mindful of the fact that the Republican constitution is really not intended to be for, or sanctioned by, a particular political party or clique of government leaders. It is a constitution for all Zambians—today and forever! We believe it is unforgiving for government leaders to fail to demonstrate the fact that they are individually and collectively accountable to the people. How is it possible that partisan and selfish interests can intoxicate leaders to the extent of making them to disregard the will of the people to whom they are supposed to be accountable?

The following observations evoked by the seemingly partisan and selfish interests that characterized the formulation and adoption of the 1996 Republican constitution should serve as important caveats in our quest to address the current constitutional impasse:

1. "A bad constitution is a divisive document, and divisions which can be occasioned by such a constitution can very easily ferment bloody conflicts in a society."—*The Post*. (Excerpted and adapted from "It Is a Recipe for Anarchy," *The Post*, August 1, 1995.)
2. "A constitution should not belong to, or be respected only by, the political party that happens to be in power at the time of its drafting or amendment."—*The Post*. (Excerpted and adapted from "It Is a Recipe for Anarchy," *The Post*, August 1, 1995.)
3. "If, for the love of power, those in government today turn their backs, and block their ears, to the legitimate constitutional concerns of other citizens who see things differently, they should accept an apportioned responsibility for the turmoil that may ensue."—*The Post*. (Excerpted from "It Is a Recipe for Anarchy," *The Post*, August 1, 1995.)
4. "Is it not true that it is self-interest and a small urban elite that is detached from the urgent concerns of the majority of citizens that have sabotaged the process of creating a popular constitution?"—Zambia Civic Education Association. (Excerpted and adapted from "Constitutional Debate," *The Post*, August 4, 1995.)
5. "Only justice, fairness, and genuine democracy can prevent social and political unrest in a country; for a country like ours, the starting point in forestalling such unrest is to have an acceptable constitution, good leadership, and sound development policies and programs."—Akashambatwa Mbikusita-Lewanika. (Excerpted and adapted from "Coups Are Not Irrelevant Topics," *The Post*, August 29, 1995.)
6. "There is morally no excuse for denying citizens the right to determine the content of their country's constitution."—Elias Chipimo, Jr. (Excerpted and adapted from Mwape, B., "Government Using Trickery to Adopt Constitution," *The Post*, August 22, 1995.)
7. "As the supreme law of the land, the Constitution must be recognized and respected as embodying the sovereign will of the majority of our people."—Father Joe Komakoma. (Excerpted from "Government Must Respect the People's Wishes," *The Post*, October 13, 1995.)
8. "Regardless of whether we want to be partisan or otherwise, we all need to bear in mind the fact that our country's constitution is the supreme law of the land and, as such, it should be able to endure the test of time, as well as earn the respect of the citizenry."—*The Post*. (Excerpted and adapted from "White Paper a Waste of Time and Money," *The Post*, October 10, 1995.)

---

## **Demolitions of Illegal Structures**

**March 27, 2007**

The demolition of houses and small business entities alleged to have been built in illegal settlements, or on plots of land that were dubiously acquired, should have been planned and conducted with due consideration of the welfare of families involved. There are just too many citizens who

will be consigned to destitution and homelessness by the exercise as it is eventually extended to other towns and cities!

The fate of school-going children and sickly residents who will be adversely affected by the demolition of their homes, for instance, should have been factored into the demolition exercise.

With good planning, it could have been more reasonable to carryout the demolition exercise during the dry season and when schools are in recess. Adequate advance notice to families involved could also have made the exercise less traumatic to the families. There are certainly humane ways in which the implementation of the law or municipal ordinances can be fitted with a human face! How do leaders who seem to lack both conscience and compassion manage to find themselves in positions of authority in our beloved country?

We need to find ways and means of humanely dealing with the issue of illegal settlements, houses and/or business entities. Besides, we should seriously consider the prospect of providing adequately for government-funded housing schemes nationwide. We, in the Agenda for Change (AfC) party, have a few suggestions for addressing the housing needs of unemployed and low-income citizens nationwide:

#### The National Housing Authority

The National Assembly needs to consider converting the National Housing Authority (NHA) into an autonomous, self-sustaining and revenue-generating entity, which should incorporate all existing national public housing projects and programs. Its mandate should include: (a) provision of low-cost housing units for low-income families nationwide; (b) stipulation of fair eligibility requirements to be met by applicants for low-income public housing; (c) generation of rules of occupancy, and determination of rental and other related charges; and (d) management of a homeownership scheme for low-income families to be financed through low interest mortgages.

Each and every adult resident of a public housing unit would need to contribute at least sixteen (16) hours per month of community service within the local community in which he/she resides. Exemptions to this "community service requirement" could be considered for residents who would meet the following conditions: (a) 55 years of age or older; (b) physically or mentally disabled; (c) primary caretaker of a disabled person, or a child who is under seven (7) years of age; (d) attending school, a program of study, or training; or (e) employed on a temporary, part-time, or full-time basis.

The NHA would also need to devise a grievance procedure and guidelines for resolving any and all the issues and matters relating to non-compliance with this requirement. The grievance procedure and guidelines to be devised would need to be consistent with the principles of due process and non-discrimination, and would have to ensure that political or any other form of affiliation would not become a factor in dealing with housing issues.

#### Moratorium on Demolitions

Meanwhile, the National Assembly should act proactively by urgently placing a moratorium on demolitions of illegal structures and forced relocation of squatter compounds nationwide until the following conditions, among other considerations, are met:

(a) Adequate low-cost public housing units are provided by the NHA as suggested above; and/or

(b) Site and service areas designated by local authorities for re-settlement are furnished with running water, electricity, health care facilities, police protection, public transportation routes and portals, and other essential public services and facilities.

---

### **Affordable Water and Electricity**

**August 7, 2007**

Recently, the Managing Director of Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO) called for an increase in electricity tariffs during a Radio Two program under the theme "SADC Update" focusing on the energy sector.

An increase in electricity tariffs would be irresponsible considering the fact that the majority of Zambian families and businesses that have access to electricity are currently struggling to settle their electricity bills. The Managing Director's quest for a "sound revenue base" for ZESCO without considering the company's consumers who are already overwhelmed by the current levels of electricity tariffs clearly invokes the need for strict and direct governmental superintendence over the supply of both electricity and water to facilitate the charging of lower re-connection fees and lower rates and tariffs by utility companies, and to provide for rapid rural electrification and accessibility to clean drinking water nationwide.

In this endeavor, there is an urgent need for the government to foster the initiation of cost-cutting measures by suppliers of water and electricity through:

(a) Requiring all public utility companies to find ways and means of reducing marketing, public relations and administrative costs, and to seek low-cost suppliers of machinery, equipment, office fixtures and supplies, sub-contracted services, and so forth;

(b) Providing for a forum at which utility companies can be afforded an opportunity to suggest viable ways and means by which the government could facilitate the process of making public utilities less costly to consumers; and

(c) Working with executives of water supply and sewerage companies in devising a standard and lean organization structure to be adopted by the companies, except private providers that exclusively serve their employees.

As a starting point in making water and electricity tariffs low and affordable to both domestic and commercial users, utility companies should consider the prospect of reducing electricity tariffs by at least 10 percent-

age points and water rates by at least 15 percentage points. Such a gesture would certainly provide some relief to consumers of water and electricity who are already overstretched by current tariff rates. Besides, a reduction in electricity tariffs would also be benign to woodlands, which are under a very serious threat of destruction as a result of uncontrolled production of fuel wood, charcoal production, and so forth.

We should, of course, not talk about electricity without considering other important sources of energy. Among other things, there is a need to provide for attractive incentives to the private sector to engage in the exploration and/or supply of other forms of renewable and environmentally friendly sources of energy—including natural gas, solar energy, wind-generated electricity, methanol, ethanol, and propane.

Moreover, it is essential for the government and the Energy Regulation Board to work with the Zambia Association of Manufacturers, Zambia Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and oil marketing companies in designing a mechanism for pricing diesel, petrol, jet fuel, kerosene, bitumen, and related products that will take into account the needs of the transportation, manufacturing and agricultural sectors, among others. Besides, there is a need to seriously consider the prospect of either reducing or completely phasing out the Strategic Reserve Fee and value-added tax on sources of energy.

With respect to water, the government needs to bolster a trend toward greater participation by municipal authorities in the supply of water and the provision of sanitation services. The provision of water and sanitation services to clusters of employees by private providers—that is, employer-organizations—also needs to be encouraged through tax incentives. Here is why: it will not be possible for our beloved country to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the proportion of citizens who do not currently have sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015 through profit-seeking water suppliers and sewerage companies.

Finally, both water and electricity provide a good case for special government incentives designed to make them affordable and accessible to the vast majority of citizens. Besides, a government needs to make a provision for losses by suppliers of water and electricity resulting from charging of affordable tariffs to be financed through the public treasury.

---

### **The 27th Ordinary Summit of SADC** **August 21, 2007**

It is gratifying to learn that Zambians warmly welcomed to Lusaka the SADC Heads of State and Government, First Ladies, Ministers, the Executive Secretary, the Deputy Executive Secretary, the Chief Director, Heads of Delegations, and Delegates who have come to attend the 27th Ordinary Summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

We are confident that they all enjoyed the beauty, warmth, friendliness, and rich cultures and traditions of our beloved country and its people during their brief stay in Lusaka between August 10 and 18, 2007.

Was It a Mere Political Gathering?

The extreme and persistent poverty, hunger, disease, and a host of other problems that have come to characterize life in SADC member-countries in particular, and in the African Union in general, are certainly unprecedented in recent human history. And, to make things worse, there seem to be no easy solutions or quick fixes to the catalogue of socio-economic ills facing the African continent!

Integration of Africa's national economies, we believe, is one of the viable ways in which the continent's sons and daughters are likely to redeem their Mother from its current state of socio-economic decay and backwardness. If it is diligently and relentlessly pursued, economic integration can actually facilitate the attainment of pronounced and sustained levels of socio-economic development in member-countries.

As such, citizens in SADC member-countries expected Heads of State and Government to consider the Lusaka Summit as a great opportunity for them—individually and collectively—to seek and eventually pursue viable development strategies and initiatives that will lead to a meaningful improvement in the livelihoods of the citizenry in each and every SADC member-country.

Given the enormous public resources that were committed to the convening of the Summit, we will all be disappointed if it turns out to have been a "talk show"—a mere political gathering characterized by rhetoric and speech-making that will not culminate in concrete action.

Zambians, particularly, had very high expectations of the outcome of the Summit mainly because the Zambian government, as the host of the Summit, was responsible for providing transport and protocol facilities, and to provide security for all delegates during their brief stay in Lusaka.

Local public resources were, for example, committed to cater for the following: (a) State Escort for each of the SADC Heads of State and Government; (b) One Chauffer-Driven Car for each of the visiting First Ladies; (c) One Chauffer-Driven Car for each of the visiting Ministers; (d) One Chauffer-Driven Car for the Executive Secretary; (e) One Chauffer-Driven Car for the Deputy Executive Secretary; (f) One Chauffer-Driven Car for the Chief Director; (g) One Chauffer-Driven Car for each of the Heads of Delegations; and (h) mini-buses for the transportation of Delegates between the conference venue and their respective hotels.

#### Importance of Membership in the SADC

SADC member-countries are not going to make any headway in socio-economic development if they cannot profoundly integrate their economies. The enormity of development hurdles facing much of the SADC region—including limited domestic markets, inaccessible foreign markets, lack of investment capital, and unfavorable terms of trade with industrialized nations—certainly calls for what may be referred to as "south-south" economic cooperation if the current socio-economic decay and backwardness in the region are to be redressed.

SADC leaders, therefore, need to realize that their countries' real future does not hinge on seeking the compassion of, or excessive and protracted

reliance on, industrialized nations in matters of socio-economic development; rather, they need to take full responsibility for finding viable solutions to their countries' socio-economic ills.

There are many reasons why strong and permanent membership in a regional economic bloc like the SADC is essential in a country's quest for sustained and heightened socio-economic development. Let us consider some of these reasons.

1. A Competitive Edge.—There is a pressing need for Southern African countries to maintain strong and permanent membership in the SADC in order to become more competitive through cooperative scientific and technological endeavors and eventually be in a better position to venture in the modern global economic system that is characterized by such regional economic blocs as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) bloc of countries, the Organization of American States, the South American Community of Nations, the Arab Common Market, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round in December 1993 (which re-affirmed the need for an open, liberal and competitive international trading system) should particularly prompt SADC member-countries to move briskly in converting SADC from a mere regional grouping to a free trade area, a customs union, a common market, an economic union, a monetary union, and, ultimately, a political union.

If they dilly-dally in taking up this challenge, they should not expect economic units in their countries to gain the necessary technological and industrial competence they need to be able to become sturdy participants in the potentially competitive global economy of the 21st century. In the longer run, the region's leaders should not be surprised when their national economies turn into permanent retail outlets for commodities produced in various economic blocs around the world.

2. Market Limitations.—A large population is an important element in a country's quest for enhanced socio-economic development. Many development economists have recognized this fact, arguing that a large overall population can, among other things, increase the potential size of a country's domestic market to a level that is economically favorable to an expansion in both local and foreign investment.

For Southern African countries, this should be obvious considering the fact that ready access to foreign markets is thwarted by numerous and insurmountable export-related problems—including poor transportation infrastructure, inadequate information relating to foreign markets, dependence on the exportation of cheap primary commodities, and inadequate communications infrastructure. After all, it should be common sense that growing markets generally stimulate invention, rather than invention coming first and creating a market!

The issue concerning the size of a country's market may also be discerned in terms of population density. The low population densities of some of the countries in the Southern African region have partly made the provision of educational, healthcare and training facilities in the region's coun-

tries difficult, and have also negatively affected agricultural development by complicating the distribution of essential tools, fertilizers and pesticides.

The Malthusian view that population growth needs to be stemmed in order to prevent the misery, hunger and pestilence that can follow if the population exceeds the carrying capacity of a given physical environment does not, therefore, apply to most of sparsely populated, resource-rich Southern African countries. As such, global population control efforts need to be appropriately directed at countries whose population densities are excessive, such as Belgium, Germany, India, Japan, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.

In this regard, it is important to be mindful of the fact that African countries in general cannot benefit from economies of scale that are usually associated with large-scale production mainly due to the limited potential markets for their outputs. In other words, most African countries cannot achieve economies of scale in production due to their small populations and can, as such, benefit from large-scale production only through openness and regional integration.

In addition to the problem of limited local goods markets, African countries cannot, by and large, depend on foreign markets as a "vent for surplus" for their products due to the inaccessibility of such markets.

In short, Africa's most urgent need is an internal market that is large enough to absorb African economies' outputs of both agriculture and industrialization—and economic integration seems to be the most, if not the only, feasible way in which such an internal market can be created within a few years or so if African leaders are keen on pursuing the endeavor!

In fact, the larger consumer and industrial markets that can be created through the integration of national economies can make it possible for member-countries to attract the foreign capital they need for boosting business activity and, among other worthwhile benefits, increasing the level of employment.

3. Economies of Scale.—Economic integration is, among other things, a means of doing away with the disadvantages of small size, and of making possible the attainment of member-countries' desired levels of socio-economic development; among other things, it can make it possible for member-countries to exploit both economies of scale and economies of scope, and to capitalize on differences in comparative advantage in the production of commodities.

Also, there are important gains from economic integration that are associated with the opportunities for specialization made possible by the integration of markets; for example, economies of scale may be realized not only from the manufacturing industry, but also from the potential large-scale dispensation of public services and utilities.

For certain kinds of public services, there may also be economies to be derived from operation over a wider geographical area. In the case of air and rail transport, for instance, there is a very strong case for operating

on a large enough scale to make full use of both specialized abilities and any available machines of large capacity.

4. Competitive Environment.—Another potential and benign effect of economic integration relates to the emergence of greater competition in commerce and industry in an economic bloc. The reduction or removal of trade barriers brings about a more competitive market environment and eventually reduces the degree of monopoly power that might have been present prior to integration.

5. Stable Financial Market.—The eventual creation of a monetary union and/or an optimum currency area can facilitate the creation of a larger, more stable financial market since it can, among other things, eliminate exchange-rate variability in an economically integrated region. Also, the attainment of greater exchange-rate stability and certainty facilitated by a common currency can result in more stable and soundly based economic growth for an integrated region as a whole.

Moreover, it can be reasoned that elimination of currency fluctuations within an integrated region can increase trade among member-countries, since such fluctuations inhibit business enterprises from expanding their operations in other member-countries. This seems all too obvious considering the fact that fluctuations in exchange rates can more than wipe out the normal profits from any given business organization's sales.

Further, it may be assumed that a monetary union can eliminate the need for member-countries that may experience a decline in the aggregate demand for their export products to consider currency devaluations—which are now proved to be both ineffective in correcting a country's economic shocks and more likely to generate high levels of inflation—as a means of making their products competitive in other member-countries.

Besides, economic integration can lead to intra-industry specialization so that all member-countries can produce and sell similar products, making them more alike and eventually reducing the chances of any one member-country becoming a victim of an economic shock.

6. Terms of Trade.—By and large, Southern African countries, like all other developing countries worldwide, face unfavorable terms of trade (TOT) in their trade with industrialized nations; the price indices of their export products—that is, primary commodities—are generally lower than the price indices of the manufactured goods which they import from industrialized nations. The greater trade among African countries which is likely to culminate from economic integration can, on the other hand, lead to "even TOT," since their economies are generally at similar stages of industrialization.

7. Other Rationales.—Economic integration can also benefit member-countries in terms of administrative savings which they are likely to realize from a reduction in the functions of the customs units of their governments, and, among other things, the greater bargaining power which they can collectively gain by being constituent members of a regional economic bloc.

People Are Fed Up of the Blame Game

In every African country today, there is a general expectation (among the citizenry) for leadership with both vision and compass. Citizens are sick and tired of leaders who have continued to find scapegoats for their own failure to address the basic needs and expectations of the common people—leaders who have continued to attribute failure and mediocrity in governance to what have become traditional and convenient scapegoats; that is: colonialism, neo-colonialism, globalization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), among others.

But really, can any of these scapegoats be faulted for bloated national governments which cannot live within their means, the electoral malpractices which block cadres of competent potential leaders from the realm of national leadership, or the hemorrhage of public resources through corruption and misappropriation?

A few selected views on who is really to blame for Africa's persistent socio-economic ills is perhaps in order at this juncture:

(a) "We cannot avoid the fact that a lot of our problems in Africa arise from bad governance."—Julius K. Nyerere, "Governance in Africa: Address," <http://www.uneca.org/>, Addis Ababa, March 2, 1998.

(b) "The failure of African rulers, African governments, African governance institutions ... account for the emergence of first, political decay, then socio-political instability, followed by social fragmentation, and finally political disorders in contemporary Africa."—Anice, L., "Descent into Sociopolitical Decay: Legacies of Maldevelopment in Africa," in Mulugeta, A., editor, *Africa in the Contemporary International Disorder: Crises and Possibilities* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1996).

(c) The African continent has, thus far, been led by leaders who lack "creativity and ingenuity" and are slow "to understand how the world system operates."—Paraphrased from Mathurin Houngnikpo, "Stuck at the Runway: Africa's Distress Call," *Africa Insight*, Volume 30/Number 1, May 2000.

According to Alassane D. Ouattara, bad or poor governance can very easily be identified; among other things, it manifests itself through a large public sector and a small private sector, weak public institutions, and weak, complex, inequitable, and arbitrarily enforced rules and regulations. (Ouattara, A. D., "Towards Better Governance: The Next Stage of Africa's Journey of Economic Reform," *International Monetary Fund (IMF)*, June 27, 1998.

It may, therefore, not be an exaggeration to conclude that it is, by and large, the leadership factor which has made Africa to become a haven for the following kinds of nation-states in post-independence Africa that are cited in the literature, which Kingsley Y. Amoako has discussed in a speech entitled "Governance for a Progressing Africa: Opening Statement at the Second Africa Governance Forum," presented in Accra, Ghana, on June 25, 1998:

(a) The Patrimonial State: A political setting in which government leaders treat the state as their own piece of property;

(b) The Predatory State: A state in which government officials look upon the citizenry as prey for their rapacious greed;

(c) The Shadow State: The kind of state that is generally characterized by informal political networks and a shadow economy punctuated by illegal activities; and

(d) The Collapsed State: A state in which common people are generally left to their own devices while government officials revel in conspicuous, state-financed luxury.

Further, Amoako has identified a fifth kind of state—that is, a state where leaders impose sufficient repression to keep their opponents weak and maintain their own power, while adhering to enough democratic formalities that they might just pass themselves off as democrats. Accordingly, we may refer to this additional kind of nation-state as “the repressive state.”

#### Membership in Both SADC and COMESA

The current proliferation of integration projects in Africa has tended to result in some countries becoming members of two or more economic groupings. This is likely to generate commercial problems arising from obligations which individual African states have assumed under the different treaties and trade agreements governing the regional groupings.

In 2002, the World Trade Organization (WTO) cited the problem facing the Republic of Zambia in this regard: the country’s membership in overlapping preferential trade arrangements has made its trade regime more difficult to manage given the different provisions, goals and geographical coverage involved.

A prudent measure which African leaders can take in order to circumvent the potential problems and implications associated with membership in two or more economic blocs is to merge some of the economic blocs. In fact, such a measure can also forestall the potential for costly duplication of effort by regional economic blocs on the continent.

The European Union’s advice (cited in Wasamunu, M., “EU Advises COMESA, SADC to Merge,” *The Post*, <http://www.zamnet.zm/zamnet/post/>, February 10, 2000) to leaders of SADC and COMESA member-countries to merge the two institutions is, therefore, worthy of urgent and serious consideration; after all, this is an issue which leaders of the member-countries of the two regional blocs have generally shown great interest in resolving since the early 1990s.

Preferably, the smaller SADC needs to be incorporated into the larger COMESA bloc. In August 1992, Dr. Frederick Chiluba (former president of Zambia) minced no words in stating some of the compelling reasons why it would be prudent for SADC and COMESA heads of state to seriously consider the prospect of merging the two regional economic blocs:

“Having one institution is the way forward. It will combine resources and expertise which are currently dissipated in the two institutions.

It will provide the wider market [needed] ... for achievement of economies of scale necessary for resilient economic production units."—Chiluba, F., Dr., quoted in Mandaza, I., "SADC: An Economic Agenda or a Mere Political Expression?" *Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly*, August 1992, Volume 5, Number 11, p. 19.

---

## **Should Poor People Stop Bearing Children?**

**August 28, 2007**

A recent statement attributed to President Mwanawasa insinuating that Zambians who cannot afford to pay school fees should stop bearing children is irresponsible.

Education, whether one likes it or not, is the key to our beloved country's future because all other facets and spheres of human endeavor are dependent on it—including national security, public health and sanitation, heightened and sustained socio-economic development, agricultural production and food security, protracted peace and stability, and meaningful citizen participation in the democratic process.

Therefore, the government has a moral obligation to provide for the educational and other basic needs of the youth, irrespective of the economic status of their parents. And all poor and wealthy citizens deserve to be afforded the opportunity to gain access to public resources for the purpose of enhancing their knowledge and skills through correspondence studies and adult education.

After all, of what value is a government if it is not perpetually responsive to the basic needs and aspirations of the masses, and of what use is leadership if it cannot be a means to the serving of one's fellow citizens?

There is a lot the government can do in meeting the educational needs of our beloved country. Among other things, there is an urgent need for the government to abolish examination fees, phase out Grades 7 and 9 elimination examinations, and provide for free education through Grade 12 as an initial step in affording each and every citizen the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills they need in order to succeed in life.

To promote scholarship and academic excellence in education and training, high-school graduates who obtain a Division 1 need to be automatically awarded scholarships upon being accepted at any Zambian college or university, but should be required to maintain a "B" average in order to retain their scholarships.

All other high-school graduates and working Zambian men and women wishing to pursue further studies should be given an opportunity to gain access to low-interest loans upon being accepted into classroom-based or correspondence-based study programs offered within Zambia. And loan recipients who would graduate with "Distinction" would need to be absolved or excused of 75% of their debt obligations, while those who would graduate with "Merit" should be absolved of 50% of their debt obligations.

It is high time for our country to make a sustained effort in catering for the basic needs of the educational system; some of these needs include: (a) schools and classrooms that are adequately equipped for both teaching and learning; (b) qualified, self-motivated and well-paid teachers or lecturers in every classroom; and (c) competent school administrators on competitive conditions of service, and adequate office supplies and fixtures.

Needless to say, the youth are our beloved country's most valuable treasures; they are the jewels of our Motherland. And high-quality and accessible education is the greatest gift a civilized society like ours can possibly extend to each and every one of them!

---

### **The Call for Perseverance** **September 11, 2007**

While attending a church service at Lima Hall in Itzhi-Tezhi on September 9, 2007, President Levy Mwanawasa called on Zambians to persevere before the country could become developed. He also observed that much economic progress had been made in Zambia since his New Deal administration was ushered into office 6 years ago.

Honestly, the people are sick and tired of being told to persevere from the 1970s to date by successive government regimes. Today, the waists of the majority of Zambians do not have any more room for further belt-tightening! And claims that much economic progress has taken place over the last 6 years are a mockery to the Zambian people because, if meaningful socio-economic development has really occurred, why has it not resulted in belt-loosening by the majority of Zambians?

The truth is that the New Deal government has thus far not succeeded in meeting the basic needs and expectations of the majority of Zambians. For example: tens of thousands of Grade 7 and Grade 9 students have continued to be spilled onto the streets every year, the healthcare system cannot meet the basic needs of the majority of citizens, the majority of Zambians have no access to clean water and electricity, a critical shortage of decent public housing has compelled so many of our fellow citizens to live in shanty townships nationwide, public infrastructure and services are still deficient, civil servants are still not adequately compensated for their services and the payment of their meager incomes is often delayed, crime and unemployment are still widespread, and, among many other socio-economic ills, taxes and interest rates are still high.

Needless to say, the great Zambian nation that we have always sought to build for ourselves and for posterity cannot be realized by citizens who are hungry, sickly and not adequately educated and trained. And to grow the economy, the common people do not really need to make any more sacrifices than they have already made over the years. On the contrary, it is government leaders who need to avoid wasteful spending of meager national resources on maintaining sinecures, for instance, so that they can apply the savings on projects and programs that would bolster socio-economic development.

It is really not fair to ask the poor people to persevere after government leaders had given themselves hefty pay packages earlier this year through the Presidential Emoluments Amendments Bill and the Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices Emoluments Bill. In other words, perseverance or belt-tightening needs to start with government leaders—even to the extent of reducing their own pay packages, and/or instituting a freeze on the not-so-essential political appointments, and on increments of their pay packages.

Meanwhile, political appointments that do not seem to add any value to the resolution of the catalogue of socio-economic woes facing the majority of Zambians have become a routine feature of governance. As a result, we have created a nation-state where the common people are generally left to their own devices while the Republican President, the Republican Vice President, Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers, District Commissioners, and other government officials have continued to revel in conspicuous, state-financed luxury.

---