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SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA AND GLOBAL HEALTH
Donald M. Payne (D-NJ), Chairman

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Testimony By

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Mr. Chairman:

Subcommittee Members:

Distinguished Guests:

It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to appear before this august Subcommittee and before its distinguished Chairman, the Honorable Donald Payne. I have had the honor of working with Chairman Payne for the last twenty years or so on issues of importance to Africa and to U.S./African relations. From the seminal role he played in bringing to a close the Apartheid era in South Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s, to his opposition to President Mobutu in the then-Zaire, to his support for the emerging democracies around the continent in the last decade, Chairman Payne has exhibited a unique and sustained commitment to Africa. It has been refreshing and constructive for those of us in the NGO and policy communities to have a Chair who has accumulated the experience and knowledge that is the hallmark of Chairman Payne, but, more importantly, who truly cares for Africa and its peoples.

I have been lucky enough to have been called upon to contribute from time-to-time some hopefully helpful guidance and insights from my 40 years of living and working in Africa as he and this Subcommittee have looked at ways to respond positively to the unfolding dramas around this magnificent continent. I welcome that opportunity again.

Today, as we look together at the Zimbabwe Renewal Act of 2010, and think about how we might play a constructive role in encouraging the transition to democracy, peace and stability in that troubled country, I must begin with a caveat about my level of knowledge. Although I was intimately involved in the early negotiations that led to an independent Zimbabwe as a U.S. diplomat in 1976-80, and have worked in subsequent years with that country in various other capacities, I have not visited Zimbabwe in almost 10 years. While I stay in close touch with colleagues who do visit, and have friends and contacts within Zimbabwe and in forced exile in South Africa, my reflections on the current situation, and the impact of the international sanctions regime, are, of necessity, second hand.

Therefore, the best use I might make of my time, rather than give a litany of the current state of play, the fragility of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the Transitional Inclusive Government, the human rights abuses, and the economic catastrophe that has beset this country, could be to take a brief look back at its history of independence and put in perspective the proposed legislation.

In fact, the independent Zimbabwe that emerged from the long war of liberation and subsequent peace negotiation that culminated in elections in 1980 was a model for sustainable peace processes, heralding in an era of progressive economic, education and development policy, and an open, vibrant society that represented the best hopes of Africa emerging from minority rule. Yet to come were the transitions in Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa, but Zimbabwe stood out against all odds as the country that had gotten it right and gave hope to the other peoples of southern Africa that their aspirations could yet be fulfilled and had become the “breadbasket” of Africa and a booming, progressive, exciting member of the global community

But, all was not as it seemed. I need not reiterate here the brutal campaigns against opposition that characterized the political landscape in Zimbabwe following the electoral success of ZANU-PF in 1980 to consolidate its

power and eliminate rivals like Joshua Nkomo, Josiah Tongogara, Ndabagini Sithole and many others, whose lives were taken or were intimidated or bought into silence. A bandit problem in the ZAPU heartland of Matabeleland provided the pretext for a January 1983 deployment of the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade of the army, called Gukurahundi - which in Shona means the “rain that washes away the chaff” to engage in a series of massacres of Ndebele supporters of ZAPU that was unprecedented in Zimbabwe. Some, like current opposition party Senator Roy Bennett, deemed it “ethnic cleansing.” Bennett, in a November 10, 2010, speech to the UK House of Commons and House of Lords, characterized the period and its impact as follows:

“The Gukurahundi has left a huge, festering wound in the Ndebele psyche; it hangs over Zimbabwe like a dark cloud. Not one of the architects of the Ndebele ethnic cleansing has been brought to justice—not a single one. Instead, many have been promoted for their loyalty to Mugabe and Zanu. The commander of the Fifth Brigade, Brigadier Perence Shiri, was later promoted to the head of the Zimbabwean Air Force. He now sits on the Joint Operations Command, a junta which effectively runs Zimbabwe to this day in spite of my party’s victory in parliamentary elections of March 2008—a victory that was even grudgingly acknowledged by Mugabe.”

Through subsequent years, this pattern of intimidation and control has continued unabated. There were the now well-known farm takeovers and driving out of farm owners and farm workers. After the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change as an opposition party and its surprising success in 1999 in defeating Mugabe’s draft constitution and winning a quarter of the parliamentary seats in the 2000 election, the regime began brutalizing of opposition party supporters and candidates. The most egregious single event was in 2005 in the townships of Harare, where over 700,000 people lost their livelihoods and had their homes demolished in mid-winter, during Operation Murambatsvina - a term that means “drive out the rubbish.” This initiative was embarked upon in response to MDC’s total control of the urban electorate to demolishing MDC’s urban support base and force destitute Zimbabweans to flee to neighboring countries. This violence against opposition party supporters and candidates again characterized the 2008 elections, which were won by the MDC.

Through all of this, the international community, the United States in particular, has had limited options on how to respond. In fact, the situation has presented a real dilemma to policy makers. Part of that dilemma is based on the fact that, in 1980, and the years leading up to that election, there was a struggle here in America on who to support. Remember, and I am sure that Chairman Payne does, that this was in the context of the Cold War and then-myopic policy guru, when sides were taken in accordance with the perceived ideological leanings of individuals and parties. Conservative forces in the United States, and powerful entrenched interests in South Africa and elsewhere, were actively anti-Robert Mugabe, the ZANU-PF leader, who they saw as a Marxist who had received Soviet and North Korean support. Many conservatives favored more “moderate” – that is in quotation marks – leaders such as Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Ndabagini Sithole, or Joshua Nkomo. I know Chairman Payne, and most who knew Africa well, like his predecessor on this Subcommittee, Howard Wolpe, understood the need to support the will of the people, and when Mugabe won an overwhelming victory in the first free and fair elections of 1980, they threw their support behind him. Subsequent behavior by Mugabe and his regimes, as they consolidated and perpetrated their hold on power, including eliminating opposition members, shackling a free press, and corrupting the democratic system, began to paint a different picture of who this man is, and what his true motivations were and are. Outside observers have been dismayed at the seeming transformation that occurred.

But, this early optimism from the international community makes the recent history of Zimbabwe, which is fraught with human rights violations, abrogation of democratic norms, corruption and mismanagement of an unimaginable proportion, all the more frustrating to policy makers the world over who watched Zimbabwe’s birth and first years of existence with pride and hope.

Recent years, as stated above, have dimmed the aura that once surrounded Mugabe and independent Zimbabwe. But, the potential and hope for a nation naturally endowed with an industrious people, huge natural resources, and agricultural wealth, has created a dichotomy for policy makers: How to penalize a wayward regime and the individuals who run it, while at the same time not exacerbating the damage to the fabric of the economy and the welfare of the people of Zimbabwe, and, **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**, how to support a viable opposition and encourage a return to functioning democracy.

This dichotomy has manifested itself in the application of a number of sanctions against government officials, a redirecting of development aid through non-government channels, statements of strong condemnation for human rights abuses, encouragement of regional (SADC and Africa Union) peace initiatives, support for the GPA, a new constitution and free and fair elections, and a strong cooling of our bilateral relations. At the same time, however, the international community has been and continues to be incredibly generous to Zimbabwe, particularly as it focuses on emergency food and relief supplies. Drawing from some statistics I received from Eddie Cross, an MDC official in Harare, foreign aid to Zimbabwe in the past three years has hovered at about \$800 million a year – 20 per cent of GDP in 2008 when donors provided food aid for over half the population and 10 per cent of GDP in the current year. Total foreign aid to Zimbabwe since 2000 (all of it in the form of grant aid) has in fact exceeded the total combined foreign aid received by Zimbabwe from independence in 1980 to the year 2000. In 2010, foreign aid has again exceeded \$800 million – half of it being disbursed on humanitarian assistance in one form or another. International aid has started to fund the provision of social services very substantially - \$200 million to health, over \$100 million to education and \$50 million to water and sanitation. Nearly 90 per cent of this has come from a group of States that call themselves the “Friends of Zimbabwe,” a group started by Tony Blair in 2007, which includes the United States. The U.S. provides one third of all aid, the UK with 14 per cent, Germany and Norway with about 7 per cent each. The UN Agencies are quite significant but the bulk of their efforts are funded through bilateral donors – of which the Friends constitute the majority of contributors.

As noted in the Findings section of the Zimbabwe Renewal Act, the economy has, in fact, recovered quite significantly in recent years. The latest IMF report gives an estimate of GDP of \$8 billion for 2011, up from \$4.2 billion in 2008 (90 per cent in three years). Again, according to Mr. Cross, the industrial capacity utilisation is now just over 40 per cent compared to 10 per cent in 2008 and the mining industry has expanded significantly – mainly gold and platinum, although diamonds are emerging as a potential major contributor. The financial sector has recovered with deposits now standing at \$2.4 billion and rising by about \$80 million a month.

So, this Bill comes before Congress and the American people at a time when there are signs of recovery in the economy, there are promises of cooperation among the parties to the Coalition Government to push through the actions called for by the GPA, and there is a new government in South Africa and dynamics in SADC that indicate an end of their tolerance of the Mugabe regime. Its intent, as I read it, is to fully condemn the atrocities and deprivations of the recent past, but to look for some thread of hope - some way to get around this government that turned so dramatically away from its people to focus only on perpetrating its own power and privilege – to find a way to help this long-suffering people in their recovery and transition back to democracy.

But, at the same time, it wants to throw out some “carrots” to encourage sustained movement forward, to provide mechanisms and resources that would allow a measured, and tightly controlled flow of assistance to those who have suffered, and those who are working hard for reconciliation and good governance throughout the country; and to lay a foundation for training, education and recovery and the functioning of democratic institutions such as the judiciary and the press. If I understand it correctly, any such assistance is dependant on a determination by the President and/or the Secretary of State of the United States that progress is being made in alleviating the suffering of the Zimbabwean people, and guaranteeing the ultimate outcome of the GPA, which is a new constitution and a free and fair election whose results are honored by all parties.

I think carrots are warranted, but the questions that we need to ask ourselves is has this generous international aid and subsequent economic recovery, described above, deterred the ZANU-PF ruling click from its gross behavior? Has it in any way begun to change the strategic balance between forces for democracy and the old regime?

I would only caution the authors of this bill to be certain that the “sticks” don’t get lost among the “carrots,” that the monitoring of performance on democracy and recovery be strict and comprehensive, and they do not allow the current government to use any lifting of sanctions, however targeted and whatever caveats are applied, as a propaganda victory. The ZANU-PF government has become adept at blaming the “illegal sanctions against Zimbabwe,” as they call them, with holding back its economic recovery and inhibiting its industrial and agricultural sectors. It blames opposition party members for fomenting any violence or abuses against the population. In

fact, it has been the clear policies and actions of ZANU-PF that have resulted in this situation, but they continue to live in denial, blaming everyone else, domestic and international, for the state of affairs in which Zimbabwe finds itself.

Let me end by citing one example of language in the Bill which leaves itself open to propaganda advantage for ZANU-PF and abuse of the intent of the legislation, I perfectly understand why the Bill, in Section 6 (c)(1)(a), advocates lifting of sanctions against financial institutions that provide lines of credit to communal farmers, civil servants and pensioners, but I can't understand the leap to instructing U.S. Executive Directors at all international financial institutions of which the U.S. is a member to, and I quote, "vote in favor of programs proposed or being considered by (that financial) institution for Zimbabwe." It seems to me the better policy option, and way of maintaining leverage, is to ask our delegates to international financial institutions to examine any request for Zimbabwe carefully, and make a determined and informed judgement on whether it is responding to supportable development or humanitarian needs and is not, in any way, underpinning ZANU-PF individuals or objectives.

Beyond this, the support for youth employment; strengthening rule of law and human rights compliance; crucial development assistance in health care, agriculture, education, clean water, and land reform; and reconciliation and democracy promotion is laudable. This is work that needs to be done. But, Mr. Mugabe has manipulated the good intentions of international donors before. I am pleased to see that all lifting of sanctions and decisions to supply aid funds are predicated on a determination by the President of the United States that steps are being taken to strengthen human rights and rule of law, to implement the GPA, and secure a future for all Zimbabweans. That is as it should be. Monitoring has to be essential to meeting the objectives of this Bill.

If my view is jaundiced on ZANU-PF intentions, it is born of over 30 years of disappointment for this once promised government. We must maintain this caution, while realistically trying to move the ball forward and support the very people who have suffered so much. Let us hope that we are at the beginning of a new era.