

POLICY STATEMENT No. 3

**Prime Minister Opens
Zimbabwe Conference on
Reconstruction and
Development
(ZIMCORD)**

MARCH 23, 1981

ZIMBABWE

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The following is the text of a speech by the Prime Minister, Comrade Robert Mugabe, when he opened the Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development (ZIMCORD) at Meikles Hotel in Salisbury on March 23, 1981.

On behalf of the Government and people of Zimbabwe, I am pleased to welcome you all to this Conference on Zimbabwe's immediate post-war reconstruction and development problems and priorities.

I would especially like to extend a warm welcome to our guests and visitors from other countries and various international agencies. I wish for all of you a very happy stay in our country. Your presence here certainly bears witness to your understanding that Zimbabwe requires material assistance and that that assistance is beyond the capacity of any single donor to provide. Indeed, I believe that your presence also bears witness to the political, economic and moral significance and importance of this non-racial, free, democratic society in this southern sub-continent of Africa. This Conference constitutes an important milestone in our history as a people and a nation. It takes place on the eve of the first anniversary of our accession to sovereign and independent statehood, itself an event of the most momentous significance for our people, for our region and, I daresay, mankind everywhere.

The Conference, moreover, takes place against the background of the termination of the war, that, for nearly a decade and a half, had ravaged our country, claimed thousands of lives, and threatened the viability of the country's entire socio-economic infrastructure. Alongside the raging war experienced by the country were the realities of international sanctions and international isolation which added to the ravages of the sustained bitter war.

During the whole period of our conflict, an increasingly large share of the country's output was diverted to the war so that the expenditure on this account was as high as 15 per cent. of GDP. The inflow of foreign investment was reduced; access to external capital and money markets was severely restricted, thus reducing required resources for public and private investment programmes; exports were almost invariably sold at a discount, imports purchased at a premium. Because of the need to conserve foreign exchange earnings the economy was forced to pursue an import substitution strategy to a degree not always consistent with efficiency.

We are now at peace. While the peace we have now achieved has unfortunately occasionally been disturbed by the misguided actions of a few disgruntled or criminal elements, there can be no doubt whatever that our country is more at peace today than at any time in the recent past. Thus, while they may not have yet been turned into ploughshares, the swords of war have nonetheless been rendered blunt and the guns silent. And within our country we are determined to maintain them that way, so both our nation and the world may realise that we adopted war as the means of struggle so we could produce peace. War, as I stated in 1976 at the Geneva Conference, was an instrument for peace. We now have to attend to economic rather than to political problems.

Mr. Chairman, this moment and this conference are equally historic, in that they define and reflect the determination of our people, acting through their popularly-elected Government, to set in motion and consummate the rebuilding of Zimbabwe. The task before my Government in the new era of independence and peace is clear. It is to lay the foundation on the basis of which our people can regain their history and, as active participants, make their lives go forward in prosperity and happiness. The task facing us in Government is, indeed, immense, challenging and daunting. It involves rehabilitating our economy, reconstructing a shattered socio-economic infrastructure, particularly in the rural areas, resettling thousands of our people, as well as making sure that vital social services are restored or introduced for their benefit.

This has been our first, inescapable, order of business as a Government. Having regard to the heavy toll in destruction and disruption exacted by the armed hostilities of scarcely a year ago, my Government has already undertaken an extensive variety of initiatives directed to accomplishing the broad objectives of post-war reconstruction.

On the basis of our own resources and the assistance extended to us by friendly countries, international agencies, and various charitable organizations, we have taken the first firm steps along the road toward the rehabilitation and reconstruction of our rural, social and economic facilities, along with the restoration of basic social services.

May I take this opportunity, Mr. Chairman and Honourable Guests and Delegates, to record my Government's appreciation and

gratitude for the assistance we have thus far received from friendly countries and international institutions. This assistance has been effectively utilized in alleviating the suffering and destitution of thousands of our people especially the over one million war refugees and displaced persons.

It is in this context, in which our own resources and initiatives have been supplemented by external assistance, that my Government has proceeded with determination to undo the heritage bequeathed to us by nearly a century of colonialist neglect and exploitation and by the protracted armed conflict of the recent past. We have thus, as I have already stated, resettled most of our war refugees and displaced people. To thousands of our people — both the former refugees in particular and the destitute in general — we have provided minimum shelter, food, land, and basic means of sustenance in the year that has gone by.

*I wish to
W.D. Johnson*
We have also opened several rural roads, repaired some bridges and thus restored vital lines of communication without which no development is possible. My Government has, in addition, set about rebuilding schools, clinics, and hospitals or, indeed, building new ones where none existed before. Furthermore, Government has purchased 370 000 hectares of farmland at a cost of nearly Z\$5 million, on which have been resettled some 15 000 families.

I wish to stress here that our efforts have not been directed towards the mere restoration of the *status quo ante-bellum* as an end in itself. Rather, our objective is to prepare the ground work for the launching of a comprehensive, integrated and well-articulated development plan geared to attacking the evil of mass poverty, especially as this pertains to our rural areas. Elements of this plan, which will be unveiled three months hence, have been incorporated in the ZIMCORD agenda which is before us. Hence simultaneously with the formulation and elaboration of our projected three-year transitional development plan we have set out to tackle our most pressing and immediate problems.

It is our conviction that the resolution of these problems is not only called for in terms of the immediate needs of our people, but also that this should already indicate the orientation and provide the base on which Government will initiate its further plans and programmes for realising the accelerated growth of our economy under conditions of justice and equity for our people as a whole.

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Zimbabwe's economy has a tremendous potential; it already has a diversified base and inbuilt resilience, founded on a rich and diverse natural resources base. Our mineral resources of gold, chromium, nickel, asbestos, copper, iron ore, coal and semi-precious stones underpin and secure the country's economy, as do our major agricultural products which include tobacco, maize or corn, cotton, wheat, sugar, groundnuts, soya beans, beef and dairy products. The industrial base is firm and indeed the manufacturing sector which includes both capital and consumer goods, already contributes about a quarter of the nation's output of goods and services.

I think it should also be underlined that all these economic considerations are underpinned now within the framework of a democratic system directed to the attainment of a socialist and egalitarian society. In addition, my Government has demonstrated its capacity to maintain peace, security and stability under the most difficult circumstances, and is determined to do so in the future.

These, we believe, are essential ingredients for successful social and economic development. Yet because of the unique circumstances facing Zimbabwe at this early but critical stage in its development, there is one missing link. This is the need for economic resources for a reconstruction and restructuring programme on the order of magnitude indicated in the conference documentation. The need for such aid was recognized at Lancaster House, where it was noted that the magnitude of the task was such that no one donor country could provide it alone.

Your presence this week is testimony to the need for international support for this task. Because of its geographical position, the strength and diversity of its economy, and because of its highly developed infrastructure, Zimbabwe occupies a strategic position, one likely to increase directly in proportion to the political uncertainties and possible international isolation of South Africa.

The initial task of reconstruction is, however, yet to be completed. The financial and technical assistance we have to date received falls far short of our requirements, even when these are estimated conservatively. Whilst some may now perhaps find it inconvenient to be reminded of the aid promises that were presented to us as essential components of the Anglo-American constitutional settlement proposals of 1976 and 1977 respectively,

we merely note that our immediate post-war requirements were then estimated at around US\$1.5 billion. That was four or five years ago. Today, as we set about consolidating our independence following the Lancaster House Agreement of December 1979, our requirements for post-war reconstruction and development are surely greater.

We have much vital work before us. My Government is committed to clearing the stage and unleashing a vigorous attack on the evils of mass poverty, disease, and ignorance. These evils, persisting side by side with our technologically advanced civilization as they do cannot but reflect man's inhumanity to man. They demean the dignity of man, mock his inhumanity, and stunt the potentiality for his fuller development as much at the individual as at the collective level.

My Government clearly cannot accept a state of affairs in which millions of our people are condemned to a life, nay a mere existence, characterized by stagnation, hopelessness and desperation. Our struggle for national liberation — protracted, incalculably costly and herculean as it was — would lose meaning were we, in the moment of victory and the era of peace, to allow millions of our people to wallow in poverty and degradation as victims of forces beyond their control.

We have a responsibility and duty to create and consolidate a new order, a new social environment of progress and all-round development based on the democratic, socialist, and egalitarian principles that have inspired and informed our endeavours to this day.

We therefore call on all who wish us well and who have an appreciation of the magnitude and urgency of the task before us, to come forward and assist us to complete the task.

Distinguished and Honoured Guests, this conference is, for us, a rare occasion and singular opportunity. It is a unique occasion, not least because it has brought to our young country so many distinguished visitors and guests drawn from the large number of countries and international organizations represented in this room. More importantly, this Conference affords us the opportunity to define before this august and representative cross-section of the international community, of which Zimbabwe is now a proud

member, the nature of the problems we face and our perspectives as to the requirements for their solution. Equally importantly, my Government feels strongly that this Conference is the occasion and the opportunity for the international community to commit itself to assist us concretely and practically. Only in this way would our myriad challenges of reconstruction and development be rendered more effectively manageable.

We have estimated, on the basis of very careful assessment, that we do require an injection of resources of the order of Z\$1 254 000 000 to complete the projects and proposals identified on the ZIMCORD agenda. As detailed in the document before you, entitled "Let's Build Zimbabwe Together", these projects and proposals include completion of the refugee and reconstruction programmes, land resettlement and rural, agricultural development, capital investment in training institutions, and technical assistance. These are priority areas and bear directly on the imperative need to reform and restructure our economy for the benefit of all. The total cost of all projects listed under these headings is Z\$1 254 million in the three-year period envisaged. My colleagues in the appropriate ministries of Government, and in particular, the Minister of Economic Planning and Development, will in the course of this Conference describe in detail the various projects for which we seek external financial and technical support. Permit me, however, to touch very briefly on one central item, namely land settlement and rural development.

The situation in our rural areas, in which over four million of our people reside and eke out scarcely a bare subsistence livelihood is alarming and in some areas close to calamitous. As can be gleaned from the main ZIMCORD document that I have already referred to, these areas, taken as a whole, constituted, in the Rhodesia of yesterday, a sort of colony within a colony: neglected, exploited, underdeveloped. They thus, to this day, remain the other side, and at that the ugly side, of our so-called dual economy. We have within our economy a tale of two cities!

In these areas, acute overcrowding in respect of both human and livestock population, accompanied by rapid ecological deterioration in conditions of low diffusion and development of technology, looms as a danger signal of the first magnitude. Low, if not declining productivity, is here the order of the day, with obvious consequences for incomes and living standards. Progress has, in these areas, been

slow, largely due to the limited availability of funds from our own meagre resources and from aid. The need to proceed rapidly in these areas cannot be over-emphasised for long-term investment in them is bound to yield the most social benefits.

Under colonialism the pattern of land distribution lopsidedly favoured the settler minority at the expense of the vast majority of Zimbabweans. Hence the acquisition of more productive land for thousands of our land-hungry people is an urgent, priority item on our national agenda. The land is available, but as stated above, my Government lacks the requisite financial resources either for its purchase as stipulated under the Lancaster House Agreement, or for its development. If we must honour the Agreement and we have all along indicated our willingness to do so; and if the international community, including Britain in particular, desires us to honour the Agreement — and we think this is the case — then we simply have to have the resources to enable us to discharge our obligations while doing full justice towards our people. This to us is a matter of paramount importance and we look forward to its being fully ventilated and effectively dealt with at this conference. We appreciate that in principle some governments would not be willing to provide funds for purposes of land purchases and compensation and regard it as the responsibility of the former colonial power — Britain. Land acquisition is only one aspect of our land problem. Rural development is another and we would invite such governments to participate in our latter endeavours.

It may be noted further that under colonialism the mass of our people, especially those in the rural areas, derived little benefit from the economic development activities initiated by Government and private enterprise in respect of the development of the social and physical infrastructure, agriculture, mining and manufacturing industry. Hence, not only have we inherited a situation in our countryside which is the negation of development, we also confront in this situation the effects of an historical process whereby the so-called modern sector developed at the cost of the underdevelopment of the rural peasant sector. Land expropriation and the structurally determined migration of able-bodied young males from the subsistence sector to the modern sector enclaves, to quote but two illustrations, were part and parcel of this process. Previous regimes were loath to invest capital in the African rural areas because of their narrow sectional interests.

Yet our attitude is not to bemoan, much less dwell on, the past. Rather our attitude is to look to the future. It is from this perspective that we seek at this conference the necessary capital and technology, as also technical assistance, to enable us to implement our projects of rural development and the training of sorely-needed skilled manpower. It is also from the same perspective, I might add, that we have put forward the concept of national reconciliation as the basis of our policies and actions as a Government.

Our attitude is that our country will make better and faster progress in achieving the unity of our people, consolidating our hard-won independence, and effectively tackling the many problems we face as a nation, if we bury the past and resolve to make a new beginning.

A good deal of progress has already been made in this regard. We have, as I have already stated, transformed our country from a state of war to the state of peace. We have already gone a long, long, way towards moulding a single Zimbabwe National Army, out of three armies that only yesterday had sought to annihilate each other. Primary education is now free for about a million of our children and we began the current school year with a fourfold increase in secondary school enrolment compared to the previous year. Medical care is now free to those of our people whose income is less than Z\$150 per month. I could go on in this vein. But I do not wish to take too much of your time.

I wish to add, however, that the humane and progressive impulse that informs our domestic policies also projects itself at the level of our international relationships. We seek and fight for the full liberation of man everywhere. In our region this means, on the one hand, that we support those fighting against the evils of colonialism and apartheid in Namibia and South Africa, and on the other hand, that we associate with all the free and friendly states close to us and beyond in developing co-operation in many fields in order to promote and enhance the quality of life of our people.

The international community, we feel, should play its full part in assuring the success of our efforts. Our country is poised to make a decisive and historic advance in transforming the lives of millions of our people. In specifics and to repeat myself, we seek

to purchase and provide land for productive purposes to the landless, we seek to rehabilitate and further develop our physical infrastructure and improve our rural economy; we seek, as well, to provide technical training on a wide front to thousands of our young people so that they can contribute to the fullest towards the development of their country.

As I have already indicated, the request for aid contained in the ZIMCORD document for envisaged projects is Z\$1 254 million. Aid, or other forms of material support, is also required for national infrastructural development, the cost of which is estimated at Z\$1 079 million over the three-year period. Many of the projects in this category are essential for the success of projects in the three priority areas. They are mutually supportive. The only difference is that economic returns on national infrastructure projects are higher, and therefore, can be financed on a more commercial basis than the ZIMCORD projects.

It has been suggested that the amount of aid being requested by my Government far exceeds the ability of the economy to absorb it. I cannot accept this argument. Over the last 10 months we have demonstrated the vigour of our policies and our capacity to put resources to effective use. It is also beyond doubt that our absorptive capacity will increase over the three-year period envisaged in the ZIMCORD programme as we get more experience and especially as urgent reconstruction work is phased out. I must also emphasise that absorptive capacity is a function of good infrastructure, efficient administration and hard-headed planning and programming. This we have in abundance, or have demonstrated we can achieve.

As explained in the Conference document, as many projects as possible will become part of an interim three-year development plan to be published in July. The case for aid to Zimbabwe and the responsibility of the international community within the context of the Lancaster House settlement has been clearly and forcefully stated in the ZIMCORD document. There is, however, another compelling reason why the international community should do its utmost to support Zimbabwe at this critical stage of its development.

Zimbabwe's position in the Southern African region is clearly crucial. We form the geographical link between four countries, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Botswana. Our transport system

already facilitates trade between them and potentially with the rest of the world. We also have the capacity, through our manufacturing sector, to lessen their and our dependence on South Africa. Our agricultural potential is such that we can supplement our neighbours' food requirements if necessary. We have proven technology in food production that could enable them to become exporters in their own right. Just as UDI and Zimbabwe's liberation struggle adversely affected our neighbours, so will stability and development in Zimbabwe have beneficial effects on their economies.

We call upon the international community to demonstrate its fullest practical support for our non-racial democratic system and put into practical effect its abhorrence and repugnance to the apartheid system in South Africa. Failure by the international community to render to Zimbabwe support for its resettlement, reconstruction, rural development and training programmes will have the effect of bolstering the evil designs of the apartheid regime in South Africa to hold our economy to ransom and destabilize our political systems.

We are poised for giant strides aimed at the economic development of our country so we can reinforce the political independence we have achieved with improvement in the quality of our people's lives by bringing benefits to all and thus securing the foundations of a progressive peaceful non-racial society which will contribute decisively to world peace.

While my Government and people acknowledge with deep gratitude the support already given to us by the international community, it holds that it would be tragic if our attempts to reconstruct and develop our country were to lose momentum because of indifferent international support.

Our requirements are not excessive. They are certainly very realistic. The need is great. The hour is ripe for a decisive onslaught on the shackles that hold man in thrall and impede the possibility of his enjoying a richer, fuller, and more meaningful life. We cannot fail in this task.

We know we have the goodwill of people and governments around the world. May we be permitted to hope that this is the time and the occasion for the translation of that goodwill into concrete action.

It is my sincere hope that your stay here will enable you to gain first-hand knowledge of our development programmes and greater insight into our need for assistance, as you also see for yourself Zimbabwe's great potential for economic development and for contributing to effective international co-operation in the interests of world peace and prosperity.

Once again, I say welcome to you all. I now wish to declare the Conference open.



