



Expert Presents 'Road Map' for Post-Mugabe Zimbabwe

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Zimbabwe is in the midst of an unprecedented economic and political free fall. With skyrocketing inflation rates, declining agricultural production and repressive political and media policies, Zimbabwe is a nation in crisis. One long-time Zimbabwe watcher has proposed a plan to help put the nation, once proudly known as Africa's "breadbasket," on the road toward economic and political recovery.

Todd Moss, senior fellow at the Center for Global Development, says the story of Zimbabwe's decline is tragic. He says the nation began its post-British-colonial era with a measure of true economic strength.

"At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe had a fairly diversified economy," he said. "In fact, it was a very robust economy that had just survived an extended period of trauma, and, at independence, was in a very good position to lead Africa as a kind of model going forward."

Speaking at a recent forum at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies, Moss said independent Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, had achieved political stability, despite lingering racial tensions.

"Politically, it was sort of a model of racial reconciliation," he added. "Obviously, there were racial tensions during the colonial period, but for the most part, the previous white Rhodesians - white Zimbabweans - largely withdrew from politics. But politically, it was also somewhat of a success story."

All that good fortune began to erode in the early 1990s, says Moss, when Zimbabwe's economy cooled, and official corruption rose along with the nations' debt level.

Moss says the point of no return for Zimbabwe began six years ago, when the first credible opposition movement was formed, the Movement for Democratic Change. Perhaps more important to the country's decline, he says, was the land reform program instituted by President Robert Mugabe, the country's only leader since independence.

Zimbabwe's land reform program was designed to redistribute white-owned commercial farms to poor, landless blacks.



Moss says the implementation of the program, often violent and used to reward President Mugabe's political friends, has been devastating. Thousands of farmers have been forcibly evicted, and, in their absence, tracks of once highly productive land have stalled, amid a combination of bad policy and a withering drought.

The Zimbabwean ambassador to the United States, Machivenyika Mapuranga, attended Moss's seminar, and he strongly defended land reform. He called it successful, and a much needed redress from the British colonial era that has now created racial equity.

Malvern Chishazhe, 7, cries after family home was destroyed at Porta Farm, Zimbabwe, June 30, 2005

"Eighty percent of Zimbabweans are peasants," he explained. "Getting them out of the reservations and giving them productive land. [And now] 320,000 families have been resettled. You cannot call them cronies of Mugabe! We are talking about a substantial part of the peasant population. Where you used to have just a handful of black farmers in commercial farming business, now you have 40,000. This is the equity that we were fighting for."

Moss questioned the ambassador's numbers, calling them highly doubtful. In response, the ambassador angrily walked out of the forum.

Moss went on to propose steps the international community could take to help restore prosperity in Zimbabwe.

They include tightening sanctions, exposing the government's propaganda, pushing to get Zimbabwe expelled from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and applying more U.S. diplomatic pressure.

The focus, Moss says, should be on the future, when President Mugabe is no longer in power.

"While all these short terms things are kind of pushing around the margins, there's a more important thing that the West can do to help Zimbabwe. And this is really to think ahead, and to do some contingency planning, for the transition is coming at some point," he noted.

By transition, Moss means the inevitable end of the 26-year rule of the 82-year-old president.

At that time, Moss says, Zimbabwe should be thought of by donors as what he calls a "post-conflict" situation.

"We have had political violence and social trauma. There are militias. There have been gross human rights violations. There has obviously been an economic collapse; not only on the scale



Robert Mugabe

of a war zone, but worse," he added. "Maize, the staple crop, is now down to a fraction of what Zimbabwe can produce. They are importing food. The infrastructure is collapsing. And really, unfortunately, the country is past the point of a quick rebound."

He says international donors must be ready and willing to respond quickly.

"One example of this is, they put in a lot of money upfront to try to steer the country, to get it on a recovery path early, rather than sitting back and waiting," he said. "In terms of political support, there could be an international effort to smooth the transition, depending on how it unfolds. There would definitely have to be some kind of security forces reform. That will have to be dealt with, and, actually, the U.S., in particular, has a pretty good record on helping reform the security sector."

Another key element to help rebuild Zimbabwe, according to Moss, is the creation of a truth and reconciliation commission, or a war crimes tribunal to address the issue of severe human rights abuses.

And, there should be an immediate effort to deal with humanitarian needs among poor Zimbabweans suffering under a shattered economy. Among them are hundreds-of-thousands of people made homeless last year, when the government destroyed homes and businesses as part of an urban rationalization scheme.

Finally, Moss says, there must be a deliberate effort to court private investors, especially highly skilled Zimbabweans who have left the country, amid its collapse.

The United States has condemned human rights abuses in Zimbabwe and imposed some sanctions. However, the U.S. continues to provide humanitarian assistance to Zimbabwe.