Speech by
His Excellency the President
Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe,
on the occasion of the inauguration of the President,
State House,
Harare,
Sunday 17th March 2002

Master of Ceremonies,
Your Excellencies Heads of State here present,
Honourable Vice Presidents of the Republic of Zimbabwe,
Comrades Simon Muzenda and Joseph Msika,
Mai Muzenda na Mai Msika.
Mama Mafuyana,
Former Heads of State,
The Speaker of the Parliament, Comrade Emmerson Mnangagwa,
The Chief Justice of Zimbabwe, Honourable Godfrey Chidyausiku and Amai Chidyausiku, and Members of the Judiciary, Distinguished Representatives of Heads of State and Government from fraternal countries within our region and beyond, Traditional Chiefs, Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament, Service Chiefs, Heads of Religious Denominations present here today, Representatives of Sectoral Organisations and Professionals, Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
All Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Comrades and Friends.

I come before you in a moment and mood of national pride and personal joy tempered with a sense of humility. It is a moment of national pride because the nation, through those registered and able to vote, has made its unfettered decision that in turn has produced this day. Personal joy, yes, because in a closely fought campaign, a large majority of our people returned me and my party into the leadership of our free and sovereign country.

With humility, I thus wish to thank all those who voted for me and my party as well as those others who decided to exercise their voting in a different way, both dimensions indeed lending their weight to a truly democratic process. In their different political affiliations and espousing their preferences, our people turned out in the thousands, indeed millions, braving the elements as they stood patiently awaiting their turn to cast their votes. Such was the evidence, if anywhere needed,

of the maturity of our democratic practice and level of discipline prevailing in our society.

How can anyone feel restrained, least of all the winner of this day, in chanting with an exuberant voice, "Well done, Zimbabweans! Makorokoto! Amhlophe! We have dealt a stunning blow to imperialism!"

This indeed is a moment for all of us, winners and losers, to celebrate the multi-faceted phenomenon of the victory of our democratic process. Where the Ruling Party won the Presidential election, it became a loser of the Mayoral and Council elections in all Harare. On the other hand, where the opposition won the Mayoral and Council elections, it became a loser of the Presidential election. Both sides have therefore something to rejoice about as well as something to mourn about. But these mingled joys and aches aside, the greatest winner, you will agree, was our Democratic Process.

As Zimbabweans, this moment of national pride is one that bids us further to come together, and as in unison we chant our National Anthem and raise high our multi-coloured flag of glory, work jointly and collectively to reconstruct our economy in order to transform our society. Our energies and capabilities are surely better spent on constructive people-oriented tasks and programmes than on planning and plotting the downfall of each other. The serious espousal of the ideal of national unity and the spirit of brotherhood will inject correct doses of love and fervour into our relationships hitherto soured by hostility and anguish.

The current and urgent demand of our country is for a renewed faith and vigour, faith in ourselves and vigour in our efforts. Our country beckons us to join hands in a formidable unity of purpose as we vigorously engage in our various national endeavours.

The excitement, jubilation and exhilaration, as well as the anxieties, of the last several weeks will soon recede into history, and yet our tasks will continue in their various shapes and focuses to address the current and future economic problems that persistently confront our nation. We have no choice but to strive to sustain and enhance the lives of our people in order to give meaning to the shape and content of our democratic society. Indeed, the general review of our socio-economic programmes has now to receive immediate attention.

The Land Reform Programme must proceed with greater speed and strength, so the losses and drawbacks of the current drought-ridden season can be overcome and replaced by rich harvests and farmers' earnings in the coming agricultural season, given better weather patterns than at present. In the process, deliberate emphasis

will have to be given to the production of critical crops such as maize, tobacco, cotton, soya beans, sugar and others, at both peasant and large-scale levels. For now, however, Government will continue to exert maximum efforts into securing adequate maize supplies, to ensure the adequacy of food for the people.

The manufacturing sector has to be immediately addressed in order to revive all those factories which have shut down or are on the verge of doing so. Greater emphasis than before will be placed on the informal sector in order to adequately revamp it as a vital contributor to the Gross Domestic Product. The Mining Sector will similarly be given such serious attention as will enable it to sustain productivity at higher levels than at present so the volume of foreign earnings can be boosted.

The development of the infrastructural sector which encompasses dam construction, rural electrification, road and rail construction will of necessity have to be intensified, as indeed will the construction and rehabilitation of our airports, large and small.

Then there is our sector of tourism which is a significant contributor to our capacity to earn foreign exchange, and which we must continue to enhance both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Beyond these and other measures directed towards the current food emergency situation, Government has worked out a comprehensive economic recovery strategy whose components integrally address the issues of economic empowerment and indigenisation; restoration of confidence in the management of the economy; and formulation of appropriate, consensus-based responses to the problems of reduced foreign currency inflows, inflation, high prices, debt management and low investment activity in the economy.

The details of the strategies and other solutions to the challenges cited above are either already enshrined in our Millennium Economic Recovery Programme or will shortly be presented to the nation following necessary consultations. However, the current severe foreign currency crunch requires that we immediately provide further stimulus to national export performance, including that of the general agricultural and horticultural sectors; promote beneficiation for high value exports; encourage both local and foreign direct investment in the economy and market our country more professionally, innovatively and effectively to boost tourism.

On inflation, which has had such a devastating effect on the standard of living of out people, we are determined that fiscal policy shall focus on strict control of Government expenditures, especially recurrent or consumption expenditure.

However, Government must and will invest in productive, employment-generating activities, including infrastructure. In particular, we plan, as already stated, to increase production in agriculture which, among other things, will have a dampening effect on inflation through an increase in aggregate supply.

Economic empowerment is a vital part of our economic policies. We intend to further enhance this thrust by way of initiatives that aim to:

- produce an overarching legal framework on economic empowerment;
- create an enabling environment for employee ownership and management buy-out schemes as may be mutually agreed;
- strengthen the capacity of micro-finance institutions to deliver loans to the informal and micro-enterprises sector;
- increase funding for the land reform programme;
- give preferential treatment to indigenous businesses on Government tenders, whilst ensuring efficiency and value for money; and
- use the budget as a central tool for economic empowerment, where a significant amount of resources would be set aside for such empowerment.

I should, however, wish at this stage to state that in tackling these problems, we shall be moving with speed and in a time-framed and results-oriented manner. We cannot afford the luxury of dilatoriness and bureaucratic sloth and indecisiveness.

The day is gone and gone for good when the business of the people could be half-done, postponed inordinately or even recklessly and responsibly set aside. Government has no purpose at all unless that purpose speaks in words and deeds to the needs and aspirations of the people.

This economy must grow, not contract. Growth will be restored as investment by, above all, Zimbabweans themselves, is deliberately and systematically embarked upon in all sectors, but principally in agriculture. Land reform is not merely an exercise in rectifying a monstrous colonial injustice, vital though and necessary this has been. The resettlement programme is also an opportunity:

- to unleash the spirit of self-reliance and creativity of our people;
- to foster the economic empowerment of our people;
- to increase agricultural production and therewith to expand the domestic economic base and foreign market access;
- to create and enhance employment creation; and
- to assure national food security on a permanent and reliable basis.

In addition, and in complementary fashion, we have set out to evolve an integrated rural development strategy that covers provision of enhanced agricultural extension

services; infrastructural rehabilitation and development; rural electrification; and the development of largely agro-based small and medium-scale enterprises around the country.

Other programmes directed, for example, to improving social service delivery will be announced in due course. These will include improves approaches in our fight against the HIV-AIDS pandemic that has so ravaged our society in recent years.

Beyond our borders, our country has in recent years attracted a good deal of international attention, most of which has been extremely negative and quite hostile. Indeed, it could even be said, colloquially, that Zimbabwe or Mugabe-bashing has become an obsessive compulsion in certain circles abroad. The reason for this is obvious: our land reform initiative and its impact on the affairs of the white community and certain foreign interests in our country have inspired that attention and the hostility from the former colonial power Britain and its allies.

It is greatly to be regretted that we live in an age where racial and socio-economic injustices still prevail after centuries of their callous and systematic perpetration against many of our African communities.

In most of our colonised countries, the oppressed, suppressed and repressed people had no option but to organise themselves in order to fight these injustices both politically and militarily. It was these liberation struggles that gave birth to their freedom and Independence as they regained their sovereign right to determine their destiny. In 1980, as we celebrated the advent of our Independence, here, we least expected that twenty years down the line we would, once again, have to wage another struggle for the defence of that sovereign Independence against our former colonial power seeking in a determined way to diminish it so as to regulate our policies and our lives, including the choice of our rules.

Ladies and Gentlemen, comrades and friends, you certainly have now been able to see how Britain and its white allies have blatantly sought to ensure that this last Presidential election be won by their protégé and not by me and ZANU (PF). But thanks to the people of Zimbabwe for loudly saying, “No! No! Never!! Never again shall Zimbabwe be a colony.” I thank them for their resolute anti-imperialist stand!

Finally, I want to thank our brotherly African and non-African countries for their full solidarity and enduring support. It is indeed against that background that I want to welcome all our guests, especially the Heads of State and Government from outside Zimbabwe from being here with us today a we celebrate our victory over colonialism. May I mention, however, that we will continue to need your

support in the future as imperialist manoeuvres against Zimbabwe persist.

Thus as we move now to face up to the two daunting tasks, on the one hand, that of our socio-economic recovery and stabilisation, and, on the other, that of nation-building, we humbly call upon you, our friends and allies, to remain steadfast behind us. Simunye!

To all of you here, may this historic occasion be to you as much a source of joy and inspiration as it is to me. I thank you all for being with us and for sharing this day with me, my wife and family, Party and Government colleagues.

I thank you.