PRESS STATEMENT BY ACTING PRESIDENT, CDE. JOSEPH MSIKA, ON ACCEPTING LAND SUBMISSIONS FROM THE ZIMBABWE JOINT RESETTLEMENT INITIATIVE, HARARE, 5TH SEMPTEMBER, 2001.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media,

I thought we should get together to share with you Government's response to land submissions from the Zimbabwe Joint Resettlement Initiative (ZJRI) which were made to us on 11th July, 2001. You will recall that soon after this development, Government publicly acknowledged the submission and indicated it needed more time to verify the properties. Indeed, Government set up a joint technical committee comprising its own experts and those from the ZJRI to:

1. verify the authenticity of the land submitted;

2. ascertain its legal status;

3. again ascertain its status on the ground and,

4. determine the characteristics of the submitted land in relation to our resettlement goals.

I am happy to announce that the technical sub-committee has completed its task, thereby making it possible for us to respond meaningfully to the overall submission from the commercial farmers.

Members of the media will recall that the commercial farmers made an undertaking to initially submit **one million hectares** to Government for resettlement. From the analysis of the technical committee, the ZJRI submission amounts to **531** farms with a total of **967 452** hectares. The present submission thus falls short of this target by **32 548** hectares which I am told will be forthcoming soon.

In assessing this submission, Government looked at the spirit behind the offer, and welcomes the fact that some white commercial farmers appear to have turned a new leaf in their attitude towards the Government Land Reform Programme. The commercial farmers have indicated to Government that **229** of their number are withdrawing their legal contest to the acquisition of gazetted farms with a total hectarage of **410 111**. This, together with the uncontested **132** farms measuring **290 838** hectares, and an additional **73** new farms amounting to **116 021**, should accelerate the fast-track resettlement programme. The remaining hectarage includes land from sub-divisions, alternate offers and re-locations.

Significantly, most of the identified properties submitted to Government fall within farms already gazetted and this means precious time will not be wasted in needless legal battles which only serve to polarise our society and to cost us dearly through loss of production time. The agricultural season is more or less upon us and every day counts.

Let me re-state that this submission is an initial submission by ZJRI, and must be understood within the overall Land Reform Programme. Government remains committed to equitable distribution of land and should be able to meet the huge land hunger there is. Teams are already at work and should soon cover all land earmarked for resettlement, including this latest submission.

To the outside world, I say this development represents a home-grown solution which amply show that Zimbabweans are capable of solving their own problems. Outsiders can only build on the oneness and goodwill we have for each other as Zimbabweans.

Office of the President and Cabinet

5th September, 2001