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**Two Years of Political Inclusivity in Zimbabwe? A Review of the
Global Political Agreement Government**

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Opportunities and Positives

Economy: Significant progress has been made in addressing some of the economic challenges confronting the country since the formation of the coalition government and the introduction of stable multi currencies in the economy.

The introduction of the inclusive government and the dollarization of the economy obviously brought some stability in the economy.

The economic stability that has attained in the country following dollarization has helped many business ventures to stabilize and recover. Zimbabwe remains a cash economy but a number of people involved in business are making super profits. Even the director of LS Exchange recently noted that Zimbabwe is one of the few emerging markets where one can make 'decent returns' on investment.

Basic commodities and food are now available in the shops and the provision of some social services has also improved, while a marginally improved number of workers are back at work.

Relative improvement in delivery of social services: This economic stability, infrastructural development improvements and relative improvement in the delivery of social services and the socio-economic welfare of the people has brought a sigh of relief among the majority of Zimbabweans who were reeling from the negative effects of almost a decade of a debilitating economic and political crisis which particularly worsened in 2008, especially after the controversial June 2008 Presidential election.

While a significantly large number of people have continued to experience widespread poverty there is some relief in economic pressure.

This sense of economic relief has continued to be shared by many Zimbabweans, even though the economy has not improved much since the early bubble of 2009 which followed the formation of the GPA government (cf recent survey by Gallop international where Zimbabweans are among those relatively satisfied with their economic situation).

Political Front:

First and foremost, the formation of the GPA government in February 2009 has substantially helped to reduce polarization and tension in Zimbabwe.

Although violence, intimidation and political tension has continued in some parts of the country has been a noticeable thawing of political tensions since the formation of the GPA in February 2009.

There has been a notable reduction in cases of overt violence, and a decrease in the cases of politically motivated arrests, violence, abductions and murders as compared to the period prior to the GNU (especially executive lawlessness and violence).

At the same time, the limited reforms in some sectors of the government, the economy, the media, politics and society in general have helped to stabilize the country and open new spaces for democratic engagement, progress and development.

A number of key Constitutional Commissions established under the GPA have now been commissioned in full consultation among all the GPA parties. These are the Media Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, Human Rights Commission have been set up.

Constitutional Reform process has been dragging because of the political bickering, but has managed to complete some of its major milestones like the public outreach programme.

All this represents substantive progress in the normalisation of politics and opening of democratic space.

Problems and Challenges

The inclusive government has remained a fragile political arrangement which has so far not resolved all Zimbabwe's myriad of challenges.

Intense contestation for control of government and state power among GPA partners which slowed down a lot of political and economic progress.

Tensions amongst the parties over outstanding issues and many other issues have remained high.

Arbitrary arrests and harassment of members of civic groups, the victimisation and intimidation of political and human rights activists, the violation of property rights and the disregard of court orders have also continued in some parts of the country.

The delays of the constitutional reform process and the delays in the implementation of some of the GPA agreements have all affected the pace of political reform.

Political uncertainty has resulted in a slow pace of economic recovery. The manufacturing, mining and agricultural sectors, all biggest contributors to Zimbabwe's GDP, are still operating below capacity.

A significantly high number of Zimbabweans, particularly in rural areas and high density communities, are still economically vulnerable and lack access to most basic services, including food, health, education, clean water and shelter.

Sources of the GPA's Problems

First, there is an obsession with hegemonic power among GPA partners, evident in the intense battle for state control between the two dominant parties in the government- ZANU PF and MDC-T. The GPA government has since its formation in February 2009 become the site of intense contestation for state control and political influence in the countryside among all the parties in the coalition government.

The parties which signed the GPA have always understood the GPA government as some form of ceasefire mechanism following tiring years of the inconclusive battle for power (2000-2008).

For all parties, the GPA government was never about political reconciliation or unity although the parties often referred to the new government as a 'unity government' or 'inclusive government'.

From day one, the inclusive government was all about how the three parties could use that space to rebuild and consolidate their power both inside and outside government.

ZANU PF has been trying to regain total control of state power and legitimise itself through the GNU (and now thru an early elections), while the MDC has also been working on capturing 'executive powers' through the GPA.

Second, there is a general lack of perspective about the political reality of Zimbabwe among the leaders of the political parties. Parties in the GPA and their supporters (including those in civics) quickly forgot why they found themselves signing the GPA in the first place. The GPA was timely because it came at a time when Zimbabwe was on the brink of a major political and humanitarian catastrophe from which it might not have recovered. This catastrophe, if not averted through the signing of the GPA, would have consumed both those holding on to power those fighting for change.

No proper perspective about their electoral support and the real issues shaping their support. *Because of their misplaced focus on capturing state power, there has been lack of total commitment to deliver on their social mandate within the framework of the GPA.*

Third, there is a lack of creativity and imagination among ministries and government departments when dealing with current socio economic challenges. The weaknesses in the policy development aspects of the transitional government have negatively affected its ability to execute its mandate, to develop innovative strategies to deal with the legacies of the crisis, to transform current politics and economics and to further democratise the country.

Fourth, there is lack of support from civics, especially those aggrieved by their exclusion from the negotiations and questioning legitimacy of the GPA government. Zimbabwean citizens, in general (as individuals or as members of groups, including the Zimbabwean diasporas, have not adequately supported the GPA and explored opportunities presented by the GPA to extricate the country out of its challenges. We have essentially remained passive citizens (subjects) rather than active citizens.

Fifth, limited support from the international community. The international community's emphasis has been on humanitarian aid rather than development assistance. As a result, two year after formation of the GPA, Zimbabwe remains a case of arrested political and economic development. The 'arrested development' that has occurred under the GPA government has resulted in a 'crisis of expectations' among a number of Zimbabweans.

At the moment, most citizens are particularly frustrated with the inability of the GNU to come up with new innovative initiatives to deal with the myriad of challenges confronting the country and their inability to improve service delivery.

Perspectives on the Future

Despite its challenges, the GPA has not only given Zimbabweans the much needed hope and chance to rebuild their shattered lives but has also created possibilities for a democratic political transition.

In spite of its weaknesses, the GPA represents an important breakthrough in efforts to resolve the protracted Zimbabwean crisis.

The coalition government provides an important platform for continued negotiations between ZANU PF and the MDC parties- the only process which will ultimately lead to a successful resolution of the crisis.

The political settlement has not and will not lead to an overnight change in the country's economic and political fortunes, but it presents opportunities for Zimbabwe to begin the process of extricating itself from economic and political turmoil. It does present a stepping stone for the process of transformation and democratisation.

The reform processes initiated and institutions created under the GPA are highly contested, but they are important platforms for the future building of a more democratic and accountable state.

The Joint Monitoring Commission, the Constitutional Reform Process and the opportunities for Multi-Party engagement on key issues are all critical components of this transition process.

Through support to the implementation of the GPA, including the process of ensuring the accountability of state institutions, drawing up and agreeing to a new constitution, and successfully laying the foundations for a new legitimate election, the full extent of utilising the opportunities presented by the GPA will be realised

For now and probably for the next couple of years, the GPA is the only framework that provides Zimbabwe with a realistic chance to move forward.

The sole mandate to govern- people's mandate or two-thirds majority or whatever, being sought by both the MDC and ZANU PF will not deliver Zimbabwe from its political and economic logjam.

The only way forward, given the levels of political polarisation in the country, is an inclusive government which seeks to accommodate both ZANU PF and MDC.

Recommendations on Way Forward

The following recommended strategies could help to untangle the GPA gridlock and move the political and economic transition in Zimbabwe forward:

- Zimbabwe's political parties and civics need to be strategic about the way they engage with the GPA and the GNU, making sure that they focus on the real issues that are blocking peace, stabilisation, progress and development.
- Zimbabweans and their international partners need to support institutions and structures that were set up by the GPA that have the potential to reform the structures of political and economic governance, such as the Human Rights Commission, Media Commission, JOMIC and Zimbabwe Elections Commission.

- The key to Zimbabwe's economic and social stabilization efforts lies in political stabilization. The GNU therefore needs to ensure that there is political stabilization in the country as a prerequisite for economic stabilization.
- Zimbabwe's economy is largely dependent on land and agriculture for its growth. To ensure that agriculture can recover, the GPA government will need to stabilize the agriculture sector by finalizing the issue of land redistribution and tenure security.
- Zimbabwe's peace and violence problems go beyond politics, and the best way to approach peace, violence and healing is to try and address some of the economic and social challenges that generate tensions and conflict in communities.
- The issue of healing and reconciliation goes beyond the GNU, and both JOMIC and the ONHRI need to be constituted as permanent bodies so that they continue to play important roles in facilitating national healing.
- The lack of policy consistency has greatly undermined efforts to stabilize the economy, and the GPA government will need to develop consistency in its policies while its leaders should speak with one voice on key policy issues to avoid sending mixed messages to investors.
- The GNU has struggled to deliver economically partly because of its starvation of economic support by the international community which has focused more on humanitarian aid than development assistance. To help the GNU deliver on its economic and social mandate, Zimbabwe's development assistance partners will need to consider lifting the current economic restriction measures/sanctions on the GOZ and extend development and financial assistance.
- Zimbabwe's economic and social challenges are bound to continue for a few years to come. To mitigate the economic and social effects of the weak economy on the poor and vulnerable groups, the government, NGOs, CSOs and CBOs will need to initiate and support self-help programmes that assist these groups deal with the challenges of poverty and food security.
- For a political and economic transition to occur in Zimbabwe, there is need for Zimbabweans to have a proper conversation around the terms and conditions of such a transition. Such a negotiation will have to focus on the security and constitutional guarantees for transitional processes and the proper structural mechanisms, frameworks and processes for the transfer of power as well as physical, political and economic security guarantees for those who lose power.