

COMMUNIQUE

At the invitation of H.E. Dr. Stan Mudenge, Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe, the Committee of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers met in Harare, Zimbabwe from 25 to 27 October 2001. The meeting was a follow-up to the Conclusions of the meeting held in Abuja on 6 September 2001. Ministers from Canada, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and the United Kingdom and a Representative of the Minister from Australia, as well as the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth attended the meeting.

2. The Committee, under the chairmanship of H.E. Sule Lamido, Foreign Minister of Nigeria, received a progress report from H.E. Dr. Stan Mudenge and other officials, on the action so far taken by the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) to implement the decisions taken in Abuja on 6 September, 2001, including the following:

- (i) de-listing of a further 20 (twenty) farms;
- (ii) renewed consultations with the UNDP, resulting in an agreement on the visit of a technical team in mid November 2001;
- (iii) establishment of Committees, composed of Ministers, war veterans and farmers to explain to the people of Zimbabwe the commitments made in Abuja;
- (iv) establishment of a permanent committee for trouble-shooting charged with responding to incidents and aberrations;
- (v) instructions to the top leadership of all law enforcement and security organs to ensure that Zimbabwe's commitments are implemented and, where necessary, enforced;
- (vi) commencement of a programme of information involving all agencies implementing land reform, from national to local levels; and
- (vii) commencement of the movement of settlers to legally acquired lands.

3. During its sittings in Zimbabwe, which lasted till 1:30 a.m. on Saturday, 27 October 2001, the Committee received reports from the following groups and organisations:

- ù Council of Chiefs
- ù Commercial Farmers' Union
- ù Zimbabwe Joint Resettlement Initiative
- ù Zimbabwe Farmers' Union
- ù Indigenous Commercial Farmers' Union DP
- ù Zimbabwe Liberation War Veterans Association
- ù Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)
- ù ZANU-PF

ù ZANU (Ndonga)

ù Church Leaders

ù NANGO (National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations):

Amani Trust

Zimbabwe Human Rights Foundation

Affirmative Action Group

National Constitutional Assembly

Transparency International

Crisis in Zimbabwe

Indigenous Business Development Centre

National Development Association

Zimbabwe Tobacco Merchants Association

ù Media Representatives:

The Daily News

The Herald

The Sunday Mail

The Financial Gazette

Zimbabwe Independent

Zimbabwe Union of Journalists

ù The Electoral Supervisory Commission

The Law Society of Zimbabwe did not appear before the panel, but submitted a memorandum. GAPWUZ (General Agricultural and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe) was invited, but was not available when the Committee was ready to hear from them.

These represented a wide range of groups and organisations in Zimbabwe. The views expressed can be summarised as follows:

i) a majority regarded the Abuja Agreement as a useful one that should be pursued;

(ii) there was a unanimous view that land reform in Zimbabwe was necessary;

(iii) there was a divergence in the views and facts, in relation to farm invasions and occupations;

(iv) there were a number who believed that the rule of law had not been adequately upheld;

(v) there was confusion over the process of the implementation of land redistribution; and

(vi) there was concern about the displacement of people currently working on farms.

4. The Committee received a number of conflicting reports of alleged violations of human rights and press freedom before and after the Abuja Agreement. It therefore, called upon the law enforcement authorities to look into all these allegations, ensure that the law is obeyed, in order to

build the necessary confidence that will ensure the speedy implementation of the Abuja Agreement.

5. Even though the Committee was given free access to all parts of the country, it was only possible, due to time constraints, to visit two farms outside Harare. The objective was to be informed of the situation on the ground in connection with the implementation of the land reform programme.

6. Against the background of the short period since the Abuja meeting, the Committee considered that the Government of Zimbabwe had established a process to implement the Abuja Conclusions of 6 September 2001, particularly as they relate to land reform. It however, called on the GoZ to speed up, in particular, the de-listing of farms which do not meet set criteria, and also implement the entire process in accordance with the laws and constitution of Zimbabwe. The Committee also recognised the clear need to develop and implement an information and publicity programme, which will include public meetings to reach all the stakeholders, in order to generate the much-needed confidence that will ensure the success of the initiative

7. The Committee further urged the GoZ, Commercial Farmer's Union, and other stakeholders, to work co-operatively, and to adopt a positive engagement with each other, in order to get through these difficult implementation issues. In this regard, the Committee noted the positive attitude of the Zimbabwe Joint Resettlement Initiative (ZJRI) as a group that has willingly offered one million hectares of land and resources in order to assist with a comprehensive programme of land redistribution and resettlement that will benefit the optimum number of people.

8. The Committee welcomed the agreement with the UNDP for the vigil: of a technical team to Zimbabwe in mid November 2001. It called on the team to undertake and complete early, the assessment visit, so as to assist the GoZ to fully undertake the land reform programme, on the basis of the UNDP proposals of December 2000. Considering that land is at the core of the crisis, as recognised in the Abuja Conclusions, the Committee reaffirmed the conviction that the work of the UNDP will assist the GoZ to fully comply with the undertakings and assurances freely given under the Abuja initiative. It further called on the GoZ. to extend full support and cooperation to the UNDP to ensure the early success of its work.

9. The Committee recognised that this meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe at the invitation of Foreign Minister Dr. Stan Mudenge, was the second one in the process initiated by President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. It was therefore appropriate that the Committee presents its report to the President. The Committee would also recommend to President Obasanjo that it (the Committee) remains engaged and continues to monitor the implementation of the Abuja Agreement by all the parties.

10. The Committee expressed gratitude and appreciation to President Robert Mugabe for receiving members despite his busy schedule. It also expressed gratitude to Foreign Minister Dr. Stan Mudenge for the kind invitation, which afforded the opportunity for the meeting and lastly, to the Government and people of Zimbabwe, for the hospitality and conducive atmosphere provided for the meeting.

Harare, 27 October 2001