

**Address by the Patron of the TMF, Thabo Mbeki, at the
Zimbabwe Diamond Conference: Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe:
November 12, 2012.**

Director of Ceremonies,
Our host, Minister Obert Mpofu,
Honourable Ministers from Zimbabwe and our region,
Leaders of the Kimberley Process,
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, High Commissioners and members of
the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen:

One of the occasions I was here at Victoria Falls was in April 2000.

I came here as part of a SADC delegation constituted of then Presidents Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, Sam Nujoma of Namibia, and myself, as President of South Africa.

We came here to engage President Robert Mugabe specifically about what was happening in this country at the time, relating to the occupation of white-owned farms by this country's liberation war veterans, intended to address the historic Zimbabwe land question.

Specifically we discussed with the President how best to assist the sister people of Zimbabwe in the noble quest to correct an historical injustice. At the same time, our region fully accepted that land redistribution had to happen in Zimbabwe, as in other countries of our region.

After the meeting here, I had to report to the South African Parliament about the outcomes of that meeting.

Here is part of what I reported to the South African National Assembly and therefore the people of South Africa as a whole.

"To address both the fundamental and central land question, which has to be solved, and the consequences that have derived from the failure

to find this solution, we have been in contact with both the Zimbabwe and the British Governments.

This contact sought to achieve a number of objectives. These are:

"1: to get a common commitment to solve the Zimbabwe land question, according to the framework and programme agreed at the 1998 Conference and thus, simultaneously, to speak to such questions as the rule of law;

"2: to end the violence that has attended the effort to find this solution;

"3: to create the conditions for the withdrawal from the farms they have occupied of the demonstrating war veterans; and,

"4: to pursue these issues in a manner that would be beneficial for all the people of Zimbabwe and the rest of Southern Africa. As we informed the media at Victoria Falls on Good Friday and other occasions since then, President Mugabe fully supported these objectives."

The truth is that we failed to achieve the global outcome we sought.

This was because we did not get the funding commitments to the programme that were agreed at the 1998 International Conference on the Zimbabwe Land Question.

This meant that we failed to convince the world powers to honour the solemn commitments they had made, including their funding of the Zimbabwe land reform, and therefore the related creation of the conditions to end the occupation of the white-owned farms.

With regard to everything I have said, I must report that, at that time, the view of the political leadership in our region was that it was still nevertheless correct and vital that Zimbabwe had to address the land question.

This was particularly so given the fact that from 1990, a decade earlier, Zimbabwe had delayed dealing with the land question in a new way, especially after the expiry of the restrictive land provisions in the independence Lancaster House Constitution.

As an outstanding act of African solidarity, the Government of Zimbabwe decided on this delay expressly to facilitate the then on-going negotiations in South Africa, from 1990 onwards, concerned that nothing should be done in Zimbabwe which would so frighten the white

South African population that it would oppose our own country's transformation.

With regard to the land question, the prevalent view in the rest of our region, outside Zimbabwe, which we, the SADC delegation that came to Vic Falls in 2000 represented, was that given the balance of power in Africa and the rest of the world, it was strategically and tactically ill-advised to resort to revolutionary methods to address the challenge of agrarian reform in this country.

We were convinced and argued this with President Mugabe, that, rather, Zimbabwe should indeed confront the matter of the land question, but address it through a process of reform rather than through revolutionary means.

We understood very well that the process of the reform rather than the revolutionary transformation of the inherited colonial system of land ownership, meant that the Zimbabwe Government and people would have to respect the principle of market based compensation of land owners for improvements on the farms they would have to forfeit.

SADC took the position it adopted in part because its leadership was convinced that the regional, Continental and global progressive movement did not have the strength to overcome the determined Western opposition immediately to end the unjust colonial system of land ownership in Zimbabwe and our region.

In this context we had also come to understand very well that the West had absolutely no intention to provide the funds it promised solemnly, in 1979 in London and in 1998 in Harare, to compensate the white farmers for the land they would lose.

Whatever we might have honestly communicated to Africa and the rest of the world at the end of the April 2000 Vic Falls meeting between a SADC Presidential delegation and President Mugabe, the historical record is that the sister people of Zimbabwe succeeded to carry out a process of agrarian transformation which has fundamentally corrected an historic injustice relating to the land question in this country.

In this context I am happy to mention the united position taken by the democratically elected Zimbabwe political parties on the land question, in terms of which they said in the GPA that:

"(they accept) the inevitability and desirability of a comprehensive land reform programme in Zimbabwe that redresses the issues of historical

imbalances and injustices in order to address the issues of equity, productivity, and justice.” [GPA: Article 5.3.]

Directly relevant to all this, I would also like to highlight the 2010 seminal book, *“Zimbabwe’s Land Reform: Myths and Realities”*, written by a British academic, Ian Scoones, and his Zimbabwe colleagues, Nelson Marongwe, Blasio Mavedzenge, Felix Murimbarimba, Jacob Mahenehene and Chrispen Sukume.

In essence this well-researched treatise, based on a detailed scientific assessment of the Zimbabwe land transformation process over at least 10 years, makes two important statements.

One of these is that the Agrarian Revolution in this country has succeeded to transfer the land to the people.

The second is that the new system of land ownership, favouring the peasantry, has demonstrated its capacity successfully to address the issues of food security and the provision of the agriculture raw materials required by the manufacturing sector.

An academic review of the Scoones book said the book challenged *“five myths (about Zimbabwe’s Land Reform) through a detailed examination of field data:*

“Myth 1 – land reform had been a total failure;

“Myth 2 – the beneficiaries have been largely political ‘cronies’;

“Myth 3 – there is no investment in the new settlements;

“Myth 4 – agriculture is in complete ruins, creating chronic food insecurity; and,

“Myth 5 – the rural economy has collapsed.”

The same review says Professor Bill Kinsey of the Free University of Amsterdam recommended to the readers of the book:

“Whatever you thought about the land issue in Zimbabwe, be prepared to change your mind.”

As the Zimbabwe Agrarian Revolution ran its course, our task as the political leadership of our region focused especially on our obligation to defend the right of the people of Zimbabwe to decide what they should do to resolve the land question, and therefore, and inevitably, to defend their fundamental right to self-determination.

Attached to this was the hope of our region that a successful Agrarian Revolution in Zimbabwe would also address the imperatives of the economic recovery of the country, poverty reduction and food security.

This arose because of both our concern for the welfare of the sister people of this country and our knowledge of the level of regional integration, as a result of which our countries could not isolate themselves from important developments in this country, vice versa.

In this regard I must make the point that Ian Scoones and his colleagues, and other objective observers, such as the African Institute for Agrarian Studies, have made the correct and important observation that further to build on what has been achieved in this country in terms of successfully transferring 'land to those who work it', a serious effort must be made to support the new farmers with all-round assistance.

This would include upgrading the rural infrastructure, intensifying agricultural extension services, and providing the necessary credit to enable the new farmers to access the equipment, fertiliser, and other inputs, as well as the market access they need.

Of course, this must also include addressing the corrupt practice which occurred during the necessarily enormous upheaval of the Agrarian Revolution, which led the Government of Zimbabwe to take the important decision to conduct a land audit to ensure that those who had corruptly acquired land are not allowed to benefit from such corrupt practice.

In this regard, the September 2008 Global Political Agreement (GPA), elaborated and adopted by the Zimbabwe Political Parties, states that the Parties agreed:

"to conduct a comprehensive, transparent and non-partisan land audit...for the purpose of establishing accountability and eliminating multiple farm ownerships." [GPA: Article 5.9(a)].

I sincerely hope that this has been, or is being done.

Certainly the delegates present here from Zimbabwe and the rest of Southern Africa will recall vividly that essentially because of the Zimbabwe Agrarian Revolution, and as we feared when we met here with President Mugabe in April 2000, a veritable global and sustained political firestorm broke out, seeking to incinerate the Government of Zimbabwe as well as those of us who were seen as defenders of that Agrarian Revolution.

Accordingly, for many years now, various important political players in the world, as well as significant sections of the global media, have presented Zimbabwe as a 'rogue state' within our region, and in Africa as a whole.

This narrative was advanced to place on the global political agenda the fundamental proposition that because Zimbabwe was such a 'rogue state', it was perfectly legitimate to use all means, including through decisions of the UN Security Council, to overthrow the Government of Zimbabwe, thus to effect the necessary 'regime change' in this country.

It was perfectly clear to the political leadership in this Southern Region of Africa, and indeed the masses of the people in all our countries, that the determination by some from elsewhere in the world to effect this 'regime change' in Zimbabwe had to do with fundamentally undermining and weakening the historically and strategically important right of the peoples of Africa to self-determination.

In this regard, and contrary to the canards propagated by others from elsewhere in the world, certainly our Zimbabwe colleagues will recall that while it opposed such 'regime change', our region was deeply concerned about the then situation relating to democratic practice in this country, as stated in various SADC decisions.

For this reason our region welcomed the commitment entered into by the Zimbabwe political parties in the GPA, according to which, for instance, they said:

"Recognising that the right to canvass and freely mobilise for political support is the cornerstone of any multi-party democratic system, the Parties have agreed that there should be free political activity throughout Zimbabwe within the ambit of the law in which all political parties are able to propagate their views and canvass for support, free of harassment and intimidation." [GPA: Article 10].

Taking into account the fact that Zimbabwe will have to hold its next General Election next year, I would like to believe that the Zimbabwe political parties will honour this agreement and that our region, represented by SADC, will help the sister people of Zimbabwe in this regard.

We have convened here to discuss matters that relate to diamonds.

I can therefore imagine that some among us here tonight would have wondered why I have spent so much time talking about other matters,

including the politics of our region of even more than a decade ago, without so much as a casual mention of the word – *diamonds!*

I must therefore explain that I have spoken as I have because we are meeting at the Zimbabwe Diamond Conference and not any other Diamond Conference.

As I am certain we all know, in the very short years since Zimbabwe started mining and exporting diamonds, this has generated much international debate that I believe has been unjustifiably hostile to Zimbabwe, and which has sought to use the Kimberley Process incorrectly to classify the Zimbabwe diamonds as '*blood diamonds*', which should therefore not be traded internationally.

In this regard I must confess that since towards the end of 2008, because of other obligations towards our Continent, I have not had the opportunity to pay much attention to various matters relating to Zimbabwe, including the Kimberley Process as it bears on this country.

Last year, on April 13, I was privileged to address the Presidents Meeting of the World Federation of Diamond Bourses held in Dubai.

I beg your indulgence to quote what I said then, eighteen (18) months ago, which I believe remains relevant to this day. I said then that:

"I am certain that a positive response to Africa's call focused on helping to create the African lions of which (the 2010 McKinsey Report) spoke, through adding value to its raw diamonds, would both benefit the diamond industry as a whole and reinforce the growth and development of the global economy.

"I am equally certain that everybody concerned should take seriously Africa's views about the resolution of the current standoff in the Kimberley Process, centred on the issue of Zimbabwe diamonds.

"One of the critical points to bear in mind in this regard is the fact that the core objective of the Kimberley Process, to end the practice of the use of illegally mined diamonds to fund and prolong deadly wars, was of primary concern to us as Africans, first and foremost.

"Africa's determination in this regard has not diminished. I am therefore certain that Africa, including the African Diamond Producers Association, would not support or advocate the production and sale of diamonds, especially African diamonds, contrary to the spirit and purposes of the Kimberley Process.

"In this regard I am certain that it will not help anybody, including you, the distinguished participants at this Presidents Meeting, that the Kimberley Process is politicised, to advance objectives other than those originally agreed at the Diamond Capital of South Africa, Kimberley, which gave its name to the Kimberley Process.

"In this regard I believe that all of us should take on board the weighty observation made by the Chairperson of the Kimberley Process, Minister Lapfa Lambang Mathieu Yamba, in his Notice of March 19, that, 'the cessation of exports in the KPCS must be subjected to a more credible mechanism which includes verification of allegations and due process.'

"I believe that it was exactly to ensure such verification of allegations as well as due process that a high-level delegation of the African Diamond Producers Association visited the Zimbabwe diamond fields earlier this month, led by the South African Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources, Hon Susan Shabangu...

"I sincerely hope that the current dispute affecting this Process will be resolved soon to avoid its breakdown, an eventuality which I am convinced nobody would desire."

Eight months later after I made these remarks in Dubai, and earlier this year, I was pleased to see media reports of important statements made by the esteemed current Chairperson of the Kimberley Process, the KPCS, Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic, on February 3, 2012.

I refer here to what it was reported she said, that:

"The (Kimberley) process went through great difficulty determining how to deal with the question of diamond exports from Zimbabwe, given violence and other matters. And this showed that there was a need to look at systems, to look at definitions, to look at ways to ensure that the lessons were drawn, and that the organisation could determine best ways to become more efficient and to remain relevant. That would include the definition of conflict diamonds...

"But at the present time, I am told, the only country whose diamonds are fitting within the definition of conflict diamonds is diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire. And that represents, overall, far less than 1 percent of all diamonds."

As I understand it, perhaps wrongly, those of us who are members of the Kimberley Process are engaged exactly in the processes to which

Chairperson Milovanovic referred when she spoke about *"a need to look at systems, to look at definitions, to look at ways to ensure that the lessons were drawn, and that the organisation could determine best ways to become more efficient and to remain relevant."*

In this regard I am certain that all of us understand and respect the fundamental practice in jurisprudence that consistent with the principle of the rule of law, all law of general application, like the prescriptions of the Kimberley Process, should not be written to target particular persons or entities.

I say this because as Africans we would surely agree that we should *"look at the Kimberley Process systems...and definitions"*, as urged by Chairperson Milovanovic.

At the same time, in this regard, I am certain that as Africans we should do everything possible to ensure that the Kimberly Process is insulated from any political abuse, and is therefore used to establish an equitable global assessment system consistent with the agreed goals of the Kimberley Process.

I am certain that among others, we will work hard to ensure that the Kimberley Process is not misused to compromise the right of Africa as a whole, a major diamond producer, to the fundamental and inalienable right to self-determination, and the right to development.

In this context I must also emphasise that as Africans we must remain especially vigilant that the export of African diamonds does not open or widen yet another window to the immensely pernicious illicit outflows of capital from Africa.

I trust that all of us at this important Zimbabwe Diamond Conference, will understand what I have just said, with regard to both Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole, about the absolute imperative we all share to end the illicit export of capital from our Continent – the sustained illegal and 'legal' transfer of capital from the African poor to the rich West, which have been a critical and central contributor to the underdevelopment of our Continent, and therefore the criminal impoverishment of the African masses.

I hope that you now understand why, earlier, I spoke to you about other matters not related to diamonds, such as this country's tumultuous Agrarian Revolution.

All of us know that all manner of negative allegations have been made about diamond mining in Zimbabwe, no different in essence from the global political offensive which sought to oppose and defeat this country's Agrarian Revolution.

Basing myself on my experience, I would like to exploit the privilege I have been given by Honourable Minister Dr Obert Moses Mpofu, the Zimbabwe Minister of Mines and Mining Development, to say a few additional things as I speak at this conference.

The first of these is that I am absolutely certain that the masses of our people throughout the entirety of our region of Southern Africa, the neighbours of Zimbabwe, are indeed very happy that the sister people of this country, have found yet another natural resource which can and should be used to ensure that our sister people achieve the sacred goal of a better life for themselves.

In this regard, we really hope that this natural resource, Zimbabwe's diamond deposits, will be used genuinely to benefit the masses of the ordinary people.

This must also mean that this country's political leadership, including all the Parties which serve in the current Inclusive Government established because of the GPA, must absolutely ensure that the diamond mining industry is not governed by a predatory elite which uses its access to state power to enrich itself, against the interests of the people as a whole, acting in collusion with the mining companies.

Accordingly, the Government of Zimbabwe must surely do everything possible to ensure the greatest possible transparency about all matters relating to the mining and marketing of diamonds, and the management and use of the resultant financial resources, precisely because the Government would have nothing to hide.

In this context, the Government would obviously have to put in place very strict measures to combat any corruption that might arise, related to the diamond industry.

I have said all this because I have no doubt that there will be people both from Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the world who will see the opportunity of the exploitation of Zimbabwe's diamond resources as, for them, a happy occasion for self-enrichment by corrupt means.

In all humility, I would also say that the Government of Zimbabwe must put in place a progressive and long-term policy about the management

of this important natural resource heritage, as it has done with regard to land, in this case relating to this country's diamonds.

This must mean sustained national access to the financial revenues deriving from the exploitation of this resource, and the use of these revenues to finance the necessary sustainable development, bearing in mind that what is mined, including diamonds, is not a renewable resource.

I know that Zimbabwe, like much of our region, is rich in natural resources, in addition to the land and the diamond resources we have spoken of today.

I have absolutely no doubt that Zimbabwe will evolve into one of the African Lions of which other objective observers have spoken, which will ensure that the people of this country achieve the objective we all seek of achieving the objective of a sustained and comprehensive better life.

Of critical importance in this context, will be how you, our Zimbabwe friends, present here today, handle your management of your natural resources, including land, diamonds, platinum, chrome, copper, coal, gold, and others of this country's many natural resources.

For many years now, our region, through SADC, has called for the lifting of sanctions against Zimbabwe, which regrettably has not happened.

Our region made this call not to advantage the ruling Party in Zimbabwe, but to improve the socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe, in favour of the people as a whole.

We acted as we did as the people in place who had intimate knowledge of the situation in our countries and our neighbourhood.

In this regard we were very happy that earlier this year, the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Judge Navi Pillay, also called for the lifting of these sanctions.

The public position which many took relating to what UN Commissioner Navi Pillay said about Zimbabwe confirmed to us as Africans, to our regret, that the issue of human rights in international politics, certainly as it relates to us, is little more than an instrument in a global political struggle weighted to undermine the assertion of our right to self determination.

In this regard, as I did in Dubai last year, I would appeal to you as members of the Kimberley Process, not to allow the important Kimberley Process, in whose success our Continent is genuinely interested, to be abused by anybody whatsoever, for political purposes, among others to achieve the objective of '*regime change*' in Zimbabwe.

In this regard I have no doubt that Africa, as a major producer and exporter of diamonds, will participate actively and willingly in any process to improve the functioning and other elements of the Kimberley Process, as I have said.

However, Africa and Southern Africa as a whole share the hope for the speedy economic and political recovery of Zimbabwe.

Together, as a billion Africans, we believe that the Zimbabwe diamonds will help to achieve these important objectives which would benefit our Continent as whole.

Both the Zimbabwe political leadership and the world political powers owe a sacred obligation to the peoples of Zimbabwe and Africa to ensure that this country's diamonds serve as the people's best friend!

I sincerely hope that all of us gathered here at this World Heritage Site, Muziwa Thunya, will take the decisions we must, which will enable the peoples of Zimbabwe and Africa to acquire the benefit of the heritage of a better life, and thus defeat all ill-intentioned attempts to inject into the Kimberley Process objectives inimical to its original and noble purposes.

As Africans we can have no objection to the goal that Africa must succeed.

As these Africans, including as Zimbabweans, we cannot have any other objective than that Zimbabwe re-establishes herself as one of Africa's preeminent pioneer countries.

You, Zimbabweans who are with us today, have an obligation to live up to this task, and therefore to honour what Africa has done to help guarantee your own right to self-determination, in Africa's own interest.

Whatever your faults which as Africans we share with you, nevertheless we demand of you that you must, at all times, act in a manner that upholds and demonstrates our character as true and noble Africans.

Thank you.