



To: President-elect Obama  
Cc: Secretary of State–designate Hillary Clinton; National Security Advisor–designate General James Jones; future Assistant Secretary for African Affairs; future National Security Council (NSC) Senior Director for Africa

From: Todd Moss, Center for Global Development<sup>1</sup>

## Re: Three Steps to Restore Democracy to Zimbabwe

**Background.** Unlike other difficult Africa policy challenges inherited by the new administration, Robert Mugabe’s flagrant misrule of Zimbabwe may be ripe for resolution. The country’s collapse threatens to bring broader instability and is a blot on Africa’s progress toward peace and prosperity. Mugabe’s cruel regime also poses a direct humanitarian challenge that demands a strong U.S. policy. And unlike Congo or Sudan, Zimbabwe could rebound relatively quickly. For these reasons, an early and robust diplomatic strategy could pay high returns.

**Recommendations.** Within the first 100 days, the next administration should:

- 1. Send clear messages to Harare and Pretoria that Mugabe must go.** Recent actions prove that ZANU-PF is not, nor has it ever been, serious about implementing the September 15 power-sharing agreement. Thus, neither political reconciliation nor economic recovery can begin while Mugabe is at the helm. South Africa has significant leverage but its involvement to date has been counterproductive. The cholera outbreak and mounting domestic demands could provide new reasons for more forceful action. The United States should make clear to Pretoria’s incoming leaders what the international community expects.
- 2. Encourage the African Union and China to be more forceful.** Many African leaders are frustrated with Zimbabwe and would be willing to rebuke Mugabe if enough AU members were on board. The AU summit in early February is a possible opportunity. China is embarrassed by Zimbabwe and its influence could be productive, if engaged quietly.
- 3. Task the interagency to prepare for both impasse and sudden change.** Direct the diplomatic, development, and intelligence agencies to take a fresh look at ways to apply further pressure to Mugabe’s inner circle. State-sponsored brutality, including rape camps and hit-squads (and the mid-1980s Matabeleland massacres), warrant serious consideration of additional action against those responsible for gross human rights violations. The administration should also re-energize international preparation for a transition. Although Zimbabwe is not technically at war, it will require broad support similar to what the international community offers traumatized post-conflict societies.

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